

**Helping Communities to Help Themselves? :  
Japan's Assistance for Self-help Development  
in Rural Malawi**

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## Declaration

I, Yuko Misu, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the primary principles of Japan's development assistance – *jijo*, meaning self-help. Japan's development assistance is most commonly presented as economic cooperation, and much less is understood about its social and human development programmes at the community level. These programmes prioritise the self-help process and self-reliance of people in the recipient communities. This thesis provides new insights into social and human development assistance aspect of Japanese development programmes by exploring how the concept of 'self-help' is shaped by field practice. The thesis also contributes to broader debates about the grounded nature of development practice and the roles of different development actors at a range of scales.

The practice of self-help development is examined with specific reference to the mobility of the concept of self-help, from the stage of project design until it becomes embedded in recipient communities. The mobility is analysed from perspectives of individual actors involved during the process, including development workers, their local counterparts, and individual members of recipient communities. It does so by empirically studying two rural development projects implemented by Japanese agencies in Malawi.

The thesis demonstrates how a development concept which has evolved in specific historical, political and social contexts interacts with the development practice evolved in a different context. The studied cases show that a concept transforms by adapting to the official international and national agenda while it is interpreted by field workers and communicated through to key actors of project implementation. They further suggest externally initiated programme can produce positive effects when it synergises with existing local activities, and development assistance can create conducive environment for the locals to improve the livelihood when it prioritises multi-dimensional self-help effort of local people. The thesis also argues that individual actors' actions and re-actions construct development practice as a comprehensive process.

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## Acronyms

AAR	Association for Aid and Relief
ACLO	Assistant Cooperative Liaison Officer
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
AE	Agricultural Extension Workers
AEO	Agricultural Extension Officer
AJF	Africa Japan Forum
AGS	Action for Greening Sahel
AISUD	Agricultural Innovations for Sustainable Development Uganda
AMDA- MINDS	Association for Medical Doctors of Asia's Multisectoral and Integrated Development Services
CanDo	Community Action Development Organisation
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO	Community-Based Organisations
CDA	Community Development Agent
CDO	Community Development Officer
CNFA	Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs
COMSIP	Community Savings and Investment Promotion
DAG	Development Assistance Group
ECOSAN	Ecological Sanitary Toilets
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GNI	Gross National Income
GVH	Group Village Head
HSA	Health Surveillance Agent
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IDA	International Development Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JANIC	Japan NGO Centre for International Cooperation
JIBC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JOCA	Japan Overseas Cooperative Association
JOCV	Junior Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
JT	Japan Tobacco
LIP	Livelihood Improvement Extension Workers

MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MLIT	Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profitable Organisations
NSO	National Statistical Office
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
OECF	Overseas Economic Cooperation Front
OISCA	Organisation for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement
OTCA	Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency
OTOP	One Tambon One Product
OVOP	One Village One Product
PLAS	Positive Living Through AIDS Orphan Support
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
ROSCA	Rotating savings and credit associations
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SVA	Shanti Volunteer Association
TA	Technical Assistance
TICAD	Tokyo International Conference for African Development
TICO	Tokushima International Cooperation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCRD	United Nations Centre for Regional Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
US	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WAHE	Water Agriculture Health Education

# Glossary

## Chichewa Terms

Apongo	A special friendship between two people, typically women
Banki m'nkhonde	Village savings and credit scheme
Chilemba	Rotating savings and credit associations
Chiperegani	Rotating savings and credit associations
Chitenji	Traditional textile which women wrap around their waist
Dimba	A farming plot close to water sources
Ganyu	Casual labour
Kalimalima	Group farming to raise money
Kaponya	Rotating savings and credit associations
Linda-tsoka	Wait for it to pass
Mandasi	Doughnut
Matola	Shared taxi
Munda	Farming plot normally far from water resource

## Japanese Terms

Enjo	Assistance/Aid
Hatten	Advancement
Jijo	Self-help
Jiritsu	Self-reliance
Kaihatsu	Development
Kaizen	Accumulation of innovations based on self-help efforts
Kasseika	Revitalisation
Keizai-kyoryoku	Economic cooperation
Michi-no-Eki	Roadside station
Shien	Support
Wakon-Yosai	Western knowledge with Japanese spirit

## Other Languages

Harambee	A term used in Kenya for 'pull together' or community self-help
Sarvodaya Shramadana	Term used in South Asia for Self-help development movement
Tambon	Thai tem for sub-district
Ubuntu	Humanity in Bantu languages
Ujamaa	Swahili term adopted as a socio-economic development policy in Tanzania

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines the primary principles of Japan's development assistance – *jijo*, meaning self-help, and *jiritsu-teki-hatten*, meaning self-reliant development in English. The Japanese government has emphasised the principle of supporting the self-help efforts of recipients since articulating it in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Charter first adopted in 1992 as a policy guideline, while some Japanese non-governmental organisations (NGOs) promoted the idea of supporting self-help and self-reliance of local people in development assistance as early as the 1980s (MOFA 1992; Tanaka 1998). Japan's development assistance is most commonly known for its involvement in economic cooperation and large infrastructure programmes (see, for instance, Arase 2005; Scheyvens 2005; Shimomura 2011; Ohno 2012) and much less is understood about its social and human development programmes at the community level, which are prioritising self-help effort and self-reliance of people in the recipient communities. In order to address this knowledge gap, this thesis focuses on the social and human development assistance aspect of Japanese agencies by exploring the meaning of the self-help that is shaped by field practice.

Having identified the area of focus, my PhD research set off with the aim of exploring the practice of self-help development promoted by the Japanese development agencies. In the initial stages of the research, I was particularly interested in the roles of Japanese programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, the region where Japan has historically had limited relationships and experience of development assistance, particularly compared to East and Southeast Asia (Sawamura 2004; Akiyama and Nakao 2005). One of the key inspirations in shaping my perspective towards the research came from the preliminary field visit I made to Zambia and Malawi in 2012. I encountered a diverse set of field workers, and had opportunities to find out about their personal experiences in engaging with development projects on the ground. They voiced insightful logics and passions at one time, and they

were caught by confusion and despair at another. I was intrigued by the complex world of development practice constructed by everyday experiences of individual actors, including the expatriate field workers, their local counterparts, and the people in local communities.

This thesis contributes to establishing a foundation for an actor-oriented analysis of self-help development promoted by Japanese agencies. It does so by focusing on two development projects implemented by Japanese agencies: one by an NGO and another by the government, in one of the poorest Sub-Saharan countries, Malawi. Narrowing down the focus on these two Japanese projects in Malawi allows in-depth and coherent analysis. By producing in-depth research into various individuals' roles in the implementation process of development assistance, this thesis contributes to wider discourses of development assistance beyond the particular self-help ideas of Japanese agencies. In development assistance to promote self-help of local people, the individual actors and the interaction between the actors shape 'development' as a comprehensive process (Long 2001; Mosse and Lewis 2006; Ward 2006; Fechter and Hindman 2011; Peck 2011). Despite this importance, there is a dearth of knowledge about how the individual actors put policies and ideas into practice during the process of implementation. Furthermore, the focus on the self-help process of development makes important contributions to knowledge about how external agencies can be a part of endogenous development through development assistance while producing and re-producing the meaning of self-help. This chapter further explains the context of the research, clarifies the research aims and objectives, and summarises the structure of the thesis.

## **1.1 Research Context**

### **1.1.1 The Idea of Self-help in Japan's Development Assistance**

One of the distinct characteristics of Japan's development assistance is its emphasis on the principle of self-help (Rix 1993; King and McGrath 2004; Sawamura 2004; Nakamura 2007; Versi 2011). In relation to Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA), the Japanese government explains the principle of self-help:



“The concept of actively supporting the self-help efforts of developing countries was first advocated by Japan, prior to other Western countries, based on Japan’s own experience of development and its experience of providing aid to East Asia. [...] In the revised ODA Charter, support for self-help efforts is positioned as “the most important philosophy of Japan’s ODA.” This is because Japan has always thought that only a recipient country advancing its own development based on its self-help efforts would lead to the true economic independence of that country and that the role of ODA was to support that process.” (MOFA 2014)<sup>1</sup>

In the context of Japan’s development assistance, self-help is regarded as the essential ingredient for achieving self-reliant development. It also suggests that the idea of supporting self-help has evolved in the context of Japan’s historical experience. In particular, it is argued that experiences are drawn from the rapid modernisation process that Japan experienced after it opened up its economy in 1868<sup>2</sup> and rapid socio-economic development after World War II (Rix 1993; Nishigaki and Shimomura 1999). In addition to the historical experiences, the idea of respecting self-help and self-reliance is argued to be culturally embedded in Japan’s development practice. Sawamura (2004) highlights the value of making persistent effort in the Japanese culture and explains how it is reflected in the principle of self-help and self-reliance in the context of development assistance:

“It is noteworthy that the Japanese have a high regard for ‘self’ and for the capacity of the individual to work efficiently in a team; this is quite different from Western individualism. Perseverance is a foundation in various activities conducted in Japanese society and is believed to create and develop self-reliant attitudes. Making self-help efforts is therefore seen as the basis of self-reliance.” (31)

Making persistent self-help effort is a prerequisite to achieving self-reliance. Self-help effort is made by individuals but there is an important element of contribution to a larger

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, all quotations from literature originally written in Japanese are translated to English by the author. The literature written in Japanese is indicated in bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> Japan opened up the economy for foreign countries in 1868 as a part of the Meiji Restoration. The Meiji Restoration, where the long-lasting rule based on a feudal system was abolished and the political authority was returned to the Emperor of Japan, is seen as one of the most critical events in Japanese modern history in terms of economic, political, social and cultural changes that followed afterwards and is seen as the modernisation period of Japan.

collective goal. In order to investigate these points further, understanding of how the idea of self-help has evolved in the process of Japan's own development historically and culturally, and how it has informed the developmental thinking of Japan and further translated into the practice of development assistance among Japanese agencies is required.

### **1.1.2 Japan's Assistance for Self-help Development in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The focus on self-help development is particularly important for Japan's development assistance to Sub-Saharan African countries where dependency on external development assistance is paramount while many of them are ranked as least developed countries from the perspective of socio-economic development as well as human development (UNDP 2011). Having recognised the situation, Japan has been shifting its priority to Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years (MOFA 2010). However, despite the growing significance, Japanese agencies seem to have less clear strategies for the region compared to their strategies in Southeast Asia (Hashimoto 2010). The experience in Southeast Asia has been represented by bilateral economic assistance characterised by large infrastructure projects and industrial development in cooperation with private corporations. In contrast, social and human development projects carried out by Japanese development agencies at the grassroots level have earned much less attention (Arase 2005; Scheyvens 2005; Nakamura 2007; Copestake 2010). This thesis responds to this contrast and addresses the focuses on the social and human aspects of development assisted by Japanese agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Self-help is widely recognised as an important element in development assistance by non-Japanese donors and recipients too. This trend has been reflected in criticisms of the provision of assistance particularly in ways that encourage the dependency of the recipients on external assistance (Moyo 2008; Easterly 2009; Lewis and Mosse 2006; Wroe 2012). Japan's focus on the principle of self-help can be important in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa as dependency on external development assistance has been regarded problematic in some Sub-Saharan countries (Versi 2011). One of the notable examples is Malawi. Malawi in southern Africa is one of the poorest countries in the world, whose national budget has been significantly influenced by development assistance from international donors (Wroe

2012; Dionne *et al.* 2013). Malawi has a large rural population who rely on subsistence farming and the development of rural farmers is regarded as the priority in Malawi's development (IMF 2012). This context begs important questions: how is Japanese development assistance carried out in a way that promotes the self-help of rural farmers in Malawi and whether/how is it shaping the path to self-reliant development in the context of rural Malawian societies?

### **1.1.3 Scales and Spaces in Development Assistance**

An important aspect of Japan's development assistance in Malawi is the fact that the two countries have different historical, social and cultural backgrounds. While development ideals and goals have informed policies at the institutional scales, they have been adopted and operationalised across different geographical and social spaces. If policy models or project designs can travel across different scales and spaces, and they are transformed in accordance with the specific local context (Peck and Theodore 2010), it is meaningful to investigate whether/how it applies to the context of Japan's development assistance in rural Malawi, where the policy or the principle of self-help has travelled a considerable distance. Various factors can influence re-shaping of the policy model during the delivery of policy, and the role of the individual actors is preeminent in many ways. In particular, once the policy reaches the stage of field practice, it enters into the everyday lives of individuals whose realities are constructed and re-constructed by individual experiences and interactions (Long 2001; Fechter 2012). In the case of Japan's development projects in rural Malawi, such individual actors include expatriate field officers of Japanese development agencies, the local counterparts and local farmers. As such, the project design formulated by the headquarters of a development agency travels across vast distances being carried by individual actors and results in constituting development practice in different contexts at the scale of farmers.

This further leads to the idea that the definition of development can vary depending on the scale of implementation (Willis 2011). Particularly, when implementing development projects, donor agencies sometimes simply assume that there is a consensus in their

understanding of the meaning of development between the donor and the recipient (Escobar 1995; Ginzburg 2005). The reality is far more chaotic than is often assumed by the project design as there are many actors involved during the delivery process including those who are “invisible” to the many donors (Ramalingam 2013: 5).

Investigating self-help development projects assisted by the Japanese agencies from an actor-oriented perspective also contributes to filling in the knowledge gap that exists in the understanding of Japan’s developmental thinking. Previous research has explored Japan’s specific focus on self-help from two main perspectives. First, from political and historical points of view, the emphasis on the recipients’ self-help effort is analysed in connection with the non-interventionist attitude of Japan’s assistance; for example, the policy of request-based assistance reflects the respect for self-help effort of the recipient country (Ohno 2001), while it has been seen as a disguise for the Japanese government’s interest in providing loans and creating opportunities for economic cooperation in the self-interest of Japan (Hook and Zhang 1998). The other main account attempts to analyse the origin of the concept of self-help development from socio-cultural perspectives, in which the Japanese discourse of endogenous development is distinguished from typical Western perspectives of modernisation and development (Tsurumi 1999; Sato 2003; Nishikawa 2004; Sawamura 2004).

‘Development’ in the Western international development discourse can be translated in several ways to Japanese terms, but when the endogenous development element is emphasised, the term *‘jiritsu-teki-hatten’*, self-reliant development, in Japanese is commonly used and it is associated with the element of *‘jijo’*, self-help. Furthermore, endogenous development discourse has evolved as a contrasting argument to the ideas of development that stem from historical colonial experience, which has dominated the Western discourse of international development (Nishikawa 2004). In other words, development occurs in different ways in accordance with the specific historical, traditional, and social context of the local space, and it is driven by endogenous and autonomous actions of the local community (Tsurumi 1999). In this sense, the concept of development as *‘jiritsu-teki-hatten’* based on *‘jijo’* implies the aspect of individual actors taking actions for development and is associated with the heterogeneity of development practice in the diverse context of local space.

### 1.1.4 Context of Malawi

Malawi is a landlocked country in Southeast Africa (see Map 1.1). It has an estimated population of about 17 million living in an area equivalent to less than half of the size of the United Kingdom (UK) or about one-fourth of the size of Japan. The agricultural sector contributes about 30% to Malawi's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 90 % of export revenue comes from agricultural items (World Bank 2014).

Map 1.1: Malawi



Source: adopted from CIA (2014) and modified by the author

Agriculture is important not only in terms of its contribution to national economy, but equally importantly for most people in Malawi, agriculture is the typical way of life. About

84% of the population lives in rural areas sustaining their livelihood by engaging in small-scale farming (World Bank 2014). Smallholder farming is prevalent in rural Malawi and the majority of rural farmers cultivate less than two hectares of land (FAO 2002; Munthali and Murayama 2013). In addition to the problem of small plot sizes, the farming pattern and production levels are heavily dependent on the climate of the region which is sub-tropical with a strong seasonality in precipitation and temperature (Chirwa *et al.* 2011). Except for some isolated cases, 95% of the total annual precipitation is observed from November/December to March/April with high temperatures which go up to 37°C whereas for the rest of the year it hardly rains and the temperature goes down as low as 4°C (Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Environment 2006). Due to the lack of infrastructure, such as tread pumps and irrigation systems, to overcome adverse climate pattern particularly during the rainy season, and also because of low levels of adaptation of agricultural technology to improve the situation, the livelihood of rural farmers is significantly influenced by the climate patterns (World Bank 2014)<sup>3</sup>. Low food security and the lack of cash income are chronic problems for the smallholder farmers in rural Malawi (Dorward and Kydd 2004; Peters 2006; Munthali and Murayama 2013). In such a situation, more than 60% of the population was found to be living on less than \$1.25 a day in 2010. In fact there has been no notable improvement in Gross National Income per capita since 2011, and the data in 2013 has retreated to the level before 2008 arguably due to the fast-growing population (at 3 % annually) and devaluation of the Malawian kwacha against US dollar (The Nation 2013; World Bank 2014a).

### ***Community Development and Self-help***

The issues regarding development of Malawi have been recognised as having a deep root in rural farming population and at the same time the improvement of rural farmers' livelihood is considered to have significant potential to contribute to the development of the country (IMF 2012). In order to encourage rural farmers, the Malawian government has introduced various policies in the past. The first government of Malawi after independence in 1964 adopted the strategy of community development as a policy to develop rural areas

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<sup>3</sup> 0.5 % of total agricultural land was irrigated as of 2008. The necessity of irrigation varies depending on local climate but for a condition like in Malawi where water resource is not available, irrigation systems can make significant difference in agricultural productivity (IFAD 2011).

(Kishindo 2003). The definition of community development was adopted from the United Nations:

“a process by which the efforts of the people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress” (United Nations 1963: 4)

The UN definition emphasises the element of autonomous involvement of people in communities and the cooperation between the state and local communities. In case of Malawi, involvement of local people was intended to ease the financial burden of the government (Kishindo 2003). The role of the government was deemed to be to provide assistance to projects that have been initiated by local communities by providing materials that are difficult for the local people to obtain; for instance, in the case of a health centre establishment project in Machinga district in 1981, local people moulded bricks and provided labourers whereas they requested the government to provide cement and iron sheet roofing (to which the government responded positively) (*ibid.*). This collaborative relationship between state and local community has been observed in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa under British colonial rule (Page 2014) and as local level social development as early as in the nineteenth century Tanzania (Jennings 2007). It is beyond the scope of this research to explore specifically where this particular style of collaboration originates from; still, the empirical evidence suggests that such collaboration is likely to have stemmed from or was carried over from the experience under the British rule.

### ***Chronic Issue of Food Security***

Community development in rural Malawi after independence had an aspect of bottom-up action. On the other hand, there was a regime of material assistance to rural farmers by the government as a provision of a safety net for smallholder farmers (Harrigan 2003). Particularly relevant to the theme of this thesis is that the Malawian government has provided subsidised agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and seeds for smallholder farmers. In 1971 the government established a parastatal organisation, Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC), which was created as the marketing and export agency for Malawi’s agricultural sector. It managed universal provision of fertiliser to all

farmers at a subsidised price, and also acted as the buyer of last resort for farmers to sell their harvest. This was carried out after the independence from the Britain under the rule of the first president of Malawi, Hastings Kamuzu Banda. It contributed to stabilising the farmers' household economy, and this was evidenced in the field research by rural farmers referring to the universal provision of farm input as "the good old times of Kamuzu". For the provision of subsidised fertiliser, local communities formed farmers' clubs to manage credit facilities along with the subsidies. Affordable fertiliser and access to credit resulted in better productivity among the farmers (Chinsinga and O'Brien 2008). However, the policy on the other hand accelerated the monopoly of ADMARC in keeping the buying price of agricultural products low and investing in commercial estate farming at the expense of smallholder farmers (Peters 2006; Chinsinga and O'Brien 2008).

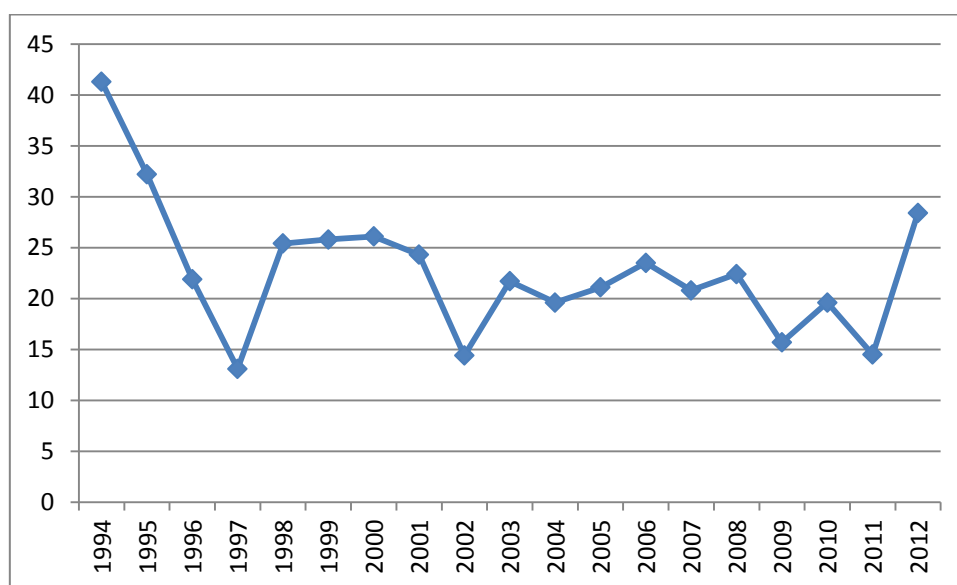
In the 1980s, the Malawian government entered into the negotiation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) due to a worsening national economic situation caused by drought affecting agricultural yield, underperformance in international trade, and the impact of civil war in the neighbouring country of Mozambique (Harrigan 2003). Under the SAPs, the government was requested to remove the subsidies on agricultural inputs and price control of products particularly maize a staple crop; and the farming of export crops such as tobacco was significantly encouraged. The policy led to a fall in maize production coupled with unfavourable rainfall and control of maize reserve, Malawi eventually faced food crisis in 1987 (*ibid.*). Although the government reinstalled farm subsidies at times after the experience of food shortage, the international donors, particularly the World Bank continued to support Malawi's liberalisation policies through to the 1990s and the fertiliser subsidy was finally abolished in 1996. The most serious case of food shortage was experienced from the end of 2001 to early 2002 in which 3.2 million people were reportedly affected due to a number of factors including poor harvest and lack of government food reserves (Chinsinga and O'Brien 2008). Whereas SAPs are considered to have contributed to raising incomes of smallholder farmers by allowing them to engage in tobacco farming individually, it has contributed to making food security a chronic development problem of Malawi (Peters 2006).



### **Development Assistance in Malawi**

Reformation of the agrarian economy has been a theme in Malawi's development, but development assistance that Malawi has received goes far beyond the SAPs. The issue of food security is often a prioritised theme in development assistance to Malawi (Dorward and Kydd 2004). Malawi has been a recipient of development assistance for many years (see Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1: % of Net ODA received by Malawi to GNI since 1994**



Source: adopted from World Bank (2014a)

Japan is one of the major development assistance donors to Malawi together with the UK and the US (OECD 2011). The first development assistance from Japan to Malawi was provided in the form of sending volunteers for technical cooperation programmes within the framework of bilateral development assistance in 1971. Initially, the assistance was limited to technical cooperation, and the government also began grant and loan programmes in 1980. As of 2013, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), a volunteer programme, has sent the largest number of volunteers to Malawi compared to other destinations. Loans were provided to the Malawian government from 1980 to 2004. The grant programmes have ranged from the establishment of large bridges to provision of

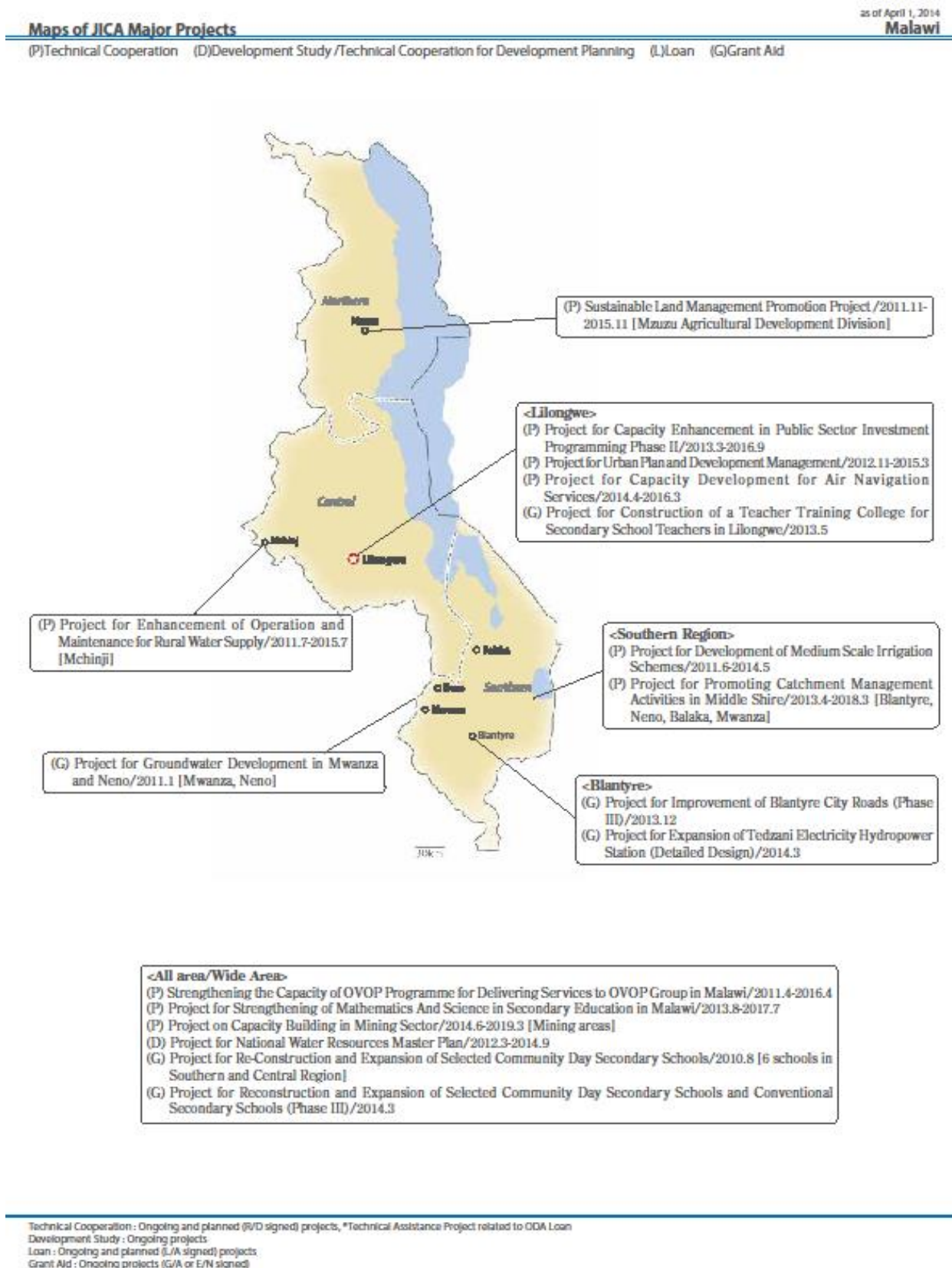
musical instruments to the Malawian Police. As of April 2014, there were 17 major on-going projects nation-wide (see Figure 1.2).

One of the flagship projects under the category of technical assistance is called One Village One Project (OVOP), which aims to achieve economic self-reliance of farmers by assisting them to produce value-added farm products. It was originally started in 2003 in cooperation with the government of Malawi and now it has been included in Malawi's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) due to its potential to develop the country's agro-processing industry (IMF 2012; The Embassy of Japan in Malawi 2014). This thesis studies OVOP Malawi as a case of Japan's development assistance for rural farmers. It is more recently that Japanese NGOs have started their operations in Malawi as compared to the government initiatives. There are three Japanese NGOs and one university which have operated in Malawi, where the first one opened its Malawi office in 2005. This first NGO is called JOCA (Japan Overseas Cooperative Association) which is an association of former JOCV. Drawing upon its many years of experience in working directly with people in local communities in recipient countries of development assistance, JOCA opened its Malawi office in 2005 to implement a project focusing on autonomous development of rural farmers and finished the project in 2013. Another NGO, JNGO<sup>4</sup>, has implemented development projects since 2007 in Malawi, with main focus on rural community development, and this thesis mainly studies JNGO as another case study.

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<sup>4</sup> This thesis adopted a pseudonym for the NGO as 'JNGO' for their anonymity.

Figure 1.2: Japan's development assistance in Malawi



Source: JICA (2014)

## **1.2 Research Aim and Objectives**

As has been stated at the beginning of the chapter, the broad aim of this thesis is to understand how the idea of promoting self-help is practised in Japanese development assistance from the perspective of individual actors involved in field implementation. In order to achieve this aim, the research process was guided by following objectives:

1. to explore how the concept of self-help is transformed into practice by different actors involved in the process of project implementation;
2. to examine the relationship between external initiatives and endogenous actions in the self-help development practice assisted by Japanese agencies; and
3. to explore how self-help development assistance is constructed by individual actors' everyday practice.

The research employs qualitative data gathering including narratives of individual actors constructing development practice and participant observation of their activities. In this way, this thesis attempts to shed light on the heterogeneous nature of realities constructed by individual experiences.

## **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis mainly consists of four parts. First, Chapter 2 establishes a conceptual framework for the analysis of self-help development practice by reviewing relevant literature. The chapter first investigates the concepts of self-help that have evolved to have different meanings depending on the unique socio-cultural context and the scale of application. It does so by outlining the Japanese concept of self-help, the major concepts in the Western development discourses and the historical self-help practice in Sub-Saharan Africa. Borrowing from the literature on policy mobility, the chapter then establishes the perspective to investigate implementation chains of development assistance. Finally the chapter discusses actor-oriented approaches as the appropriate perspective to be applied to analyse Japan's development assistance and self-help development practice.

Chapter 3 explains and justifies the methodology used to achieve the aims of this thesis. The research adopted a qualitative approach which involved in-depth interviews and participant and non-participant observations. Ethnographic investigation was attempted as much as possible in the limited timeframe in order to understand everyday practices of people involved in development practice, mainly the members of local communities and expatriate development workers. The chapter also discusses the challenges encountered during the research and ethical considerations.

The thesis then sets out the background and the context of present-day development assistance of Japan in Chapter 4. As has been highlighted in the previous chapters, historical events and cultural aspects contributed towards shaping the principle of Japan's emphasis on self-help. It analyses Japan's experience as a recipient of development assistance after World War II and the journey of becoming one of the largest donors in the world in the 1990s. The common trends and issues of the development assistance sector in Japan are then examined in order to have a comprehensive understanding of Japan's modality, and particular interest is paid to grassroots programmes as they are the subject of this thesis.

The third part of the thesis concerns analysis based on empirical research. The analysis is conducted in three separate stages. First, Chapter 5 provides an analysis on how Japanese development agencies' primary approach of promoting self-help and achieving self-reliance is designed and transformed across different institutional scales and geographical spaces until it reaches the field project site. Chapter 6 further investigates how the ideas are put into practice on the ground in the form of assisting self-help development of local communities and analyses how external assistance interacts with existing self-help activities. Chapter 7 specifically sheds light on individual actors' experiences and explores how diverse sets of actors produce and reproduce the development practice as a comprehensive process.

The last part of the thesis is the conclusion in Chapter 8. This chapter summarises the analysis and further explores implications in the wider context of development assistance.

## **Chapter 2: Conceptualising Self-help in Development Practice**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the conceptual framework that underpins the investigation of self-help development emphasised by Japan's present-day development assistance. The concept of self-help has been widely applied in various areas in the world in the collective actions and individual lives of people and in increasingly diverse ways. Sometimes self-help refers to self-learning and self-improvement of knowledge and skills, and at other times it refers to self-help groups that are prevalent in coping with a common problem of the group members, such as psychological and health-related issues (McGee 2005). Also, self-help activities can be pursued by attending seminars, reading books, or even joining Internet-based dialogues (Finn 1999). Self-help activities can be also engaged at the individual as well as collective levels where they often relate to improvement of socio-economic status and living conditions (Choguill 1996). Self-help is differently conceptualised and practised according to the socio-cultural background and the scale of application.

The principle of self-help development has played a guiding role in shaping the practice of Japan's development assistance at both national and grassroots level since it was adopted in ODA Charter in 1992 (MOFA 1992; Tanaka 1998; Sawamura 2004). The idea of self-help development however did not just emerge for the ODA Charter. It had been nurtured in Japan's development discourse while it was influenced by global trends (Tsurumi 1976; Nishikawa 1989; Wakahara 2007). It is then equally important to understand similar concepts that are discussed and practised outside the contexts of Japanese institutions in order to develop a broader framework to capture self-help ideas. Furthermore, during the implementation process of development assistance, the idea needs to be transferred into practice. In this process, the ideas are transferred across different institutional scales and geographical spaces, which can be investigated from the perspective of policy mobility,

which encompasses the idea that policies are moved between and within institutions by individual actors through a number of stages (Ward 2006; Lerner and Laurie 2010; Peck 2011; Temenos and McCann 2013). To recognise the role of individuals, this thesis adopts actor-oriented perspectives in order to facilitate the analysis into the roles of various individual actors who produce and reproduce development as practice (Long 1990; Long 2001; Mosse and Lewis 2006; Fechter and Hindman 2011).

In developing a conceptual framework based on the process explained above, this chapter has three main sections. First, it discusses the evolution of development ideas in Japan in relation to the concept of self-help and compares it to the major Western development ideas and practice in Sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter then considers approaches to analysing how an original policy and concept is transferred across different institutional scales and geographical spaces. Finally, it discusses how actor-oriented perspectives can be effective in analysing individual actors in development assistance promoting self-help processes.

## **2.2 Concept of Self-help Development**

*'Jijo'* in Japanese or 'self-help' in English is a commonly-used term within the Japanese discourse of development and development assistance to emphasise the importance of self-help efforts by recipients of the assistance. Along with the concept of self-help, the idea of *'jiritsu'* in Japanese, or 'self-reliance' in English, is also frequently identified as a key development goal. These principles are officially expressed in Japan's ODA guidelines (MOFA 1992, 2003) and other international initiatives such as the principle of the Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD), a series of international dialogues which started in 1993, whereby the development partnership between Japan and African countries is discussed and promoted (Tembo 2008; MOFA 2013). Japanese NGOs also align their principles with the concept of self-help and self-reliant development (for instance, see the websites of CanDo and JOCA). The following sections investigate how the ideas of self-help and self-reliance came to be embedded in the principle of Japan's development assistance by following the events after the end of World War II, when the

ideas of international development assistance began to be actively conceptualised and practised. Furthermore, it analyses the Japanese meaning of self-help development by comparing it to the similar concepts of participatory development and empowerment of local people in Western development discourse.

### **2.2.1 Self-help Development Discourse in Japan**

As it was highlighted in Chapter 1, MOFA (2014) explains Japan's engagement in self-help development:

“The concept of actively supporting the self-help efforts of developing countries was first advocated by Japan, *prior to other Western countries*, based on Japan's own experience of development and its experience of providing aid to East Asia.”  
(emphasis added by the author)

This implies that Japan's development philosophy had its own roots and evolution. The definition of development is contested and its meaning has evolved along with historical events and global trends particularly over the last sixty years. In Japan, the discourse of development that is directly relevant to present-day development assistance emerged after World War II when the country needed to recover from its war-torn status<sup>5</sup>.

The development of post-war Japan can be considered at two main scales: national-scale economic development and local-scale community development. National economic development was led by changes in economic structure: from an agriculture-based economy to industrial economy and from labour-intensive industry to capital-intensive industry (Shimomura 2012). It was driven by macro-economic policies to achieve national economic growth, while the effect of the growth was expected to trickle down to the marginal groups of society. Financial loans were strategically taken through official routes from the United States government and multilateral organisations such as World Bank, much of which was spent on large infrastructure programmes in order to achieve economic growth (USAID

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<sup>5</sup> Although the end of World War II is arguably the most significant event in the history of development of present-day Japan, some scholars highlight the Meiji Restoration period which started in 1868 as equally significant, particularly in terms of cultural and social modernisation of Japan (Rix 1993; Sato, K. 2012). See relevant discussion in Section 4.2 and 4.4.



2014; World Bank 2014; also see detailed discussions in Chapter 4). In the situation where the lack of raw materials as well as capital was a pressing problem in the pursuit of the reconstruction of the country and national economic development, having access to large financial loans was crucial (Sato, J. 2012). It is important to note that the last repayment of post-war loans was completed in 1990 by achieving a rapid economic growth and the status of a world economic giant (MOFA 2013). Although receiving loans can be considered as external help and not self-help, it is recognised that fulfilling the repayment terms of all loans underpinned the self-help effort of Japan towards development at the national level (Miura and Watanabe 2003).

Simultaneously, local community-based development occurred. While the experience of economic development has greatly informed the present-day economic development policies in Japan and elsewhere (World Bank 1993), the ideas based on economic and non-economic aspects of local community development lend themselves to the emergence of endogenous development concepts in Japan.

### ***Self-help Development Idea in Endogenous Development***

The idea of self-help development is embedded in the discourse of endogenous development in Japan. Endogenous development was theorised in the 1970s by Tsurumi (1976), who is seen as the pioneer in studies of Japanese development discourse (Nishikawa 1989; Wakahara 2007). Having spent several years of her early career as an academic researcher in the fields of philosophy and sociology in the US, Tsurumi's work is inclined towards identifying Japanese philosophy by comparing it with the western perspectives, particularly from the viewpoint of culture and tradition<sup>6</sup>. Tsurumi often mentions the influence of Buddhism on endogenous development in Japan and other Asian countries (Tsurumi 1989; Tsurumi 2001; Kawakatsu and Tsurumi 2008)<sup>7</sup>. The essence of Buddhism is

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<sup>6</sup> Her work is greatly influenced by the works of Kumagusu Minakata and Kunio Yanagida, both of whom were the progenitors of the study of Japanese ecology and folklore in the first half of the twentieth century. While both are known for their analysis of Asia and Japanese culture and tradition, Yanagida analysed Japan from 'inside' - exploring the folklore of people in rural areas of Japan to identify Japanese culture - whereas Minakata analysed Japan from 'outside' - analysing Japanese culture from a western point of view, which lends a broader perspective to Tsurumi's analysis of Japanese philosophy (Tsurumi 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Religious belief in Japanese tradition is complicated. While the majority of the population identify themselves as atheist, the majority of funerals in Japan are carried out in Buddhist tradition, and many people are involved in local festivals which are normally carried out in the Shinto tradition. Despite the confusion, it is largely considered that Buddhist philosophies have a strong influence on social norms and people's perspectives towards life (Sato, K. 2012).

elaborated in the aspect of internal self-meditation to reduce material greed and attain a peaceful mind (Tsurumi 1989). Development originates from individuals who have attained such 'self-realisation' and it is transferred to larger scales, as community development, national development and global development. What 'self-realisation' effectively means in this context is to be confidently aware of one's own capability and non-capability, and to recognise one's self-identity and identity in relation to others. On this basis, self-aware individuals are able to leave a larger impact at the community level, and the impact can extend to a global scale through individuals replicating similar practices. The endogenous development that emanates from one's self can scale-up, and in this sense it can be considered as a bottom-up process. This also indicates that there is an interesting assimilation of the individual pursuit of self-improvement with collectivism in society. Such ideas of endogenous development are put into practice in some movements in Asia. For instance, the *Sarvodaya Shramadana* Movement popularised in Sri Lanka implements rural development programmes based on self-help principles (Nishikawa 1989).

Tsurumi makes a contrast between developing states in Asia and industrialised states in the West in terms of different definitions of and approaches towards development (Tsurumi 1976, 1989; Nishikawa 1989). The idea of endogenous development in her theorisation has a significant aspect of individual self-effort and self-reliance, and also demonstrates the important aspect of the link between individuals and society through scaling up the self-help practice to larger levels even to the global level. It is also evident that her definitions of self-help development and self-reliance are strongly associated with the aspects of mentality and attitude of individuals, as she categorically maintains:

“[My focus on the endogenous aspect of development derives from] the idea to draw a contrast with the development ideas based on the western social and traditional norms. Non-western societies have their own norms and ways of endogenous development, especially based on self-realisation through mental realisation and intellectual creativity.” (Tsurumi 1989: 47)

The aspect of internal improvement of individual actors is further elaborated by Kawakatsu (2008) who argues that endogenous development is an internal process of a person trying to recognise one's identity to achieve self-realisation. While Tsurumi stresses the aspect of

individual actors, she also emphasises the importance of locality and endogenous factors in the process of endogenous development:

“Endogenous development is a process of social change. For the social change to happen, people need to establish harmonious and synergetic relationships with the local environment in accordance with the local culture and tradition. While maintaining such endogenous factors, it is also important to learn from exogenous knowledge, skills and systems to eventually create the process of social change by themselves.” (*ibid.*: 49)

From the 1960s and 1980s, different perspectives towards development emerged globally in response to growing concerns over the negative impact of economic growth based on rapid industrialisation and ecological / environmental degradation (Carson 1962; Hardin 1968; UNEP 1972). Japan also experienced grievous environmental pollution problems which affected a number of people during the process of rapid industrialisation prior to this period (Yokota 1990). Industrial pollution raised much public anger which led to an increase in the number of lawsuits by local residents against public and private organisations in Japan during this period (Ministry of Environment 1969). With this background, endogenous development theory encompassed consideration of the relationship between human livelihoods and environmental issues in the local spaces.

### ***Self-help Development from the Perspective of Localism and Folklorists***

As Tsurumi (1976, 1989) also indicates, the significance of localism is apparent in the discourse of endogenous development in Japan. National-scale economic development was expected to have a trickle-down effect on the local communities at smaller scales, but the self-help effort from the ‘bottom’ played a significant role in local areas in Japan. One of the main perspectives in endogenous development discourse in Japan emerged from the studies of localism and rural areas. From the perspective of localism, the marginal areas follow their own development paths based on their unique cultural and environmental background, driven by the self-help effort of local people to achieve self-reliance in economy, governance and culture, which are specific to the local area (Tamanoi 1979).

According to Tamanoi (1979), who is considered as the pioneer of localism studies in Japan (Ikuta 2006), localities need to be identified based on their unique way of life, particularly

farming, that evolves out of the local environment. Having conducted extensive ethnographic research in rural villages in Japan, Tamanoi states that “culture does not simply refer to intellectual properties like arts and music, but it also entails agriculture as a farming activity as well as crops” (Tamanoi 1979: 90). This view represents the significance of over-shadowed local knowledge and furthermore, the necessity of including it into comprehensible formal knowledge. In Japan, folklorists have contributed to addressing the importance of local knowledge that is un-documented or under-recognised and they relate to improvement of living space and environment of the locals, and endogenous development. Miyamoto (1986) for instance claims that the diversity of rural villages needs to be recognised and studied so that knowledge is shared with other areas where it is applicable and desirable. Tsurumi also builds up her theory of endogenous development based on the folklorists such as Kunio Yanagida, who collected a number of narrated stories by visiting rural villages in Japan. The perspectives of folklorists contributed to forming the concept of endogenous development in terms of appraising, transferring and sharing useful knowledge. Morimoto (1991) argues that the localism in Japan starts from recognising local livelihoods by identifying unique characteristics and nurturing local culture. He further maintains that local communities are inherently diverse and this diversity weaves a rich web of a region and as an extension, they form a country. The diversity forming a larger group can even scale up to the level of the world. The localism that has grown in Japan perceives diversity as an advantage and as a resource conducive to grassroots development. In this way, development is naturally and organically incorporated within localism.

This view is brought into the practical context by K. Sato (2012) who argues that local knowledge is often too individualised to be comprehensible to others and hence, external intervention can potentially reorganise it into formal knowledge. He uses the example of OPOP Japan to support his view in that it has adopted an approach to come up with a local unique product based on the collaboration between those who are the specialists of the locality in question and those who have wider-knowledge beyond the locality. The emphasis on the local characteristics and self-reliance shares the same perspective with Kawada and Tsurumi (1989). From the perspective of sociology and comparative cultural studies, it also addresses the issue of the standardised value of modernity which is commonly associated with the idea of industrialisation and westernisation. The scale of development that

modernisation theorists are grounded on is the scale of a country, and hence the definition of modernity needs to be carefully considered in terms of spatial and temporal context (Willis 2011). The Dag Hammarskjold Report of 1975 was a counterbalance to this view, the principle of which is echoed by Tsurumi (1989). The process of self-identification requires the phases of interaction with external factors including interaction with other people, interaction with the environment, different cultures, new information and ideologies (Kawakatsu 2008).

In the 1980s in Japan, the self-help effort of local communities and the bottom-up movement for regional development were also encouraged by the central government which was under the pressure of national budgetary stringency after the 1970s and hence had to cut down on agricultural subsidies (Moritomo 1991). The 1970s had also seen the slowdown of the rapid economic growth of the 1950s and the 1960s while negative effects of the growth became very obvious in the forms of environmental pollution and ecological degradation. In this context, local communities gained momentum to improve their problems on their own. In this course, the rise of localism in Japan was also backed by the political imperative at the national level (Hobo 1990).

Regional economic development is another prominent area where endogenous development has been discussed from the perspective of localism. Miyamoto *et al.* (1990) applies the concept of endogenous development into his argument of regional economic theory. In his argument, endogenous development is framed as an alternative regional development approach to an externally-initiated economic growth approach which is based on the ideal of a free-market economy and led by large corporations. Eminent examples are OVOP programmes which attempt to achieve the central goal of reviving regional economies by reviving the local community from social and cultural aspects in addition to economic development (Suzuki 1990). The goal of endogenous development from the viewpoint of the regional economic theory is to ensure the happiness of local people and build a wealthy (not just 'rich') livelihood space while conserving the environment and preserving cultural aspects of their societal belief system. Popular approaches to achieving such goals are primarily based on the idea of utilising locally-available resources, such as human resources including traditional skills and knowledge to promote small-scale yet comparatively advantageous manufacturing and production, and natural resources to

promote the locality in relation to tourism<sup>8</sup>. The multiple dimensions of the strategy to revitalise marginalised localities complement the limited extensiveness and the lack of applicability of centrally-planned economic policy.

### **2.2.2 Japanese Ideas in International Development**

Japan has been one of the major donors of international development assistance in terms of the volume of disbursement (see detailed analysis in Chapter 4) and a member of major international development assistance communities such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC). The traditional aid community is dominated by the donors of the Western countries and Japan, and being a non-Western yet developed country puts Japan in an isolated position (Mawdsley 2012a). Certainly, Japan has been engaged with international development programmes within the framework of global strategy; on the other hand, it has been often pointed out that Japan differentiates itself from the other Western traditional donors (Sawamura 2004; Jerve 2007). Although the emphasis on the principle of self-help and self-reliant development is characteristic of Japanese development discourse in the present-day guidelines as well as in the historical evolution of developmental ideas, it is not only in the Japanese context that the idea of self-help appears. For instance, self-help schemes in building housing for the urban poor were installed by the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s (Turner and Fichter 1972). Is Japan's development assistance with its emphasis on self-help really distinct and unique? Although the concept of self-help appears to be associated with bottom-up processes, is external assistance for self-help entirely benevolent and empowering? Starting with these questions, Japan's position within the international development community is ambiguous and there is a need to clarify where it stands within the mainstream Western development discussions (Takahashi 2010).

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<sup>8</sup> Tourism is one of the important aspects of promotion of localism. In addition to serving the purposes of economic achievement, tourism involves promotion of local culture and expanding societal networks. This is evidenced by programmes like the aforementioned OVOP and another scheme called *Michi-no-Eki*, whereby roadside stations are created on highways for tourists as a rest space / information centre / local cultural centre (MLIT n.d.)

### ***Political Incentives***

Self-help development inevitably begins with the notion of 'self' and there is a fundamental element of 'self' as an individual who makes his/her own decisions and acts upon them<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, when the idea of self-help is externally assisted in the context of international development assistance, such individuality comes into contact with various actors including other individuals as well as institutions at larger scales. In order to locate the idea of self-help development in the context of international development assistance, it is necessary to investigate the environment surrounding such individuals, and how development assistance is shaped and carried out at different levels.

As a fundamental premise, international development assistance exists between countries, between donor and recipient as partners. At the global level, the relationship between the donor and recipient of development assistance is a much debated topic. Assistance as an action can be certainly of altruistic nature; however, international development assistance is associated with multiple motives and its context is far more political and complex than simply being ethical and altruistic (Hattori 2001; Lancaster 2007). Scholars of different theoretical orientations emphasise various aspects of development assistance. For instance, from the perspective of international relations, it is an instrument for international political predominance as the scholars of realist tendency state (Liska 1960, Hook 1995), or for constructivists it is also donors' interest to provide humanitarian assistance for moral and ethical reasoning in the interests of projecting particular identities and narratives (Lumsdaine 1993). While there are various interpretations, the strategy of international development is commonly determined by external as well as internal political factors (Lancaster 2010). With such influences, donors have elaborated their own modalities of development aid in the specific historical contexts that are unique to each country (King and McGrath 2004; Lancaster 2007). In analysing the historical origins of development assistance, for Western donors, colonial experiences in the past have informed development assistance to a great extent (Willis 2012). It is widely recognised that colonial policies were meant to serve the interest of the colonialist, through revenues from the colonies. Development

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<sup>9</sup> The emphasis on self as individuals and their capabilities to improve their own lives has a specific resonance of neoliberal ideas. However, the self-help development ideas evolved from different aspects within the Japanese context which have been discussed in this thesis and allude to more complicated meanings beyond the simplistic comprehension of neoliberalism.

assistance has replaced the colonial relationship to maintain engagement with former colonies after independence. Provision of aid became an important instrument for the Western donors to maintain strong ties with the former-colonies (Seddon 2005; Lancaster 2007). Unlike the Western donors, Japan did not have large colonies; still, the similar background is shared through Japan's imperialism and expansionist policies before the end of World War II (Seddon 2005). After the end of the war, Japan's imperial relationship was gradually replaced with the policies of international economic cooperation in Asia, which is seen as the origin of Japan's development assistance (Sato, J. 2013). Similarly, many have convincingly argued that the politics of the Cold War have been the most significant factor shaping present-day development assistance (Arase 1994; Hook and Zhang 1998; Lancaster 2007). In this way, international development assistance can be seen as an instrument of realist and/or liberal internationalist politics, and a machinery to maintain and crystalise the power relations between donors and recipients. The aid policy is shaped in accordance with domestic and international political climate.

### ***Self-help and Participatory Development***

While international development assistance seems to be inevitably political to different degrees, developmental ideas are informed by the past experiences that each donor has. One context which has contributed to forming the ideas of development in Japan and distinguishing it from that of the dominant Western development discourse is that the Japanese idea of development is embedded in the its own experiences of development, whereas in the Western discourse it is deeply associated with the idea of development assistance to the others. From this perspective, the following section compares the Japanese idea of self-help development and mainstream development ideas related to the idea of self-help development in the Western discourse.

One of the most widely spread and debated ideas of international development is participatory development. Since the 1990s, participatory approaches have been widely accepted in development policy and practice globally. There are important commonalities between the idea of participatory development which was born out of Western development discourse and self-help development as it evolved in the Japanese development context. For instance, they both share the common principle of development driven by local people. But the question of what is the relationship between participatory



development and self-help development still remains unanswered. In order to find answers to this question, participatory practice needs to be explored from the perspective of self-help development ideas.

Participatory development was brought to the mainstream of development practice in the 1990s as part of the shifting development paradigm towards human-centric, de-centralised and grassroots-based approaches. The work of Robert Chambers (1997) has contributed to establish the foundation of a participatory development approach, particularly through the introduction of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). The PRA method has been adopted by a number of development organisations as a basic tool of field projects to understand local contexts and appraise local knowledge, and at the same time to involve local people in their development projects. Although participatory approaches were popularised in the 1990s, the element of participation has existed in the practice of community development for a long time; during the colonial era in some Sub-Saharan African countries, participation and self-help effort of local people were fundamental and instrumental to achieve the goals of communities<sup>10</sup>. Attempts to conceptualise participation have been increasingly observed since the 1960s. For instance, Arnstein (1969) proposed the ladder of citizen participation in the context of city planning in US cities, whereby the stages of participation are analysed according to participants' degrees of autonomy. In her model, the parameter of the 'ladder' is the level of control between citizen and authority, which represents rather a simple scenario of participation. At its core, however, participatory approaches endorse the self-reliance of beneficiaries in mobilising local knowledge and resources and solving their problems, more effectively than external agents solely tackling the problems.

Participatory approaches have also been adopted by Japanese development agencies. It is rather difficult to find development projects implemented by Japanese agencies without a participatory approach particularly in the last decade; however, there seems to be a translational confusion of 'participatory development' and 'self-help effort' among the Japanese agencies. Sato (2003) argues that the participatory approaches which are predominant in present-day development practice mainly concern the participation by

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<sup>10</sup> Detailed analysis of community development practice based on self-help can be found in Page (2014) which evidences the realities of community development in colonial Nigeria through the film 'Daybreak in Udi'. The film is fully available to watch on <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/252>.

external development agencies in local development. According to Sato, the participatory approaches advocated by Robert Chambers are essentially guidelines for external interventionists on how to participate in the local development movement, and not a technique to raise the participation of the local people in external development projects.

Sato (2003) provides another perspective in terms of participatory development approaches adopted by Japanese agencies. He claims that the confusion around participatory approaches in Japan lies in the western-born methodology and the Japanese principle. In the international development discourse in Japan, 'development assistance' can be translated as '*kaihatsu-enjo*'. Although this is a commonly-used term, there is another term that is used more frequently by the Japanese development agencies operating at the grassroots level that is '*jiritsu-shien*': '*jiritsu*' means 'self-reliance' and '*shien*' means 'support'. '*Kaihatsu-enjo*' seems to be used by the agencies in the effort to follow the global trends in development<sup>11</sup>, whereas '*jiritsu-shien*' seems to more accurately represent the principles and objectives of the agencies, which is to support local people to achieve self-reliant development based on their self-help, '*jijo*'. Sawamura (2004) compares development assistance of Japan and western approaches to development assistance, arguing that Japan's focus on self-help effort means the capacity for self-motivated efforts, which is more endogenous and employs bottom-up approaches, whereas the western idea of autonomy and ownership is externally given to the recipient countries and is associated with an externally-driven and top-down style. It is highly unlikely that all Japanese development projects are bottom-up, and similarly highly unlikely that all western approaches are top-down. Still, Sawamura's view possibly reflects a particular nature of the relationship between donor and recipient in the western-born participatory approaches and the self-help paradigm of Japanese agencies. Fundamentally, participation occurs only when there is something to participate in. In other word, there has to be a development practice or a project to participate in whereas self-help fundamentally means autonomous action by an actor or a group of actors (Shigetomi 1997).

Although participatory approaches have become one of the most embraced concepts in setting development policy and carrying out development projects, some have argued that

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<sup>11</sup> Sato (2003) also claims that the English terminologies appeal to Japanese intellectuals who adopt the terms without sufficiently examining the meaning of the terms.

the definition of participatory approach itself is elusive (White 1996; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cornwall 2008). Cornwall argues that participation needs to be regarded “as an inherently political process rather than a technique” (Cornwall 2008: 281). More fundamentally, Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue that participation itself does not automatically lead to successful development. A similar argument has been made by Miyamoto (1990) who claims that in the context of endogenous development in Japan, ‘participation’ of local people needs to be considered as different from the ‘action’ of local people. In other words, in order to achieve endogenous development, participation without autonomous engagement by local people would be ineffective and it would only end up as the romanticisation of participation by the local elites.

The elusiveness in practice of a participatory approach is recognised within the western discourse of participatory development (White 1996; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cornwall 2008). Participatory practice in development programmes has demonstrated ambiguity and confusion due to the diverse context of development (Cohen and Uphoff 1980). The ambiguity derives from the conflicting interests of actors who are involved in the participatory programme (White 1996) and from participation being the means and ends at the same time (Parfitt 2004). As Cooke and Kothari (2001) further argue, blindly adopting participatory methods could end up in dis-empowering the participant by requiring higher levels of engagement than they can afford to in terms of their priorities. Self-help development based on the autonomous actions of local people would be less susceptible to this danger of dis-empowerment. In relation to the addressed importance of self-help element in participatory development, Takagi and Aoyagi (2009) argue that endogenous development that has a deep root in the work of Tsurumi (1976) and Nishikawa (1989) share important commonalities with common participatory development frameworks in that both address the importance of developing capacities of problem solving and identifying own goals and achieving them. Takagi and Aoyagi (2009) further argue that the individual capacities can be considered from the aspects of skills/knowledge, mentality, action, and material resources. These elements of capacities reinforce each other while individual actors interact with other actors, engage in group activities, and establish social relationships.

The dilemma involved in self-help development assistance is that it can be exclusive to those who are able to afford to act, or those who are capable of weighing the pros and cons of engaging in self-help development, whereas popular participation could be more inclusive. This reflects the difference in the core ideas of development assistance between Japanese agencies and western agencies: the Japanese assistance of self-help development is meant to help those who help themselves in contrast to the common western philosophy that whoever are fortunate enough to help should help those who are less fortunate (Nishigaki and Shimomura 1999). In other word, self-help development presupposes the existence of the agencies of local people whereas the other presupposes the presence of the enabler of the agency of local people.

The analysis of Swidler and Watkins (2009) sets an interesting case to compare participatory development and self-help development. They analyse cases of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention projects in Malawi. In order to sustain the projects financially, many of them worked with local youngsters who would 'participate', but in reality they work for free for the projects as 'volunteers'. The intentions of the local participants are often for them to be a part of the outside community and develop their career, which does not necessarily correspond with the primary objective of the project. However in the light of self-help development practice, this case reflects the self-help effort of local people who are trying to achieve their own goals by utilising opportunities. Although their intention is not solely dedicated to the project, their engagement in the project contributes to shaping their lives based on their own self-help, and thus it can be seen as a self-help development.

In summary, it can be said that self-help can occur in the course of participatory development. Self-help effort is an essential element of a participatory development approach to be driven by the recipients and owned by the recipients. In this way, as Hickey and Mohan (2004) similarly argue , participatory development with the element of self-help development can play a significant role in transforming the lives of people in terms of harnessing agile mentality and attitude.

### ***Self-help and Empowerment***

Similar to the concept and practice of 'participation', 'empowerment' has become a term often cited and used in the discourse and practice of Japanese development assistance

(Kukita 1998; Sato 2003). Empowerment as a term began to appear in development narratives in Japan in the late 1990s. One of the prominent researchers who has focused on development and empowerment in Japan is Jun Kukita, who argues that empowerment as a term has been used without much clarification as to what it exactly means, and the term has not established its own space in the contexts of application (Kukita 1998). This is partly due to the fact that the definition of empowerment itself is unclear. 'Empowerment' is targeted towards community or individual, or a particular segment of society, such as women or the poor. However, as Cleaver (2001) claims, implementing empowerment programmes with such social categorisation does not take consideration into how individuals exercise their agency. Furthermore, social categories such as gender, religion, ethnic groups, and other association to particular activities potentially influence the way the local people receive external assistance in that they may have different interests and values. In referring to the World Bank's international programmes, Cleaver (2001) similarly warns that despite much attention and resources being directed towards incorporating the excluded groups in the local communities, implementation has been poor.

Kelsall and Mercer (2003) similarly argue that external empowerment programmes focusing on community self-determination can result in the initiative remaining in the hands of community elites while the poorest and the marginalised may have limited advantage from the assistance. Sato (2003) also maintains that there is no consensus in terms of the meaning of empowerment in development discourse in Japan. In Japanese development discourse, empowerment has been used as an English term without being translated into Japanese. The direct translation would be 'to give someone right or authority to do something'. In this context, the empowerment is initiated by someone who has the power to 'give'. Related to this point, Sato further argues that the discourse of empowerment in development needs to begin from the discussion as to whether it is appropriate for someone (donors) to empower some others (recipients) from their point of view. This point of view implies that it is important to assume that there can be different interpretations of what is 'empowered' to local people.

Mercer (1999) and subsequent research presented in Kelsall and Mercer (2003) analyse NGO community empowerment projects and argue that empowering a community can lead to dis-empowering some groups or individuals in the community and similarly, empowering

one community could lead to disempowering another community. This view echoes the evaluation of an OVOP programme in Oita region in Japan by Morimoto (1991). The OVOP Oita programme was designed and implemented in the pursuit of local revitalisation which included aspects of depopulation of rural areas and people's involvement in community activities. The initiative was begun by the community leader to encourage people to engage in local activities, ranging from cultural events to farming exercises, in order to enhance knowledge, social status, economic status, and people's well-being, which can be interpreted as 'empowerment from within'. Although it was not intended and participation was voluntary, income inequality emerged between the OVOP-participating farmers and non-participating farmers within the same community (for more detailed explanation and analysis of OVOP Oita programmes, see Chapter 5).

### ***Hidden Power***

So far this section has investigated the Japanese idea of self-help and other popular ideas of development in the Western discourse in parallel. It has argued that the Japanese idea of self-help is embedded in the discourse of endogenous development which emphasises self-identification and recognition, self-confidence, and self-esteem which leads to empowerment from within. In common development practice, as Rowlands (1997) highlights, development agencies implement their programmes in the idea of 'power to', whereby they provide opportunities to acquire ability to change (Willis 2011). While such idea of 'power to' is maintained, the ideas of participatory development and empowerment in the western discourses are more about how people can take best advantage of and be a part of established framework of development assistance. There is a element of power to It is then important to consider what power dynamics are involved when the self-help idea becomes a part of framework of development assistance and the concept is institutionalised during the process of development assistance.

Many scholars have argued how power is exercised through development programmes as vehicle. Power, in the first place, can take various forms and can appear through different media. The most notable and obvious notion of power is, as highlighted by Dahl (1957), what is observable in the behaviour of decision making in the conflict of interests. Dahl's narrow definition of power is not sufficient to capture the complex process of development aid as what is important to consider here is the idea of hidden power. As Lukes (1974) claims,

power is not always observable and obvious, and it has different dimensions. Lukes emphasises an alternative dimension of power by explaining that “A may exercise power over B by getting him [sic] to do what he [sic] does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants” (Lukes 2005: 27), and furthermore, Lukes warns that “the most effective and insidious use of power is to prevent conflict from arising in the first place” (*ibid.*). The commonly-held notion of power relations in development assistance has been the power imbalance between donor and recipient and the assistance associated with the interest of donors at the international scale (Koppel and Orr 1993; Schraeder *et al.* 1998; Hattori 2003), and the top-down approaches to local implementation of programmes (Cernea 1991; Chambers 1997b). However, in the framework of development assistance, Lukes’ notion of hidden power has increasingly attracted attention. One of the prominent discussions regarding such power hidden in the institution of development programmes is the analysis of post-colonial Indonesia by Li (2007a). Inspired by Michel Foucault’s idea of governmentality, Li (2007a) argues how authorities exert their hidden power while they pursue efforts to achieve the welfare of population through “the will to improve”. Though educating and configuring desire and habits, government conducts the population at large (Li 2007b). In this context, as Mosse (2001) argues, local needs and values can be influenced by externally-designed perceptions of what can be and should be desired to be delivered by the development agencies of all types.

The Japanese idea of self-help development appears to have distinct root in Japan’s developmental thinking whereas the ideas of international development have been adopted in the recent development programmes carried out by the Japanese agencies. Despite the distinctly manifested principle of self-help, much of the critical argument regarding donor-recipient relationship and notion of power is also applicable to the practice of Japanese development assistance. Thus, analysing the practice of Japan’s assistance to Malawi within such a perspective will enable this thesis to have comprehensiveness in probing the realities of Japan’s development assistance.

### 2.2.3 Self-help Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

The concept and practice of self-help can be observed not only in the western development circles or Japanese development agencies, but also in Sub-Saharan African countries. For instance, the traditional norm of '*harambee*' in Kenya and the '*ujamaa*' movement in Tanzania are known as a traditional spirit of self-help by people, as well as the national policy for development by the central government. In Kenya, the *harambee* tradition was institutionalised by Jomo Kenyatta, the first Prime Minister and President of Kenya after independence from British rule in 1963, in order to adopt the traditional collective self-help philosophy for the nation's development. *Harambee* basically means 'pull together' in Swahili and the philosophy had been practised in the form of local communal works before it became the national slogan for development. Mbithi and Rasmusson (1977) refer to the research conducted in rural communities in Kenya in the 1960s that *harambee* was often practised by female groups in rural areas to seek mutual help in exchange for labour and other resources. *Harambee* during the colonial period referred to facilities supported by local communities as opposed to the colonial authority or missionaries (Mwiria 1990). It is summarised that the core concept of *harambee* is "initiated, planned, implemented and maintained by local communities", "heavily biased towards use of local resources" and "for collective good rather than individual gain" (Mbithi and Rasmusson 1977: 14). With such principles, the *harambee* philosophy was adopted in national development policy with the specific focus on participation in education at the community level (Nakamura 2007). The idea of *harambee* secondary schools was institutionalised under the post-independence government in 1963 in the claim of collective purpose of national building, which was basically the self-financing of the secondary school system at the local community level. The focus on greater education was influenced by modernisation theory which was globally popular at that time, whereby the developmental problems of Kenya were regarded as the lack of a highly-skilled population which could contribute to transforming rural economies into productive modern economies (*ibid.*). Although it appeared as a self-reliant national effort after achieving independence, *harambee* has been criticised for developing patronage relationships between national elites and local leaders involving misuse of money and corruption, which led *harambee* to divert from the original concept of self-help by local people (Ngau 1987). Still, Nakamura (2007) observes in her in-depth research of community



participation in education in rural Kenya, that members of the local community autonomously organised an informal system of contributing money or labour to construct school buildings and hire extra teachers. She attributes this action to the traditional concept of *harambee* embedded in the local society and also their trust in the government and a community development project by a Japanese NGO which attempted to encourage their self-help attitude.

Also, recently the word '*ubuntu*' has become more globally recognised as an equivalent term to self-help. The term is adopted as the name of privately-developed computer software that can be provided free of charge or at significantly lessor cost than major competitors so that people with lower incomes can have an access to a computer system, Internet network, and mobile phone technologies. A UK-based Fairtrade company also produced a drink named *ubuntu* to promote the drink using fairly-traded sugar from Malawi and Zambia. '*Ubuntu*' as a term originates from southern African languages, and basically means humanism, kindness or "a person is a person through other persons" (Gade 2011: 303). In the essence of the term, there is collective self-help and mutual help based on collective action and compassion towards each other. Gade (*ibid.*) argues that the adoption of *ubuntu* philosophy in the political dialogue of the newly-independent Zimbabwe reflected the desire of the new nation to adopt its indigenous philosophy of *ubuntu* based on unity and reconciliation, and not foreign political philosophies that people did not associate themselves with. Similarly, Gade (*ibid.*) refers to Shutte (1995) and highlights that South Africa adopted *ubuntu* as a new nation-binding philosophy after the end of the apartheid regime.

Finally, similar values of collectivism and sharing are observed in Malawian societies too (Forster 1994; McCracken 1998); however, limited literature is available regarding Malawi's self-help concept and community development history during the latter half of the twentieth century. This could be due to the autocratic tendency of the government led by Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the first prime minister and president of Malawi after its independence from Britain in 1964 (Kalinga 1998). Reports on development projects and descriptions of domestic politics and economic development policy of Malawi are relatively more available, such as evidence of the role of missionaries in expanding economic activities across Southeast Africa (McCracken 1977), the evolution of nationalism and politics (Forster

1994), and Kamuzu Banda's autocratic regime and its impact on Malawi's historical narratives (Kaliinga 1998). During the regime of Kamuzu Banda, macro-economic policy was formed in tandem with the classical modernisation theory and rural development policy was shaped in coherence with the state-led pro-capitalist development planning (Forster 1994)<sup>12</sup>. In contrast to other Sub-Saharan African countries like Kenya and Tanzania, Malawi after independence aligned itself with the western capitalist doctrine whereby it promoted an increase in agricultural production for export-driven economic growth, with state-led planning involving little encouragement for self-help effort at grassroots level. Bottom-up movements were not generally supported under the autocratic government while it embraced the cultural unity of the nation (*ibid.*). The idea of communal work and utilisation of local resources were prevalent in rural communities in Malawi, but participation was sometimes mandatory by the order of traditional community leaders, which Kamuzu Banda had embraced (Forster 1994; Kishindo 2003). Kishindo (2003) analyses four community development cases between 1965 and 1988 and highlights the government's reluctance to support self-help activity at the grassroots level. He indicates that the non-supportive attitude of the government might have contributed to the decline in self-help spirit in local communities.

While the self-help movement in some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa evolved as a part of a political strategy by the central government, there has been a traditional collectivism that has been long embraced in the region. In this context, it could be said that the concept of self-help is associated with collective effort and unity in these cases. Many of the self-help development movements in Sub-Saharan Africa followed their independence in the 1960s and traditional values of collectivism coupled with humanism were adopted as the principle to hold the nation together politically as well as culturally. It would be also important to note that the principle of collective self-help is interpreted as the principle of mutual help, which involves both active and passive elements: action of *helping* and situation of *being helped*. This indicates that the active as well as passive attitudes co-exist in human

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<sup>12</sup> Hastings Banda spent more than 25 years in the US and the UK where he obtained higher education and worked as a medical practitioner. He was very "absorbed in English middle-class life: indeed, probably no other African had previously succeeded in becoming so integrated in this way" (Forster 1994: 486). Banda maintained his political ideas closely associated with western developmental thinking while his experience in the UK made him culturally more attached to African nationalism at the same time. Banda did not just try to follow the western doctrines but he tried to create his version of Malawian nationalism (*ibid.*)

behaviour of mutual help. When external intervention in the form of development assistance is applied in such a context, the philosophy of mutual help and collective self-help may be put into a complex scenario. Development assistance is regarded as a rather one-way action not involving direct reciprocation. Analysis of self-help development in a Sub-Saharan African country such as Malawi requires an appropriate understanding of the traditional values and systems of mutual help, which justify or potentially encourage the passive attitude of being helped.

### **2.3 Mobilising Concepts in Development Assistance**

The previous section analysed how the idea of self-help development is conceptualised in the context of Japanese development assistance. This section focuses on how the concept is mobilised. In the field of international development assistance, the ideas and policies move from donor institutions in one place to recipients in another place of the world. A development policy or idea can be formulated as a collective policy at the global scale and adopted by different government and development institutions around the world. A notable recent example is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The case of MDGs appears to have spread and been accepted almost everywhere in the world. For another example, the idea of microfinance to assist poorer people was famously institutionalised by Grameen Bank in the 1980s and since then a numerous number of development projects have borrowed the idea in many development projects around the world and became a global industry (Roy 2010; Grameen Bank 2014). While global development agendas such as the MDGs are broad guidelines which can be achieved through various means, an idea such as microfinance is in itself a specific means to achieve development goals. In this way, development ideas are put into practice in various ways and at different scales.

As Temenos and McCann (2013) claim from a geographer's viewpoint, such ideals and policies do not spread naturally. In other words, development ideas and project models do not simply travel from one place to another, or purposively move around the globe. Instead, they are mobilised and carried around by people. The individual actors involved in different stages of project implementation translate the ideas and react to local situations at the specific scale of operation and social context of the place (Ward 2006; Lerner and Laurie

2010; Peck 2011). This particularly applies to ideas and norms carried by development assistance targeting grassroots human development in that the process of implementation significantly involves interaction between people, in addition to inter-state or institutional interactions. Furthermore, development problems are often space and scale specific, and the mobility of development ideas in the context of international development assistance concerns the process of localisation of external ideas.

### **2.3.1 The Concept of Development from a Policy Mobility Perspective**

The diffusion of ideas and policies has been a subject of discussion particularly from the perspectives of political science, which focuses on policy transfers from one jurisdiction to another and the roles of institutional actors at the nation-state level (see for example, Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Stones 2004; Benson and Jordan 2011). In the early studies on policy diffusion, ideas and practices are considered to travel from one source of origin contagiously. However in reality, the ideas travel in much more complicated ways (Stone 2004; Cresswell 2010). In relation to development assistance, Stone (2004) analyses the role of international organisations and non-state actors in transferring policies with transnational networks. In her analysis, 'soft' forms of transfer, namely, transfer of norms and principles are highlighted in contrast to 'hard' forms of transfer, such as policy models and decision-making structures. Stone (*ibid*) argues that the softer aspect complements the hard policy transfer and it is necessary. The perspective of policy mobility places significance on looking at the softer aspects in analysing the process of continuous alteration and reformation by various actors and socially-constructed process of policy mutation (Peck and Theodore 2010; Peck 2011). Furthermore, putting it into the context of Japan's development assistance for self-help development, to understand self-help development from the perspective of policy mobility is valid in that the process of self-help project implementation involves interaction between the actors of donor institution, their local counterparts, and local people in recipient communities.

### 2.3.2 Scales in development assistance

In order to investigate how an idea moves around across different places and scales, it is firstly important to clarify where it moves around. The ideas travel across geographical scales, in a way, horizontally across the globe. At the same time, they are mobilised by various actors of development, from individuals to governments and institutions, in a way, vertically across different scales. The scales in development practice appear in correspondence with the levels at which these actors operate and influence others. Although relational perspectives on the definition of scale have provided various versions of the definition, and furthermore the existence of scale itself has been challenged for its fluidity (Marston and *et al.* 2005), the concept of scale is valid and useful in analysing Japan's development assistance as the analysis can be grounded on relatively clearly defined operational scales. The main scales that exist during the process of mobilisation of development ideas are: global, national, sub-national or regional, community level and individual levels.

Recent studies have analysed policy mobility through a focus on 'urban policy mobility' by looking at city-to-city policy movements, trans-local policies, and urban planning (Ward 2006; McCann 2008; Cook and Ward 2011; Clarke 2011). In the context of development projects, similar horizontal travels happen but beyond cities, including international or community levels. In addition, the movement often involves journeys across vertical scales.

In discussing mobility of ideas, scholars have explored what is mobilised, how and why, and these questions provoke other set of questions: what is *not* mobilised and why. McCann (2008) highlights this aspect as "policy immobility" (16). It is important to pay careful attention to the aspect of immobility in that it potentially addresses issues around power relations and inequality among different actors and social contexts that are inherited in the process. Importantly, McCann also mentions that analysing immobility would reveal the subjectivities of the actors in terms of "class, gender, ethnicity, professional status, etc" (2008: 16). This perspective is significant when it comes to analysing Japan's assistance in rural Malawi, which involves actors of various backgrounds during the process of operationalisation.

This thesis investigates the implementation of development ideas by borrowing perspectives from the policy mobility literature in order to understand development assistance as a process created by different actors involved in the different stages of implementation. It also presents an alternative way to comprehend and analyse development projects as chains of project implementation, by borrowing the perspective of policy mobility that focuses on the process of transformation and the role of social contexts and individual actors in the transformation. Chapter 5 of this thesis specifically bases its analysis on this theoretical foundation to facilitate the analysis of the journey of the self-help idea from Japanese development institutions to rural communities in Malawi.

## **2.4 Agency of Social Actors and Actor-oriented Approach**

Endogenous development theory which has been nurtured in Japan is fundamentally underpinned by the ideas of recognising one's own identity and extending one's agency to improve day-to-day living under the name of self-reliance and human well-being.

Specifically, in the investigation of development project implementation, it is important to note that external interventions enter into the day-to-day lives of individuals, which normally consist of experiences, perspectives and also emotions that they experience and reflect over time (Long 1990). This view assumes that individuals involved in the process have agency and are capable of mobilising resources and managing interpersonal relations. Hence, the 'actors' deserve significant attention in analysing development practice. Although the importance of individual actors has been addressed and actors' agencies have been recognised previously, the potential of actor-oriented perspectives can be explored more from the aspect of the relationship between external assistance and self-help development. It would play a significant role in complementing the predominant bias on political, structural and institutional aspects in development research (Long 1990; Blackmore 2009; Fechter 2012). Furthermore, an actor-oriented perspective provides an alternative perspective to understand the project implementation process in the framework of development assistance. As has been highlighted by Peck (2011) and others, the roles of individual actors in the mobilisation process of certain ideas warrant more attention in

order to understand the process of development practice implementation (see Section 2.2). This thesis hence argues that it is important to analyse the roles of individual actors who are involved in the implementation process of self-help development projects by Japanese agencies, and further investigate how the individual actors shape their lives around the projects.

One of the most recognised previous works on an actor-oriented approach to development practice is the work of Norman Long through conceptualisation and case studies in Latin America from the 1970s to the beginning of the 2000s. His early foundational argument to conceptualising an actor-oriented approach concludes that the actions and behaviour of individual actors can be diverse even when the structure and system in which they act and behave are similar (Long and Roberts 1978). Long further elaborates that actor-oriented analysis helps explain “how the meanings, purposes and powers associated with differential modes of human agency intersect to shape the outcomes of emergent social forms” (Long 2001: 4).

#### **2.4.1 What Constitutes an ‘Actor’?**

The actors involved in development practice are constructed by the particular social and cultural contexts of the society in which the actors are embedded and the relationships in which they are involved. Such social actors make decisions, implement them, innovate means and experiment methods to change the present status whether it is in a conducive or restricting social structure. In this sense social actors possess human agency. Human agency has been commonly characterised by capability and knowledge. For instance, Giddens identifies ‘knowledgeability’ as an essential element of human agency because social actors are “highly ‘learned’ in respect of knowledge which they process, and apply, in the production and reproduction of day-to-day social encounters” (Giddens 1984: 22). In respect of human development, Sen (1999) elaborates that capability is a fundamental element of human agency which brings about changes by pursuing personally-defined values. He promotes the view that beneficiaries of development assistance are the “agents”

and not just “motionless patients”, as they are simply “deprived of capabilities” (Sen 1999: 137)<sup>13</sup>.

A focus on individual actors has gained importance in the context of increasing emphasis on a human development agenda and the influence of post-modern development approaches, which recognise the significance of heterogeneous reality and local diversity. It is not only the less privileged, in other words the individuals as beneficiaries in the discourse of development assistance, who have come to fore but also the importance of individuals as benefactors. Chambers (1994), within the context of rural appraisal and participatory development, points out the potentially significant impact of the development workers’ personal behaviour and attitude in changing the larger institutions. Although he does not directly relate his views to an actor-oriented approach, the view of the ‘primacy of the personal’ implies the importance of individual actors involved in development projects in having an impact on the way the practice is shaped. Based on the emphasis on the importance of ‘the personal’, Chambers (1997b) further argues that development goals need to emphasise the personal dimension in that well-being means different things to different people and development should happen in a way that ensures individuals’ well-being. Also, an important ingredient to achieve this is people’s responsibility towards other people’s well-being. Agency and responsibility are combined to make an argument of responsible well-being (Blackmore 2009). The well-being of actors involved in both the donor side and the recipient side needs to be taken into account.

In elaborating the idea of human agency based on capability and knowledge, Long (2001) maintains that the concept of human agency is not consistent or universal, for the meanings of capability, knowledge, and power are dependent on local contexts where the meanings are socially constructed. Long also claims that human agency is embedded in social relations and can only be effective through them, in that agency is realised by exercising the ability to influence each other and translate the resource that they obtain through the relations to further their capability. Additionally, human agency needs to be understood from the perspective of human feelings and emotions.

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<sup>13</sup> As much as Sen’s capability approach has been influential, it has received critical reviews as well. For instance Giri (2000) points out that capability can be promoted or obstructed not only by policy and structure but also by internal will.



## 2.4.2 Investigating Individuals

Based on the understanding of actors and the notions of human agency, actor-oriented perspectives allow us to investigate development practice. As Long (1990) argues, traditionally the mainstream perspective of study on development practice has been inclined towards institutional structures and functions. However, with the increasing importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness towards heterogeneous social contexts, practitioners and researchers started seeing the importance of individual actors involved in project delivery. Structuralist views of capturing institutional actors such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund tend to fail to consider the increasingly diverse sets of social actors from various parts of the world as has been evidenced by negative consequences of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

An interesting similarity is observed between Long's actor-oriented approach and the work of Tsurumi on endogenous development theory in Japan (see Section 2.2.1). Kawakatsu and Tsurumi (2008) outline that the fundamental element of endogenous development is the autonomous individual, which emerges from autonomous action with autonomous motivation. This theory of endogenous development is rooted in an autonomous individual living in a harmonious relationship with others and also with the local ecology. This example indirectly supports the perspective of actor-oriented analysis in that perception from the autonomous self is embedded in this example and it would be plausible to say that endogenous development theory in Japan has an actor-oriented perspective at its core.

### ***Researching Development Practice from Individuals' Perspectives***

Actor-oriented approaches have been adopted in researching development projects and analysis of grassroots development in order to investigate effective ways of analysing local development issues. Particularly, there has been a surge in the literature on the lives of individual field workers who are expatriates of western donor organisations posted in developing countries, whereby the development projects are analysed from the perspective of experience of individual actors. Mosse (2005) carried out ethnographic research whereby he examined how individual development workers represented development practice on the ground. The individual actors produced and re-produced daily lives based on their personal experiences and ideas, and at the same time they determined their course of

actions in line with the interest of building and maintaining relationships rather than policies and realistic demands of the recipients. He maintains the importance of understanding the idea of institutions and social relationships through investigating interactions at the interface between such subordinate actors of development practice. Mosse (*ibid.*) has adopted an actor-oriented approach to analyse development practice mainly from the experience of the individuals of donor organisations. While Mosse (*ibid.*) investigated the interface between expatriate aid workers and their local counterparts, Fechter and Hindman (2011) more specifically focus on the daily lives of and relationships among the expatriates working in development projects in aid destination countries in that “the human actors who transform policy into projects are neglected” (Fechter and Hindman 2011: 2) and there is a limited amount of study on how “everyday life reveals how daily interactions and individual relations influence international aid workers’ practices” (*ibid.*: 11). Furthermore, the aspect of professional as well as personal living spaces is explored in their lives during the assignments overseas and how such an inter-play of the professional and the personal affects the development practice (Fechter 2012). It is pointed out that due to the nature of the work the aid workers tend to feel that they are obliged to live with an altruistic mission and to minimise their sense of self while maximising the priorities of others (Vaux 2001; Gilbert 2005; Fechter 2012). Under such unique professional environment, how they form their career, and shape their personal lives and their own identity when posted in other countries needs to be further investigated. Similarly, Eyben (2006) investigates the everyday lives of expatriate workers, but with a specific interest in the relationship between the actors. Eyben (2012) specifically focuses on women in development practice and investigates the individuals’ choices and their relationships with environment and other individuals.

As has been argued by many, individual actors produce and re-produce daily lives based on their personal experiences and ideas, and at the same time they determine their course of actions in line with the interest of building and maintaining relationships rather than policies and realistic demands of the recipients. Mosse (2005) further maintains the importance of understanding the interests of institutions involved in the process of development assistance at difference levels and social relationships through investigating interactions at the interface between actors of development practice. In the similar context, various social

categories play important role in shaping the way in which ideas are formed and action is taken by individuals. This is evident in development programmes in rural setting; for instance, as Meagher (2010) argues, social categories such as class and gender contribute to shaping particular values and interests in rural environment in Africa, and hence such social categories can have significant effects of development programmes. As Eyben (2006) emphasises in the case of women in development practice from the perspective of development workers, such social categories are also important in shaping development worker's ideas and individual choices and how they form their identities in relation to others. The roles of institutions and social categories need to be analysed carefully in investigating rural development programmes.

### **2.4.3 Investigating Relationship between Individuals and Collective Actions**

Admittedly, self-help is not limited to individual action at the micro level, but it extends to collective effort of self-help at the meso level. Nishikawa (1989) refers to Smiles (1859) and argues that the individual element of self-help is valid in the context of the bourgeoisie maintaining economic supremacy over the margins and perpetuating effective agency to fulfil their aspirations. Those who are already privileged and are capable of handling his or her destiny can help themselves to better their lives individually (Evans 2002). This implies that individual self-help does not necessarily foster an effective foundation for those who are in the margins of the society to control and improve their destiny. In order to improve the livelihood of the people who are marginalised in terms of socio-economic status, such as subsistence farmers in rural areas of Malawi, not only individual self-help but also collective self-help can be conducive, if not necessary, in order to achieve individual goals.

Everyday lives of individuals are inevitably associated with involvement in social and collective activities at a scale beyond the personal. Individuals engage in collective self-help activities in order to achieve their collective goals based on the idea that a group of individuals can extend the potential of what can be achieved further than one individual could. In other words, it means a mechanism for mutual help. In fact, self-help groups are commonly observed in rural communities in less developed areas in the world, including

Sub-Saharan African countries (see discussion in Section 2.2.3) and one of the institutionalised forms of self-help group is the farmers' cooperative.

The important argument claimed within actor-oriented theory is that the interaction between the micro level and meso level needs to be more carefully examined in order to understand what kind of impact such interactions would leave in the development practice and how. For instance, Long (2001) examines the case of a women's mutual-help group in Peru assisted by a government intervention and how external development assistance was re-shaped from within by the local group of women in the course of participation in the programme. The project was designed to encourage the local women to be more actively involved in agro-industrial activities by assisting a bee-keeping business group organised by local women, and one of the highlighted outcomes of the intervention was that the social status and agency of women was strengthened through various activities and struggles to maintain the group from their own effort.

### ***Relationships among Actors***

The important aspect of actor-oriented approaches is how relationships between individual actors have an impact on human behaviour and action (Pieterse 2010). The individual pursuit of lives evolves with the network of human relationships and relationship with the local environment (Long 2001). The relationships exist within the process of development policy implementation and such relationships affect the efficacy of development practice while transforming and reforming the various aspects of individual identities. Some researchers suggest that the importance of individual relationships in organisational partnerships and successful aid delivery at large is largely underestimated (Lister 1999; Mosse 2005; Eyben 2006; Eyben 2010; Fechter and Hindman 2012).

In the study of development assistance, an actor-oriented approach has been adopted to analyse the life of expatriate aid workers and the interaction between them, whereas local counterparts and beneficiaries are less likely to be the focus and independently studied. Mosse (2006) introduces several case studies of 'aid brokers' as the intermediate interaction of aid agency and local counterparts at the level of interface between external actors and internal actors. The analysis in this thesis builds upon Mosse's investigation of intermediaries and extends an in-depth analysis to the interface between the intermediaries

and local beneficiaries through investigating how different actors interact, what kind of relationships they establish, and what kind of impact such interaction has on the implementation of development assistance.

In analysing relationships in the context of rural communities in developing areas, the concept of collective self-help plays a significant role as has been previously discussed as a traditional collectivism in Sub-Saharan Africa. The act of help strongly and importantly entails the element of giving which further creates a social bond between giver and receiver. Mauss (1990[1925]) in his theory of the gift argues that a gift is different from a typical economic exchange of goods in that the primary purpose of gifting is to create a social relationship. Gifts establish social relationships between giver and receiver essentially because of the associated obligatory reciprocity. Reciprocity is hence a connecting agent in building social relationships in various forms depending on the particular circumstance and context. For instance, Sahlins (1972) draws a distinction between three types of reciprocity in the process of gift giving: balanced reciprocity; generalised reciprocity; or negative reciprocity. Balanced reciprocity is where a gift is reciprocated with an item or action of equal value and generalised reciprocity is where a gift is received with an expectation of distant reciprocity. Building upon the reciprocity argued by Sahlins, Hattori (2001) analyses international development assistance with a structural and functional perspective. According to his analysis, the process of official international aid involves negative reciprocity where nothing is expected in return for the received gift. Hattori argues that development aid is essentially an unreciprocated gift and by its very nature of non-obligatory giving, and hence it creates power relations where the giver assumes more power than the receiver. The act of giving could reinforce the existing inequality of economic power between the giver and the receiver. It could further lead to dis-empowerment of those who have been helped in their social status and self-esteem. This analysis on the particular aspect of gift needs to be carefully analysed with the scale of the analysis. Like the case of Hattori (*ibid.*), country to country relationships would be differently analysed from relationships between individuals from different backgrounds, the analysis needs to consider various factors such as their daily interactions and identities. Silk (2004) and Korf (2007) further develop the antinomy of development aid as gift with insights into the geographies of generosity. International development assistance makes the recipient

automatically powerless while the donor earns recognition as capable and generous. In essence, this type of giving is a rather easy way for those who are in developed countries to express generosity and be ethical or socially responsible and it consequently serves the interest of the donor and crystallises the domination and power on those who give (*ibid.*). In other words, such giving could satisfy the objective of the giver to help while it inevitably deprives the recipient of autonomy by making them 'passive' and 'someone in need of help'.

### ***Meso-level interaction***

While the lives of aid workers have gained attention as a subject to study from the actor-oriented perspective, how everyday lives of people are shaped in relation to their engagement with activities at a larger scale is an equally important theme of actor-oriented perspectives. Long (2001: 72) calls the style of analysis "interface analysis" and explains that "interface analysis helps to deconstruct the concept of planned intervention so that it is seen for what it is, namely, an ongoing, socially constructed and negotiated process, not simply the execution of an already-specified plan of action with expected outcomes." The analysis into the interface, that is the relationship between individuals and external activities, facilitate understandings of external programmes as a process shaped by individual engagements and as a production of individual actions and re-actions.

Matsaert *et al.* (2005) employ the actor-oriented approach in their attempt to analyse the determinants of effective partnership in a participatory rural appraisal project in Bangladesh. The research proposes tools to analyse social actor relationships systematically, designed based on anthropological and sociological research techniques, stakeholder analysis methods and development project monitoring and evaluation systems. These involve 'actor linkage maps' illustrating who is linked to whom, which is commonly used in understanding the actor dynamics of development projects, and 'actor linkage matrix' to complement the map in order to investigate the determinants of such linkages. Although there is a concern of missing out the important personal accounts of events due to formulation and quantification of data, this case demonstrated a practical application of the actor-oriented perspective in analysing the relationship between the actors in development practice. On the other hand, Jingzhong *et al.* (2009) in cooperation with Norman Long, explore how rural farmers in China improve their living standards by diversifying their social activities and self-help innovative effort, and establishing social relationships. From the in-depth qualitative

research of farmers' life histories and interviews with farmers, they conclude that those farmers who have been successful in transforming their living standards engage in a wide variety of activities, which have led to an accumulation of their social assets, such as "social networks, information, enlightenment from everyday small-group interactions, trust, reputation, respect, credibility, experience, consultation with others, self-help and cooperation, interests, beliefs, curiosity about the outside world, social pressures and so forth" (*ibid*: 200). In the context of rural Africa, Meagher (2010) investigates the successes and failures of social networks among small-scale traders in Nigeria while analysing how individual traders benefit and/or suffer from disadvantages from their various social associations. According to her research, innovative use of personal networks through their association with class, church groups or community has led to successful outcomes, while many still have faced constraints from the same social associations. For instance, women tend to suffer from limited access to resources as compared to men, due to cultural values. The meso-level interaction underpins the importance of considering the impact of social networks in shaping individuals' interests, motivations and decisions in receiving the benefit of development programmes in a rural environment.

#### **2.4.4 Critical Views on Actor-oriented Approach and Further Debate**

Although the actor-oriented approach has been endorsed particularly by development sociologists and anthropologists (Mosse 2005; Pieterse 2010; Hamamoto and Sato 2012; Fechter 2012), it has been critically reviewed and concerns have been raised. Hamamoto and Sato (2012) warn that due to a heavy inclination towards the individual's internal motivation and action, an actor-oriented approach may overlook social influences on individual choices and co-relations between the social environment and individual interests. Or on the contrary, ones that attempt to explain individual choices from the dominant theories of social behaviour would be diverting from the individual actor's unique reality for the sake of situating it within the existing conceptual framework (Long 2001). Such criticisms suggest that there seems to be scope to investigate the experiences of actors importantly with an emphasis on how they are integrated into the social relationships around them.

In fact actor-oriented approaches do not only emphasise human agency, but at the same time they extend consideration into social structures in that the social relations are influential in shaping the reality of actors. This argument provokes a more fundamental debate between the role of human agency and social structure in determining human behaviour. It was Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration (1984) which provided an alternative view for the debate as to which one of them should prevail, or which of them comes first. Structuration theory refused to give priority to either agency or structure, and rather it claimed to consider both factors as mutually constituting. Actor-oriented approaches stand closer with Giddens' structuration theory as Long (2001: 24) notes "social structures [...], as Giddens explains, are both constituted by human agency and [...] the very medium of this construction". Furthermore, Long claims that it is clear that there is a "need to give proper weight to both human agency and emergent structures" (Long 2001: 24).

Slater (1990) as well as Hamamoto and Sato (2012) argue that the idea of an actor-oriented approach would walk alone separately from the practical scenario without careful integration into practice. Actor-oriented approaches have not been elaborated enough to be recognised as an established analytical framework. As the primary principle of an actor-oriented perspective is rooted in the presupposition that people's realities are heterogeneous, the research would inherently result in having diverse information which may be difficult to generalise so as to be developed as a useful tool for development practice. Nevertheless, based on the viewpoint that development practice is constructed based on the experience of individuals, the heterogeneous realities need to be incorporated into effective policy development, by addressing how different actors behave and why, and how individual or collective, and personal or social activities lead to different consequences.

Hindess (1986) states that actor-oriented approaches regard organisations such as corporations and churches as actors; however, other possible units such as gender and class can be also considered as actors. Gender and class are abstract concepts and not capable of social action whereas project agencies and aid donors are capable of making and carrying out consistent decisions, which is an important quality of agency of social actors (Slater 1990; Long 1992). In other words, the subject of actor-oriented analysis can be an individual as well as a group of individuals when the group acts as one entity. However, development practice has historically involved communal activities, including local groups organised by



community leaders and groups initiated based on common interests (see discussion on self-help development custom of Sub-Saharan African countries in Section 2.2.3). The actor-oriented approach demonstrates some limitation in applicability in this aspect, especially for gender-based investigation and economic-class oriented analysis.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the conceptual framework to analyse the principle and practice of development assistance prioritising self-help of local people. By discussing the evolution of the ideas of self-help development in Japan, and further by situating them within the major relevant ideas that evolved elsewhere, the chapter established the fundamental perspective to analyse the idea of self-help promoted by Japanese development agencies. Based on this framework, the thesis analyses the implementation process of development assistance from the perspectives of policy mobility, which allows the analysis to follow the process of transformation of the original idea of self-help development. Furthermore, this chapter highlighted the relevance of actor-oriented perspectives to the analysis of self-help development and justified how it can consolidate the conceptual framework. Actor-oriented perspectives can reveal how individual actors make the development assistance relevant to their lives, and how their everyday experiences constitute development practice on the ground.

The next chapter moves on to explaining the methodology employed in the research. It describes the research journey I took from the initial stages to the final stages of field research in rural Malawi while explaining the research methods in detail. It also examines some challenges I faced during the research.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the implementation process of development assistance and investigates how the ideas of self-help are mobilised from a donor institution to recipients by various actors involved in the process. This chapter explains what methods were adopted to facilitate the investigation and why. My research started with desk work in London in the UK and travelled to offices of development agencies and relevant events in Japan, and further took journeys to villages in Malawi, to follow the route of the idea of self-help development travelling from Japanese institutions to Malawian villages.

As my research takes a particular interest in investigating the practice of development assistance and implementation process, empirical field work constituted an important and large part of my overall data collection. The empirical field research mainly involved in-depth interviews and participant observation in the activities of research participants. As was discussed in Section 2.4.2, there are three main groups of individual actors who are involved in the implementation process of the Japanese projects: Japanese officers, Malawian counterparts, and people in recipient communities. In order to understand self-help development practice from their perspectives, among different types of research methodologies, I chose to adopt qualitative research methods to capture people's realities (Brockington and Sullivan 2003; Bryman 2012). The qualitative approach is preferred when people's behaviour, social phenomena, value system and lifestyle are the focus of the research (Stewart-Withers *et al.* 2014). I employed a range of qualitative data collection methods, such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews, and the multiple methods assisted the validity and reliability of the collected data (Bryman 2012). Prioritising qualitative methods derives from two main reasons. Firstly, I aimed to explore the real world of development practice from the perspectives of individual actors, based on their own narratives. Secondly, I aim to contribute to the dearth of knowledge about Japan's assistance for social and human development, particularly in the English-speaking world. Regardless of the large volume of Japanese development assistance and hence potentially great impact, rigorous in-depth research with qualitative analysis

has been limited (Nakamura 2007). In this context, it is meaningful to focus on narratives of individual actors with an emphasis on the approaches of Japanese agencies.

The chapter starts by laying out how the research progressed from initial stages of desk work to the stage of field work, and explains how the collected data was analysed. It then explores methodological issues and discusses dimensions of power and positionality in the research process.

## 3.2 Initial Stages

### 3.2.1 Searching for Information on the Internet

While interviews and observations are the main methods for data collection, finding general information about the organisations delivering development assistance on the ground had to begin with information gathering from the Internet. In order to investigate general trends in the implementation of Japan's development assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa, my first step was to identify government programmes. The official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of the Japanese government and JICA provided information regarding official aid projects implemented under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Current and previous JICA projects were listed on the JICA website and project reports and publications were available in electronic and hard copies. Fortunately, JICA had embarked on making the ODA process more transparent and accountable and in October 2010, they launched a new website named "*ODA Mieru-ka Site*", which means "visualising the ODA", dedicated to providing a clear and detailed account of JICA project implementation to the general public<sup>14</sup>. The information was consolidated project by project and the basic information included the period of the project, the objective of the project, and the mode of assistance, a brief description of the project implementation and photos. The JICA projects have previously attracted academic as well as non-academic research interest, though the focus has tended to be on a few specific projects and evaluation of effectiveness of such projects to inform development policies (see for example, Arai 2005; Yoshida 2006; Kurokawa *et al.* 2010; Uchijima 2010). Although the basic factual data is readily obtainable, the availability of detailed information and analysis about the project implementation is significantly limited. This clearly indicated that one of the important contributions of my research lies in producing analysis based on in-depth empirical research.

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<sup>14</sup> ODA Mieru-ka Site can be found at: <http://www.jica.go.jp/oda/index.html>, The content has become increasingly informative since its launch in October 2010.

On the other hand, the activities of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were harder to identify and it required a systematic and patient approach to collect data. While most NGOs had their own website where they introduced their operation and communicated with wider public, it was difficult to have a grasp of the entire picture of involved actors and the implemented projects as there was no official consolidated list of such organisations. In order to sample as many active organisations as possible, data were collected from two recognised NGO databases: Japan NGO Centre for International Cooperation (JANIC) Directory and Africa Japan Forum (AJF) Directory<sup>15</sup>. These two directories included registered as well as non-registered NGOs working in international development. In addition, the Registered NPO (Non-Profitable Organisations) Database of the Japanese government was used to find international development NGOs<sup>16</sup>. Despite the government's initiative to officially register existing de-facto NGOs with the database, there are still a number of non-registered NGOs in Japan regardless of the level of their activeness. On the other hand, there are registered NGOs that are not effectively active. After the potential organisations were found, each organisation was studied through their website and their appearance in publications and public events to examine whether they were active enough to take into the analysis. Although there can be active organisations with a limited web presence, to discover such organisations would demand a significant amount of research which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Additionally, since the NGOs are often dependent on external funding, they tend to have some presence in public media, typically on the Internet, to attract funding and be accountable to donors. Thus, in combining these three databases and the screening method, I was able to have a satisfactory coverage of NGOs.

### 3.2.2 From the Virtual World to the Real World

My field data collection began with a visit to Japan in September 2011. After I had identified active organisations mainly based on the Internet search, I embarked on a preliminary research visit to collect information regarding development projects implemented by JICA and NGOs, and to find out more about the general trend of international development as an industry in Japan. There was also a logistical aim in establishing acquaintances with organisations with potential field research possibilities. I attended JICA and NGO seminars and I had informal meetings with aid professionals

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<sup>15</sup> JANIC NGO directory can be found at: <http://www.janic.org/directory/>. JAF NGO Directory can be found at: [http://www.ajf.gr.jp/lang\\_ja/db-ngo/index-name.html](http://www.ajf.gr.jp/lang_ja/db-ngo/index-name.html). Some contents of the both websites are available in English, but the directories are only available in Japanese.

<sup>16</sup> NPO Homepage by Cabinet Office of the Japanese government can be found at: <https://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/portalsite/ninteimeibo.html>, only available in Japanese. The contents have been dramatically improved since the data collection was carried out in September 2011.

including JICA officers and NGO workers, and visited the headquarters of NGOs operating in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was helpful in collecting up-to-date and detailed information and data on their philosophy and ground implementation strategy, and it helped me develop a selection strategy to choose which field projects to study.

Following the Internet-based search on 42 projects carried out by Japanese agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa and also further investigation into some of the projects during the field work in Japan, I identified two projects in Zambia, implemented by Tokushima International Cooperation (TICO) and Association for Medical Doctors of Asia's Multisectoral and Integrated Development Services (AMDA-MINDS), and three projects in Malawi implemented by Japan Overseas Cooperative Association (JOCA), JNGO and JICA Malawi respectively. These projects were selected as they were implementing field projects by closely working with local counterparts and promoting self-help process of development of local people. Additionally, Zambia and Malawi were suitable locations to conduct preliminary research in that both countries had significant development issues concerning the rural poor.

Then I conducted preliminary field research in Zambia and Malawi in March and April 2012. The objective of the field research was to investigate the possibility of conducting in-depth research on the projects and to further elaborate the research design by evaluating contextual validity and logistical feasibility. I conducted observations of project sites where it was possible and interviews with field officers working for the projects. In addition to getting to know the real implementation issues of the projects, I was able to observe and experience the different socio-economic contexts in visiting these two different countries. One striking factor that I took into account in later deciding where to conduct further in-depth research was that the situation of the rural poor of Malawi appeared much worse than Zambia. The level of development proved to be lower in many aspects in Malawi, from the condition of the transportation infrastructure to the efficiency of policy administration, the quality of the service industry to the diversity of economic activities. Furthermore, during the field research, it emerged that there was a significant trend of dependency on international development assistance in Malawi, at the national budgetary level as well as at the grassroots level, co-existing with the custom of inter-dependency among the people in Malawi. These factors importantly shaped the course of my research. Less important to the academic rigour perhaps, but more importantly to me personally as an individual researcher, the way the NGO field workers welcomed me in Malawi was encouraging and motivating. When I literally entered the country, I received a text message, "Welcome to the warm heart of Africa!" from the country director of the NGO I arranged to meet. Conducting PhD field research is a lonely thing especially at

the first stage, when the researcher does not know many local contacts and everything is unfamiliar. For some, the first days are experienced with a series of “shocking events” (Leslie and Storey 2003: 120). Not only was this actually ‘heart-warming’, but also this was an indication of a cooperative attitude of research participants. This incident also contributed to making the decision to conduct further in-depth research in Malawi.

While conducting in-depth research in an NGO project site was proven to be possible, conducting similar research with a government project appeared to be more difficult. I visited the JICA Malawi Office during the first preliminary field research in Malawi and conducted an interview with field officers. I could obtain information that was not available on the Internet as much as I needed at that initial data collection stage, but as they were already very busy with handling external researchers with a limited human resource on the ground, I could not obtain consent from them to conduct my research in their project sites. It was from my UK connection that I made a breakthrough to this deadlock. JICA UK awarded me research funding for the Malawi research from January to March 2013 which assisted me financially and my field research was facilitated by communications between JICA UK and JICA Malawi. I consulted with the JICA Malawi office and decided to research one of their flagship projects, OVOP Malawi, which aimed to promote a self-help process to achieve farmers’ self-reliant development. Following this preliminary research, I designed my main field research schedule to focus on the JNGO project and OVOP Malawi project. I decided to investigate two projects instead of one so that I could have a comprehensive and at the same time in-depth understanding of implementation process of development assistance by Japanese agencies from different backgrounds.

### **3.2.3 Aid Workers’ Blogs**

Studying individuals’ personal weblogs (blogs) has increasingly gained popularity as a formal method to collect information and to gain knowledge among qualitative researchers. The potential of blogs particularly in academic research is underestimated and not fully explored (Fechter 2012).

Blog space exists somewhere in-between the virtual and reality. Blogging fundamentally offers a space of free expression for the writers. There is no particular required format in blogging and it is entirely up to the blogger how to portray his/her identity, to what extent it is professional or personal, and for what purpose it is written, as long as it complies with the official rules of the website. As Denskus and Papan (2013) claim, expatriate aid workers’ blogs showcase the interface between the professional and personal dimensions of development work abroad and how the daily

realities of field operations are reflected in the writers' eyes. Blogging also offers aid workers the opportunity to learn, express their perspectives and network with global readership.

It provides those who are engaged in development practice, particularly in remote areas, with a virtual gate through which they are connected with the rest of the world professionally as well as personally. In planning my field research, these bloggers sometimes played the role of gatekeepers to access the field operations.

One of the characteristics of the Japanese expatriate aid workers' blogs is the fact that a large majority of them are written in Japanese. Due to this language limitation, it essentially communicates with Japanese audience only. As one aid worker who works in a primary school in a regional town in Zambia once told me:

“When you contacted me via email, I felt that my effort of writing blogs has paid off. [...] Our work is often assessed based on what we deliver at the end and what outcome we produce in numbers. But there is much more to what we do. Each of us, aid workers, has their own struggles, which are not normally featured in popular media. I feel sad when all these individuals' dramas are forgotten. I guess it is part of my work to welcome visitors like you and tell stories of our daily realities.” (Male Volunteer, Zambia, March 2012)

This comment underpins that the perspectives and knowledge of individual actors are often overlooked and it also represents the desire to be recognised as an individual actor who has agency to achieve certain goals.

I began searching blogs systematically when I started off the field work in Japan. Since then studying virtual descriptions of real world activities ran alongside doing the field research in the real world. I have been regularly reading up on the aid workers' blogs and it has provided me with opportunities to learn how development assistance is delivered on the ground and how the volunteers shape their perspectives through day-to-day experiences. They have helped me connect with those who I would not have access to otherwise. I have identified 13 blogs written by the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) who have worked in Malawi and 1 by JOCV in Zambia<sup>17</sup> (see Appendix 1). Although the use of blogs provided much information regarding field practices of development assistance and daily experiences of individuals who are involved in the practice, my research utilised them as a source to have a broad understanding of the real pictures on the ground and also to

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<sup>17</sup> In Malawi, there were 92 JOCVs as of 2012 March and they constantly have about 80-100 JOCVs in Malawi (JICA 2012).

establish connections with field workers. There is potential to utilise the blogs beyond the way this research has. However, due to time constraints it was not possible.

### **3.3 Fieldwork in Malawi**

I spent about seven months in total going back and forth between rural and urban areas in Malawi. The seven months were made up of three separate visits, with the first visit from October to December 2012, the second visit from January to March 2013 and the third and last visit from July to September 2013. The objective of the first visit included the following: to conduct in-depth field research at the project site of the Japanese NGO, and to establish my research base at Chancellor College of University of Malawi to have access to local advice and also to pilot my interview questions. The second phase was designed to study the Japanese government project and the final visit allowed me to return to both the NGO project site and government project site to conduct follow-up interviews and observations. I also conducted individual interviews with aid workers and their Malawian counterparts who had been involved in the NGO or government aid projects. By separating the visits into three periods, I created an opportunity to reflect properly on preliminary findings and also to discuss them with my supervisor based in the UK.

#### **3.3.1 Field Work**

##### ***Qualitative data collection in ethnographic style***

Linguistic information represents merely one of the many ways of interpreting reality. In order to understand the lives of other people effectively, it is important to extend attention to non-linguistic information such as seeing activities, tasting food, hearing and smelling rituals, and touching the tools that are used day-to-day (Kagami et al. 2011). One of the objectives of my research is to understand the existing system of mutual help within the recipient communities and the self-help activities that people in the communities engage in. Achieving this objective required engagement with some the research participants beyond one-off interviews, in order to understand their daily lives and how the projects were changing over time. Although such ethnographic style of research significantly helped me understand the realities of people's lives, I was not able to conduct an in-depth ethnographic study. This was because of time and financial constraints and the multi-sited nature of the research, in Malawi, but also in Japan and Zambia. Similarly, compromises had to be made on the extent of inquiries at times during field research in rural villages. I was strongly advised



not to walk about alone in the villages, and never go out in the early morning and in the evening after dark. As I was always cautious not to take any risk, my mobility in rural villages was restricted to an extent that I had to let opportunities to collect potentially relevant information go. Thus in fact this study is informed by qualitative research methods rather than ethnography. This situation is mainly due to the lack of resources to ensure my safety, and is possibly unique to a PhD research when it is conducted independently.

### ***Using Five Human Senses***

To help my understanding of the day-to-day lives of the people living in the communities where JNGO and JICA worked, I decided to live in selected villages with a family. Living together gave me an insight into the problems the villages face and how they cope with and solve problems. Additionally, observing and participating in their daily activities helped me triangulate the interview answers with observations.

While such qualitative approaches are important tools to comprehend the individual lives experienced in the specific social and cultural context, they are subject to certain shortcomings. For instance, the researcher's perspective governs the interpretation of observations and other data, generalisability is difficult due to a heavy emphasis on context, and the sample size is limited (May 2001; Silverman 2010). The issue of generalisability and potential for policy input was reflected in the feedback that I received from one of the officials of a development agency during a presentation of my field work findings, "Ok, so we understand people experience things differently in different context. But you know, so what? How do we actually improve our policy based on this?" To counter claims like this, Silverman (1985) argues that the issue of generalisability is underpinned by the belief that one true reality exists independently from different interpretations of the reality by individual actors. My research investigates the diversity of the development assistance implemented under different modalities while involving individual actors who have their own interpretation of realities. Sharing understanding of such dynamics of implementation processes is essential for formulating policy.

### ***Entry to the NGO Project Site***

As my research investigates two different projects, the conduct of field research needed to be different according to the specific context of each project. First, I conducted field research in the JNGO project site. JNGO was selected for in-depth research due to its strong focus on self-help processes in achieving self-reliant development among rural farmers in Malawi, and equally importantly because I met gatekeepers who had close connections with JNGO during the preliminary field research. The gatekeepers were willing to facilitate my research on JNGO and encouraged me

to conduct research in their project site. They also acted as an emergency contact for me when I was living in remote villages. This situation appeared fortunate as I had already received negative responses to my field research requests to other potential project sites due to their tight schedule in the projects. Although I was not specifically requested by JNGO field officers to do so, due to the nature of my research being evaluative to some extent and also as personal narratives of individuals were to be presented, I made a decision to keep the organisation anonymous in this thesis.

Prior to starting the actual research, I made a preparatory visit to the villages where JNGO operated in order to meet the representatives of the villages, explain my research schedule and obtain permission from them to carry out my research. To enter to the village, the NGO offered to take me in their vehicle, but I decided to go in the way that the local people travel, which was to take a minibus and a *matola* (truck taxi) from Lilongwe (see Plate 3.1).

**Plate 3.1: "Matola" shared taxi to research site**



Source: the author

I made this choice consciously so that I do not appear as a typical foreign aid worker who comes by a private vehicle making their status exclusive to the local people. My positionality needed to be established carefully from the first day, so as to research participants do not regard me as their helper, which could have impacted their response to my interview questions and their behaviour in

front of me. It took about four hours including waiting time of two hours to get to the village whereas the NGO cars would have only taken about one hour, but it was important for me to learn the mobility of the local people and the way of their life from this aspect. My entry to the community was facilitated by an unexpected encounter. I met a woman in the *matola* taxi and she happened to be a relative of one of the village chiefs in the group village. She suggested that she would guide us to the village and introduce us to the group village chief. My initial plan was to find out the village's custom of accepting an outsider and to find the appropriate person to meet when we reach the village, but all of this was sorted out during the journey to the village thanks to this encounter. As she promised, she guided us to the Group Village Head (GVH) Chief and the initial introduction was carried out smoothly.

The arrangement of accommodation during the research was also confirmed during this initial visit, as the GVH chief himself offered that I could stay in his house. After one month I returned with a large backpack to his home and I stayed at his home during my research, for total of eight weeks. The chief provided me with a safe shed, but at the same time there was a concern how this could impact my positionality in the village. As village chief is considered as a person with power and authority amongst villagers, my relationship with the chief could influence the performance of research participants. I tried not to provide and spread information as to where exactly I stay in the village in the fear of this influence, and whenever it was known, I explained that I was simply using an available room in the village which happened to be at the chief's house.

### ***Entry to OVOP Malawi Project Site***

I maintained the same approach to conduct field research in the OVOP Malawi project site; still, some aspects of the methodology needed to be altered to correspond with the specific contexts of the project. I selected JICA Malawi's flagship grassroots development project One Village One Product (OVOP). As the research on OVOP Malawi was partially funded by the JICA UK research scheme, JICA UK facilitated the logistics of my field research in Malawi in cooperation with JICA Malawi. Unlike the case of JNGO, as my research was officially published as research on OVOP Malawi by JICA UK, I decided to keep the original name for the project in this thesis. However, for the individual groups, I decided to maintain the anonymity of the groups and the members of the groups for the same reasons as in the case of JNGO.

There were 116 registered cooperatives with OVOP as of 2012, but only about 30 groups were fully operational. Amongst these groups, I selected two groups (Group A and Group B) in two districts based on the fact that these two groups were regularly producing products and members were actively involved in the operation, and also a Japanese volunteer was assisting these groups on the

ground. These factors were important for my research to be able to investigate how local people as well as Japanese development workers are involved in the implementation of development projects.

Because the field research schedule was developed with the assistance of JICA Malawi and OVOP Malawi, my first field visit to the farmers' groups was arranged through the official route. I visited their production factory where the members were gathered and I was formally introduced by the OVOP local coordinator as a visitor. This facilitated the negotiation of their cooperation in terms of my interview schedule and accommodation during the research.

My intention to stay at a member's house was to understand their daily life including the life outside the group activity. For Group A, a very active member offered me the chance to stay at her house. It was not in my initial plan to actually participate in their work, but the daily routine evolved in the way that I would go to work with the member at eight o'clock in the morning, work together, eat together, and come home together at seven in the evening, six days a week for the total of 25 days (see Plate 3.2). This greatly helped me understand what kind of life a member would lead, and their work at home as well as at the factory. Participating in their work by facing issues and tackling them hand in hand made me learn who plays what role, the personal attitude of the members towards work, and in what aspect they tend to seek external assistance. Also a JICA volunteer was working with the group during my stay. I could observe how she worked, and we discussed her experience and worked together sometimes.

**Plate 3.2: Eating *nsima* together with the group members**



Source: the author

The unexpected research method naturally emerged as I lived and worked with them, and it has given me different valuable information about the OVOP and its group dynamics. For Group B, the chairman of the group agreed to accommodate me in his house during my research. Since the members of the group were based in a remote village which is located one-hour away by bicycle or three hours on foot from the factory, the participation in the factory work by the members was not as great as the case of Group A. Hence I decided to spend three days a week observing their group activities at the factory and three days observing daily activities at the village to conduct my research. In total, I spent 20 days living in the village.

### **3.3.3 Interviews**

Interviewing is one of the most common methods in empirical research as it captures the lives of people through their descriptions, which cannot be observable (Willis 2006; Withers *et al.* 2014). The way in which questions are asked during the interviews varies depending on how strictly structured the questions are. I designed semi-structured interviews based on its recognised advantages of being flexible enough to accommodate unexpected yet interesting topics and at the same time not being diverted from prepared topics of my research interest (May 2001; Willis 2006; Bryman 2012). My interview schedule was broadly categorised into three groups of development actors: Japanese expatriate aid workers; Malawian counterparts; and members of recipient communities. The details of interview format and questions were further customised according to the professional and social status of the respondents, and sometimes by being reflexive in response to the particular circumstance.

#### ***Interviewing Members of the Recipient Communities: NGO Project Site***

Fitting with my approach to participant observation explained in the previous section, I designed interview schedules in accordance with the context of each project. First, I designed semi-structured interviews for the members of communities where the Japanese NGO implements the comprehensive rural community development project. The project was expected to directly benefit all households situated in the five GVHs<sup>18</sup>, which amount to about six-hundred households. As the entire project site covered an area which was too large for me to conduct in-depth research, and in order to have a better understanding of the social context of the people living in the villages, I selected one of the five GVHs which consisted of 10 sub-villages of various size and population. This GVH was the largest of the five GVHs with about 300 households and the intensity of NGO activity

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<sup>18</sup> A GVH normally consists of multiple numbers of villages, and is headed by a chief for administrative purposes.

was higher in this area in that it was located in the middle of the five GVHs and people came to this GVH from other GVHs to participate in intra-village group activities. Also this GVH was located adjacent to a local market area where the government extension services office was located and some development practices initiated by the government were observed more often than the other areas.

My interview targeted the members of the community where the NGO implemented the project, those who the NGO regarded as direct beneficiaries. However on my initial observation, the level of participation in the NGO development project appeared to be different amongst the direct beneficiaries. The NGO organised group activities in villages for different purposes and I decided to categorise the direct beneficiaries into active beneficiaries and less active beneficiaries according to their participation in the group activities. I conducted 122 individual interviews in the nine sub-villages in a GVH including 35 active beneficiaries, which is more than one-third of the total number of households in the GVH (see Table 3.1). The interview respondents included equal number of men and women, and they were the head of the household or the second head of the household. Each interview lasted one hour to two and a half hours and was carried out in one-to-one style by me with assistance from a translator.

**Table 3.1: Number of Interviews at the NGO project site**

	<b>Active Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Non-active Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>GVH</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>122</b>

Source: created by the author

It is important to note that the definition of household appears to be ambiguous in practical terms in rural Malawi. The National Statistics Office of Malawi defines a household as “a person or group of persons related or unrelated who live together and make common arrangements for food, or who pool their income for the purpose of purchasing food” (NSO 2012: 9) in conducting their socio-economic household survey in Malawi. This definition is wider than the stereotypical definition of unit of integrated group; still, my observations in the researched communities revealed that the composition of a household is far more complicated in reality. For one, polygamous marriages are common and husbands tend to stay in different homes and/or they do not necessarily support all their wives and children consistently. Also, I observed that children sometimes have meals in

different relatives' houses. For instance, there was a family led by an elderly couple. Two of their grandchildren ate and slept in the same house. Another granddaughter was married, but her husband was always away as he was in military service, and she slept in a different house from the grandparents, but normally engaged in domestic work and shared meals with the grandparents. There were two other grandchildren who normally ate together but slept in different houses, and their tuition fees were paid by the grandparents. In such cases, the boundary of a household can be determined according to physical existence of house, movement of people between the houses, and sharing of food, cash and labour. This observation echoes other earlier analysis on households in rural African communities such as Hill (1986) who emphasised the deficiency in using narrowly-defined household unit in researching rural farming communities in West Africa. Rather than adopting a fixed definition household, the household should be defined in different ways according to the specific purpose of research; for instance, it would make sense to focus on how many people sleep in a household when distributing mosquito nets. In my study, the complexity and fluidity of household composition reflected the networks of mutual-help relationships. I conducted interviews with the head or secondary head of the household and I justified it by defining a household head as the individual who bears responsibility for sustaining the general livelihood of the people who share the living and who are in charge of making decisions for livelihood strategies.

The village chiefs played a role of gatekeeper to village residents. The first stage of my research was to find the village chief and introduce myself as a student from a university in England, and to explain my purpose in the village as to understand the way people live including their general activities and problems, as a part of an assignment in my college education. Then I asked for permission to talk to people in the village promising that I would not cause any disturbance in the village and would follow all rules in the village. Also, I did not ask for any assistance from the chief apart from them being available for my interviews, but I also explained that it was up to the individual concerned whether they wanted to participate in my research or not. This approach was always welcomed, and the chief appreciated my presence and wished me a successful study. In some cases the village chief went as far as gathering people in the village and asking them to cooperate with me when I came to talk to them.

As the JNGO project targeted to benefit all residents in the villages through borehole construction programmes and mosquito net distribution programmes, I intended to have a randomised sampling method, whereby every third households was to be interviewed in order to evenly cover the villages with interviews with more than one third of all households. However it turned out to be difficult and often unrealistic to stick to the specific randomising strategy due to people's availability and the

limited time available for fieldwork. For instance during the first few days of the rainy season, the villages were almost empty as the people were out to their agricultural fields to work intensively. I asked each interviewee about the level of their engagement in the JNGO project to identify active and non-active beneficiaries.

I conducted interviews with people in the recipient communities normally in front of their home or inside their home (see Plate 3.3).

**Plate 3.3: Interviewing in front of the interviewee's home**



Source: the author

I decided to do this rather than inviting them to my base so that people did not need to travel just for my interview and so that I did not waste time in waiting for respondents who may never turn up. Even more importantly, while interviewing at homes can be sometimes fragmented because of the presence of other members of the family, the respondent can feel relaxed and the researcher can observe the household environment (Willis 2006). In fact interviewing in such locations enabled me to observe the living conditions and dynamics of daily lives of the respondents, which might not have become apparent within the interviews. The advantage of interviewing at homes was not limited to these. For instance, visiting their homes and recruiting the respondents meant walking around the villages, which helped me understand village life, and establish acquaintance and good relationships with residents.



Additionally, I could deepen my understanding of their customs of dealing with outsiders at home through the actual experience of being a visitor. Although it eventually offered me advantages, it certainly required a cautious approach with careful considerations into possible disadvantages. A respondent could feel more relaxed when being interviewed in their own space, but he or she could also on the contrary feel unease because of an outsider invading their private space. Similarly, visiting them meant that the respondent did not have to travel to my location. On the other hand, asking for their cooperation by bringing myself to their place could oblige them to respond positively to my request. With these considerations, I approached potential respondents so that they felt enough free to claim whether, when and where they wanted to be interviewed.

The basic information regarding the interview participants' socio-economic status, including their family composition, financial situation, and the size of landholding was gathered as a part of individual interview questions. As Hill (1986) also highlights, this way of gathering such quantitative data was not entirely reliable in gathering correct information, and thus it was occasionally followed up by more probing questions. For instance, the interview respondents sometimes appeared unsure about describing the size of their farming land in the unit of acres and hectares. I asked how many lines of ridges they have in their agricultural land and how long one line is. They often appeared as more sure about such information rather than in the units. The interview questions mainly covered the following topics: their interpretation of the meanings of self-help and development, involvement in external aid project, self-help activities in the village, and mutual help system in their society (see Appendix 2 for interview schedule). The interview questions were asked in English by me and translated to Chichewa by my translator, and the interview respondents mostly answered in Chichewa and the answers were translated from Chichewa to English by my translator, and I wrote down everything in notebooks simultaneously. This method gave me enough time to note-take every sentence while clarifying meanings of translated sentences.

### ***Interviewing Members of the Communities in OVOP Malawi Project Site***

The second phase of the field research was essentially focused on the project implementation by OVOP Malawi. Interview questions were designed in the same framework as in the NGO project site, with the only difference being the sampling method of interviewees (see Appendix 3 and 4 for interview schedules). Group A had 21 members and Group B had 46 members. In order to investigate the point of interaction between the OVOP assisted group members and the existing self-help and mutual help activities in the local community, I extended the interview sample to the non-members of the groups who live in the same village as the members. I interviewed 20 and 26 non-members of Group A and 28 members and 30 non-members of Group B. (See Table 3.2)

**Table 3.2: Number of interviews in OVOP Malawi project site**

	<b>Member</b>	<b>Non-Member</b>	Total
<b>Group A</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>26</b>	46
<b>Group B</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	44
Total	46	54	<b>100</b>

Source: created by the author

For the case of Group A, as most members came to the factory at least once or twice a week, and it was also difficult for me to visit their houses efficiently as they were coming from different villages in the area, I decided to interview the members at their factory while I participated in their work. After I finished interviewing the members, I went on to their home villages and randomly sampled non-members.

In contrast to the case of the JNGO project site where roughly one-third of the entire population of the village were randomly sampled, in the case of OVOP I had specific interviewees as I needed to interview the members of farmers' groups assisted by OVOP Malawi. In contrast to the field work in the JNGO project site, I had a specific sample to cover in a limited time and mobility. The research was often behind my target and I started feeling frustrated. This was a moment which Kleinmann and Copp (1993) described as 'gaining control of the project by allowing it to lose'. Although I was behind the target on my interview time frame, because I was at their working site, I could not only observe but also actually participate in their work and experience day-to-day activities.

### ***Interviewing Malawian Counterparts***

I conducted individual interviews with the Malawian counterparts involved in the JNGO project and OVOP Malawi projects. There are four Malawian officers who were employed by the NGO as project officers, all of who I interviewed. Also I interviewed four extension agents of the Malawian government who were involved in the NGO programme delivery on the ground as a Health Surveillance Agent (HSA), Agricultural Extension Officer (AEO), or Community Development Officer (CDO). For the OVOP programme, I interviewed five Malawian counterparts, two of which were based in the OVOP Secretariat in Lilongwe, and three of which were working as extension agents in regional offices (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3: Number of interviews with Malawian counterparts**

	<b>NGO Project</b>	<b>JICA Project</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Office Colleagues</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Local Counterpart</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>

Source: created by the author

Interview questions investigated: understanding of the principles and objectives of organisation and project; definition of self-help and self-reliance, and how they can be achieved; definition of development; experience in working with Japanese officers; and their identity (see Appendix 5 for interview schedule). All the interviews were conducted in English without translator and conversations were audio-recorded.

#### ***Interviewing Japanese Aid Workers***

In order to understand self-help development assistance implementation from the perspective of expatriate aid workers and the general daily lives of the aid workers, individual interviews with semi-structured questions was the most suitable method. On one occasion I had to conduct an interview in a focus group setting, with three aid workers present in the same interview, due to time constraints of myself and the respondents. The focus group can be an effective method in obtaining information about group dynamics and relationships, and in exploring issues that the respondents are keen to expand (May 2001). In my study however, understanding the group dynamics between the Japanese expat workers is a secondary objective which I was able to achieve by living together and spending time in their official as well as unofficial capacity. Rather, it turned out that to understand individual perspectives and personal experiences, the focus group setting had a rather adverse effect on the responses in that respondents were cautious about how they portrayed themselves in front of co-workers with whom they were not open about personal matters. Thus I decided to conduct individual interviews and not group-format interviews unless it was the only available choice.

I interviewed a total of thirteen Japanese expatriate aid workers and volunteers (See Table 3.4). During my stay in Malawi, there were five Japanese expatriate officers working for JNGO. I conducted individual interviews with all of them. Similarly, for the OVOP programme, there were two expatriate workers at that time and I interviewed both. I also interviewed six JOCVs who are directly involved in OVOP programme in different capacities, but commonly working with the

members of recipient communities. Most of the interviews took place in their home, workplace, or a coffee shop in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi and few in the homes of volunteers who lived in other regions.

**Table 3.4: Number of interviews with Japanese expatriate workers**

	NGO Project	JICA Project	Total
<b>Expat Officers</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	7
<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	6
Total	5	8	<b>13</b>

Source: created by the author

There were about 200 Japanese people residing in Malawi as of 2012 and 2013, consisting of about 100 volunteers, with the rest made up of JICA officers and specialists with their family members, embassy staff and their family members, NGO workers, and others. I conducted formal interviews with the field officers of the JNGO project, and expatriate officers of the OVOP programme, and JOCVs who are involved in any of the two programmes. In addition to them, I informally exchanged opinions and discussed issues around assisting self-help development in Malawi with ten Japanese aid workers who were not directly involved in the above two programmes.

Interviews were conducted with semi-structured questions while discussing the following themes: understanding of principles and objectives of the organisation and project; the issues around implementation; definition of self-help and self-reliance and how they can be achieved; definition of development; how they perceive counterpart and recipients in the villages; attitude towards development work; and their personal experiences in Malawi (see Appendix for 6 and 7 interview schedule). Each interview lasted one and a half hours to two and a half hours. Most interviews were conducted in Japanese without translators in one-to-one style, with some occasions in a group conversation style, and the conversations were audio-recorded.

As my topics involve how they shaped their career including their previous experience in Japan, Malawi and elsewhere, I adopted a life-history interview style. The life-history method has long been used by anthropologist and sociologist traditions in spite of criticisms for its perceived lack of scientific and methodological rigour (Tierney and Clemens 2012). My research adopted life history as

a narrative inquiry specifically to extract the respondents' personal perspectives based on personal experiences and investigate their decision making process.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

Collected data was mainly kept in two formats during the field research. One was in writing field notes, including field observations, participant observations, transcripts of meetings conducted as a part of JNGO or OVOP project, and transcripts of interviews with people in the recipient communities of the Japanese development assistance. The other format was audio-recording, which covered interviews with Malawian counterparts and Japanese workers.

I began my analysis during the field research by reading through the notes and transcribing the interviews so that I could reflect on the methods and improve as necessary. However due to the time constraints during the field research, the majority of data analysis was conducted when I was back in the UK. Initially my strategy to analyse interview transcripts was to read and re-read them through from the beginning to the end while highlighting interesting parts that contribute to objectives of the research. However I soon realised that this method was not efficient in organising important information, identifying links, and consolidating theme by theme, but rather it was useful in recapturing the detail information from the interviews. In order to resolve this issue, I designed Excel spreadsheets to enter information from the interviews. The initial reading of the transcripts helped me identify themes that emerged during the field research in addition to the themes that were intentionally covered by interview schedule. The spreadsheet was designed to deal with socio-economic data of the respondents in a structured manner, such as their age, number of household, and the size of their farming landholding. Other interview answers were classified into a relevant theme and entered as transcribed on the spreadsheet. Analysing data on Excel spreadsheet made it easy to find themes by using key word search function on Excel, and also it was convenient in generating graphs and charts based on the data I entered. Although it took significant amount of time for data entry, I found it was still a good way as I could analyse the narratives and enter the information at the same time. As I organised data on spreadsheets so that it is easy to refer back to the transcripts on the field notes, it was easy to come back to the original transcript at the later stage of analysis when necessary.

The audio-recordings of interviews were transcribed. For one hour of conversation, it took about five to six hours to transcribe in Japanese, and three to four hours to transcribe in English. Most of my interviews were around one-and-a-half hours or two-hours long in Japanese, this process took a

significant amount of time. Anticipating the time constraint, at some points I was analysing narratives only by listening to the recordings without transcribing, but eventually it was necessary to transcribe them so that I could capture the flows and overall contents of the conversations properly.

## 3.5 Methodological Issues

### 3.5.1 “Seeing through Frosted Glass”

“Half of the week I would go around villages and check the progress of the project with my own eyes. I even learnt Bengali quickly and I was good enough to enjoy daily conversation with people in the villages. I bet if other people had seen me then, they would have thought that I understood the lives in the villages more than anybody and communicated very well with the people in the villages. However, to be honest, the villagers always appeared behind dense fog in front of me. No matter how much we chat, and eat together, this feeling that I am looking at them through frosted glass never disappeared. I never felt that I am even touching upon the reality of their live.” (Wada and Nakata 2010: 16, translated by the author)

Researching an unfamiliar society is a difficult task. This view is shared by academics and also practitioners. Researchers who pursue qualitative data collection make efforts to conduct research by immersing themselves in the place to understand the people of the place. Investigating the realities using multiple methods is important, as was observed by an expatriate officer working in Malawi:

“Living in a developing country sometimes makes people mentally vulnerable and unstable. Please understand that I might say something today, but I might say something conflicting tomorrow.” (Japanese expatriate officer, Malawi)<sup>19</sup>

This comment represents the reason why it is important for qualitative research to include careful observation and participation in daily activities, and the sharing of conversations as much as possible outside the formal interview framework. The reality sometimes appears behind the frosted glass even to the interview respondents themselves.

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<sup>19</sup> All comments by Japanese people in this thesis were originally made in Japanese and have been translated by the author.

Living together with the research participants enormously helped me understand the reality of their lives. On the other hand, this raised an important question regarding my positionality and relations with them. Living together with them meant that I might get too personally close to ask questions and to receive answers objectively. I tried to maintain a certain distance between me and the research participants. Keeping a certain distance turned out to be a good decision, as I was not too close for them to disclose their personal stories as I was not a part of the story, while I was not too strange to understand what they mean by talking in specific contexts.

### **3.5.2 Translation**

Due to the area of my research, it was necessary to access data and information in multiple languages, English, Japanese and Chichewa. As my native language is Japanese, there was no difficulty in collecting data in Japanese, from going through publications and the Internet resources, and establishing good rapport with Japanese contacts and interviewing Japanese expatriate workers. It would have been impossible to exchange opinions extensively and share a deep understanding with them if I had to conduct research in any other language with them. A large majority of Japanese expatriates I came across in Malawi were able to communicate in English to a minimum required level to carry out their professional duties, but not to the level where they could engage in in-depth discussion and enjoy informal conversation without feeling frustrated. All Malawian counterparts I communicated with in Malawi were able to communicate in English without any problem and this was true of most professionals working in the development sector in Malawi. The majority of research regarding Japan's development assistance including JICA publications and NGO reports are conveyed only in Japanese. As has been explained, the Japanese development workers are not always adept at communicating in any other language than Japanese. As my first language is Japanese, there was no problem in interviewing the Japanese respondents and observing their lives. However, I needed to translate the data to English wherever necessary.

On the other hand, the majority of the population in villages in Malawi had a very limited command of English. For me to conduct interviews with people in the villages, assistance from a translator was a necessity. I recruited a Malawian translator from Lilongwe, who had spent most of his life in Lilongwe, with two years of previous work experience in the UK. The task of a translator is not limited to translating one language to another. The translator needed to be a good communicator who could convey my sentences and at the same time the tone of my voice, and communication attitude. In my research, the translator needed to be a coordinator at the same time who would

establish a conducive environment for me to conduct my research in the locality and at the same time to be a humble outsider who would behave in accordance with the local customs. My overall experience with my translator was positive and in fact, unexpectedly positive. He was good in taking my instructions and understanding my intentions. Regular feedback sessions I had with him were helpful to keep the smooth and appropriate operation of interviews, in order to confirm my instructions, to reflect what the translator felt during interviews in terms of the way I addressed questions, and also to discuss the choices of words in translating. There were conflicting situations in working with a local translator in terms of difference in the attitude towards work in general. For instance, I was trying to plan and execute things efficiently, move fast and cut out inefficiencies; on the other hand, my translator was more relaxed towards work and he loved chatting with people who we were not supposed to interview, or sometimes he continued chatting with interview respondents about casual topics after I finished my questions. It was initially frustrating as I had a target to meet. While it led to the issue of changes in research schedule and increased my personal frustrations, this attitude of my translator often resulted in establishing good relationships and networks with local people, and also helped me become better immersed in the local environment. As my translator was a male, some gender-based issues were anticipated. Although I did not face any explicit expression and it was difficult to know what they feel inside, female respondents might have been less open to talk freely in front of my male translator about certain issues. Overall however, we collaborated well to create a conducive environment to our research, as in one village his local friends gave him a parting gift of a chicken when we left the village on the last day of the research.

### **3.5.3 Positionality and Reflexivity in Field Research**

One distinct characteristic of qualitative research is the relationship that can be built between the researcher and the research participants. In qualitative research face-to-face interactions are often essential and investigation tends to probe into the personal space of the participants (Scheyvens 2014). Therefore it is essential for the researcher to carefully consider and critically reflect on such potential relationships as it can affect the conduct of the research. The kind of relationship that can be built between the researcher and the participant is much more complex than widely assumed (Banks and Scheyvens 2014). It is not simply that the researcher controls what and how the information is extracted and from whom, but that other stakeholders of the research can affect the research conduct in various ways. For instance, gatekeepers control access to potential research participants and valuable information and they can work favourably or adversely to the research



schedule (see for example Scott *et al.* 2006). Even the interview participants and informants can manipulate the research findings by intentionally providing misinformation, or they can simply hide information (Scheyvens 2014).

The complexity also derives from the positionality of the researcher. In development field research, a researcher is often more than a mere researcher. McAreevey (2008) explains the complex nature of the researcher’s positionality from her own experience of being a researcher and an employee of the organisation at the same time during field research. As she highlights, the complex positionality often brings about a conflict of interests between the researcher and other stakeholders involved in the research, such as gatekeepers, employers, local authorities or funding organisations. The researcher’s positionality in relation to those who are involved in the research process can alter the course of research and affect the performance of data collection significantly (England 1994; Grey 2004; Scheyvens 2014). In fact, my research involved a wide range of participants and stakeholders as has been discussed in Section 3.3, ranging from members of rural Malawian communities to Japanese development workers, to each of whom my positionality appeared differently. In this context, careful understanding of my positionalities in relation to various research participants was required so that I minimise the effect of power relations that would affect the performance of participants and so as to be ethically correct. The research participants had some common initial perceptions about my identity based on their own norms and social systems (see Table 3.6).

**Table 3-5: Changing Positionality**

	How I was initially perceived	How I presented myself
Members of Rural communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aid worker</li> <li>- Foreigner</li> <li>- A staff of Japanese NGO</li> <li>- Official researcher from authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student from a UK university</li> <li>- Independent of any organisation</li> <li>- Friend</li> </ul>
Host family in villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Important visitor</li> <li>- Foreign stranger</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family member</li> <li>- Friend</li> </ul>
Malawian counterparts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research student</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research student</li> <li>- Friend</li> </ul>
Japanese aid workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Japanese</li> <li>- Student yet highly-qualified</li> <li>- Investigator</li> <li>- Supporter/Critique?-unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Japanese student</li> <li>- Friend</li> </ul>

Source: created by the author

In preparing to face and in response to such perceptions, my strategy to present myself to the participants was to stress the fact that I am a student and independent, and to adapt to their customs and be friendly. Furthermore, the positionalities can also be formed in relation to other social and economic status, notably gender and income levels. It has been much discussed that gender issues need to be carefully scrutinised in field research (England 1994; Chacko 2004; Momsen 2006; Sultana 2007; Scheyvens *et al.* 2014). In the communities where I conducted field research, gender-specific difficulties for research were present. For instance, women with small children tended to be busy taking care of the children and engaging in household chores, and with consent, I sometimes had to conduct interview while they were bathing their children or cooking, and the interviews had to be suspended or terminated in some cases. The female respondents included those who was divorced or widowed, or those who were married but the husband was not financially contributing to the household for different reasons. These respondents tended to be poorer and extremely busy, and hence difficult to spare time for the in-depth interview.

In the similar context, working with a male translator addressed specific issues interviewing female respondents. In an interview with a young mother with her baby in her arms, after I started my questions her baby started crying. When I suggested that I could stop the interview as the baby might not feeling good, she asked me not to worry and continue the questions. The baby did not stop crying and she started to breastfeed. After a few minutes, my translator suggested:

“Let’s stop this here, she is not saying so but I think she is not feeling very comfortable that we are looking at her. And neither am I actually.”

I agreed with his opinion and we suggested the mother that we would come back later so she could focus on making her baby feel better. This incident demonstrates that there is a need of not only considering the perspective of such female respondents, but also the same of the translator when the interview involves people of different gender. It was extremely rare in my research; still, some few female respondents were initially hesitant to speak openly. It was possibly caused by my translator being a male, or by me being a foreigner. In such instances, my translator possessed an excellent talent of icebreaking, and it greatly helped the interview respondents to become open and friendly. While there were difficulties interviewing female respondents, it was equally evident that the women in the communities were not constrained by their social and cultural norms in voicing their opinions and public appearances. It was not rare that while I was interviewing a male respondent, that his wife interrupted and started answering questions on his behalf. Nevertheless, the gender-specific difficulties were present, and as emphasised by Scheyvens *et al.* (2014), they can

be overcome as long as the researcher is well-informed of the local socio-cultural norms and made sensitive decisions.

There is also a salient issue of me being a Japanese researcher while investigating the field practice of Japanese development projects. In particular, with the people in the recipient communities of the Japanese development assistance, I expected that the people would naturally assume that I was a part of the organisation, and hence the research participants might be hesitant to express any negative comments about the project. I appeared clearly as a foreigner, or a foreigner looking similar to those who were assisting them. In fact, a woman who lived near the house I was staying at in the village explained who I was to her friend, "She is coming from this organisation building toilets in our village." Before I got to know what they were talking about as my translator was not simultaneously telling me the meaning then, her friend started shaking hands and thanking me. I had never told anyone that I had any relationship with the organisation, and still the people sometimes just assumed that I was part of the organisation, perhaps due to the resemblance of my appearance to the organisation staff. On this point a careful reflexivity was required as my interview questions included how the external development assistance by the Japanese organisation is perceived by the members of recipient communities. Interview responses could have been affected by my identity that was misunderstood.

I realised that the fact that I was trying not to publicly communicate with the staff of the organisations or not to move around with them while they are visiting the communities was simply not enough to mitigate the risk of forming such power relations between myself and the research participants. I recognised that this was partly caused by my miscommunication and the lack of communication. While staying in the villages, my intention was to establish my position in relation to the people in the research site as a student researching the lives of rural communities as an individual researcher. In order to make this as clear as possible to the people in the communities, I tried to have direct communications individually as much as possible.

Different dynamics played out when I had to obtain access to interview participants by the initial introduction through the Japanese organisation<sup>20</sup>. For the reasons explained earlier in the chapter, the participants were hesitant to be open and speak negatively about the project at the beginning. This was a clear limitation. Leyshon (2002) suggests that building trust by establishing common grounds with research participants is an effective way to have better responses from research participants generally, in his case sport activities and community social events. Similarly as Atkinson *et al.* (2007) claim, casual socialisation or simply spending time together helps build foundation of

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<sup>20</sup> This was only the case when I was researching OVOP projects.

mutual trust with research participants. My case resonates with these claims in that the participants gradually understood what I was doing in the village as I spent more time with them. In this project where the Japanese organisation was assisting the particular groups of farmer, I joined the group activity every day and spent much time before I started conducting formal interview with the group members. I also participated in Church services which were such an important and fun social space for the local people. I was able to obtain open comments from the members; for instance, the members of the communities where JNGO provide assistance critically reflected on their programmes. Still, the difficulty persisted in some occasions. I coped with this persistent difficulty by participating in their activities and observe their lives by myself.

Furthermore, it was not only the specific Japanese persona that has affected my positionality in relation to different people in the community. In one of the initial visits to the research sites in the rural communities, a man in the market area observed me and my translator carrying a leather document bag and cautioned us,

“People might see you as a ‘madam’ who is escorted by a Malawian man carrying a bag full of cash.” (Field Notes, October 2012)

I was almost always interpreted as an aid worker or an official by villagers at the first encounter. This case demonstrated that my foreigner appearance combined with the way I dressed affected my positionality and might have put me into risk. Moreover this also meant that it was not only me but also the positionality of my translator could affect the research. My translator also reflected on his appearance and his positionality in relation to the people in the community, and he decided to wear a casual shirt and not to carry a bag. He also decided to spend his free time in the local market area to make friends and gather information, and when he heard any misleading rumour about our research, he corrected them. As I made a conscious effort to make my position clear by taking time to interact with them individually, more people came to understand my purpose in the villages. With the people in the local communities, my appearance as a foreigner led them to perceive me as rich and somebody willing to directly help their needs. After conscious reflections however, a conversation between two women demonstrated how I was seen by the local people and how the people’s view towards me gradually changed:

“Let’s ask her to take us to the Lake Malawi.” “No, she is a student, she doesn’t have money.” (Field Notes, November 2012)

While interviewing the recipients of the Japanese development assistance addressed the clear difficulty, researching Japanese workers in Malawi as a Japanese researcher from UK academic

institution had its own challenges. With the Japanese research participants, the fluidity of outside-insider boundary between the researcher and the researched prove to be fluid and changeable (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). On the one hand there were a number of commonalities between me and the research participants, such as culture, language, living in Malawi as a foreigner, interest in international development; on the other hand, there were significant differences such as me being in academia and them being in field practice. The certain space I always maintained between myself and the interview respondents made us interestingly close and at the same time distant: the distance between us was a comfortable distance for them to talk about their personal experiences and feelings about their everyday lives in Malawi. Individual interviews I conducted with aid workers often led me and the respondent to understand each other and the relationship I established with the individual expatriates in Malawi helped me carry out field research significantly in terms of logistical arrangements as well as mental aspects.

Having a common ground translates into advantage as well as disadvantage at times. As Takeda (2012) highlights in his research on international marriage between Japanese women and Australian men:

“While speaking the same language helped me to hear and understand their stories, the politeness inherent in Japanese cultural practices created an environment that only allowed for formal and polite questioning and did not allow for personal questioning of a deeper level. Constrained by my own cultural conditioning, I was aware of how much I could ask and when I needed to stop inquiring further.” (Takeda 2012: 293)

Interviewing in a common mother tongue of the researcher and the researched, in such a particular language as Japanese, demonstrates a unique issue in field research. Not merely the use of language, but also the cultural norms behind the language also plays a role in conducting interviews with people of particular national and ethnic identity.

As my research involved collecting narratives through in-depth interviews with individual participants, establishing networks and maintaining good relationships greatly helped in obtaining insightful comments and sharing personal stories with the interviewees. On the other hand however, establishing good and close relationships hindered me in asking penetrating questions that I knew would have upset the feeling of the interviewees. This is particularly the case with Japanese research participants as we were trapped in the typical Japanese norm of the importance of reading between lines and understanding other people’s feeling without explicitly communicating. At times I decided to compromise on obtaining some information or clarifying opinions in order to maintain the good

relationship. Although I gradually developed the technique of directing the conversation so that I could access information without directly asking questions, it was always a challenge to deal with such a situation. This issue can be improved by accumulating experiences in handling unexpected situations and enhancing the reflexivity to deal with unexpected situations.

As such, varying relationships can be a challenge during field work. However, as long as such relationships are properly acknowledged, in other words, the researcher understands one's positionality sensitively, critically informed research can be achieved (Chacko 2004; Sultana 2007). In order to understand the researcher's own positionality, it is essential to constantly engage with critical reflection of power relations and politics during the research process.

## **3.6 Ethical Considerations: Reciprocity and Relationship**

### **3.6.1 Researching People – Need of a Sixth Sense?**

Researching in the real world involves the people and ethics needs to be considered from the perspectives of individual participants (Gray 2004). The researcher needs to behave appropriately to those who can be affected by the research in different ways. Ethics in social research are concerned with what is right for the researcher and the researched within the specific context in which the research takes place, which makes it difficult to establish a defined guideline for ethical conduct of social research (May 2001), with some notable exceptions in research on health or social care and nursing (Bell and Nutt 2002; Tilley and Woodthorpe 2011).

For instance, I was trying to be discreet so as not to raise too 'personal' questions during interviews or participating in their activities. However, it was very common for the interviewee or other members of the communities to ask me if I was married and what my religion was. I was not used to being asked such questions by a stranger and these questions caught me by surprise and discomfort at first. What is 'personal' to me was not necessarily personal to the people I spoke to, and indeed the opposite was also true. I needed to be sensitive to this diversity and reflexive to unexpected situations. Indeed, my objective of field research entailed understanding diversity of social norms and customs.

As Wada and Nakata (2010: 20) recall from their field research experience,

“I observed my colleague’s interview technique. The questions he was asking seemed very personal to me and I would have not asked that way. However, the respondent was very happy to answer and it was just like two people were greatly engaged in the conversation.”

It is extremely difficult to understand confidently what is accepted and what is not without being explicitly told. It is something that organically develops in the researcher’s sense based on observation and experience. It would be beneficial for a social researcher to train and polish, if it is possible, the sense to intuitively understand the hidden norms of a society and to instinctively know how to respond and behave to a situation.

### **3.6.2 Research Consent**

Similarly, the different forms of ethics applied in obtaining consent from participants. In order to ensure the ethical conduct of my research and to comply with the ethical research responsibility and procedure required by the College Ethics Committee in my university (see Royal Holloway Ethics Committee 2010), I sought to obtain written consent from Japanese aid workers and Malawian counterparts, who are relatively familiar with the concept of a contract and also literate. I did not on the other hand seek to obtain written consent from the members of recipient community, the majority of whom were illiterate and rather unfamiliar with the concepts of confidentiality, accountability, or contracts (see Scheyvens et al. (2003) regarding the need to be sensitive to individual and cultural history). In addition, during my interviews it emerged that ‘informing’ the participants, particularly the members of the recipient communities, in advance of commencing the interview questions, simply made them confused sometimes. On an occasion, my translator told me, “Can you just start the question to this one? It will not make any sense to him, you know.” I understood what he tried to imply, but I responded, “Still I need to stick to the university regulation and I just need to ‘say’ it, and you just need to ‘say’ it in Chichewa, OK?” While I went onto explaining the usual protocol of purpose, the right to refuse and withdraw and confidentiality, I could clearly see the facial expression of the interviewee changing from friendly and cooperative to totally confused and intimidated. Even after this experience, I did not stop explaining what I was required to explain; however, I discussed this issue with my translator and we paid special attention to how to convey the message without confusing them. We ended up presenting ourselves in a friendly manner and explaining the research in as simple a way as possible so as not to create a moment of discomfort for the respondents.

Obtaining written consent from participants is not only concerned with literacy level or familiarity, but also, as Millar and Bell (2002) note, the possibility that it challenges the relationship based on the notion of trust between the researcher and the researched. Although it never became an obvious problem, I felt awkward in asking written consent from someone I had a close relationship with. I sometimes needed to stress that it was just a formality.

### **3.6.3 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is another important element of ethics in qualitative and quantitative research (Scheyvens et al. 2003). This was particularly applicable to my research as it places an importance on individuals' experiences and perspectives, including their personal sphere and the relationships with other individuals. Anonymity has become one of the important considerations for a research. On the other hand, concealing certain information such as setting and location can lead to omission of insight into co-relations between events and furthermore, connections which can be formed between the readers and the research context (Nespor 2000; Tilley and Woodthorpe 2011). In my research therefore for the purpose of confidentiality, I have kept individuals anonymous and unidentifiable in this thesis, by using pseudonyms. As the Japanese expatriate community in Malawi is relatively small and it would be easy to identify particular persons in some cases if information such as gender, age, and name of organisation is used, so I have not been very specific with regard to individual Japanese interviewees. Similarly, I have kept the names of the NGO and farmers' groups anonymous. The name of OVOP Malawi is presented explicitly as my research report has been published and circulated openly as a part of the periodical newsletter by JICA UK who assisted my research in cooperation with OVOP Malawi.

### **3.6.4 Balanced Reciprocity**

It would be undeniable that the primary purpose of academic research such as mine does not necessarily provide an instant or tangible benefit to the research participants. It has been admitted by previous researchers that interviews can be exploitative in that only the researcher benefits by extracting information from the respondent without proportionately helping them (Walcott 1995; Scheyvens et al 2003; Brockington and Sullivan 2004). To be ethically correct in this regard, it is important to create conditions and atmosphere that are conducive to the research participants, and to make them feel able to refuse to cooperate in my study. This is concerned with the issue of power



relations between the researcher and the researched. As Chambers (1997) has observed, the researcher with belongings that are not locally available or clothing that is not affordable by the locals, reinforces the power imbalance that the researcher is superior and the researched is inferior, which can make the latter feel intimidated and disempowered. I attempted to challenge the typical assumption that power relations plays a role in favour of the researcher coming from developed world over the research participants in the communities of developing areas. Although as our physical appearance cannot change and hence the impact of such is not easily superseded by behaviour, power imbalances can be reduced by showing appreciation of local customs and values, and by living in the way the locals do (Scheyvens *et al.* 2003). From the entry point to the research area, I used local transportation, dressed as the local women do, and followed careful instruction given by my translator as to how to talk to people with respect (see Plate 3.4 and 3.5).

**Plate 3.4: Author participating in farming exercise**



Source: the author

**Plate 3.5: Author participating in cooking nsima**



Source: the author

In the case of research in the JICA project site, because I was introduced by the local OVOP coordinator who has authority over the provision of assistance to the farmers, I had to be extra conscious about minimising power imbalance.

As a student, I lacked financial resources and capability to bring about instant changes to the livelihood issues of the communities. Thus I reciprocated to their cooperation with what Sahlins (1972) named balanced reciprocity. The way I could reciprocate for what participants have given me, namely, knowledge and time, as an instant response to their cooperation with a hope that my research could contribute to the improvement of their development practice in the long term.

My reciprocation was attempted in the following way. Once I finished my questions, I explained that I would like to reciprocate, but I lacked resources as I am still a student, and the only way I could thank you is to give you opportunity to ask me any questions they wished to ask, as many questions as they wish, just as I had asked them questions. This method of reciprocation was received well in general and remarkably well in some cases. On one occasion my field note records:

“When I told him that he could ask any and many questions just like the way I asked him, he went into his room and came back with a notebook and a pen. He sat down in front of us [me and my translator] and started asking questions. It was as if I was interviewed back by him. And, he was enjoying that.” (Field Note, July 2013) (See Plate 3.6)

**Plate 3.6: An interview participant asking back questions both to author and the translator**



Source: the author

On the other hand, I was sometimes asked by the respondents what benefit they could receive out of my interview at the beginning or end of the interview. In order to avoid misleading participants, I approached potential respondents by stressing the point that I was a student and the interview was primarily for me to complete my academic degree, and there would be no instant benefit for the respondents. It was then up to them to cooperate voluntarily with me.

Another issue that emerged during my research in relation to reciprocity was that there can be two elements in reciprocity: tangible gesture and intangible action. For instance, reciprocation is a gesture of creating or maintaining relationship between the giver and receiver by showing appreciation of each other (Mauss 1990[1925]). On the other hand, one can reciprocate to the other by taking action but not necessarily making it visible to the person, for instance, donating money to the community without announcing it. Giving a bag of sugar to the participants would have been received as an instant appreciation of their cooperation, and hence it could have improved our relationship afterwards. However, it could also raise their expectation that foreigners are resourceful and are charitable in giving hand-outs, which is the idea that tends to penetrate in rural communities in Malawi where foreign aid is widespread. In contrast, the silent contribution might have had no impact on the relationship between the researcher and the participant, but the participant's livelihood could have actually improved in the long term owing to the NGO being able to construct a borehole with the donation for safe water supply in the area. The concept of reciprocity in social research needs to be considered carefully and according to the specific context of the field research.

Related to the idea that foreign development assistance is prevalent in rural communities, I also felt that the action of giving material items would contribute to crystallising this view. In particular, the projects that I was researching were trying not to provide hand-outs to encourage the self-help development of the recipients.

I reciprocated to the people who accommodated me in their homes in a different way from the interview participants because they allocated a room for me, and they prepared food and also water for bathing every day and I did not even ask for food or water. I reciprocated their material and labour contributions to making my stay comfortable, by gifting maize flour, sugar, salt, cooking oil, or vegetables, and I also gifted *chitenji*<sup>21</sup> to my host mothers, which has a symbolic meaning of a good gift to a close person. Another way that I considered as a way of reciprocation was to never refuse anyone who came to visit me. Indeed while I was living in village, different people kept coming to see me, to greet me, to chat with me, to ask questions about the UK, to practise English, to have tuition on mathematics and science from me, to play with me, or simply just to observe me. I felt exhausted sometimes especially when some 30 to 40 children followed me everywhere and just sat around and expected me to say something after long day of research work.

PhD field research puts the researcher in a unique situation. On the one hand the researcher is expected to produce results that are up to a professional standard; on the other hand he/she tends to lack resources to live up to the expectation particularly in the logistical aspect. In my case, most of my field research had to be self-funded and hence I had to seek ways in which I could produce satisfactory results with a very limited financial resource. When I visited Malawi for the first time, the first people I met were the expatriate officers of the NGO. After the first one month, they offered to help me with living arrangements in Lilongwe, by letting me stay within their office/residential compound.

The resource that is important in carrying out a field work especially when the field work involves in-depth ethnographic investigation is not only financial but also importantly institutional resources. For example, NGO expatriate workers would normally be always well-informed, have their security assured and have access to a necessary safety-net by their headquarters channelling through embassies at the same time. However an individual researcher like me did not have such support particularly during the time when I was staying in rural areas. Malawi is fairly secure environment in terms of criminal activities; still, I had to be careful about my security. Individual officers of the NGO offered the safety net when I fell ill, they kept me in comfort and made sure I was fine. I reciprocated

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<sup>21</sup> *Chitenji* is traditional textile which women wrap around their waist and legs like a long-skirt. Women use *chitenji* in various purposes in daily lives, as a cloth to hold a child on their back or as a curtain in a house. It is also a popular choice as a gift to women.

their assistance by sharing information and data they were interested in as long as the confidentiality of the research participants in the villages were not violated, and buying and carrying materials for the project that they were unable to obtain in Malawi from the UK, such as books and soap-making moulds. I also contributed to the cooking routine by cooking for all the housemates whenever I was staying at their house.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated how the research was constructed responding to a diverse set of research contexts in different phases, in the way that meets research objectives. This was achieved through efficiently utilising multiple techniques of qualitative inquiry, from searching the reflections of development workers on the Internet to living with aid recipient families in rural village in Malawi. As my research environment was diverse, the issues that arose along with the progress of the research were also diverse. The chapter also demonstrated some challenges that the researcher can face, such as constantly changing identity and the necessity to be highly adaptable to the research environment. In coping with challenges, I tried to help myself while being helped by others. Self-help in carrying out my field research concerned taking actions based on consulting and making decisions on how to utilise available resource which I made available after strategically working towards it.

“Methodology may just mean a series of meetings with people, but if researchers are appropriately self-aware, and meetings are characterised by good listening, and conversation, we will have much to learn about the world in which we live.”

(Brockington and Sullivan 2003: 73)

The key to successful data collection in Malawi was about being humble to the environment including people, culture, society and also the environment as the nature, while holding myself strongly and not losing myself.

## Chapter 4: Japan and Development Assistance

### 4.1 Introduction

To examine Japan's involvement in development assistance, this chapter begins with disentangling the historical background of how Japan has become one of the world's leading donors of development assistance. The early history of Japan and development assistance can be found in the history of Japan's own economic development and international relations particularly after the end of World War II. Its principles and practices evolved with and in response to a series of domestic and international socio-political events during this period (Orr 1988; Rix 1993; Nishigaki and Shimomura 1996; Arase 2005; Sato, H. 2012). The government of Japan played a significant role in establishing the platform for Japan's development assistance and setting a direction, while the private sector has played a highly significant parallel role in Japan's development assistance (Lancaster 2010; Nishikawa and Sato 2012). Additionally, grassroots activities by non-governmental organisations have become noticeable since the 1990s (Reimann 2003; Pekkanen 2006). Understanding the historical backgrounds shall reveal how socio-political events have influenced policy and implementation of Japan's development assistance in international as well as domestic contexts, and how government, private and non-governmental sectors have also contributed to the current landscape of development assistance. Importantly, the chapter also argues the political nature of development aid while exploring Japan's claim of exceptionalism in principles and practice of development assistance. In doing so, it demonstrates how the idea of self-help has become a primary principle of today's Japanese development assistance and a distinct characteristic of Japanese aid (Sawamura 2004; Ellerman 2007; Versi 2011). Furthermore, the chapter examines Japan's relations to other traditional large donors and to emerging donors, in terms of where it stands in the recent environment of international development assistance.

## 4.2 As a Recipient of Aid

### 4.2.1 Macroeconomic development

Because of its current status of a world economic giant and leading donor of development assistance, it is often forgotten that Japan was once a large recipient of development assistance. It is significant to learn its own journey from being a recipient to a donor as the experience of being a recipient has contributed to shaping the philosophy and practice of donor to a great extent (Sato, J. 2012). After the end of World War II in 1945, Japan was in a state of social and economic chaos due to the physical and structural damage accumulated over the period since 1937, when the Sino-Japanese War II began<sup>22</sup>. Domestic industries were dysfunctional and supply chains were physically damaged. To add to the significant damages to industrial and social infrastructure, about 6.5 million expatriate Japanese citizens including ex-soldiers were repatriated (Ishikawa 1986). The lack of basic necessities in people's daily life and the lack of material and financial resources to reconstruct the war-torn infrastructure labelled Japan as a developing country.

The post-war reconstruction was led by the United States (US) government and multilateral institutions, notably the World Bank. The US provided US\$ 1.6 billion of grant aid and US\$ 500 million of loans to the Japanese government in seven years (Serafino *et al.* 2006) (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.6: US Aid to Post-War Japan (in millions of US dollars in the value at that time)**

	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	Total
Grants	82.7	291.0	375.4	388.8	283.6	225.1	49.9	1696.5
Loans	24.0	98.3	108.3	112.7	81.8	65.2	13.7	504.0

Source: USAID Grants and Loans Database (2014)

In today's value<sup>23</sup>, it is equivalent to US\$ 11 billion in total, which is on an annual basis similar to the aid disbursement of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to

<sup>22</sup> World War II started in 1941, but Japan was already at war with China from 1937. It is largely understood in Japan that this Sino-Japanese War II which started in 1937 later developed into World War II in 1941.

<sup>23</sup> The value as of January 2014.

Afghanistan in 2012. The grant portion was disbursed in the forms of necessities such as food, agricultural fertiliser and medical equipment, and also in the form of industrial materials such as coal, iron ore and machinery (Kaneko 2012). The provision schedule was made by the Japanese government and mostly the items were delivered to local organisations such as hospitals, schools and shelters, where vulnerable people were accommodated.

In Malawi, it was often highlighted by the Japanese expatriate aid workers that locals tend to ask for material items from them. “Give me money!” is what aid workers often hear when walking around rural villages in Malawi. There was a sentiment of criticism of aid dependency in the expatriates’ comments towards such scenes. However, this scene is not unique to Malawi, in fact it was common to find children asking for material provisions to foreigners in post-war Japan (see Plate 4.1)<sup>24</sup>.

**Plate 4.7: “Children Pestering an Occupation Force Soldier for Chocolates” in Karuizawa, Nagano-prefecture, Japan.**



Source: US National Archives & Records Administration, published on Mainichi Newspaper 24/09/1945

Furthermore, multilateral organisations were another large source of assistance (see Table 4.2).

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<sup>24</sup> Although there seems to be a similarity, it would be not appropriate to strictly compare the two countries as the environment and historical background is greatly different for Japan at that time and Malawi of today. Still, it would be worthwhile to remember that this was a reality in Japan at that time.



**Table 4.7: World Bank Loans to Post-war Japan**

Year	Beneficiary	Project
1953	Kansai Electric Power Co. Ltd.	Tanagawa thermal power station (two turbines; 75 MW)
1953	Kyushu Electric Power Co. Ltd.	Karita thermal power station (75 MW)
1953	Chubu Electric Power Co. Ltd.	Yokkaichi thermal power station (66 MW)
1955	Yawata Iron & Steel Co. Ltd.	Steel-plate production facilities
1956	Nippon Steel Tube Co. Ltd.	Seamless tube production facilities
1956	Toyota Motor Co. Ltd.	Koromo Plant truck and bus machine tools
1956	Ishikawajima Heavy Industries Co.	Tokyo marine engine turbine production facilities
1956	Mitsubishi Shipbuilding & Engineering	Nagasaki Shipyard diesel engine production facilities
1956	Kawasaki Steel Corporation	Chiba plant hot and cold strip mills
1956	Agricultural Land Development	Several agricultural development projects
1957	Aichi Waterworks Corporation	Public water project in Aichi Prefecture
1958	Kawasaki Steel Corporation (2nd loan)	Chiba Works 1,000 ton blast furnace, coke oven
1958	Kansai Electric Power Co. Ltd. (2nd)	Kurobe No. 4 hydroelectric power station (three turbines; 86 MW)
1958	Hokuriku Electric Power Co. Ltd.	Arimine hydroelectric power station (261 MW)
1958	Sumitomo Metal Industries Ltd.	Wakayama Works 1,000 ton blast furnace and blooming mill
1958	Kobe Steel Ltd.	Nadahama 800 ton blast furnace and Wakihama steel mill
1958	Chubu Electric Power Co. Ltd. (2nd)	Hatanagi No. 1 and No. 2 hydroelectric power stations (85 MW)
1958	Nippon Steel Tube Co. Ltd. (2nd loan)	Mizue Works 60 ton steel converter
1959	Electric Power Development Co. Ltd.	Miboro hydroelectric power station (215 MW)
1959	Fuji Iron & Steel Co. Ltd.	Hirohata Works 1,500 ton blast furnace, converter and blooming mill
1959	Yawata Iron & Steel Co. Ltd. (2nd loan)	Tobata Works 1,500 ton blast furnaces (two)
1960	Japan Highway Public Corporation	Amagasaki Ritto section of the Meishin Expressway
1960	Kawasaki Steel Corporation (3rd loan)	Chiba works slab casting facilities construction
1960	Sumitomo Metal Industries, Ltd. (2nd)	Wakayama Works combined mill
1961	Kyushu Electric Power Co. Ltd. (2nd)	Shin-Kokura thermal power station (156 MW)
1961	Japan National Railways	Tokaido Shinkansen (bullet train) Line
1961	Japan Highway Public Corporation (2nd)	Ichinomiya Ritto and Amagasaki Nishinomiya sections of the Meishin
1963	Japan Highway Public Corporation (3rd)	Tokyo Shizuoka section of the Tomei Expressway
1964	Japan Highway Public Corporation (4th)	Toyokawa Komaki section of the Tomei Expressway
1964	Metropolitan Expressway Public	Haneda Yokohama section of the Metropolitan Expressway
1965	Electric Power Development Co. Ltd.	Kuzuryugawa hydroelectric power stations (Nagano and Yugami)
1965	Japan Highway Public Corporation (5th)	Shizuoka Toyokawa section of the Tomei Expressway
1965	Hanshin Expressway Public Corporation	Kobe line No. 1
1966	Japan Highway Public Corporation (6th)	Tokyo Shizuoka section of the Tomei Expressway

Source: adapted from World Bank Country Data (2014) and formatted by the author

All beneficiaries of World Bank funding were private corporations related to power plants, steel production, and transport infrastructure. Prominently, the loans were made from 1953 to 1966 for the specific purpose of basic infrastructure and rehabilitation of key industry. A total of 863 million US dollars of loans was provided to thirty-one projects. This reflects the strong partnership between the government and private sector and great emphasis on economic development based on infrastructure investment (MOFA 2014).

Along with the occupying US forces, fifteen charity organisations mainly from North America provided emergency relief to Japan after the war during the period of occupation and the assistance consisted of food items, clothes, medicine, and also cattle like goats and cows, (Oku 2007). Similarly, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), an international NGO, established an office in Japan in 1948 and provided assistance until 1955.

#### **4.2.2 Rural Development of War-Torn Japan**

In rural post-war Japan, what are regarded as typical developmental issues today were prominent. Access to safe water, modern latrines, general hygiene in living space, and electrification of rural areas were not widespread. A major rural development plan was introduced in 1948 in order to improve the livelihood of rural farmers with the initiative led by the US occupying force. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries embarked on a rural development plan whereby it mobilised extension workers for rural livelihood improvement, including agricultural extension workers (AE workers) and livelihood improvement extension workers (LIP workers). AE workers were knowledgeable and skilled male workers teaching agricultural techniques, while livelihood extension workers were female with knowledge of basic housekeeping but no specific technical skills. It is notable in that the livelihood improvement programme was designed to be implemented by female extension workers. At that time, female professions in Japan were limited to nurse, nutritionist, teacher or hairdresser. The profession of extension worker was advertised as “New profession for ladies, introduced by the Americans” (Ota 2004: 67), and it was associated with the image of “modern professional ladies” (Ota 2004: 67). The new profession was deliberately created to mobilise female workforce and involve in the development of the rural areas and Japan as a country at large.

There is no readily available information and data regarding the details of the US aid provision to post-war Japan, yet aid-provision related studies observe that aid workers comprising of the officials of US occupying force primarily intervened at the level of policy formulation and human resource training at the higher levels of implementation hierarchy and not at the stage of field implementation (Ota 2004; Oku 2007). In such a context, LIP workers have arguably played a significant role in the rural development of Japan, even to the present day (Sato, H. 2012). Since its institutionalisation, LIP workers have implemented numerous and diverse projects (see Plate 4.2 for an example).

**Plate 4.8: “A LIP Worker Advising a Lady about Laundry”, Kofu, Nagano Prefecture, July 1956.**



立って洗濯をすすめる生活改善員

1956.7 甲府市

Source: Digitalisation of Regional Archives Research Group, the photograph taken by Hiroshi Uchida

Mobile cooking classes, family planning lessons, household accounting lessons, renovation of cooking stoves and many other projects emerged from the ideas of the LIP workers under the agenda decided by the policy makers with a strong influence of the occupying force. Under the overall themes of modernisation, liberalisation and democratisation, which were underpinned by the objective of disarmament of the country, small-scale projects were initiated, designed and carried out by the individual extension workers. The project would

evolve from the stage of identifying a problem and causes for the problem, and innovating solutions by utilising the locally available resource to the fullest extent. This experience has been notably carried over and shared among the Japanese aid workers, particularly by the JICA Volunteers.

As has been explained briefly, during the course of reconstruction of the country after the war, Japan received and utilised a large volume of international development assistance including emergency relief and rural socio-economic development programmes. It is distinct that there was a clear focus on investment in power plants and large infrastructure development projects while cooperating with private corporations. Equally importantly, the assistance which established the foundation for the country to experience high economic growth was provided in the form of loans to private corporations through the Development Bank of Japan (Yoshida 2012). Furthermore, the fact that the World Bank loan was fully repaid in 1990 is seen as reflecting Japan's principle of self-help in developmental thinking and practice (MOFA 2014). In terms of rural development programmes, what is common to date in rural development programmes outside Japan was practised at that time, such as extension workers schemes to transfer skills and share knowledge. Overall programmes were carried out in cooperation with the US occupation administration and the World Bank, and this had impacts on the various spheres of the society, from governance systems to social values in terms of moving out of extremist nationalism and militarism, and respecting democracy and basic-human rights (Yoshida 2012).

## **4.3 As an Aid Donor**

### **4.3.1 The Origin of Today's ODA**

The origin of Japan's development assistance can be found in World War II and the aftermath of the war. Japan attempted to expand its empire during the war starting from the neighbouring countries such as China through to Southeast Asia as far as the Northeast region of India. The physical destruction that Japan caused to these regions during the war imposed obligations to pay reparation after its defeat in 1945. The first reparation was

made to Burma in 1955 and successively the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. This war reparation is seen as the origin of Japan's bilateral foreign assistance (Sato, J. 2012).

In parallel with the war reparations, Japan joined the Colombo Plan in 1954, the international framework for development assistance whereby it particularly promotes and facilitates technical assistance and economic cooperation among the member countries. The war had destroyed essential agriculture and raw materials production infrastructure, which were the main sources of export revenue in East and Southeast Asia. The decrease in the volume of exports was an acute concern to major international trade partners and prevailing poverty demanded global attention. Through the Colombo Plan, Japan for the first time committed to an international framework for development assistance and it was the beginning of Japan's multilateral development cooperation.

It can be questioned why Japan began its commitment to assist other countries while it was still facing its own development challenges. By the time Japan joined the Colombo Plan, external pressure, particularly from the US, had been built up for Japan to become a part of international community (Sato, J. 2013). In the building up of the Cold War, the need of development assistance in the Third World provided opportunities for the US-led capitalist allies and the Soviet Union-led communist countries to use foreign aid as a tool to expand the network of allies (Arase 1994). The participation of Japan in the framework was similarly encouraged by the US as a part of its geo-political strategy in Asia so as to limit the influence of the Soviet Union (Orr 1988; Watanabe 2006).

#### **4.3.2 Economic Growth Strategy and Internationalisation**

It is important to note that, at this point in time, the Japanese government had not used the term "aid" (*"enjo"* in Japanese) in their discourse and instead used "economic cooperation" (*"keizai kyoryoku"*). The loans were tied with Japanese companies so as to achieve increased exports revenue and aid continued to be 100% tied until the end of the 1960s (MOFA 2004). As Sato J. (2012) points out, Japan's motivation to assist poorer countries in Asia at that time was not altruism but commercial interests. Having concluded most of the war reparation terms, the government reached a stage at which it could start working on more proactive international economic cooperation strategies. With an explicit objective to

accelerate exports and secure the imports of raw materials, the first concessional loan was made to India in 1958 (MOFA 2004). For Japan's domestic economic growth, one of the most significant problems was lack of raw materials for industrial production (Sato J. 2012). By establishing cooperative economic platforms with other countries in Asia in the form of development assistance, Japan could procure the raw materials while selling industrial goods to the recipient countries.

Fifteen years after the end of World War II, development issues especially in those countries which had recently achieved independence, became a main concern in the international community. The Development Assistance Group (DAG), which later became Development Assistance Committee (DAC) under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was formed to provide an international forum to engage with issues of development assistance. This was the time when Japan faced external pressure to join the international community so that it is integrated into various frameworks including the OECD/DAG(DAC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Development Bank. Japan joined OECD-DAG in 1961. Since then, the conduct of Japan's development assistance has been influenced by various external political movements (Lancaster 2010). For instance, the first oil shock in 1973 forced Japan to quickly increase assistance to Arab states in tandem with Japanese corporations, to strengthen the ties with oil producing countries (Orr 1990; Lancaster 2010; Sato, J. 2012). Similarly, US policies greatly impacted Japan's decisions regarding the provision of development assistance. After US President Richard Nixon announced the end of dollar conversion to gold in 1971, Japan, as a new economic giant, was expected to share the role of the US in maintaining its economic and military power in the world (Hayashi 2012). Japan responded to this pressure by redesigning development assistance, which led to expansion of the recipient countries and the volume of the assistance. Japan's aid policy has been reshaped over many years in an effort to achieve its independent economic growth strategy in Asia, while being influenced by the international community and particularly the US government due to its commitment to the Japan-US Security Treaty signed in 1952 and renewed in 1960 (Leheny and Warren 2010).

While Japan had steadily practised its foreign aid, the final war reparation payment was completed to the Philippines in 1976. With this completion, the ODA entered into a new era of expansion. The government introduced the expansion plan to double the ODA volume in

each two to four year term with five mid-term review periods. The plan was successfully executed and Japan became the world's largest donor in volume in 1989. The increase was in demand not only due to the specific political reasons explained previously, but also was demanded by international community as the consequence of Japan's rapid economic growth in the previous years. Due to the export-driven rapid economic growth, Japan had accumulated a trade surplus to the extent that the international community started demanding that Japan bring the enormous trade surplus back into economic circulation. In response, Japan opted to increase ODA thereby circulating the accumulated surplus and fulfilling its responsibility as a new economic superpower in the international community (Yamashita 2003). ODA has also supplemented the need for military contributions to maintain international peace and stability towards fulfilling the responsibility as one of the largest economies of the world to contribute to international society. Deployment of military troops in foreign countries was carefully avoided in consideration of Japan's imperial past and Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, also known as the "Peace Clause", whereby Japan renounces the use and possession of military force<sup>25</sup> (Nishikawa 2012).

### ***Yen Loans***

Japan's interest in economic cooperation is reflected in how the development assistance is disbursed. In the same year as its joining in the OECD/DAG in 1961, the Japanese government established the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) as a formal entity to implement concessional loans under the auspices of four different agencies: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Economic Planning Agency. These four agencies were the ones which supervised war reparation programmes and shaped the origin of Japan's development assistance (Lancaster 2010). It was founded for the purpose of fostering low-interest, long-term yen-denominated loans to development projects undertaken in recipient countries. It is one of the characteristics of Japan's ODA that there are multiple ministries and government agencies involved in the process, which makes it extensively fragmented. OECF was later integrated with the Japan Export-Import Bank and changed its name to Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) in 1999, and further integrated with the Japan International Cooperation

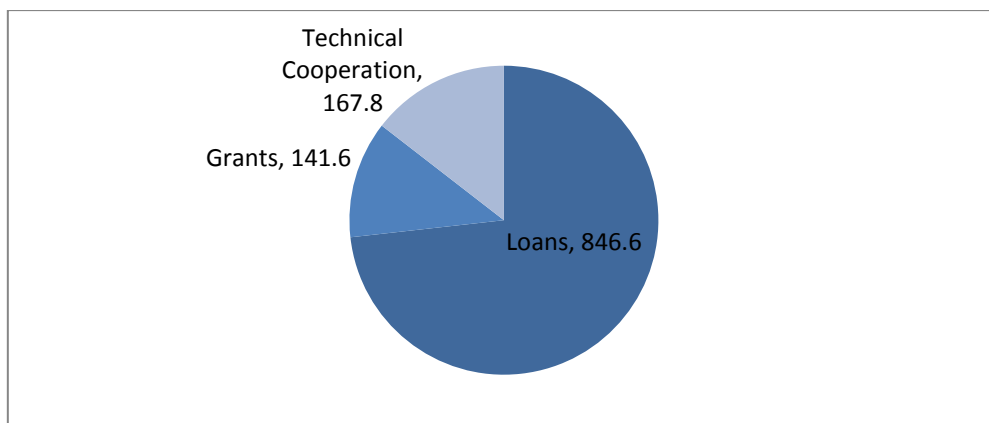
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<sup>25</sup> While Japan renounces military forces, it maintains "self-defence forces," which were developed from the former body of reserve police forces in 1954 in order only to defend the country from external attack in an emergency. Although it has existed over decades, the terms of the force has been under debate.

Agency (JICA) under the auspices of Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a sole implementing agency of Japanese ODA in 2008.

The concessional loan is provided in Japanese Yen terms and hence it is widely known as a Yen Loan. Since the first loan was made to India in 1958, the Yen Loan has become a major means of delivering Japanese ODA. In the early years, Japan was requested by the US government to incubate Yen Loans in Southeast Asian countries, Korea and Taiwan so that Japan extends contributions towards Asian stability and also it shares the US aid burden (Orr 1988). The government has justified its high proportion of loans against grants by maintaining that the core principle of Japan's development assistance is to assist in socio-economic development based on the self-help effort of recipient countries and therefore the loan system helps the recipient countries establish effective financial platforms and become legitimate players in the international community. With such historical background, Japan still maintains a distinctly high ratio of concessional loans compared to other elements of development assistance (see Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: JICA's Operation Scale in 2012 Fiscal Year (in Billion Yen<sup>26</sup>)**



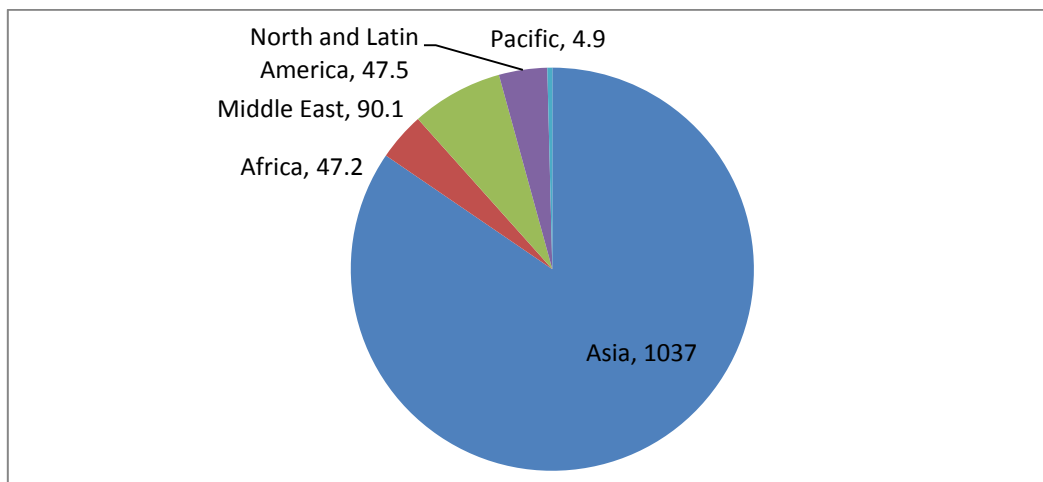
Source: composed by the author based on JICA 2013 Annual Report

Furthermore, geographically, the significantly higher portion of loan is provided to recipients in Asia region (see Figure 4.2).

<sup>26</sup> The exchange rate between US\$ and Japanese Yen was about 80 yen per dollar in 2012.



**Figure 4.2: Yen Loan Distribution by Region in 2012 Fiscal Year (in Billion Yen)**



Source: composed by the author based on JICA 2013 Annual Report

### ***Request-Basis***

The loan process officially starts with a request from the recipient countries as a project or programme proposal. Once the request is made, the Japanese government holds an international tender for contracting projects. This is claimed as a token of respecting self-help principle in Japan's aid provision by the Japanese government as stated in MOFA (2003). However, as others including Arase (1994) and Leheny and Warren (2010) point out, it has a stronger aspect of economic interests pursued by the Japanese government. The request is formulated in cooperation between the recipient government and Japanese advisors, which would not go against Japan's strategic interest if not entirely to serve it. Japanese private corporations are again involved in the advisory process (see further relevant discussions in Section 4.4.1). This aspect also derives from the war reparation programmes, where the programme funding came from the government and Japanese corporations implemented them (Lancaster 2010).

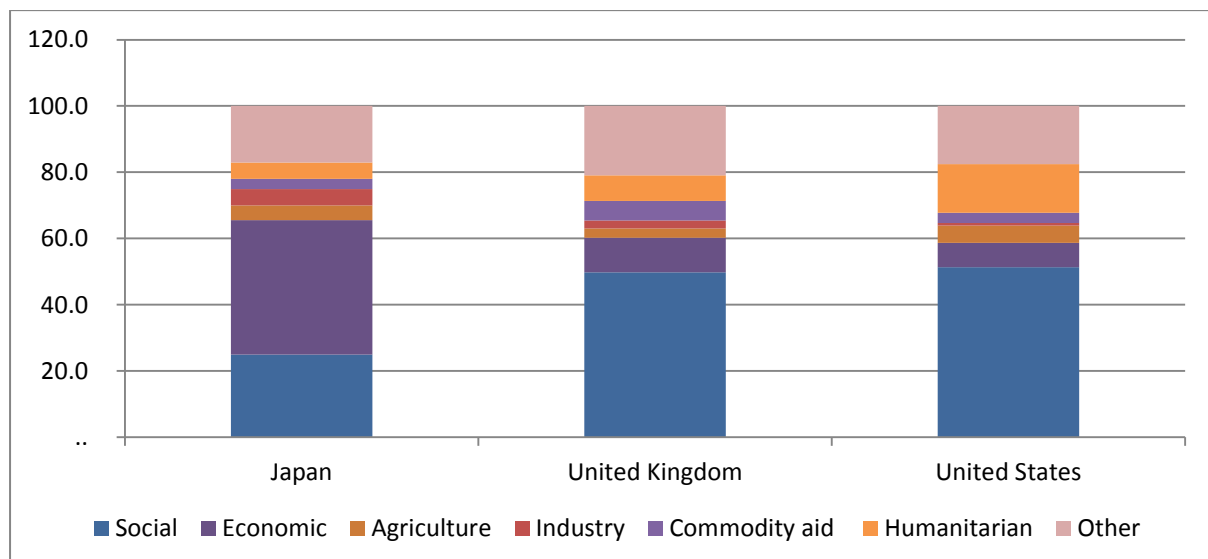
Until the end of the 1960s, the loan projects were 100% tied with Japanese contractors. In response to international pressure, especially by OECD/DAC, the MOFA has gradually opened up the bidding entries for loan aid projects since the 1980s (Hirata 2002). Thrown

into international competition, the ratio of Japanese corporations winning the tender has decreased from more than 65% in 1986 to about 13% in 2009 (JICA 2011)<sup>27</sup>.

The interest rate is kept low in line with OECD/DAC standards and the repayment term is sought to be long. In 2009, there were sixty-two projects contracted through the Yen Loan process with an average interest rate of 0.7% and repayment term of thirty-two years. The top five recipients are Indonesia, India, China, Thailand and the Philippines. The biggest portion of loans go to economic infrastructure projects including transport and electricity infrastructure, on average amounting to 55% of loans for the years 2008 to 2012, and similarly 25% of the loans have been made to fund social infrastructure projects including city sewage system and medical facilities.

Since the 1990s when the aid philosophy was officially clarified, the term “aid” has been equally used in the discourse; still, the element of economic cooperation has remained strong. The emphasis on economic cooperation is evident comparing the aid elements to other major donors (see Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.3: Comparison of Sectoral Allocation of ODA in 2011-2012 (in Million US Dollars)**



Source: created by the author using data from OECD (2014)

<sup>27</sup> Since 2005, the tied rate has been contracted to around 10%. However until 2004, the rate fluctuated depending on the year: 35% in 2000, 40% in 2001, 2.3% in 2002, 8% in 2003, and 28% in 2004. It reflects that until recent Japan had not been very compliant with international trend.

This trend is still prominent in today's ODA discourse in Japan, as has been seen in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's comment on development assistance to Africa recently, "What we promote is investment and economic cooperation and not necessarily aid." (Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during the Africa visits in January 2014, quoted in Asahi Newspaper 16/01/2014)

As has been discussed, Japan's ODA has a strong root in war reparation programmes after World War II. This was distinctly inclined towards economic cooperation to serve Japan's interest in domestic economic growth while contributing to the economic growth of Asia as a whole. This also indicates the reason for the highly fragmented structure involving thirteen ministries in Japan's ODA; for instance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is involved in mobilising skilled professionals for research and training for an agricultural project while the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is involved in fostering student exchange programmes and preserving cultural heritage. Japan's aid was not well-defined for many years and that is largely because it began as an economic cooperation strategy driven by the domestic economic growth strategy and international political and economic pressures.

### **4.3.3 Emphasis on Technical Assistance**

In parallel with economic assistance, the other distinct characteristic of Japan's aid is arguably the emphasis on technical assistance. JICA has long acted as the implementing agency for technical assistance programmes within the grant portion of Japan's development aid. JICA was established as the Overseas Technical Cooperation Agency (OTCA) in 1962, almost simultaneously as the establishment of OECF, the ODA agency for managing concessional loans. Along with the emphasis on economic cooperation, technical cooperation similarly has a long history and played an important role in Japan's ODA, which makes it the other distinct characteristic of Japan's aid.

Technical assistance was started as the main contribution under the Colombo Plan, which provided opportunities for the member countries to learn from each other by exchanging experts to transfer skills on the ground. The demand for technical assistance increased

dramatically and the budget for technical assistance increased ten-fold in the eight years from Japan's participation in the Colombo Plan. Such assistance was considered essential to optimise economic assistance in that lack of appropriate skills and knowledge were identified as a fatal limitation to the successful use of external investment (MOFA 1962). OTCA also started a Junior Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) scheme, through which it sent, and continues to send, young or senior people with certain transferable skills to other countries as a part of technical transfer programmes. The first group of JOCVs was sent to Laos in 1965 with a group of five people ranging in age from 24 to 33, out of which two volunteers were to teach the Japanese language and other the three were to transfer agricultural expertise to local practitioners.

From the 1960s to the 1970s, Japan's foreign economic assistance gradually transformed from passive international obligations into proactive economic policy. It improved the loan availability and expanded the portfolio of loans<sup>28</sup>. Moreover in the 1970s, the concept of Basic Human Needs became prominent in the discourse of international development and the provision of food aid and grant aid was also encouraged. Japan started food aid in accordance with the Food Aid Convention agreed under the Kennedy Round negotiations, where Japan began the provision from 1968. In 1974, OTCA merged with Japan Emigration Services, an agency to support Japanese people living overseas, and formed JICA to further integrate and expand its operations while it also functions as a coordinator for number of ministries involved in development assistance. Amongst a number of ministries, MOFA is the main body in charge of ODA, and JICA is the implementation organisation under the MOFA. Particularly since the administrative reform in 2008, ODA implementation has been consolidated into JICA as the coordinating and implementing agency of Japan's aid. As King and McGarth (2004) point out, it has become an expert of Japanese development knowledge and historical experience.

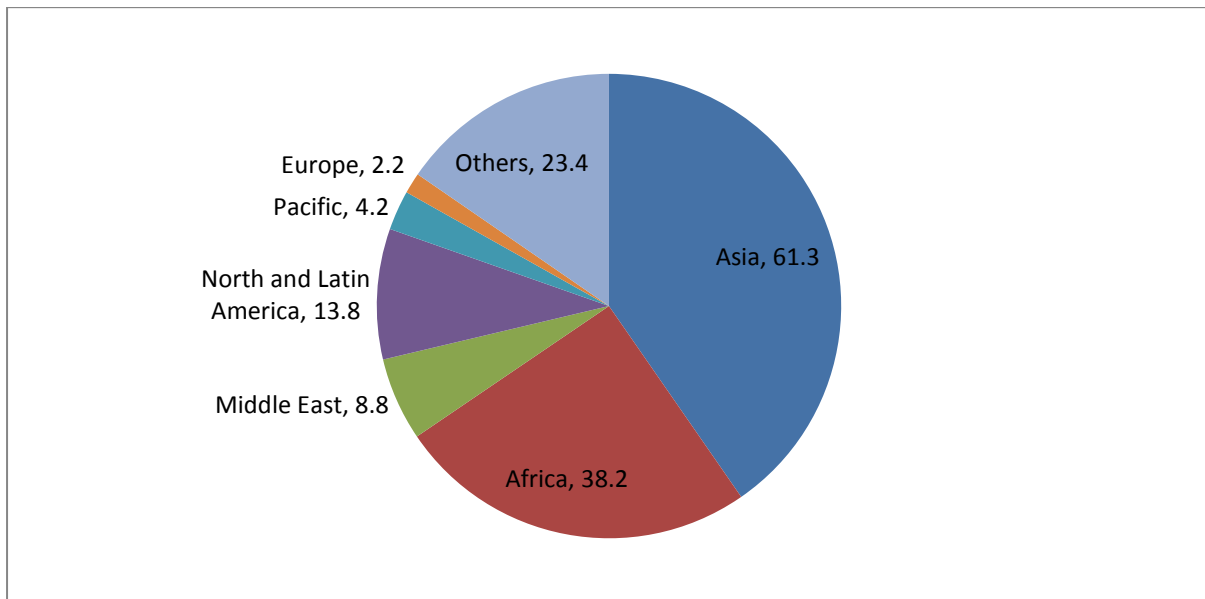
The Japanese government defines technical assistance (TA) as a means to improve human resources for the nation's development by transferring knowledge and skills through face-to-face interaction of individuals (MOFA 2014). Specifically in the context of Japan's TA, it

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<sup>28</sup> The new policies included product-based loans to help recipient countries import certain products that are essential to accelerate development, "2 step" loans which were made to recipient countries' financial institutions that lent out to small- and middle-sized enterprises and farmers.

focuses on human resource improvement which would contribute to the country's development in the longer term. This is rather a wide definition; however, it has in reality acted to complement its distinct emphasis on economic cooperation. Unlike economic cooperation, Africa received a much larger portion of the total technical assistance, and this clearly demonstrates Japan's strategy towards Africa is not necessarily the same as the strategy to Asia, which has been established and replicated within the region (see Figure 4.2 and 4.4).

**Figure 4.4: Technical Cooperation Distribution by Region in Fiscal Year 2012 (in Billion Yen)**



Source: composed by the author based on JICA 2013 Annual Report

JICA has implemented a number of technical assistance programmes, and in fact it has acted as an institution to implement development assistance for social and human development programmes. For instance, the OVOP programme in Malawi which is a focus of this study is also a technical assistance, whereby JICA sends Japanese experts to the counterpart (in this case the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Malawi), aiming to improve the capacity of officials who provide supports to farmers' groups in producing value-added farm products. JICA volunteers are also involved in working closely with farmers' groups. Not only the skills and knowledge of the Japanese expertise but also further financial assistance is made according to the necessary areas identified by the Malawian government in cooperation with the Japanese expert.

## 4.4 Role of Non-governmental Institutions

### 4.4.1 Private Sector

As has been discussed in the previous sections in relation to the aspect of economic cooperation in Japan's development assistance, it would be inappropriate to study Japan's development assistance without drawing careful attention to the involvement of private sector. As was explained in this chapter, the aspect of economic cooperation has played a significant role since the period of domestic macro-economic development of Japan. In tandem with private corporations, Japan's economy grew and Japan's foreign assistance and international relationship was shaped.

The government's aid modality which focuses on economic cooperation through project-based loans demands significant engagement by private corporations as contractors of ODA projects. Specifically, economic infrastructure establishment is planned and implemented by contractors from relevant business or consultancy firms. The level of engagement from the private sector is different from those of other traditional donors. The image of traditional development aid of Western countries is normally associated with humanitarian assistance or religious missionaries, and business is seen as a separate matter. The difference is evident: for instance, searching a key word of "development aid" or "international aid" on Google News search results in topics such as food aid for famine and small villages in Africa whereas searching "ODA" or "*Kaihatsu-enjo* (development assistance)" in Japanese results in a series of new public-private partnerships in carrying out ODA projects. A 2009 article in a major Japanese newspaper reported that the government welcomes private investments in profitable infrastructure development projects while it now utilises Yen loans for less profitable projects so as to minimise the risk of private agencies and encourage private foreign investments (Nikkei Newspaper, 23/08/2009). This business-centric view is often observed in the discourse of ODA in the Japanese media, where ODA is publically recognised and accepted as a business opportunity by the general public.

#### ***How the partnership evolved***

The heavy involvement of private corporations stems from the fact that the ODA was incorporated into Japan's economic recovery and growth strategy after the war (Hirata 2002). Sumi (1989) argues that the current ODA pattern was created with a significant

influence of notable individual actors, one of which is a Japanese engineer called Yutaka Kubota. During World War II, Kubota managed several projects to establish large dam infrastructures in Japan-colonised China, then called Manchukuo, in order to provide enough electricity to sustain increasing production of steel and coal as a part of the government's strategy. After the war, he shifted his focus towards similar projects funded by war reparations with the intention of developing trading bases for the Japanese export industry in an effort to recover from the war-torn status. He established Nippon Koei, the largest engineering consultancy firm which specialises in project planning, research and implementation for infrastructure development, and it has obtained the largest number of development project contracts amongst Japanese consultancy firms since its establishment. Kubota aggressively investigated opportunities to establish large dams in Southeast Asian countries for electricity generation and flood control purposes, and similarly dams and agricultural water supply projects in African countries. This aggressive research backed by a close connection with the government resulted in delivering a number of large infrastructure projects, which became the main sector of assistance for Japan's ODA.

In addition to engineering consultancy firms like Nippon Koei, which played a role similar to a scout for the government to identify feasible and beneficial project opportunities, the development projects naturally brought two more types of private corporation into Japan's development assistance: trading companies and general construction companies. While the Japanese government increased the level of engagement in various international frameworks after World War II to regain status in the international community, Japan's domestic economy demanded a new strategy for growth. Previously, the Japanese economy had grown significantly by supplying a great deal of military equipment and logistics to the US army and its allies involved in the Korean War from 1950. Coupled with increasing domestic economic activities, the Japanese economy grew dramatically until 1957. The economic growth was achieved in tandem with the explosion of domestic consumption, to the point that consumption greatly exceeded supply on the international trade balance in 1958 and consequently the country fell into recession. The government required a new economic growth strategy which was export-driven and expansive. In this context, trading companies have become major actors as ODA is a secured entry point into new overseas markets especially to obtain access to essential raw materials and other natural resources.

Similarly general construction companies have been a major actor as they expand their business acumen to overseas large construction projects.

### ***Indispensable partner***

ODA projects based on strong public-private partnership have brought a strong force of foreign direct investment by Japanese companies and trading houses, which significantly contributed to successful economic growth in Southeast Asia (King 2007). Nonetheless, the strong partnership between the government and private corporations has been criticised as corrupt and unfair (Kusano 1997; Hirata 2002).

The Japanese government has provided support to private corporations in Japan in various ways. Many corporations are protected so as not to collapse with government's initiatives. During the 1980s and the 1990s, the Ministry of Export, Trade and Industry employed a system called the "convoy system"<sup>29</sup>, which was basically a strong cartel system whereby companies were regulated by the government to keep unprofitable or uncompetitive business entities alive. This protection by the government eventually weakened the competitiveness of Japanese companies and encouraged exclusivity and non-transparency (Hirata 2002).

In the ODA field, it has been common yet unofficial practice for Japanese contractors to help recipient governments make applications for ODA provision and the contractors even conduct years of research with the recipient governments to win the contract (Arase 1994). Prior to the formal request, a feasibility study is normally conducted between the two governments in order to evaluate implementation plans and repayment schedules. The feasibility study often involves business-driven contractors and seems to fail to address the environmental concerns and other possible impacts of projects, apart from the financial feasibility to repay the loan (Kusano 1993). This practice has been criticised as anti-competitive and non-transparent, and driven by Japanese business needs (Hirata 2002).

While there are critical views towards the close relationship between the government and private corporations, it is also true that it is not easy to find adverse opinions from the

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<sup>29</sup> The "convoy system" (*Goso-sendan Houshiki* in Japanese) stems from the way the Japanese navy used to mobilise their warships on the sea. All warships proceed at the speed of the slowest one so as to maintain the unity and survive as one entity.



general public towards the involvement of corporations in overseas economic cooperation. This supportive trend can be found in news headlines such as “Japanese corporations explore the opportunities abroad” (Jiji Tsushin Online 23/01/2014), whereby the article reads that such win-win relationships with developing countries are desirably sought. The government is considering another revision of the ODA Charter so as to include the areas of private investment and support for business. The ODA seems to be steered towards economic cooperation which would equally profit the recipient of the assistance, and their business partners in other words.

While the private-public partnership still continues to be strong, private corporations have started implementing their own programmes which are less directly related to business profit, somewhat contributing to corporate social responsibility in more recent years. This has demonstrated a new phenomenon for the Japan’s traditional modality of foreign aid (Katada 2010). For instance, Toyota Motor Corporation, one of the largest Japanese automakers, started providing financial assistance to a large Chinese environmental NGO, in their afforestation programmes in 2001. This was a new movement unlike its earlier assistance to governmental projects which was associated with management of a Toyota’s large automobile plant in the area. Japan’s development aid to China has been significantly political and strategic (Lancaster 2010; Sato, J. 2012). However, such engagement with local NGOs in regional areas was successful and unaffected even during when political tensions were high between Japan and China (Katada 2010). In this light, private corporations have started playing a new role in Japan’s development assistance.

#### **4.4.2 NGO Sector**

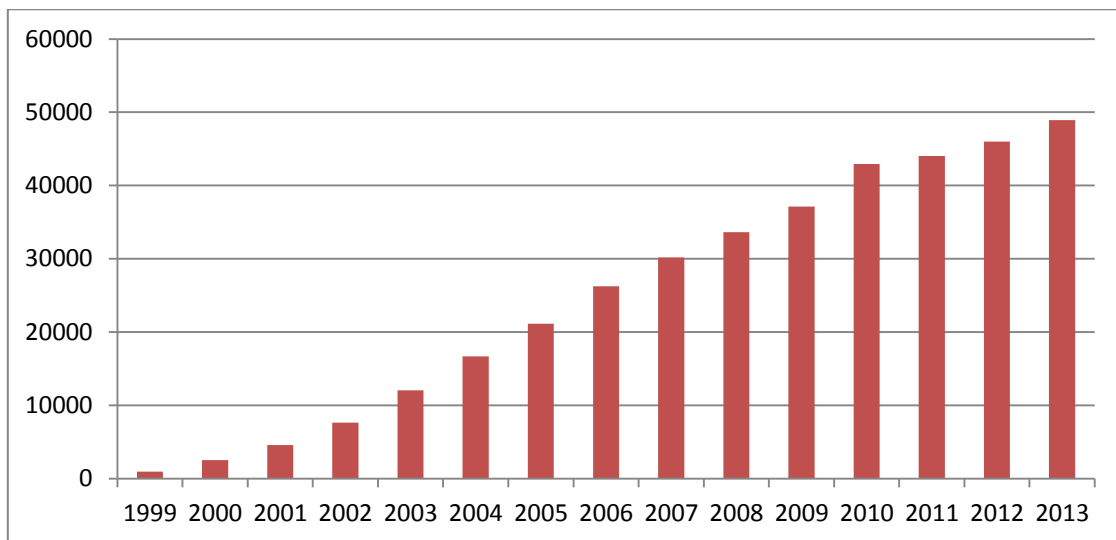
##### ***Emergence of International Development NGOs in Japan***

There were only four recognised NGOs in Japan before 1970 (JANIC 2010). Japan had a period of explosion in the number of international development NGOs in the 1980s in response to the Indo-China refugee problem caused by the socialist revolutions in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The displaced people crowded around country borders and were housed in camps. The problem received great attention combined with Vietnam War due to intensive and sensational media coverage.

In Japan, organisations working towards public interest and social causes are commonly called non-profit organisations (NPOs) as it appears in the Constitution of Japan. The term “NGO” is used in Japan for organisations that are specifically working in the international development sector in Japan. This seems to be due to the fact that NGO is globally recognised and has been used to mean a private organisation working towards international development by the UN. There are non-registered NPOs which are nevertheless active in their operation in Japan due to the lack of financial capability to meet the criteria to register. Japan has a low level of public donations compared to other developed economies and a number of small sized NPOs are constantly under the financial pressure.

The number of registered NPOs has steadily increased since the government introduced the registration system under the NPO Law in 1998 (see Figure 4.5).

**Figure 4.5: The Number of Registered NPOs in Japan (1999-2013)**



Source: composed based on data from “NPO Homepage” by the Cabinet Office, the Government of Japan

The NPO Law was constituted in response to increased civil society activities after the Kobe earthquake disaster in 1995 which resulted in a significant death toll and left a large number of homeless people. Volunteer activities for disaster relief were prominent after the disaster (JANIC 2011). The government has been slowly but gradually encouraging the NPO sector;

for instance, the government introduced a new scheme within the NPO Law through which it promotes NPO activities by introducing tax reduction on donations to NPOs that are registered and making the criteria of registration financially more achievable; for instance, the required volume of public donations is more than ¥3,000<sup>30</sup> donations from more than 100 people per year.

### ***Small NGO Sector***

Globally, the number of NGOs exploded from the 1970s and onwards (Edwards and Hulme 1997). The growth can be generally attributed to the following social phenomena: economic prosperity that is enough to educate members of the public to be aware of issues; a democratic environment that enables people to access and disseminate information and to engage in an activism for a social change; and a globalised economy that helped people engage in border-less activities and weakened the power of state (Reimann 2003). Japan has had economic prosperity, a democratic environment, and a globalised economy like other industrialised countries with a sizable NGO sector; still, the number of NGOs in Japan is distinctively lower than others with similar macro-economic conditions.

Although the government of Japan has started assisting non-governmental activities by improving the legal system to support NGOs in the previous decade, the legal and fiscal framework has been the most tightly regulated non-profit sector among industrialised countries (Pekkanen 2006; JANIC 2011). As Lancaster (2010) highlights, the distinct characteristic of Japan's foreign aid has been its emphasis on commercial aspects, which has consequently marginalised non-profitable actors, typically NGOs.

Reimann (2003) attributes the small size of the NGO sector in Japan to its domestic political environment. According to her analysis, there are three ways to encourage non-governmental activities in domestic policy: (1) legal and fiscal policies regulating the NGO sector; (2) government grants and subsidies; and (3) institutional access to various stages of government's policy-making process. The Japanese legal system employs prescriptive civil law, whereby an organisation has to meet the pre-determined legal requirement to be an NGO within the law. In contrast to the common law tradition which is adopted by the UK,

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<sup>30</sup> The exchange rate between Japanese Yen and US\$ as of January 2013 was about 90 yen per dollar. Thus 3000 Japanese yen was equivalent to about US\$ 33.

the US and others, whereby the law emerges to codify customary practice, the civil law system creates an adverse environment for NGOs to grow due to its nature of inflexibility and authoritativeness.

### ***Cultural Influence***

In addition to the above arguments, cultural background needs to be taken into account in explaining Japan's situation. Hirata (2002) points out that there is a Japanese traditional belief which is derived from Confucianism: self-improvement towards social harmony and absolute respect for elders (or the experienced ones). Confucianism is a line of thought developed by a Chinese philosopher and was introduced to Japan in the sixth century. Since its introduction, Confucianism had been adapted to the Japanese context mixed with the feudal system during the modern age of Japan, which is characterised by swordsmanship and loyalty to their lords<sup>31</sup>. Under the feudal system, respect for social solidarity and a harmonious social environment became a norm, and the highest segment of society, which consisted of the swordsmen who were educated specifically to serve the country, became the subjects of great esteem. This led to Japan's bureaucratic governance which people have historically regarded as the group of most educated and capable people working to make the society work most efficiently. As a phrase in Japanese "Respected bureaucrats and obedient public" demonstrates, the Japanese people historically maintained a trust in bureaucrats and to a great extent this remains in their subconscious level even today. In other words, the social system based on the bureaucracy has functioned so well that the general public has become dependent on the specialised agencies with elaborate skills and long experience. This subconscious trust in governmental officials, or in other words, subconscious disrespect for non-governmental movements, seems to have contributed to the limited size of the NGO sector.

### ***Un-Philanthropic Culture?***

Whereas most Western donors inherit philanthropic value in development assistance from Christianity, the Japanese traditional value system and atheist nature helped it develop differently. Rix (1993) argues that the Japanese public is less sympathetic to the less fortunate than Western countries with a Christian charitable philosophy. According to the

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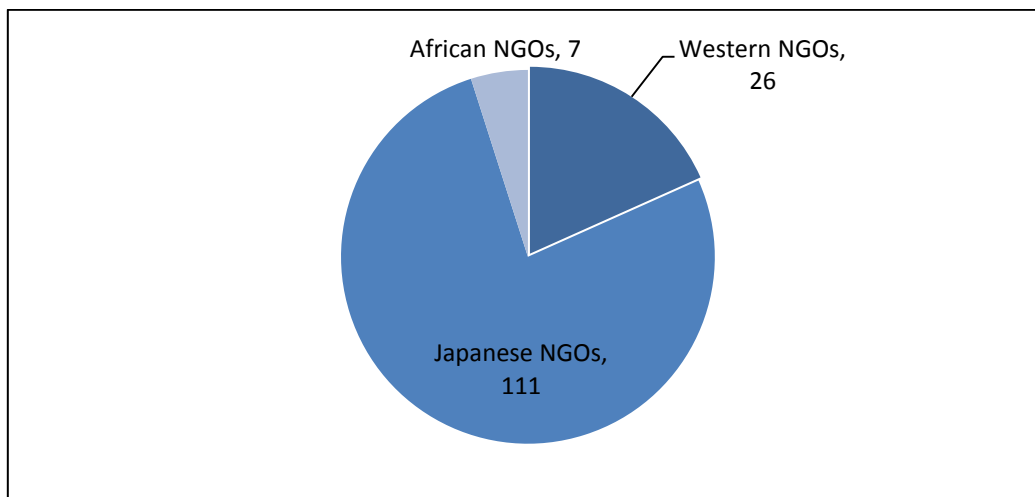
<sup>31</sup> Japan's modern age generally refers to the period between 1603 and 1867, the Edo era, when the feudal lord Tokugawa family governed Japan. During this era Japan had enriched arts, literature, educational philosophy and the principles of life, some of which underlie contemporary social customs of Japan.

World Giving Index 2010, which completed questionnaires in 153 countries, 17% of the sample in Japan answered they had donated money to an organisation, 23% had volunteered for an organisation, and 25% had helped strangers in the previous month, and the combined figure ranked Japan 119<sup>th</sup> as a country with charitable public out of the 153 (Charities Aid Foundation 2010). However, the number of volunteers and the level of public sympathy towards earthquake victims in Kobe earthquake in 1995 and most recently the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 proves that the charitable philosophy does exist strongly in the Japanese public. It seems inappropriate to simply assess the level of philanthropy of the public based on donation amount and volunteer engagement. The following two observations would be more plausible: the Japanese public is more convinced to help those who are helpless due to unavoidable causes such as natural disaster exemplified in the higher engagement in emergency relief; and the tendency to be more sympathetic towards those who belong to the same community is particularly strong in the Japanese public.

### ***The Size of NGO Sector***

JANIC is a specific network NGO which specialises in networking among and information dissemination of international development NGOs regardless of their legal status. As of January 2012, there were 72 NGOs working towards African development according to the JANIC database. AJF also plays similar roles as JANIC but focuses on Japanese NGOs working for African development. The AJF database includes 101 NGOs. After combining their data and the NPO Directory of the Japanese government, the number of development NGOs working in SSA region was 144. The number seems to be proportionately small compared to that of NGOs in Asia, where 80 % of NGOs operate according to a survey conducted by JANIC in 2010. These NGOs operating in SSA can be broadly categorised into three types with respect to their origins: the Japanese affiliate of a large western NGO; Japanese NGOs derived from African organisations; and Japanese NGOs originating from Japan (see Figure 4.6).

**Figure 4.6 The Origin of Development NGOs Working in SSA (as of February 2012)**



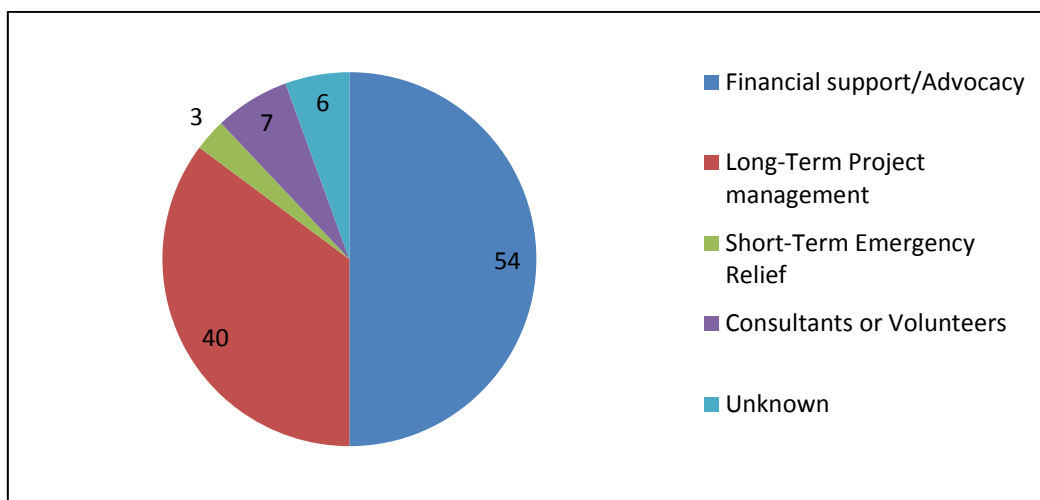
Source: composed by author based on information available on NGO websites

The large western NGOs began their operation as early as 1970 in Japan, including Amnesty International Japan (1970), Plan Japan (1983), and World Vision Japan (1987). These NGOs have established a notable presence in Japan by the large volume of advocacy work and sound financial basis. They also have largest project budget compared to the other NGOs, often more than three billion yen. Although these NGOs have far larger budgets than other Japanese NGOs, they tend to focus on advocacy and simply carry out the already established method in their global operations; therefore, it would be plausible to say that their approach does not necessarily reflect the characteristics of Japanese NGOs. Similarly, there are African NGOs which have established their base in Japan. They are primarily a base for fund raising and advocacy. There are a small number of NGOs that are based in Africa, but are initiated or run by Japanese development workers. For instance, a Rwandan NGO, Mulindi Japan One-Love Project, was launched by a Rwandan national and a Japanese national in Kigali in 1996 to help disabled people in Rwanda, which was initiated based on the friendship between the two who met in Nairobi. Similarly, a Ugandan NGO, Agriculture Innovations for Sustainable Development Uganda (AISUD), was established to support the livelihood of low-income groups in rural areas by a JICA volunteer after his assignment in Uganda in 2009. It could be expected that there are more cases like the above-mentioned NGOs, which are not readily found on the internet and databases. Although these NGOs

tend to operate at a small scale financially and human-resource-wise, they are likely to aim at working directly with most vulnerable groups at grassroots level.

As of January 2012, 111 Japanese NGOs were found to be involved in development projects in SSA. Most of them began their operation in or after the 1990s. They can be categorised according to the type of their main operation into the following four types: fund raising or advocacy focused NGOs; managing long-term development projects by planning or monitoring; short-term emergency relief; and sending consultants or volunteers (see Figure 4.7). More than half of the Japanese NGOs simply raise funds in Japan to sponsor projects or to send material assistance to Africa along with advocacy activities. It also includes NGOs that are promoting fair trade by simply importing products and selling them in Japan. The number of NGOs running projects in SSA with one or more Japanese staff in field amounts to 40. This thesis will call these NGOs as “project NGOs”.

**Figure 4.7: Types of Operations by Japanese NGOs in SSA (as of February 2012)**



Source: composed by the author based on information available on NGO websites

### ***Place of Operation***

Fundraising and advocacy are simpler and easier to carry out than running projects and the ration of such operations is naturally larger than the others. In particular, Africa is geographically and culturally distant from Japan and operational cost in the field is generally higher than that of Asia. NGO representatives’ opinions further explained the reasons:

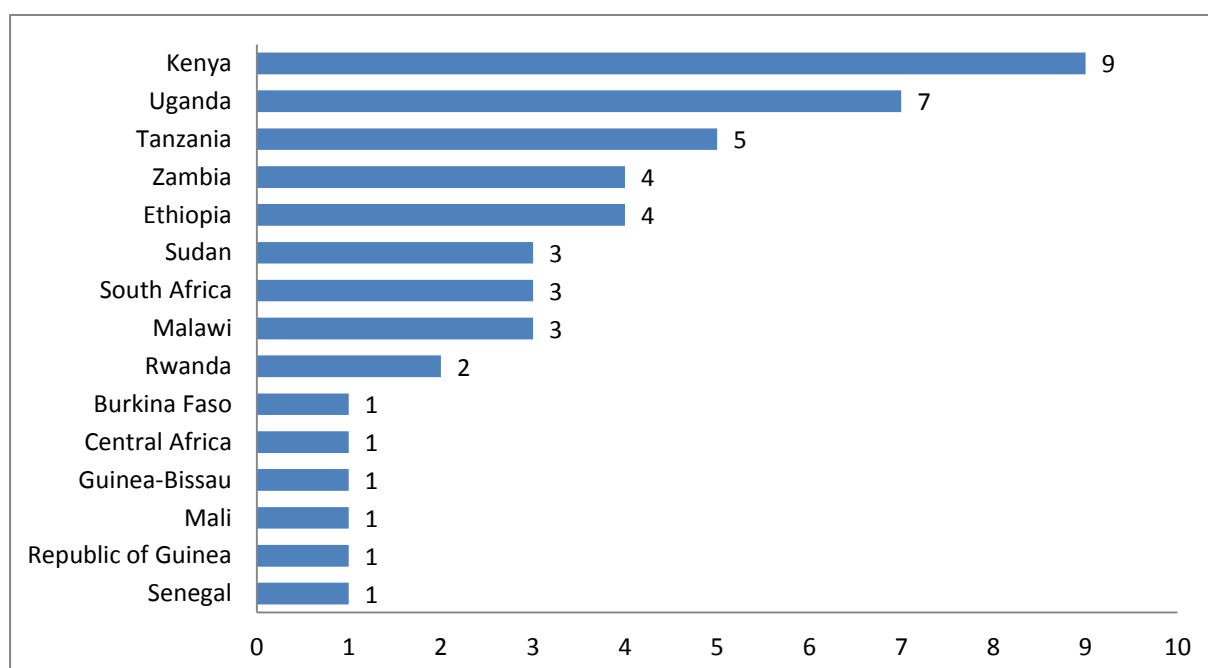
“When I asked the reason why there are a smaller number of NGOs in Africa than in Asia, the NGO representative answered that it was expensive there, even to fly there from Japan, there was no direct flight and they normally had to spend a few days and ¥200,000.” (Field notes Tokyo 17/10/2011).

“An NGO representative working in Cambodia told me that she felt Cambodia was close to Japan geographically as well as culturally.” (Field Notes, Tokyo, 12/10/2011 and 17/10/2011).

Financial assistance commonly involves educational scholarships, funding of school constructions, and providing medical services. Advocacy activities are carried out often in the form of study groups and presentations in Japan, dealing with a wide range of development issues.

Among forty-eight SSA countries, fifteen countries were found to be the destinations for the Japanese NGOs to run projects. Japanese project NGOs tend to concentrate on a few specific countries (see Figure 4.8).

**Figure 4.8: Countries of Operation for Project NGOs (as of February 2012)**



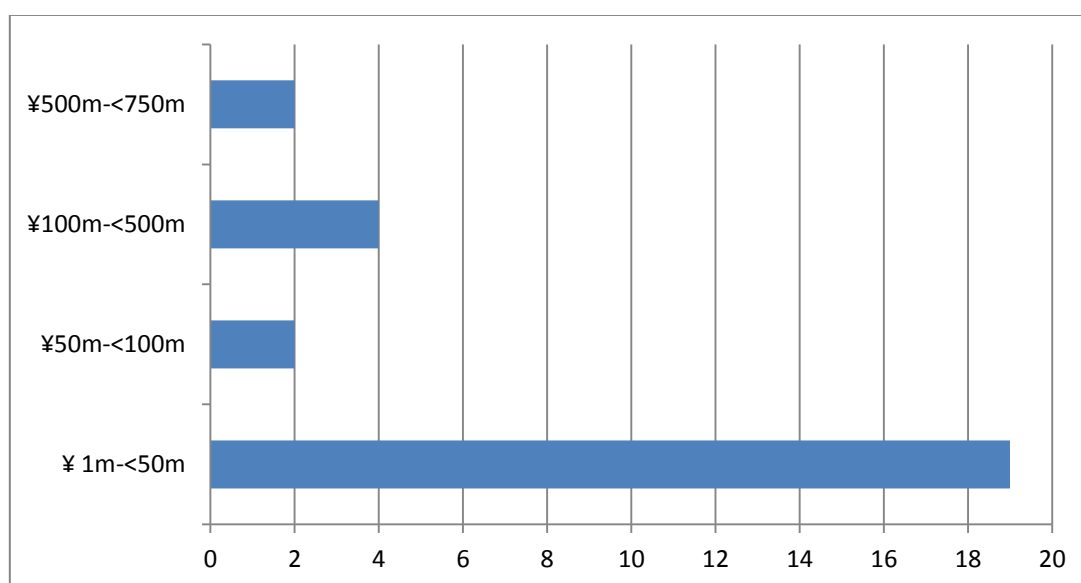
Source: composed by author based on information available on NGO websites



### Financials

Whereas Japan has maintained the status of one of the leading economies of the world for decades, the NPO sector in general has a history of struggle in financing their operations. Some of the oldest and largest Japanese NGOs have incomes of close to 1 billion yen per year<sup>32</sup>. However, the majority of NGOs are constantly under severe financial pressure. This phenomenon is often attributed to the low level of private donations and concentration of donations on the well-established large NGOs (MOFA 2007). In terms of the Japanese NGOs in Africa, the situation appears even more problematic. For Japanese project NGOs in SSA there are six NGOs with income of over 100 million yen, 70% of the NGOs operate with the income of under 50 million yen (see Figure 4.9).

**Figure 4.9: Total Income / Year of Japanese project NGOs in SSA (as of February 2012)**



Source: composed by author based on information available on NGO websites

The sources of income are donations, project, institutional grant and others. According to the survey on 224 Japanese NGOs conducted by JANIC in 2010, 66% of the total income of

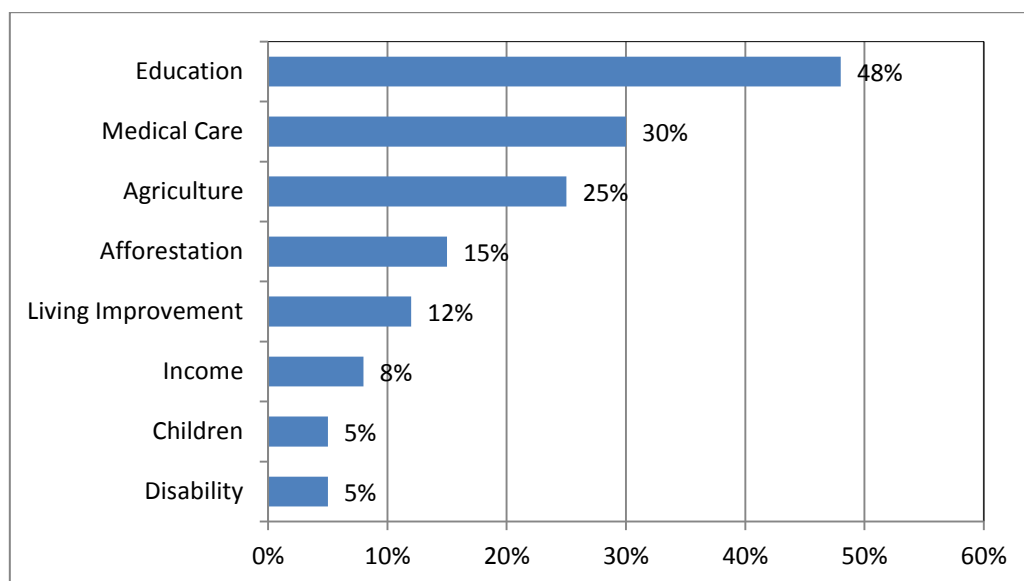
<sup>32</sup> Such NGOs include Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA) with 1 billion yen, Association for Aid and Relief (AAR) with 930 million yen and Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA) with 650 million yen.

all NGOs combined was raised from donations in the previous year, and institutional grants followed with 24%. In contrast to this figure, it is observed that institutional grants account for around 60% among the NGOs in SSA. The institutional grants are significant for these NGOs and the funders are mainly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and private corporations.

### ***Sectors of Operation***

The sectors of international development often refer to education, health, environment or agriculture. When it comes to the Japanese NGOs in SSA, it is not easy to define the sector of their operation. There is a tendency for the projects to be implemented cross-sectorally with a holistic approach to meet their development objectives (see Figure 4.10). For these NGOs, development projects are perceived as a means to improve the lives of people in local communities, based on the notion that one cannot draw clear boundaries and decide precise priorities on the concerns of daily life.

**Figure 4.10: Sectors of Activity by Japanese project NGOs (as of February 2012)**



Source: composed by author based on information available on NGO websites

There is a common emphasis on the educational element in operations among the Japanese NGOs under the objective of capacity building; for instance, the afforestation project

emphasises environmental education and HIV/AIDS related project includes health education.

## **4.5 Philosophies of Japan's Development Assistance**

This chapter has so far observed the origin of Japan's development assistance and how it has evolved over historical events in the past decades involving various actors from governmental and private institutions. It has been demonstrated that Japan has a distinct historical background and focus on economic cooperation, and at the same time is trying to be a part of international community. In other words, Japan's development assistance has been rather pragmatic, rather than acting according to well-oriented philosophy. The Japanese institutions of development assistance have not been as clearly defined as other large organisations such as USAID and DFID, in terms of their responsibilities, project domains, and strategy and principles. Nevertheless, the Japanese government has made efforts to define Japan's philosophy of development assistance, and moreover, there are general themes that can be drawn from the past significant experience of Japan's involvement in domestic as well as international development.

### **4.5.1 Philosophies of Japan's Development Assistance**

Orienting the Philosophy of Japan's Development Assistance The end of the Cold War represented a significant break from the previous aid context. The change in the political ideology landscape in the international arena created an aid policy vacuum among donors, and Japan was certainly not an exception. Japan urgently needed an alternative orientation towards ODA provision policy. At the same time, the drastic increase in ODA volume attracted public attention in Japan and provoked critical argument against ODA. Unlike the traditional western donors whose philosophy of aid and giving often underlies individuals' mentality based on the philanthropy and charitable values of Christianity, Japan has neither such a philosophical foundation nor an ample historical experience of overseas charity. It needed to establish the philosophy of giving and principle of aid to increase the volume of ODA (Sawamura 2004). Additionally, the majority of the strong criticism was raised by NGOs against the cost of bureaucracy involved in the ODA process and the limited attention of

ODA projects to basic human needs. At this time it was considered that it would be necessary to form the philosophical foundation of development assistance. Following this course, the government adopted its first ODA Charter in 1992, the principles of which consisted of the following four components; (1) starvation and poverty in the world should be tackled by collective effort, (2) stability and development of each country in the world leads to peace and prosperity of the world; every country relies on each other; (3) environmental issues and sustainability of development ought to be taken into consideration and (4) Japan is responsible for utilising its capability to assist the self-help effort of developing countries towards economic take-off.

ODA strategy was reformed in accordance with principles in the Charter and the climate of the international community. One such new strategy was the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which was initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993 and has been held every five years since then. It is a platform for Japan's ODA officials and the leaders of African countries to discuss cooperative opportunities for development and at the same time to promote Africa-Asia cooperation. Similarly, the new Charter officially recognised the concept of basic human needs and areas such as health and environment have become main focuses of development assistance.

Since the 1990s, Japan attempted to consolidate its own ODA strategy, adapting to global trends and domestic context. In order to have a more concerted strategy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was formally appointed as the responsible ministry for ODA policy in 1998 and OECF merged with Export-Import Bank of Japan to form the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) in 1999. Japan's domestic situation has changed particularly in terms of its economic situation. The economy entered into a long-term stagnation throughout the 1990s which eventually led to ODA budget cuts for consecutive years after 2000.

Internationally, the Millennium Development Goals set a direction for development assistance by emphasising the social aspects of development and recipient-oriented approach. Japan responded to such international demands as well as trends by adopting the concept of human security in the ODA Charter revised in 2003. The concept importantly entails elements of peace building in people's life, as JICA (2006) notes that the concept

addresses “comprehensively freedom from want” and “freedom from fear”, whereby it emphasises the livelihood of vulnerable people in the environment where security is ensured (Sato, Y. 2012). The adaptation of the concept of human security entails Japan’s experience of World War II and the Article 9, so called Peace Clause, in the Japanese Constitution, and its emphasis on changing the focus from economic cooperation to human development (Lancaster 2010). It has been seen as a new and distinct philosophy of Japanese development assistance (Sato, J. 2013).

### ***Wakon-Yosai – Western Knowledge with Japanese Spirit***

One of the key words to understand Japan’s development assistance would be “experience” (King and McGrath 2004). Japan’s development principle is drawn from its own experience of receiving international development assistance as a tool for rebuilding the country after World War II, and is also built upon its experience of becoming a world leading donor country. Sawamura (2004) argues that the spirit of “*Wakon-Yosai*” is well reflected in Japan’s development philosophy. “*Wakon-Yosai*” means “western knowledge with Japanese spirit”. This principle spread widely through the public when Japan opened up its closed economy in 1868 after more than 250 years of economic isolation from the rest of the world. In opening up its economy and society to foreign countries during the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan decided to take advantage of the difference between Japan and the rest of the world. It would be appropriate to interpret “*Wakon-Yosai*” as “sharing the knowledge of best practice” in the context of development assistance. As a recipient, the overall policy was determined by the occupying force, but how it was delivered was determined by the Japanese officials involved at different levels of implementation. For instance, this principle was practised in the way the LIP workers tried to work with people in the community and utilise local resources while adopting new knowledge they obtained from trainings which were designed by the external advisors. In order to practise the principle, one indispensable element was the self-help effort of the local people. The extension workers played a role in encouraging them by making their own effort first and working together. At the same time, successful projects were underpinned by the real impact of the improvement. Sometimes the impact was small, but was based on the appropriate understanding of existing problems and practical solutions to the problems. Self-help development was pursued on the basis of the individual as well as collective effort to improve their daily lives.

What is common among such projects is the *kaizen* principle. *Kaizen* can be interpreted as accumulation of innovations based on self-help efforts by ordinary people (Sato *et al.* 2011). The principle was propagated by the extension workers who were the role models of *Kaizen* actions. To become an effective role model, it was important to work together, i.e., sweat together and rejoice together. The majority of the society shared the view of respecting persistent effort to exert one's own strength including manual labour as much as possible.

### ***Emphasis on Self-help***

In order to respond to the domestic financial constraints as well as changing priorities in the international community, the Japanese government revised the ODA Charter in 2003. The old charter emphasised the principle of self-help by pronouncing that Japan is responsible for utilising its capability to assist the self-help effort of developing countries towards economic take-off. This point was further elaborated in the new charter:

“The most important philosophy of Japan's ODA is to support the self-help efforts of developing countries based on good governance, by extending cooperation for their human resource development, institution building including development of legal systems, and economic and social infrastructure building, which constitute the basis for these countries' development. Accordingly, Japan respects the ownership by developing countries, and places priorities on their own development strategies. In carrying out the above policy, Japan will give priority to assisting developing countries that make active efforts to pursue peace, democratization, and the protection of human rights, as well as structural reform in the economic and social spheres.” (MOFA 2003)

The new charter has reflected the global trend of emphasising the ownership of recipient countries and linked it with the philosophy of self-help development. Stressing self-help effort reflects the historical experience that the Japanese aid provision began as war reparations and it was necessary to demonstrate that Japan had no intention of deliberately influencing the recipient countries' domestic affairs. This historical impediment appears to coincide with the traditional philosophy of 'help those who help themselves', a core element of 'self-help' concept in development practice (Nishigaki and Shimomura 1996, and see Section 2.2.2).

After the period of being the world's largest donor from 1993 to 2000, the aid volume has decreased due to domestic financial constraints and less demand from Southeast Asian countries, who are becoming graduates of aid. At the same time the government is trying to

shift its main focus to Africa as an aid destination (MOFA 2010). Decades of experience in the Asian countries has convinced the government to replicate the Asian model in other regions. At the same time, the contexts of the two regions differ phenomenally. Shimomura (2011) emphasises that development projects in Southeast Asia could attribute their success to strong bilateral relationships between recipient and donor over a long period of time. ODA advocates such as Sawamura (2004) and Shimomura (2011) maintain that Japan's ODA practice in Southeast Asian countries has been successful and it is an appropriate model to apply to other regions in the world. Other researchers such as Muto (2004), Akiyama and Nakao (2005), Ishikawa (2005) and Hashimoto (2010) further argue that simply replicating its successful model in Asia for Africa would not deliver the best results. For instance, replicating the Asia model in Africa may not provide the same result for following reasons; Japan is not the sole or predominant donor in Africa; Japan has meagre expertise and aid experience in the region; African governments' institutional strength appears less convincing compared to their Asian counterparts. According to Shimomura (2011), the difference in infrastructure development projects between Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa is that there is a lack of political will to commit to a long-term development project and the lack of will comes from often changing aid modality on donor side in the projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### **4.5.2 Changing Environment of Development Assistance**

As has been seen in its history of development assistance, Japan is the first non-Western country to join the community of international donors of development assistance. While it recognises and claims to conform to international development goals, there are distinct characteristics of Japan's development assistance. Amongst the traditional Western donors, namely the members of OECD/DAC, Japan has long been criticised for its overemphasis on the aspect of economic cooperation and not prioritising the norms of OECD/DAC (for instance, see OECD/DAC 1999). Unlike other traditional donors, Japan is a non-Western member whose development practice has evolved differently. On the other hand, the modality of Japanese development itself can be more closely associated with that of other Asian donors. This comes as no surprise considering the fact that many of those countries in

Asia have experienced being a recipient of Japan's development assistance, or in fact economic cooperation. For instance, as Shimomura and Ping (2013) point out, China has learned from the Japanese modality of development assistance both in the positive and negative aspects, while the Western donors have rather simply criticised its negative aspect. As a result, China has embraced the synthesis of development assistance, investment and trade, which resembles Japan's earlier style of development assistance (Nissanke and Söderberg 2011). It is not to mean that the notable criticisms against China's involvement in aid to Africa are invalid; however, the environment of aid has been rapidly changing and development ideas can be plural. Shimomura and Ping (2013) in this context further argue that harmonisation that has been attempted by the Western international development communities can restrict alternative ideas and practices, and can create "a single-polar world of aid harmonization" (*ibid.*: 129).

The world has ever been changing and those countries which used to be recipients of Japan's development assistance have started becoming donors. A notable example is China. It used to be and still is a large recipient of Japan's development assistance and at the same time it is now widely categorised as an emerging donor of foreign aid (Mawdsley 2012; Watanabe 2103). Such emerging donors have gained much attention in the recent years (Kim and Lightfoot 2011; Mawdsley 2012; Sato and Shimomura 2013).

For the emerging donors, such as China, South Korea, and India, and also for non-Western donors like Japan, sub-Saharan Africa has become a strategically important region in the past years (Lagerkvist and Josson 2011). Sub-Saharan Africa as a region of new markets, raw materials, and persistent problem of poverty makes a unique case for international development from the donor's perspectives. For instance, South Korea has drastically increased its assistance to the region in the last ten to fifteen years with particular economic and political interests (Kondoh 2013). South Korea has attempted to adjust its strategy in conformity with the OECD/DAC in terms of increase in humanitarian assistance in the region so as to become a member of OECD/DAC, which it finally achieved in 2010. In the diversifying donors and the relationship between donors and recipients, South-South development cooperation has increasingly become popular. One of the common characteristics of South-South development cooperation is that donor and recipient share the identity of being labelled as a developing country, and free from the past colonial



relationship (Mawdsley 2012). China has taken advantage of this relationship to position itself as an alternative to Western powers. This relationship stands on the win-win relationship, and not necessarily on the charity-based principles that are embraced by the Western donors. However, as has been argued in this chapter, the donors often devise development aid as a political tool and as a means to pursue their own interest, and in this sense the Chinese modality is not particularly distinct from other donors. It also shares much similarity with the Japan's historical development practice. In fact it was evident in Malawi during the field study of this research in 2012 and 2013, that there was an influx of Chinese development projects at various levels, ranging from a large hospital or modern international conference centre complex with a luxury hotel and small shopping malls. Similarly but much at a more smaller scale, the presence of South Koreans automakers was obvious in the city, with groups of their employees touring in Malawi as a part of their training.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

Japan's development assistance has evolved from its unique experience of being a large recipient to a large donor. The most distinct characteristic of Japan's historical development assistance is its emphasis on economic cooperation, which was carried out in tandem with Japanese private corporations. Its modality has been shaped while meeting the objective of domestic economic growth as well as responding to international political climate, because of which the definition and philosophy of development assistance had been not well established for many years.

However, in adopting and reviewing the ODA Charter, and by reforming the laws and institutional restructuring, it has gradually made the Japan's development assistance clearer. The emphasis on self-help development is notable in its ODA Charters, which derives from Japan's own experience of self-help development. The idea of self-help is well-represented by the work of extension workers who contributed to rural development by nurturing the spirit of continuous innovation and improvement, while it was demonstrated by the success in macro-economic development in nation building with utilisation of external assistance.

On the other hand, non-economic aspects of development assistance have been limited in terms of volume in Japan's development assistance. The close tie between the government and private corporations, and generally the government-led system of development hindered the growth of the NGO sector in Japan for many years, and hence the NGO sector in Japan is relatively new and small. Correspondingly, the trust and interest in such NGO activities by ordinary people seem to be less than that found in other economically prosperous countries. In particular, NGOs activities for the development of Africa seem to be limited due to the geographical and cultural distance. Nevertheless, the principle of self-help development is pursued by the international development NGOs, as can be seen in their emphasis on the idea of self-help and self-reliance in their philosophy and practice.

Lastly, Japan stands in a unique position in the recent area of international development, particularly facing the increasing emerging donors particularly in the region like sub-Saharan Africa. Many of such emerging donors have similarities with Japan's historical ideas of development and its own development experience while Japan is still seen as a part of the West. The relationships between donors and recipients are increasingly diversifying and it is thus important to understand complex environment in understanding international development practice.

## Chapter 5: Transforming Ideas of Self-help Development

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses how self-help development emerged as an approach in Japanese development institutions and how self-help development ideas were operationalised in development projects in Malawi. The chapter divides the analysis into two main sections. Firstly, it provides an analysis of the evolution of self-help development as a concept as well as a general approach to development policy, before considering how the concept is adopted in development programmes in Malawi. The second part of the analysis provides a more detailed investigation of how self-help development is embedded in development project design. These two stages of analysis facilitate understanding of the meaning of self-help and self-reliance in the context of Japan's development assistance. They contribute to answering the first research question of this thesis (see Section 1.2) that asks how the ideas of self-help which have evolved in the context of Japan are transformed and applied in development projects in Malawi and why the transformation occurs in the ways that it does.

Investigating the process reveals what factors had an impact on how the specific ideas of self-help development are mobilised. In so doing, the chapter highlights historical and social factors and the roles of individual actors, which is an important yet understated perspective to understand the mobility of ideas (Larner and Laurie 2010; Peck and Theodore 2010; McCann and Ward 2012; Temenos and McCann 2013). The mobilisation process importantly concerns the issues of scales in the development assistance. From this perspective, this chapter also elucidates the institutional scales at which development ideas are operationalised, from the perspectives of the mobility of ideas across different geographical spaces and implementation scales. Based on the understanding of the evolution of the ideas and project designs, the chapter finally analyses how different elements of self-reliance are

understood and prioritised by different actors involved in project implementation. The analysis is based on an overview of observations of Japanese development programmes and a detailed investigation of OVOP Malawi and JNGO which were studied during field research.

## 5.2 Evolution and Application of Concept

### 5.2.1 OVOP Malawi

#### *Origin of the Concept: NPC Movement and OVOP Oita*

OVOP Malawi has three main aims: to create a product from locally available resources; to promote innovation to add value to products based on autonomous effort by local people; and to build human capacity for continuous innovation and effort (JICA 2010). The original concept of OVOP Malawi is derived from the grassroots development movement in a regional town in Japan, which was initiated in the 1960s. It was initially called the NPC Movement, a movement to improve the economic status of farmers by promoting fruit-tree farming as an alternative to rice-farming which is labour-intensive and less profitable. The NPC movement was started as ‘New Plum and Chestnuts’ (hence ‘NPC’) movement, by the then mayor of Oyama town in Oita Prefecture in Japan (see Map 5.1).

**Map 5.1: Oita Prefecture (indicated in red colour), Japan**



Source: adopted from CIA (2014) and modified by the author

At that time the region faced problem of low income among rural farmers who were left behind during the rapid economic growth driven by large corporations and industrialisation in large cities. The NPC movement was pursued under a slogan: 'Let's go to Hawaii by growing plums and chestnuts.' Travelling abroad was uncommon amongst Japanese people at that time, in particular among rural farmers. Hawaii was represented as 'a dream island where you wish to visit once in your lifetime', which in the middle of the 1960s used to cost up to six times the average monthly income of urban corporate employees (Travel Vision 2009). The slogan was adopted to motivate farmers to continue their efforts (Yahata in interview by Gacchiri Monday 22/07/2007)<sup>33</sup>. In the second phase in 1965 the programme was further elaborated as '*Neo Personality Combination*'<sup>34</sup> movement, whereby the aspect of human capacity building was promoted from the perspective of enriching knowledge, intelligence, and the human mind to promote improvement of people's personality. This phase of the NPC movement included a number of educational programmes, including promotion of self-learning and instalment of communication centres. Low-interest loans were provided to those who travelled abroad, and a free 'cultural bus' services ran connecting community centres and cultural centres throughout the town. In addition to the focus on the improvement of monetary income from farming, the second phase promoted human capacity building in a broader sense, encompassing learning from diversified experiences not limited to agriculture. The third phase of the NPC started in 1969 as '*New Paradise Community*' movement, which aimed to create a comfortable living environment for residents to enjoy their lives pursuing cultural and leisure activities. This movement aimed to promote love and harmony among the local community through improving livelihoods in diverse ways: financial, knowledge and positive attitudes towards the community.

In 1979, the NPC movement grabbed the attention of the then-governor of Oita Prefecture, Morihiko Hiramatsu, who is also the present president of the international committee of OVOP, and was adopted as a Prefecture-wide guideline for a grassroots movement for

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<sup>33</sup> By 1967, around 500 farmers were engaged in plum farming over 100 hectares of land and 456 farmers engaged with chestnut farming over 220 hectares of land, raising about 25 million yen sales annually. In 1967, 16 farmers who engaged with the NPC movement travelled to Hawaii (Yamagami 2007). Oyama town boasted of having the highest rate of passport holders in Japan (about 70 % of population had a passport) (JICA and UNCRD n.d.).

<sup>34</sup> Although '*Neo Personality Combination*' does not convey a clear meaning in English, it was originally written in English as is shown in this text.

community development. The NPC was then re-conceptualised as '*Isson Ippin Undo*', meaning the One Village One Product movement, later known as OVOP. OVOP Oita was introduced based on the following three principles:

“(1) Local yet global: Creating globally accepted products that reflect pride in the local culture

(2) Self-reliance and Creativity: Realization of OVOP through independent actions utilizing the potential of the region

(3) Human Resource Development: Fostering of people with a challenging and creative spirit” (Oita OVOP International Promotion Committee n.d.)

The name '*One Village One Product*' comes across as being particular about having the one product that the village needs to focus on. However “one” is merely a short hand for the village to come up with at least one product that they can be proud of. “It can be one product by two villages or three products by one village, as long as the product is chosen by the locals and developed based on their self-help effort with innovative ideas” (OVOP International Promotion Committee n.d.). It can be understood from their principles that there is an underlying concept of endogenous development that emerges as localism. The important element of OVOP Oita is to identify a material, cultural, or natural asset that is uniquely characterised by the locality and that can be marketed at a larger scale. Equally importantly, OVOP Oita’s wide range of community development schemes suggests that there is an underlying belief that self-help activities can be enhanced by interaction with those outside the community and can lead to the successful realisation of objectives.

### ***OVOP Malawi***

Oita Prefecture had been active in interacting with the international community, and OVOP Oita was promoted on occasions such as the Asia-Kyushu Regional Exchange Summit held in Oita Prefecture in Japan in 1994, which was organised by the governor of OVOP Oita. The grassroots and autonomous economic development strategy was appreciated by the delegates from countries in Asia and also those from Africa<sup>35</sup>. The OVOP Oita programme

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<sup>35</sup> Following the event, OVOP was formally adopted as a national development strategy in Thailand in 2001 as OTOP (One Tambon One Product: '*tambon*' meaning an area or sub-district) Thailand in 2001. Although the application of OVOP Oita into other parts of the world has attracted much attention relatively recently, such as

was first officially introduced to delegates from the Malawian government led by then the ambassador to Japan, Jone Chikago, soon after the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993 (Nation 2014). From there, the Malawian government exchanged information and delegates with its Japanese counterparts to study the possibility of adopting it as a programme for economic development. In 2003, OVOP Malawi was officially started following the third TICAD meeting in Japan.

### ***Appropriation of Original Principles***

As of February 2013, OVOP Malawi's policy streams down from its Secretariat under the Ministry of Trade and Industries of the Malawi government<sup>36</sup>. There are several Malawian officers in the Secretariat, and two Japanese advisors working together with JICA. Then there are 26 Assistant Cooperative Liaison Officers (ACLOs), one ACLO in each district of Malawi who are positioned in District Offices, playing the role of a local coordinator for the OVOP Malawi Secretariat. Apart from the formal designated positions, there are three JICA Volunteers (JOCVs) who are involved in the programme in the form of assisting OVOP-registered cooperatives in their day-to-day activities. These are the actors who are involved in the course of policy implementation of OVOP Malawi on the ground.

While OVOP Malawi drew inspiration directly from OVOP Oita, there are some differences (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1: Comparison between OVOP Oita and OVOP Malawi**

	OVOP Oita	OVOP Malawi
Basic Objectives	Community Revitalisation	Attainment of MDGs and local economic development
Initiator	Local government	Central government
Actors other than the initiator and OVOP groups	Cooperatives, Central government agencies	Local governments, Donor agencies, NGOs

Source: created by the author based on Kurokawa *et al.* (2010: 31)

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the cases of OTOP and OVOP Malawi, OVOP had been previously introduced to Shanghai in China in 1983 and Taiwan in 1989 before OTOP and OVOP Malawi (Matsui 2006b).

<sup>36</sup> The information is provided as of February 2013 so that it provides the context in which the field research was conducted. It is however confirmed that OVOP Malawi maintains the same structure as of August 2014.

Although both are broadly regarded as community development programmes, there are important differences. Building upon Kurokawa *et al.* (2010), more in-depth comparison can be drawn. Table 5.2 compares OVOP Oita and OVOP Malawi in terms of what informed the project formation. The initiators of OVOP Oita were community leaders and local government who were trying to identify the root cause of problems and solutions by adopting a grassroots and bottom-up approach, whereas OVOP Malawi was initiated by the central government which is rather a top-down approach, but is implemented in a way to encourage bottom-up action. OVOP Malawi was created from the perspective of external actors who look at the community from outside and try to scale down the principle to a local level while OVOP Oita tried to scale-up their local actions.

**Table 5.2: Comparison between OVOP Oita and OVOP Malawi in project formation**

	<b>OVOP Oita</b>	<b>OVOP Malawi</b>
<b>Primary problems identified</b>	- Poverty amongst smallholder farmers - Depopulation of rural communities	- Poverty amongst smallholder farmers
<b>Basic objectives</b>	- Community Revitalisation	- Attainment of MDGs - Local economic development
<b>Vision</b>	1. Local yet global 2. Self-reliance and creativity 3. Human resource development	1. Creation of local product 2. Adding value to low farm produce 3. Human resource development
<b>Initiator</b>	- Community leaders - Local government	- Central government
<b>Actors</b>	Beneficiary: farmers, cooperatives Benefactor: local governments, central government agencies	Beneficiary: farmers, cooperatives Benefactor: local governments, donor agencies, NGOs

Source: created by the author based on information obtained during field research

When it was adopted in Malawi as a poverty reduction strategy, the central focus was cast on local product creation, adding value, and human resource development. The difference



between the original concept of OVOP Oita and OVOP Malawi's adoption is recognised by the Japanese expat officers, particularly with regard to the successful outcome of the programme:

"I feel that the framework of OVOP Malawi has been too restrictive in a way. It focuses too much on assisting farmers' cooperatives, and their income generation based on value added farm product. Its approach can be more flexible and wider. For instance, originally, OVOP Oita was carrying out community-based cultural events along with all the farm products experiments, such as community marathons. Promoting tourism can be also a plus. I am imagining how to revitalise a community as a whole and it requires multiple dimensions." (Japanese officer of OVOP Malawi)

In comparison with the perspective of Japanese officers, a Malawian counterpart understood OVOP as:

"Economically improving livelihood of people in the designated area, by getting resources available in the local area and adding value to them. This value change and the marginal profit that arises from the added value is how we want to improve their livelihood. That's what OVOP means to me." (Assistant Cooperative Liaison Officer)

The aspect of adding value is greatly emphasised in OVOP Malawi, particularly at the level of the ACLO officers. This implies that the Malawian counterparts recognise the business-oriented aspects of economic policy and economic impact, which contrast with the understanding of Japanese expatriate workers who place relatively more importance on human capacity-building and the non-economic factors of well-being of group members. There is a difference between OVOP Oita and OVOP Malawi in terms of the way value is added. The aspect of adding value to raw farm produce is an important element of the principle of OVOP Oita as well as OVOP Malawi. However in OVOP Malawi, the concept of value addition is mostly used as a product differentiation process (Haraguchi 2008). In other words, a raw farm product is transformed into a unique farm product compared to other products made from the same farm produce. For instance, a town produces plum wines and they are characterised as from a place gifted with a good quality of natural water, delicately hand-picked by local farmers, locally processed within 24 hours, using natural and traditional methods developed in the area (Hibiki no Sato n.d.). While OVOP Oita adds value

in terms of the uniqueness of the product and locality, what OVOP Malawi means by ‘adding value’ is to *process* raw farm produce.

### ***Community Development beyond Economic Development***

The most unusual aspect of OVOP Oita is that it was targeted to improve the economic status of individual farmers while it also tried to achieve the non-financial aspect of improved well-being of the farmers and also a community at large. The underlying cause for this was the problem of depopulation in rural farming communities (Matsui 2006a). Younger generations tended to leave the rural areas to seek employment opportunities in urban industries, leaving elders engaged with labour-intensive farming activities. The revitalisation of the local community was then made a slogan. Revitalisation is a translation of “*Kasseika*” in Japanese, which means to make things active, energetic, or rejuvenated. “*Kasseika*” of communities implies a multi-dimensional approach to revitalise the local community. More importantly, *Kasseika* places human activities at the centre. Development projects, particularly the ones implemented by the Japanese development agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa, are often acknowledged as focusing on the establishment of large-scale infrastructure. In contrast, *Kasseika*-based development needs to be driven by human activities based on people’s self-help. OVOP Oita hence was a human-centric and multidimensional programme that aimed to achieve community development, beyond being a mere income-generation programme. For instance, replacing rice farming with plum-tree farming had important spill-over effects other than raising income. With the population decreasing and also aging, rice farming had become more and more labour-intensive and physically tough for many farmers. Plum-tree farming on the other hand requires much less work, and farmers are encouraged to be off-farm at least three days a week so that farmers could engage in cultural, social or intellectual activities in their spare time outside farming<sup>37</sup>. Another example of such spill-over is that in spring the plum trees attracted visitors from the local area as well as outsiders who came to admire the beauty of the flowers, which is a common seasonal leisure activity of spring in Japan (See Plate 5.1 for a brochure of an event). This was expected not only to drive economic activities initiated by the tourism industry, but also to lead to the promotion and branding of the community, and

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<sup>37</sup> This system was a new idea, whereby farmers work in the morning everyday but they would have off-farm time in the afternoon.

raising pride and love towards the locality among the members of the community (Hiramatsu 2008).

**Plate 5.1: “Let’s go to Oyama, a town of flower-scented mountains.” Information Brouchure for the 34<sup>th</sup> Hita-Oyama Plum Flower Festival in 2014 (front)**

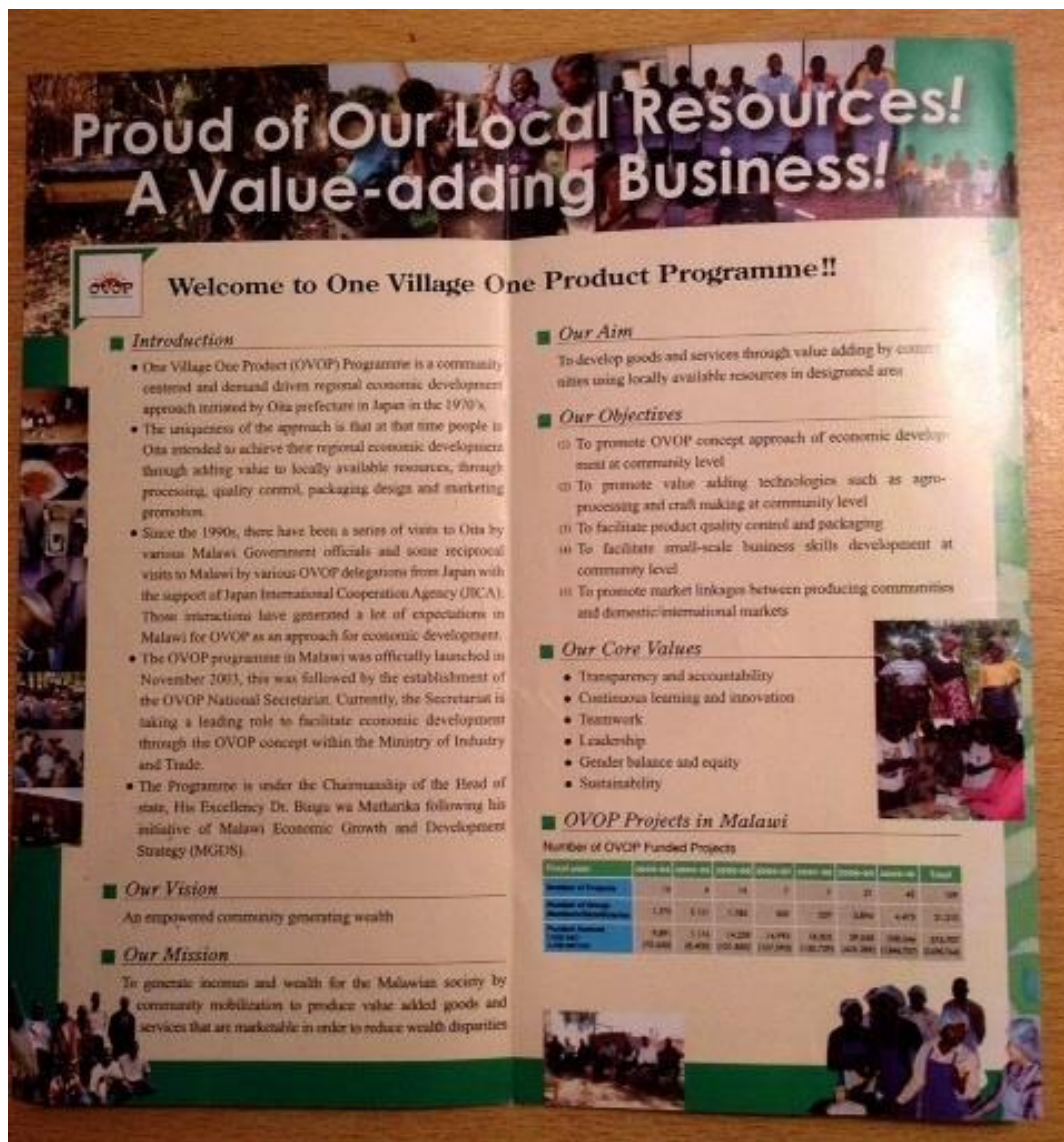


Source: Hita City (2014)

This multi-dimensional strategy resulted from a combination of the low-income level of farmers and depopulation due to urbanisation. OVOP Oita was an anti-thesis to a reliance of rural societies on trickle-down effect of national development in making their lives better. As Matsui (2006a) puts it, OVOP Oita was framed as a ‘movement’ and not a ‘programme’, whereby people of the Oita region change their lives as a whole based on their autonomous

attitude and actions. In contrast, OVOP Malawi has been given a clear guideline for the programme, whereby a particular course of action is designed in the pursuit of a defined and specific objective. OVOP Malawi's information brochure testifies that it is a programme which focuses on promoting business activities based on localities (see Plate 5.2).

Plate 5.2: OVOP Malawi Information Brochure by OVOP Malawi Secretariat 2010



Source: obtained by the author from OVOP Malawi Secretariat in 2013

In OVOP Malawi, the element of locality and character of the particular community has been eroded. It is rather presented as how rural residents are now able to produce something that they would not be able to without the support of OVOP Malawi. The products of OVOP Malawi range from honey, rice, cooking oils, fruit jams, fruit juices, fruit wine and to gemstones. The emphasis on adding value to their raw farm produce is so much

that the locality, which is the important element in the original OVOP programme, is missing from OVOP Malawi. Instead the focus is on the economic empowerment of rural farmers and reduction of poverty in accordance with development goals.

### ***Self-help Effort as Learning Process***

OVOP Oita borrowed the approach of trial-and-error from the NPC movements. The NPC's initial idea of growing fruit trees to raise income did not 'bear fruit' easily. The NPC movements continuously faced challenges particularly for the first ten years where plum and chestnut growth had not reached a sufficient productivity level. It underwent a process of numerous trial and error experiments.

The NPC movement had the three phases which significantly incorporated non-agricultural aspects into the community development strategy for rural farmers in Japan. Still, throughout the three phases, improvement of farmers' economic status remained the central theme. It explored the best mode of farming practices, in accordance with the market demand and natural factors that had affected the practice.

Although NPC contributed to raising income of farming households, the level of harvest was not constantly successful. The climate in the area and other conditions such as pests and diseases were often beyond farmers' control. In fact in 1969, plum production reduced by 90% and one-third of chestnuts trees were damaged due to adverse weather conditions, and subsequently in 1972 plum trees almost all died out due to adverse weather conditions.

The farmers also decided to diversify their products to try other crops that do not require intensive-physical labour but still have a good profitability similar to plums and chestnuts. The kind of crops the farmers tried range widely: grapes, prunes, cherries, six different kinds of mushrooms, watercress and herbs (Yamagami 2007). The diversification experiment was a result of a quest that farmers undertook to find the best crops, and was made possible owing to a flexible and innovative approach, backed by their persistent self-help efforts.

Whereas the wider approach of community development that was present in OVOP Oita has been paid less priority in OVOP Malawi, the trial-and-error approach remains as an important element in OVOP Malawi. A Japanese officer of OVOP Malawi implied endorsement of the self-help effort through trial-and-error process:

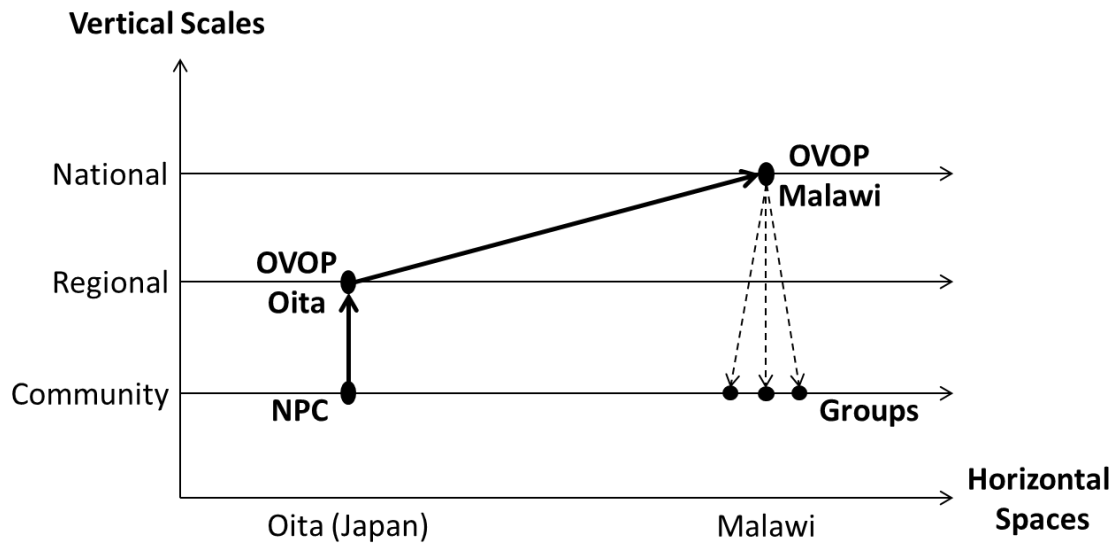
“We suggested that the farmers’ groups needed to have clearly defined short-term goals, and the group members needed to set the goals by themselves. For example, we recently initiated a discussion in an OVOP-assisted group with the question of how much the group can produce their product in a three-month timeframe. The members came up with a certain number based on their previous production experience. And then we asked, how much they are selling them for and how much profit they should make after a three-month period. We will review after the three-month period, how much of the objective has been met, and we will start from there. If the objective is not met, the members will discuss what the problem is, and think about solutions. Then improve it, and review again, think about solutions, and try out the solution. I think this method is important. We start from where the group members can and want to achieve. And, what is important is that they know it is fine to make mistakes. It is important that they learn from their mistake by themselves.”

The above quotation stresses the importance placed on farmers making their own efforts and being self-reliant in resolving their problems. Although OVOP Malawi has a clear focus on economic improvement of farmers as has been analysed, the non-economic aspect of OVOP Oita has been carried through in such ways.

### ***Mobility of OVOP Concept***

The fact that the ideas of OVOP Oita were mobilised at different geographical locations across the globe warrants the idea that development ideas can travel freely while shaping a new geographies of development ideas (Peck 2011). The original idea which evolved in Oyama town in Oita prefecture in Japan was mobilised at different locations and at different scales (see Figure 5.1).

**Figure 5.1: Mobility of concept in case of OVOP Malawi**



Source: created by the author

At each stage of mobility (as shown by arrows in Figure 5.1), the concept was re-formed. The NPC movement in the community of Oyama was scaled up to the regional policy of OVOP Oita. During this process, the NPC ideas were re-formed by the initiative of the governor of the prefecture so that replication in other communities was easier. OVOP Oita ideas then travelled across the scales and spaces to OVOP Malawi while being re-formed to be incorporated in the centrally-led development policy of Malawi. Finally the OVOP Malawi concept as a national development policy is operationalised in accordance to the contexts of farmers' groups at the community level, by way of scaling down from the national level. The movement occurred not only horizontally but also vertically across different actors at various scales (Stone 2004, also see discussion in Section 2.3). The reformations were influenced by development agenda at regional and national scales, and the context of local communities. Importantly, as Temenos and McCann (2013) emphasise, various individual actors influence the shaping of the process of policy reformation. In the case of OVOP Malawi, the idea has been interpreted and examined by different actors including the high-level officials of Malawian government, Japanese officers of OVOP Malawi and their local counterparts.

This section focused on OVOP Malawi's case in investigating how the original concept evolved and mobilised to be applied to the development policy of Malawi. The operational models are further analysed in the later in the chapter under Section 5.3. Before moving onto analysing the next stage of the mobility, the following section looks at the case of JNGO as to how its ideas mobilised from Japan to Malawi.

## 5.2.2 JNGO

### *Origin of the Concept: Experience in International Development*

JNGO is a Japanese development NGO that was established by international students studying in a university in Japan and their Japanese friends to help refugees in camps in Southeast Asia in the late 1970s. Their initial activity was to raise funds in Japan to support the refugees financially. During the project, mere provision of financial support to the refugees raised the issues of sustainable improvement of welfare and self-reliance.

“The displaced people were deprived of their original home and job opportunities to establish their new life, and there was no future for them to live on their own” (JNGO 2014).

With this identification of a problem as a starting point, they established a small informal banking system whereby the refugees could borrow resources to start their income-generating activities. Since then, JNGO has diversified its programme in a way that emphasises the principle of self-reliant development. It has extended its development assistance to other parts of the world while incorporating the idea of self-reliant development in its organisational principles<sup>38</sup>.

JNGO proclaims three main missions:

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<sup>38</sup> There are about thirty paid Japanese staff of which about a half are in overseas offices as project officers and coordinators. JNGO has an annual budget of ¥ 570 million (equivalent to about £4.3 million at the exchange rate of April 2011) for 2011/2012, which makes it one of the largest NGOs in Japan in financial terms (JANIC 2011). The annual budget for the 2011/2012 Malawi operation was about ¥ 83 million (equivalent to about £620,000 at the exchange rate of April 2011).



“1. Emergency relief: Supporting those whose lives are at risk because of natural disaster and conflicts. We deliver our assistance swiftly, and implement programme that aims to a quick and self-reliant recovery of the place and people.

2. Supporting self-reliance in an environmentally conscious way: We help to end the cycle of poverty by achieving financial and mental self-reliance of people living in poverty and those who have been affected by natural disasters.

3. Human Capacity Development: Emphasising on generating human capacity of people so that they will be able to continue and sustain the programme based on their self-help after the assistance ends. We also consider human capacity development in Japan so that they will be the leaders of international society in the future.” (JNGO 2014)

The organisation’s principles clearly include the concept of self-help and self-reliance in the context of supporting people in poverty or disaster-hit areas. Such emphasis comes from its experience in assisting refugees in the 1970s. With the above-mentioned missions, it has implemented development projects in the Middle East since 1994. The projects have had several areas of focus, particularly on the self-reliant development of marginalised people, such as women and smallholder farmers, by assisting their engagement in income-generating activities and encouraging local environmental conservation by promoting afforestation. The Malawi operation has some similar elements. For example, the Malawi projects also include income-generating activities as a main programme, where participants learn from the products that have been successfully marketed in the former projects in the Middle East.

### ***Mobilising Development Ideas from Asia to Africa***

As has been explained, the first operation that JNGO engaged in was humanitarian assistance in a refugee camp in response to emergency situations in Southeast Asia in the late 1970s and the 1980s. Since then, it has expanded its operation in other parts of the world and the Malawi programme was officially started in 2005. Comparison of the original operation in Southeast Asia, the next main project area of the Middle East, and the programme in Malawi provides insight as to how each project evolved, and demonstrates the element of replication of the original operation in Southeast Asia (see Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3: Comparison of JNGO Projects**

	<b>Southeast Asia</b>	<b>Middle-East</b>	<b>Malawi</b>
<b>Period</b>	In the 1980s	Since 1991	Since 2005
<b>Initial stage</b>	Humanitarian assistance for regional conflicts. Assisted refugees with material needs.	Emergency relief for refugees due to Gulf War in the early 1990s. Assisted with medical supplies.	Emergency relief for famine in 2005. Assisted poor farmers with food supplies.
<b>Evolving stage</b>	Concerns of dependency on external assistance among refugees. Started a project to enhance the well-being of refugees by engaging them in employment and self-help activities.	Identified problem of poverty among marginalised population. Started a project to improve living standards and social status of women.	Identified problem of food insecurity among smallholder farmers. Started a project for agriculture and improvement of living standards of the farmers.
<b>Final stage</b>	Income-generating activities	Income-generating activities for women, and basic education and vocational training for youth population.	Comprehensive rural community development project

Source: created by the author

Although the three projects in different locations implemented different components, there is a commonality in style of progression of the three projects. In the initial stage the development projects started as humanitarian response and relief to an emergency situation, and the initial actions led them to identify the problems in the specific contexts of the place and situation. The projects were then designed and operationalised in a way that promotes self-help effort and the self-reliance of local people. Furthermore, the first stage corresponds with the first mission of JNGO, which emphasises emergency relief and the quick recovery of people's living conditions. The evolving stage and the current form of the assistance echo the second and third missions of JNGO in supporting the self-reliant development by human capacity development in multiple dimensions.

### ***Transformation of Ideas via Individual Actors***

The Malawi operation was initiated after JNGO was involved in emergency food provision in response to food crisis in 2005 in Malawi. Having recognised the vulnerability of rural and smallholder farmers as a problem that needed to be addressed from the perspective of self-help development, JNGO's Malawi project was formulated as a comprehensive community development project. The objectives of the project are: to reduce poverty, to preserve the environment, to enhance health standards, and to generate sustainable income for local people. Most importantly, these objectives need to be met through the initiatives of local people themselves. The mission of achieving financial and mental self-reliance runs through in the Malawi project.

For the comprehensive community development project, the project proposal was made to apply for a Ministry of Foreign Affairs funding programme, which is a common source of funding for Japanese NGOs (MOFA 2013a)<sup>39</sup>. Having been granted the funding, JNGO has carried out the project according to the proposal. During this process, there were clear objectives and schedules allocated from the start of the project because the funding was dependent on delivering what was promised in the application. However, the details of the methods to be used to achieve the objectives were not specified in the proposal and were generally decided by the field workers. In the Malawi office during 2012 and 2013, there were two to five Japanese project officers and three to five local project officers depending on the particular needs of the project<sup>40</sup>. For a project, it normally assigns Japanese expatriates as the project manager and logistics/accounting officer, and extra expatriates are added at times as project assistants and subject-experts. A JNGO officer implied that field officers play important roles in interpreting the ideas embedded in the project proposal and that they transform the original principles on the ground:

“The project goals are fixed from the beginning, but how we reach the goal is not fixed by the project proposal. So we [field officers] can actually decide how to carry it out.”

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<sup>39</sup> According to MOFA (2013a), in the 2012 financial year, the grant scheme granted a total of about 3.4 billion yen to 92 projects across 32 countries and Taiwan (it is not officially recognised as a legitimate country by the Japanese government), out of which 16 projects were in Sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>40</sup> As JNGO has run more than one projects at the same time in Malawi, the number of staff was not consistent throughout my research. Although they are assigned to one specific project, on the ground they help each other unofficially across project boundaries if required. Also, the number of staff changes in accordance with the specific needs of the project phase. Hence it is difficult to provide a definite number of field staff in the context of this section (See Chapter 3 for the number of officers interviewed.)

While the officers feel that there is not much flexibility in making changes to the final goal that they have to meet, the way it is conducted on a day-to-day basis is in the hands of the field officers. This flexibility extends to the way they interact with other officers. The proposal does not specify how the field officers should transfer ideas regarding the primary missions of the organisation; however, the concepts of self-help and self-reliance were valued by the field officers and seemed to be naturally incorporated in the way they were engaging with other officers as was described a JNGO officer:

“I tell them [the Malawian officers] that this organisation is not here forever, and you need to nurture farmers so that they can be self-reliant. It is important to nurture them and not just to give and teach so that the farmers can actually apply what they have learnt in their own activities by themselves. [...] I use ‘self-reliance’ as an English word often. I also add ‘by themselves’ at the end of sentences often. Malawian officers seem to have understood as we have told this to them a lot.”

The ideas are transformed by the individual officers and transferred in day-to-day interaction between them and other relevant individual actors. The JNGO officer further explained how the ideas are communicated:

“In my case, I actually ask the Malawian officers to think about even the objective of each step in a project, and plan and make action to achieve the objective. I just give them the deadline and budget for an objective, and ask them to think about how to do. [...] I give advice to them [Malawian officers] when they come with the proposals because I thought it has to be their way of thinking for it to continue without us in the future. I thought that they won’t change their attitude otherwise. Although they have never brought any proposal that is totally out of context, it must have been difficult for them particularly at the beginning. One officer brought a proposal and showed it to me in the early days, and the proposal only read something like ‘I will ask this counterpart to do.’ No particular details, about even ‘what’ to do.”

When individuals take their own approaches based on their respective interpretation of the ideas, however similar the interpretations might be, some differences of approach arise. One of the Malawian officers who has worked with four different Japanese project

managers for JNGO's projects in Malawi provided a brief comparison between different styles of project management:

"The first officer's leadership was like, 'can you do A, B, C, and D.', and that meant no discussions. [And the next manager] was too harsh and very strict. You know in the field, let's say I go to [a village] today but there is a funeral. That means that I cannot work and I have to come back. But this one didn't understand it. But [the next project manager] used to go to the field frequently, and was very friendly even to local staff. That leadership was good and communication was good. And then [the next one], also liked going to the field, most of the times understands, and likes discussion. The manager would ask, like, 'for monitoring, I want you to do A, B, C, and D. Is it ok? We have to discuss.' Then we go to field. Maybe [sometimes] I don't understand what the manager really means, but when we discuss, I understand."

The project officers may work in association with the organisational principle and project proposal and attempt to practise it, but how it is practised depends on their personal interpretation and also on their personality as well. In other words, project objectives can be delivered in different ways, and can possibly leave different impacts on how the idea is transformed, depending on who implements it.

While the organisation's principles are conveyed through the expatriate officers to the Malawian officers intentionally, such as through conversations as has been explained above, it is also demonstrated by practice during the implementation. Importantly, the first operation that JNGO undertook in Southeast Asia in the 1980s was to assist refugees in cooperation with the refugees themselves. The principle of 'working together with the local people so that they can live on their own' lies at the centre of their implementation strategy. Working together includes the element of learning from role model. This can be exemplified through observations I made at a JNGO village project site:

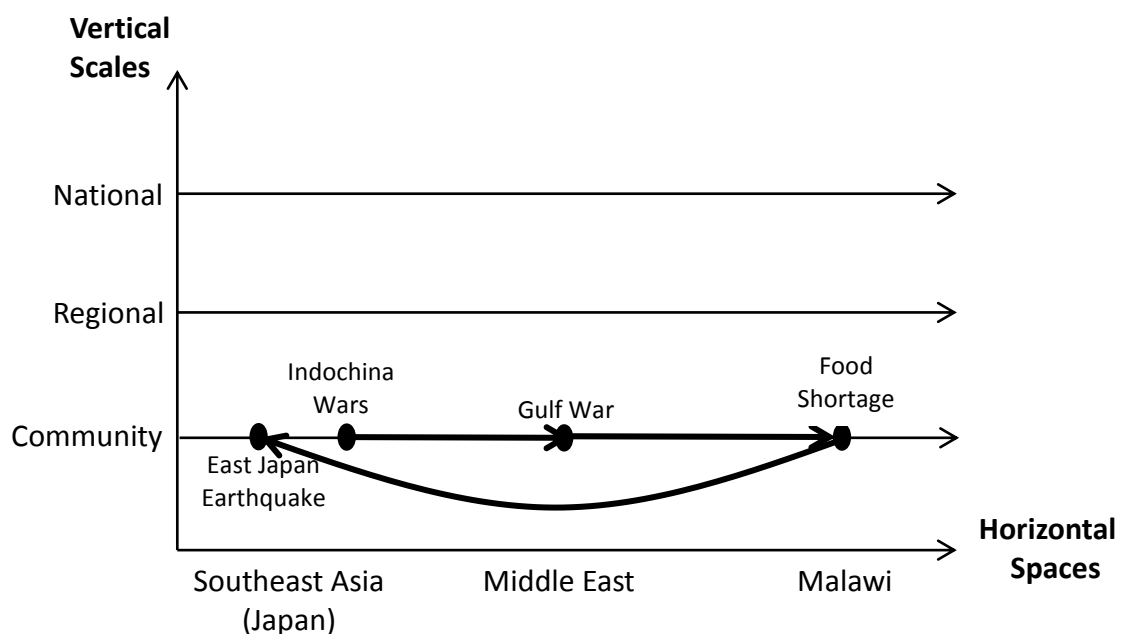
"It was Saturday today, but they [JNGO staff] came to the village to work on the construction of a greenhouse in the school. They worked from the morning through to the evening. It rained heavily at times. Even when the local workers were taking rest under the tree, the project manager was out on the construction site and working."  
(Fieldnote, August 2013)

The Japanese officers also attempt to transfer ideas by demonstrating attitude and actions, particularly by working together. It is an indirect way to transfer the ideas and principles which the Malawian officers have a choice to receive or ignore. In this way, ideas are transferred from individuals to individuals, albeit being filtered through individual interpretations.

**Horizontal Mobility of Concept**

The case of JNGO shows that the original idea of self-help development that evolved from its first operation in Southeast Asia has been mobilised and applied in other areas of the world. JNGO’s operations have essentially been targeted at the scale of community. This is due to the fact that it is a non-governmental agency which aims to provide assistance at the grassroots level as opposed to governmental assistance which is usually provided at larger scales, and also due to its focus on development at the community level. In this sense, in comparison to the case of OVOP’s assistance which is passed to communities as a form of governmental assistance, the mobility of JNGO’s concepts and policy takes a simpler form (see Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2: Mobility of JNGO concept and policy**



Source: created by the author

It was consistent that the projects were designed as a community-based operation while they were transformed in a way to accommodate the specific background of problems and local contexts. Interestingly, the policy in a way travelled back to Japan when a great earthquake occurred in Japan in 2011<sup>41</sup>. After its initial emergency relief operations in the earthquake stricken areas, JNGO implemented a project to assist fishing communities where the local fishing industry was severely damaged due to the earthquake and tsunami. Although it is not an international development project, JNGO's approach of emergency support followed by self-help development has become a generalised model for its projects.

Similarly to OVOP Malawi, the concepts of self-help development travelled with the individual field workers and were interpreted and communicated to other actors by them. The aspect of individuals' roles in policy mobility is arguably more evident owing to the fact that the policy shifted horizontally and was transformed by the field workers. This is in contrast to the case of OVOP Malawi where the original ideas were centrally adopted at a stage and disseminated.

### **5.3 Transforming Concept into Project Design**

The aim of this Chapter is to examine how the ideas of self-help and self-reliance evolved in the context of Japanese development institutions and further came to be transformed in particular international development projects. The previous section investigated this question from the perspective of the mobility of ideas and development policies across different spaces and scales, from Oyama in Japan to Malawi in the case of OVOP, and from Southeast Asia to Malawi in the case of JNGO. The following section turns attention to how the Japanese development projects implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa are designed to focus on a self-help process to achieve self-reliant development. It first investigates the project designs from a broad view of Japanese grassroots projects in Sub-Saharan Africa, and draws implications on some common types of approaches. It then builds analysis on the specific cases of OVOP Malawi and JNGO.

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<sup>41</sup> It was a magnitude 9.0 earthquake which occurred in March 2011. The epicentre was about 70 kilometers off the coast of Oshika peninsula of Miyagi Prefecture in northeast region of Japan (Japan Meteorological Agency 2014).

### 5.3.1 Self-reliant Development as a Goal

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, Japan's grassroots development assistance has been mainly carried out by Japanese NGOs of various backgrounds or less commonly implemented by the recipient government in cooperation with JICA as a part of ODA. In Sub-Saharan Africa this particularly applies to grassroots projects. In addition to JNGO and OVOP Malawi, this section draws insights from several other Japanese grassroots projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. These include projects carried out by AGS in Burkina Faso, Amani Ya Africa in Kenya, AMDA-MINDS in Zambia, CanDo in Kenya, JOCA in Malawi, PLAS in Uganda and Kenya, and TICO in Zambia<sup>42</sup>. Such grassroots projects are commonly designed to promote the self-help effort of local people and evidence can be observed in different phases of the projects. Despite the common theme of self-help promotion, each organisation has a unique background and adopts different approaches. The diversity makes generalisation rather difficult, yet similar trends can be observed.

In analysing their approaches, what is immediately noticeable is that the goals of grassroots projects are closely associated with achieving self-reliant development, "*jiritsu*" in Japanese, of the local communities and people:

"We aim to support those who are in a dire situation so that they can achieve their self-reliance in a way that is as sustainable as possible" (TICO 2013).

"Our assistance is not to 'give' but to 'create' the living space for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS by working together with people in the local community. We prioritise self-reliance of the local people so that they can carry on with the activities we initiated even after we leave" (PLAS 2013).

"By combining support for social development and business activities which would sustain the programme, we aim to establish a model of a social development programme which is self-reliant and sustainable" (AMDA-MINDS 2013).

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<sup>42</sup> As explained in Section 3.2.2, I researched these seven projects from the implementing agencies' websites and official reports. I also visited the headquarters of AGS, CanDo, TICO in Japan to interview officers while I communicated with PLAS via emails in October and November 2011. I visited project sites of TICO and AMDA-MINDS in Zambia, and JOCA in Malawi in March and April 2012 as a part of an exploratory field trip in Year 1 of my PhD.



The descriptions of organisational objectives indicate that self-reliant development is prescribed as a goal which should be achieved by the end of the project's term, which is basically when the externally-initiated project is handed over to the local people and sustained by them. This was also highlighted by an officer working in a field project in Malawi:

“The most important thing that we think in field operation is how we can help local people to become self-reliant. We always think how soon we can exit from the project and let it be carried out by the local people.”

According to the organisations and their personnel, self-reliant development is successfully achieved when what the external initiative has brought about is sustained and further carried out by autonomous actions. Promoting self-help effort of local people is considered as an important element to achieve the target of self-reliant development effectively. While the level of emphasis on self-help and the efficacy of approach vary from one project to another, their self-help based approach to achieve self-reliant development can be classified into three common types.

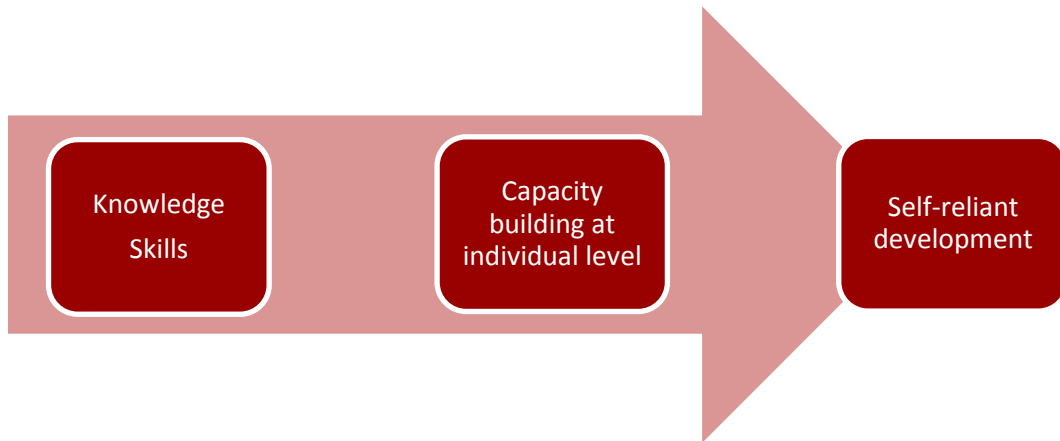
### ***Individual Improvement Approach***

Amani Ya Africa, a Japanese NGO operating in Kenya, provides financial support to schools in slums and scholarships to secondary school students, while running a vocational training centre to increase the scope for employment opportunities. The educational programme includes HIV/AIDS knowledge. In the case of PLAS operating in Uganda and Kenya they support children and youth orphaned by HIV/AIDS by incorporating them into formal education and providing vocational training for their future employment. Specific knowledge and skills are provided through programmes such as OVOP Malawi, in transferring business-management skills for income-generation to rural farmers.

These projects assist local people to acquire specific knowledge or skill so that they build individual capacity to cope with issues that they face in different phases of their lives. Knowledge and skills provided in the projects range from a basic formal education curriculum to vocational skills such as business management. This approach is designed to ensure the enhancement of basic individual capacity based on appropriate knowledge and

skills, which would contribute to self-reliant pursuit in betterment of their life (see Figure 5.3).

**Figure 5.3: Approach to Achieve Self-reliant Development 1**



Source: created by the author

This type of approach is inclined towards assisting individual capacities through providing opportunities to have a wider choice in shaping their life course, which would have been difficult to achieve otherwise. The core principle exists in line with the often-quoted proverb ‘Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime’: it is indispensable to recognise the importance of knowledge and intangible capability for one to improve one’s own life. While the proverb emphasises the importance of individual capacities, it does not necessarily answer important questions in relation to development assistance: “Do they have nets and boats to fish?”, “Do they have access to the fishing grounds?” or “How environmentally sustainable [is the fishing method]?” (Clark 2002: 504). While this project design fundamentally focuses on providing individuals with skills and knowledge, field implementation would face the issues represented by the above-mentioned questions, and taking such issues into consideration would ensure effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the project delivery. Furthermore, the question can be addressed at a more fundamental level: “Do they want to do fishing?” This question echoes a common criticism towards participatory development that participatory development projects might force local people to prioritise the project over other duties, which could lead to disempowerment (Cooke and Kothari 2001).

This approach alludes to individual aspects of self-help improvement rather than community-based development. In so doing, it creates a foundation in realising self-reliant development at larger scales.

### ***Community Development and Substitution Approach***

Figure 5.4 demonstrates the second common type of approach in grassroots development projects carried out by Japanese agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Typically, the first stage of the project involves construction of a particular communal infrastructure, such as a school, medical facility or borehole. The mode of assistance is determined on the basis of what the organisation identifies is to be done and is also influenced by what assistance the local government requests. Once the facility is constructed, local people are encouraged to use the facility and also participate in the management of the facility. The locals learn management by working together with the organisation's staff so that they build capacity to run the facilities by themselves, make appropriate decisions to run the project and take over responsibilities. Self-help is promoted in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills regarding the management of the facility, and by transferring managerial as well as financial responsibilities to local people. In this approach, the impact of the programme emanates from a specific physical infrastructure which is designed to resolve a specific problem in the local area.

**Figure 5.4: Approach to Achieve Self-reliant Development 2**



Source: created by the author

Building a medical clinic ensures the local people have an easy access to health-care facility in terms of physical distance. Construction of schools provides opportunities for the local children and the youth to have better access to education<sup>43</sup>. In addition to reducing such specific problems, projects aim to initiate the effort from the local people to run such infrastructure based on their own actions, and duplicate similar initiatives in other areas based on what they have learned.

The approach taken by CanDo, a Japanese NGO operating in Kenya, appears to be in line with this type of project. It assists local communities to build primary school blocks while the project is intended to enhance the knowledge and skills of local participants in learning construction techniques and resolving problems. Engagement of local people is ensured in the management of schools so that they are maintained without external intervention. Those locals who have been involved in building school blocks duplicate the project in other areas on their own. Similarly TICO operating in Zambia constructed a rural health post where the medical service is provided on the basis of cooperation between the local volunteers and the Zambian government. The local volunteers are given managerial training by TICO for the self-reliant management of the facility. Communal infrastructure also includes boreholes and International Water Project has focused on building boreholes in rural areas in Kenya while transferring a Japanese traditional well-digging technique to the members of local communities.

As these examples demonstrate, this type of approach importantly includes an aspect of complementing lack of public services, in the form of school building or medical clinics. The function of substituting for the government in the provision of health and education services has been recognised as one of the main roles of NGOs operating in different parts of the world. They also play a role of safeguarding against adverse impacts of policy implementation as experienced by many communities that received assistance under the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes (Hulme and Edwards 1997; Lewis and Kanji 2008; Desai 2008). Not only the Japanese NGO projects but also official government projects have focused on this aspect; for instance, construction of boreholes in developing areas of the world is one of the most publically-recognised practices of

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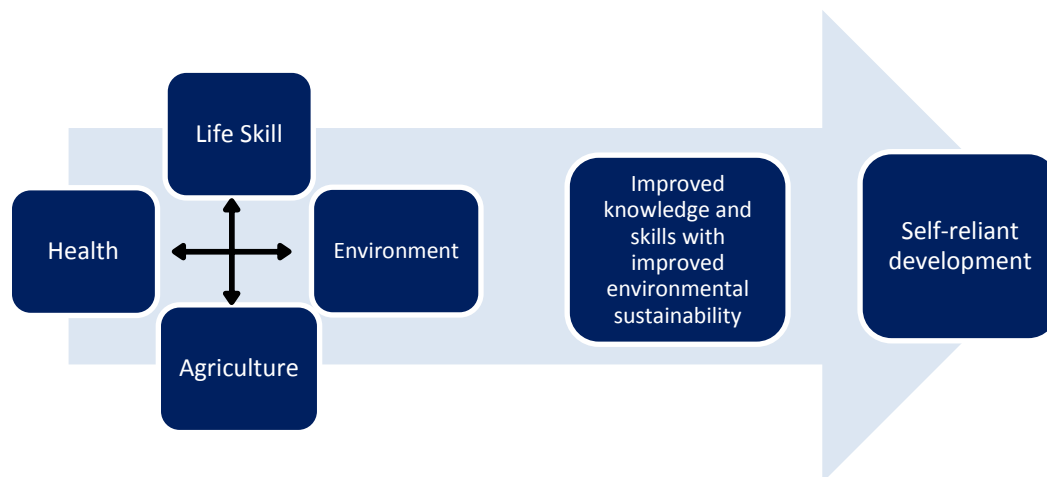
<sup>43</sup> Although such physical facility require other resources such as staff and equipment to be fully operational, construction of buildings normally require a larger sum of money.

development assistance that Japanese ODA has engaged with (JICA 2009). These projects often stress that the mere provision of physical infrastructure does not lead to self-reliant development, but it is important that such provision is associated with capacity-building activities concerning the management of physical infrastructure by local people. The maintenance of such physical infrastructure has been identified as a priority and JICA has run a project to mobilise local communities to establish a system of borehole management in Malawi since 2011, working closely with local communities and counterparts in order to maintain the facility more effectively (JICA 2013).

**Holistic Approach**

In the pursuit of self-reliant development, some projects take a holistic approach where different aspects of problems and concerns of the local community are mitigated at the same time (see Figure 5.5)

**Figure 5.5: Approach to Achieve Self-reliant Development 3**



Source: created by the author

Such projects often involve issues relating to environmental concerns. For instance, TICO in Zambia aims to tackle the problem of rural poverty from multiple aspects, calling the approach 'WAHE' (Water, Agriculture, Health and Education). Along with supporting the

management of a local health clinic, having identified the issues of soil-degradation due to excessive use of chemical fertiliser, TICO aims to resolve the problem of soil-degradation by encouraging farmers to plant specific trees and plants that help improve soil fertility. On the other hand, the primary objective of Action for Greening Sahel (AGS) is environmental conservation. AGS states that people's environment can be improved by the autonomous action of local people, and people can seriously tackle environmental issues once their immediate and daily concerns are addressed. Such projects are considered incomplete if only one aspect of livelihood is focused upon, as was expressed by AGS:

“Everyday lives of people and the environment surrounding their living space are deeply inter-related. It is necessary to consider the improvement of their daily lives including the environment.” (AGS 2013)

In this way the project takes a holistic approach by incorporating daily livelihood problems with environmental conservation. JNGO attempts to implement several projects ranging from sanitation facilities to cash crop production in Malawi, through which it aims to transfer skills and knowledge to the local people in achieving self-reliant development.

One of the challenges in implementing such holistic projects including the activities of environmental conservation is the issue of local people's priorities. Environmental conservation programmes, such as afforestation programmes involve acting for a long-term gain without having a short-term reward. This was reflected in the situation of TICO. Its project in Zambia as a whole was still ongoing; however, it had suspended the agriculture and environment aspect of WAHE as of April 2013. This is because many local farmers did not follow the programme as they weighed the short-term de-merit of planting trees and crops which do not immediately lead to bearing fruits and making profit more significantly than the potential long-term gain of sustainable farming. A TICO representative told me:

“It has been rather difficult to find enough evidence as to whether the project gives expected impact or not.” (TICO representative, Tokushima, Japan, October 2011)

The holistic approach typically takes into consideration the environment of the local area in terms of natural environment and living environment. As this comment represents, it is difficult to estimate whether the project leads to achieving long-term sustainable

development. AGS has recognised the tension between the objective of long-term development and the short-term concerns of local people at the stage of project design. This was mentioned by an AGS officer:

“We consider development problems from the perspective of daily ‘concerns’ of local people. For instance, we gathered from local women that they are worried about the amount of firewood reducing in their areas for the purpose of daily cooking. We try to link such immediate ‘worries’ and ‘concerns’ to the long-term sustainability of livelihood.” (AGS representative, Tokyo, Japan, October 2011)

In the projects which take the holistic approach to self-reliant development, one project has multiple components which incorporate other types of approaches to achieve their goals of self-reliant development more effectively. For instance, one of the project components of TICO in Zambia is to construct a medical clinic in a rural area while it aims to tackle the issue of environmental degradation in the other project within the same programme in Zambia. The same style applies to the case of JNGO.

### **5.3.2 Case of OVOP Malawi**

As outlined earlier in this chapter OVOP Malawi provides assistance to existing farmers’ groups with capital and training to process their farm produce to increase their income by adding value to raw agricultural products. The farmers’ groups take the organisational form of cooperatives with members being the cooperative’s shareholders. OVOP assistance is provided upon their application for low-interest loans with OVOP and the capital is used for the specific purposes of purchasing agro-processing machines and maintenance of the factory. The group identifies the specific product to develop in consultation with local government advisors or OVOP ACLO. Based on the screening carried out by the OVOP Secretariat in Lilongwe, successful applications are notified and the loan agreement is signed. As it is often the case that the members are primarily farmers and would have never engaged with institutionalised commercial activities, OVOP provides training on the use of machinery, factory and business management. Apart from such training and workshops, assistance is essentially loan-based, with zero or low interest rates.

There were more than one hundred OVOP assisted groups registered in Malawi as of February 2013, when the majority of my field research was conducted, and the forms and size of assistance depended on the type of agricultural product and the size of the farmers' association. In order to facilitate in-depth analysis of OVOP assisted groups, this research focuses on two groups: OVOP Group A and OVOP Group B (see Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4: Main features of the two OVOP groups (as of March 2013)**

	<b>Group A</b>	<b>Group B</b>
<b>Year Started</b>	2009	2009
<b>Location of factory</b>	Semi-urban Trading Centre	Rural and small Trading Centre
<b>Raw Materials</b>	Sunflower seeds	Groundnuts
<b>OVOP Product</b>	Sunflower Cooking Oil	Groundnuts Cooking Oil
<b>Number of Members</b>	21 (Male: 6, Female: 15)	56 (Male: 28, Female: 28)
<b>Initiator</b>	Community development counsellor from District Council	Individual members of local community
<b>Members coming from</b>	Semi-urban villages	Remote rural villages

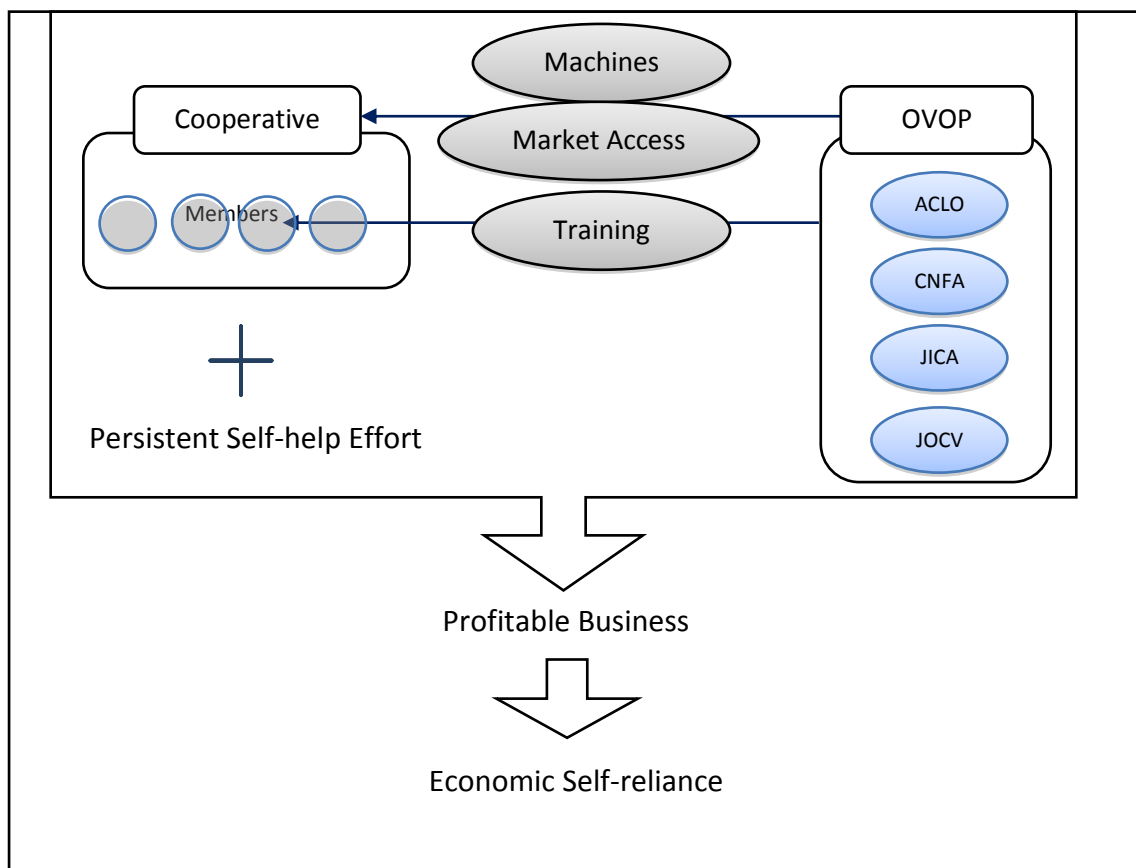
Source: created by the author

Both studied OVOP groups process cooking oil as a value-added product based on their own harvests and also on the harvest purchased from other farmers. The overall flow of the assistance of OVOP to farmers' groups is demonstrated in Figure 5.6. OVOP provides agro-processing machines to the farmers' cooperative on credit so that farmers without much capital can still have an access to industrial agro-processing machines in order to produce value-added products. At the same time, it provides market access to the farmers who



would not otherwise be able to sell their products beyond their limited local areas. For instance, the cooperatives' products are sold in the OVOP shops called 'antenna shops', in the heart of Lilongwe and in an international airport shop, and some groups make large sales by attending trade fairs a few times a year. This assistance is provided from OVOP to the cooperative as a group. Equally importantly, OVOP provides training concerning the usage of machines and business management to the individual members of the groups. This training is delivered by different providers.

**Figure 5.6: Flow of assistance observed in studied groups**



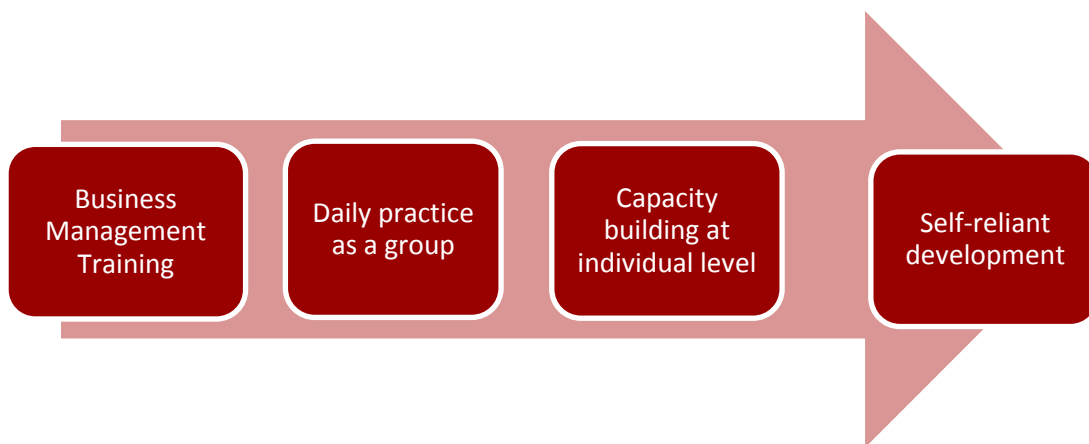
Source: created by the author

First, ACLOs who are the Malawian outreach officers under the auspices of the OVOP Secretariat visit their designated OVOP groups to provide advice regarding the day-to-day management of the business. ACLOs are based in the respective district offices and they are

the closest liaison point to the groups. Secondly, JICA in cooperation with OVOP provides specific professional training to the individual members of the groups several times a year. CNFA is a USAID sponsored agro-business consultancy NGO based in the United States, which sends volunteer consultants from the US on a short-term assignment basis to provide specific training to the groups a few times in a year. Finally JOCVs are closely involved in the activities of the cooperatives in working together in some cases while supervising and advising on the day-to-day activities of the groups in other. These forms of assistance provided to the farmers as a group and also as individuals are absorbed by them on the basis of their persistent self-help effort, and as a whole it is expected to lead to a profitable business, which will eventually encourage the economic self-reliance of the members.

This model of approach appears to be closely associated to the first type of the approach to achieve self-reliant development (see Figure 5.7).

**Figure 5.7: Approach to Achieve Self-reliant Development, Case of OVOP Malawi**



Source: created by the author

OVOP's assistance is directed towards individuals for the improvement of their livelihoods. In this perspective, the farmers' groups function as a linkage between institutional support and individual benefit. In the process of appropriating the original concept in accordance with the context of poverty reduction in Malawi, OVOP has pushed the aspect of community

development aside in order to focus on the financial self-reliance of rural farmers. Furthermore, the aspect of community development or the concept of community seems to be taken into consideration by keeping the local uniqueness within the product specification in a sense that the product has been developed by the local farmers, from the local harvest<sup>44</sup>.

Previous research has pointed out that group members perceive OVOP assistance as one of many micro-finance schemes and not related to community development (Yoshida 2006; Haraguchi 2008). In line with this perception, OVOP Malawi has been criticised as a lender with a high interest rate, which is beyond the poor farmers' capability to repay (Nation Online 2014; Majjiduh 2014), although it is considered as a low rate by OVOP Malawi, with the 15% interest over ten years repayment for factory building and three years for machines (Interview with OVOP Malawi representative 2013). This situation deviates entirely from the original OVOP Oita, which was clearly focused on local community and was not a micro-loan lender. While a Japanese OVOP officer claimed that community development as a whole needs to be taken into consideration in the future project design and a wider approach is important, it was also mentioned that:

“I actually think the assistance can also be directly given to individual households, not necessarily only to the farmers' cooperatives. They have a strong tie among family members in the Malawian society. I think it could work well... I would imagine that there will be criticisms that the government is directly giving money to individuals though.” (Japanese officer involved in OVOP Malawi)

From the field research, it emerged that one of the significant setbacks that OVOP implementation faces is how well the group dynamics are managed. The success of an OVOP-assisted group often depends on whether members are able to make the most of the group activity or not. Suggestions to focus at the household level rather than the group level could thus be a possible response to the problem of managing group dynamics, which can be an extremely challenging task due to diverse human relationships among the individuals involved in each case. A Japanese OVOP officer further noted:

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<sup>44</sup> Detailed analysis on how the OVOP-assisted groups are related to the local community is conducted in Chapter 6.

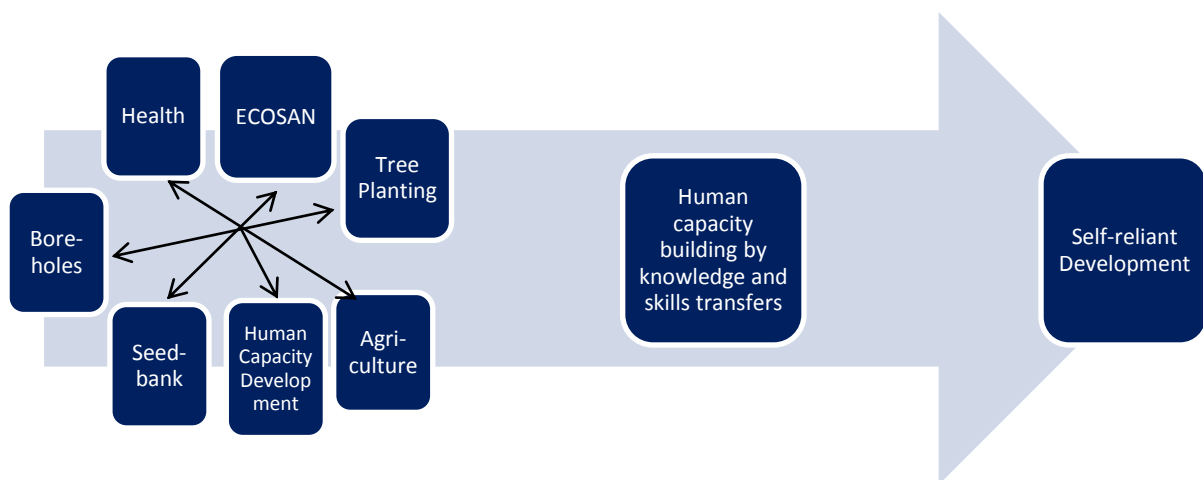
“The element of community is important in development projects. But it can be more broadly defined. [...] It can be called a ‘community development project’ as long as there is an element of community with holistic and wide activities in the local area carried out by anybody, including public body or even commercial entities, and as long as these activities lead to community revitalisation, *kasseika*.” (OVOP Japanese officer)

This view represents a wider comprehension of the meaning of community development. Community in development project does not simply consist of the targeted recipients of the assistance (Kelsall and Mercer 2003; Cornwall 2008). Similarly, community development is not only about improving the living standard of people in the community by establishing communal infrastructure or promoting income-generating activities. The definition of community development from the perspective of ‘*kasseika*’ encompasses the diversity of activities engaged in by the people in the area, and the level of their engagement.

### **5.3.3 Case of JNGO**

JNGO engendered a project model when it implemented its first development project in Malawi between 2007 and 2010, and it has replicated the model in other areas in Malawi. It is called a comprehensive rural community development project, whereby it tries to achieve food-security for villages through resolving various aspects of livelihood problems. The project includes: drilling boreholes; running malaria prevention programmes; installing improved latrines; planting trees; transferring skills of ecological farming; training local leaders with leadership skills; and building a system of storing seeds and borrowing seeds on credit. At first glance, its approach seems to be close to the third type approach to achieve self-reliant development among Japanese NGOs (see Figure 5.8).

**Figure 5.8: Approach to Achieve Self-reliant Development: Case of JNGO**



Source: created by the author

One of the distinct characteristics of the JNGO project is the fact that it covers a wide range of issues. JNGO identified the interconnectedness of the developmental problems especially in the rural communities where day-to-day life tends to be contained in a limited geographical space. The problems arising from the daily lives of rural communities are often not easily categorised into a clearly-defined area. With this perspective, the project consists of seven different components each of which contributes to building a community which is food secure. For instance, the instalment of Ecological Sanitary Toilets (ECOSAN), an improved style of pit latrines, was proposed as a potential solution to low sanitation standards and occurrence of seasonal epidemics such as cholera, and at the same time as a means to generate organic manure that can be used as an alternative to expensive fertiliser for higher agricultural production<sup>45</sup>. In this way, the ECOSAN programme contributes to at least two spheres of the livelihoods of rural farmers, which are health and agriculture. Another example is the establishment of 'seed banks' in villages. JNGO helps the local people organise the local seed storage space where villagers contribute seeds of crops when possible, borrow when needed, and return the seeds when they harvest. When JNGO builds the storage house, it installs an improved cooking stove system beside it so that the smoke from the stove flows inside the storage and prevents harmful insects, and at the same time

<sup>45</sup> ECOSAN is an alternative latrine to conventional latrines which stores human waste in a deep pit directly dug into the earth. Water Aid has produced a detailed guideline of ECOSAN programmes, which is comprehensible in technical explanation as well as strategy of project delivery (see Water Aid in Nepal (2011)).

the improved oven helps reduce the amount of firewood required. It lightens the workload of women collecting firewood and conserves trees. For environmental conservation, seedlings are planted including fruit-trees and plants which have medical value so that the trees could also contribute towards health and income generation. Whereas some components of the projects are interlinked or entangled in such ways, others such as borehole construction and malaria prevention programmes rather simply ensure the basic living condition of the local people. These components have synergies with other components in that having access to safe water and maintaining a good standard of health are regarded as the essential assets based on which the people make their own effort to improve their lives.

Theoretically, the comprehensiveness of the project makes sense in terms of fitting the assistance in the context of rural farmers' problems. But originally when the project started in Nkotakota District in 2007, there were fewer components, and particularly the health-related project was not included as JNGO did not have specific experience in running health projects compared to ecological farming. The health-related components were added in response to a request made by the District Office at that time. Comprehensiveness of the project expanded in such a way too.

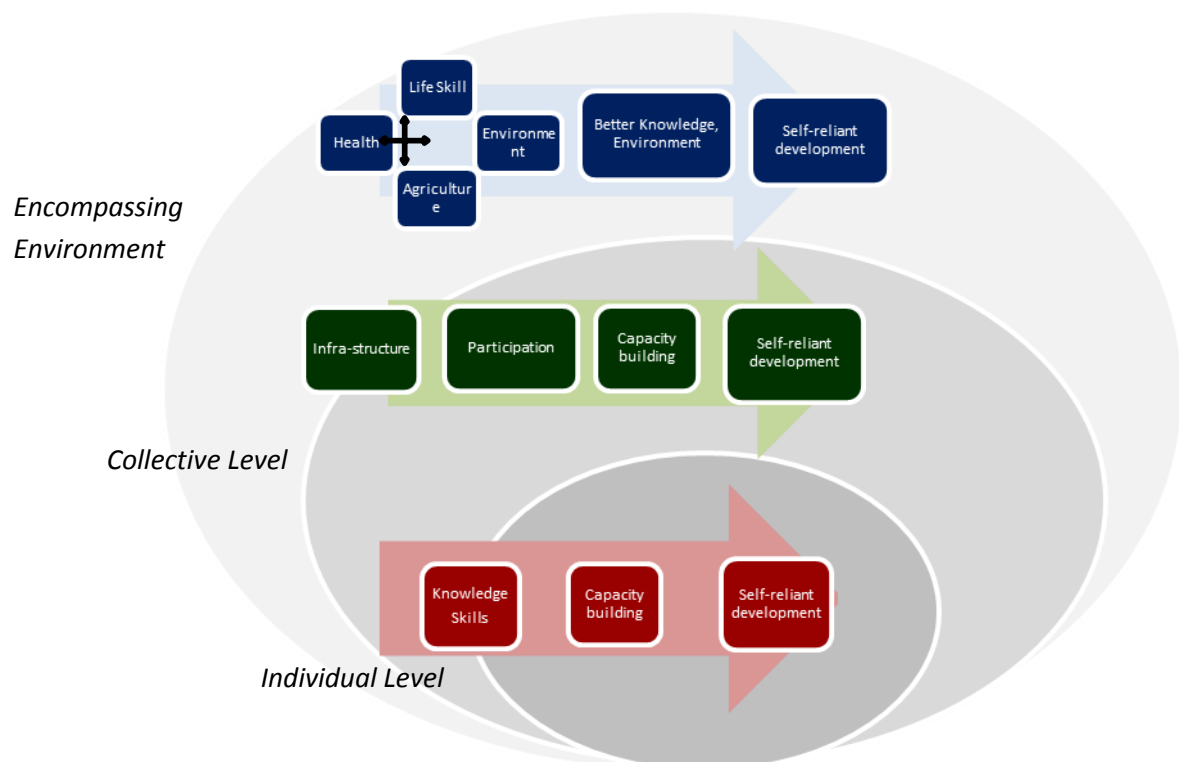
"I think it's important to understand problems in a wider context, but if you end up having to leave the projects kind of incomplete because it is too wide, then it might be wiser to focus on a few issues and do the projects thoroughly. JNGO has got a unique and interesting idea like ECOSAN project, which connects sanitation and agriculture. It can just specialise in this for example. I do understand that if you see the rural livelihood, then you may want to improve many different things though." (JNGO Japanese field officer)

The comprehensiveness provides opportunities for the different aspects of one project to interact; for instance, in the nutrition improvement workshop, they can combine the component of agricultural technique to have more variety of vegetables.

### 5.3.4 Interrelations between the Self-reliant Development Approaches

As has been shown in Figure 5.8, the assistance of OVOP Malawi places an emphasis on individuals in terms of their capacity building while it pursues the idea of revitalised community created by the individuals. This indicates that individual aspect of self-help to achieve self-reliant development is expected to scale up to the collective self-reliant development. Similarly, JNGO’s approach of comprehensive development is composed of different aspects of livelihood improvement pursued by collective or individual self-help activities. These cases indicate that there is a progressive relationship between the three types of self-reliant development approach (see Figure 5.9).

**Figure 5.9: Progressive relation of different approaches to self-reliant development**



Source: created by the author

While Japanese agencies appear to have a specific emphasis on one of the three types of approach, they are on the same progressive process of self-reliant development based on

individual self-help that scales up to different levels. This progression further demonstrates the importance of individual effort and engagement and at the same time the contribution of the individuals to the larger social and environmental spaces to eventually achieve the self-reliant development of the community as a whole.

### **5.3.5 Elements of Self-reliance**

The previous section examined different types of approaches adopted by grassroots projects to promote self-help process of self-reliant development. This section further deconstructs the meaning of self-reliant development based on empirical findings.

Similarly to the elements of capacities of individual actors identified by Takagi and Aoyagi (2008), in analysing self-reliant development practised in grassroots programmes, it has emerged that there are three main aspects of self-reliance which development projects pursue: financial self-reliance, self-reliance in skills and knowledge, and self-reliance in mentality and action (see Section 2.2.2 for the discussion about relationship between endogenous development and different elements of capacity). Financial self-reliance is where a community manages a development project using their own financial resource without receiving external funding. At a macroeconomic level, it means that a country does not receive financial assistance from foreign donors in order for the country to manage its own development programmes. Financial self-reliance of a country can be achieved through 'graduating' from external assistance. Ending reliance on such external financial support could mean socio-economic confusion and diminishing public services for ordinary citizens, while it means more control by the country in determining its own fate and achieving long-term development goals by nurturing its own capacities (Moyo 2008). It would then mean individuals generating stable income by themselves to sustain their living, and not relying on other people or organisations' assistance. Self-reliance in knowledge and skills implies that people in local communities are equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to pursue their daily objectives and future aspirations, without relying on external resources. Human resource development often serves to achieve this aspect of self-reliance, which often includes enhancement of specific technical knowledge and skills. Finally the self-reliance of mentality and actions concerns motivation, confidence, self-esteem, and attitude towards



improvement of their livelihood, and making actions based on such mind-set. This relates more to the level of individuals as it is about inner change of self-mentality.

The three aspects of self-reliance are pursued differently in development projects. The cases of five agencies which were studied during preliminary field research and main field research in Zambia and Malawi demonstrate the different approaches (see Table 5.5).

**Table 5.5: How agencies see each aspect of self-reliance**

	<b>Financial self-reliance</b>	<b>Skills/knowledge self-reliance</b>	<b>Mental self-reliance</b>
<b>TICO</b>	Required to meet end objective	End objective of the project	By-Product of the project
<b>AMDA</b>	End objective of the project	End objective of the project	By-Product of the project
<b>MINDS</b>			
<b>JOCA</b>	Required to meet objective	Required to meet objective	End objective of the project
<b>JNGO</b>	End objective of the project	End objective of the project	End objective of the project
<b>OVOP</b>	End objective of the project	Required to meet end objective	Required to meet end objective

Source: created by the author

While all five organisations emphasise the importance of self-reliant development, the ways in which they prioritise the different aspects of self-reliance vary. For instance, TICO provides assistance in providing medical facilities in rural communities in Zambia, for general medical treatment, and pregnancy and maternity health care. In such a project related to the health sector, beneficiaries are naturally limited to the users of the medical facility, who are basically patients, or pregnant women and mothers for their specific health concerns. With this background, the primary concern of the project is focused on building capacity of local counterparts in healthcare knowledge and skills, and in managerial skills to run the medical facility. Careful handling of the financial resource is also required to maintain the smooth operation of the medical facility, which, in their case, is done in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and public funds of the local government. The local counterparts are expected to become more mentally self-reliant when these objectives are achieved.

Similarly, AMDA-MINDS has constructed a community centre in a slum area of Lusaka in Zambia, where residents of neighbouring communities can have access to vocational training classes, school education, and recreational activities. Their primary aim is to provide the residents with educational opportunities and at the same time to develop adequate human resource so the community centre can be run by local people. It also aims to create sustainable income-generation activities to make the community centre self-reliant. With this objective, AMDA-MINDS prioritises equipping local representatives with skills and knowledge to manage the community centre and securing financial resource for the centre. It is different from TICO in that it emphasises income-generation activities as a part of the management of the community centre, by carrying out diverse ways of raising funds, from growing vegetables to renting out a part of the community centre. Mental self-reliance is expected to be encouraged naturally within the conduct of the project to achieve self-reliant development, similarly to TICO.

On the other hand, JOCA's primary objective is to achieve mental self-reliance of local people. While JOCA implements projects to improve farmers' living standards in rural communities in Malawi by focusing on agricultural knowledge and technique, it places a great importance on encouraging individual farmers to change their attitude and action to improve their own lives. This was clearly explained by their field officers:

“Self-reliant development is our ultimate aim. We do not provide material goods. We always encourage the villagers by telling them ‘Let us change mind-set, and think and act on our own.’” (JOCA field officer, March 2012)

When a farmer as a sign of gratitude wrote “JOCA” on the wall of a cage for goats (See Plate 5.2), which was initiated by JOCA's programme to invest in the livestock, a JOCA field officer told me:

“It does not have to appear there... I am happy to see that they like us, but we want them to feel it is due to their own action.” (JOCA field officer, March 2012)

**Plate 5.3: A farmer has written “JOCA” on his goat cage**



Source: the author

The project's underlying principles stress the importance of making the local people truly acknowledge that it is them who are driving the development and the officers were conscious about even this kind of action by local farmers. For JOCA's project hence, financial self-reliance and self-reliance of knowledge and skills can be seen as secondary to mental self-reliance. Rather, the two aspects are considered as objectives, but at the same time as instruments to achieve mental self-reliance.

In the case of JNGO's framework, the three aspects are addressed at the same time by implementing a multi-sectoral programme. OVOP is focused on economic self-reliance as a primary objective. In all cases, the different aspects of self-reliance are expected to synergise and promote self-help process to achieve a larger goal of self-reliant development.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined how the ideas of self-help development originally emerged in the Japanese development institutions and how the ideas have been transformed into project designs to promote self-help process to achieve self-reliant development.

The case of OVOP Malawi showed a journey of an idea, which originally emerged to improve incomes for rural farmers transforming into a more comprehensive development strategy to not only improve economic status but also to enhance the quality of life of local people in a small community in Japan. It was then scaled up to a regional strategy and finally adopted as a government-to-government development assistance between Japan and Malawi as the OVOP Malawi project. It was transformed to a centrally-led development policy, and yet operationalised on the basis of the self-help of local people in achieving self-reliant development. There were individual actors' strong political initiatives that made these transformations occur at each stage, such as the previous governor of Oita Prefecture and the present president of the international committee of OVOP, who took initiative to adopt the idea of NPC to the regional scale, and similarly, then the Malawian ambassador to Japan, who eagerly promoted the validity of the OVOP concept as a poverty reduction strategy in Malawi. The case of JNGO on the other hand demonstrated the pattern of horizontal mobility, where an idea was transformed across difference geographical spaces but consistently at a community level. This is due to the fact that JNGO is a non-governmental and grassroots agency, and the horizontal mobility represents that JNGO's operation has an important aspect of complementing the roles of national or regional policies.

This chapter also discussed how development projects are designed to promote self-help of local people to achieve their self-reliant development. By studying multiple projects carried out by Japanese agencies in Sub-Saharan Africa, three types of approaches were drawn. The first approach focused on the improvement of individual capacity while the second approach concerned collective engagement in complementing lack of public services. The last type of approach encompassed the improvement of local environment while improving multiple aspects of livelihood simultaneously. These three types of self-help approach to self-reliant development correspond with the scale at which the self-help effort contributes to. Individual self-help approach is expected to contribute to improvement of the capacity

of individual. The second type of approach shows a collective of individual self-help, and contributes to local development at a collective level. The third type of approach encompasses the individual self-help contributing to improvement of the local living environment. The three approaches represent the scaling-up process of self-reliant development. The chapter further identified three elements of self-reliance that emerge from the self-help approach to achieve self-reliant development. Financial aspect, skills/knowledge and mental aspect are incorporated differently in the approaches of Japanese agencies.

This chapter analysed the transformation process of the original ideas of self-help development. In the sphere of international development assistance, it is important to understand what can affect the mobility of concepts and policies so that external development ideas can be adopted in local contexts and put into practice effectively. It is particularly relevant in the discussion of external assistance for self-help development in that the external initiatives *act* not just *on* the local issues but importantly *interact* closely *with* the actions of self-help that emerge from local contexts in shaping the people's development practice. The next chapter focuses on the stage of this interaction, where the external assistance meets local norms and existing activities.

## **Chapter 6: Interface between External Help and Self-Help**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter five investigated where the ideas of self-help development originated, and how they were adopted into the context of international development assistance and integrated into the development project designs in Malawi and Zambia. It further discussed how the ideas of self-help are designed to achieve the goals of self-reliant development in various approaches taken by Japanese agencies. Building upon the discussion on how the ideas have been played out in development projects, this chapter explores how such projects are delivered through external intervention on the ground and how they are received by people in rural communities in Malawi.

This chapter concerns the implementation stage of policy mobility and self-help ideas in participatory development (see Section 2.2.2). The following sections start with providing contextual information about the recipient communities in the JNGO project site and communities of OVOP-assisted groups, based on the interview respondents' socio-economic background and their engagements in local communal activities. It then moves on to analysing how external assistance is delivered on the ground and how it is received by the members of the recipient community.

### **6.2 Local Communal Activities**

#### **6.2.1 Context of recipient communities**

##### ***Contexts of JNGO project site***

JNGO implement the Malawi project in a central region, about 65 kilometres from Lilongwe. It is connected to the national highway, which links major cities of Malawi with well-

maintained tarmac roads, by unpaved rural roads of about 20 kilometres. There is no official public transportation that connects the area and other major cities. Local people use private minibuses and shared taxis for long-distance travel. One minibus goes to Lilongwe in the early morning starting between 6 and 6:30, and other shared taxis operate three to four times a day, depending on the demand, connecting the area and a village adjacent to the national highway. The region is located on plains and has fertile soil for agriculture. The majority of people engage in agriculture, and mainly rely on tobacco farming for cash income (District Office 2011). The climate consists of a rainy season during November / December and March/ April and dry season during the rest of the year. Accordingly, farmers engage in farming activities in plots called '*munda*' in Chichewa, which is a sizable farming plot normally far from water resource and crops.

The project area covers about three square kilometres, and the beneficiaries of the project are found in nine villages consisting of 300 households with a population of about 1,500 (see Table 6.1).

**Table 6.6: Demography of JNGO Project Site**

	<b>No. of Households</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Village 1</b>	65	302
<b>Village 2</b>	50	260
<b>Village 3</b>	34	176
<b>Village 4</b>	30	167
<b>Village 5</b>	38	158
<b>Village 6</b>	30	152
<b>Village 7</b>	25	95
<b>Village 8</b>	25	130
<b>Village 9</b>	4	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>1460</b>

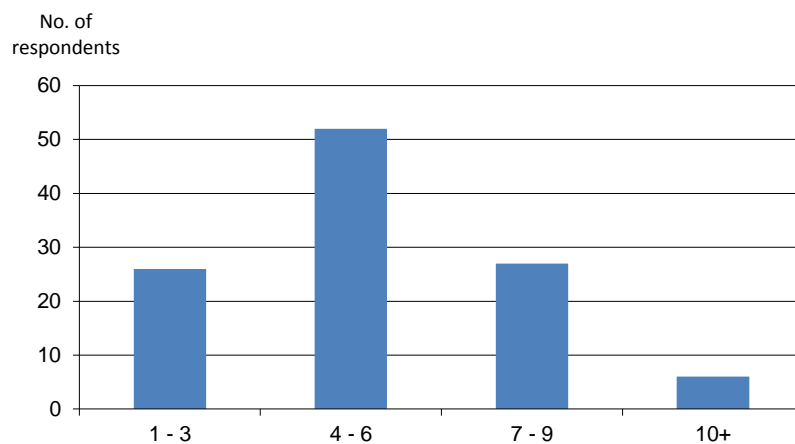
Source: created by the author based on field interviews and JNGO report

According to District Office (2011), the majority of people in the region are of Chewa ethnicity; however, out of the nine villages in JNGO project site six villages were led by Ngoni chiefs and three villages were headed by Chewa chiefs. One of the Ngoni chiefs

explained that the majority of people in the area are Chewa traditionally, and he was one of the first Ngoni people who migrated there in the 1930s. He established his village, which successively separated into a few villages headed by his relatives in the area.

The typical size of household observed among the interview respondents was four to six members in a household (see Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1: Size of Household**



Source: created by the author

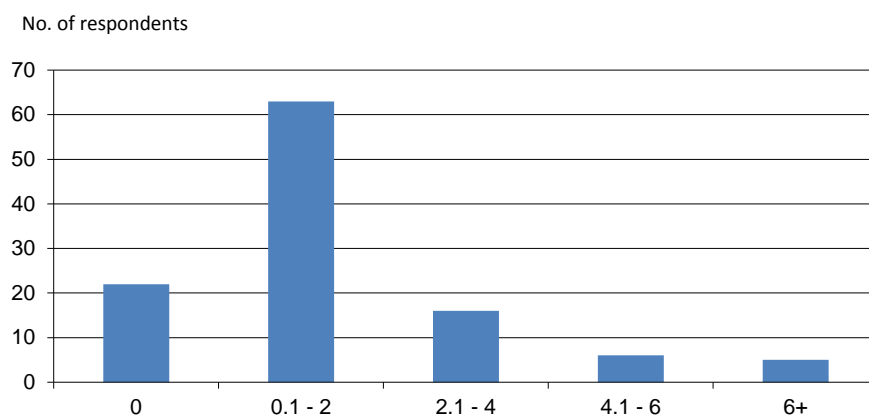
This result corresponds with the national average reported by NSO (2012). The largest size of a household was fourteen, which consisted of a husband with three wives and ten children. As has been discussed in Section 3.3.3, the definition of household is ambiguous in rural Malawi. This thesis regards the size of household as the number of relatives or non-relatives who share meals and sleep in the same compound in normal times, from the viewpoint that food security is a critical issue in rural Malawi, and that size of household might affect the problems of the household. For instance, it was commonly observed that grandparents take care of the daily needs of some of their grandchildren, and the grandchildren help the household chores and farming with the elderly grandparents.

For the rural population, the size of landholding can be vital to sustain their livelihood. The majority of respondents answered that they own less than two acres of land for agriculture,



amongst which many did not own land at all (see Figure 6.2). On the other hand, having land does not necessarily lead to prosperity as was observed in the case of largest landholder in the area. He owned 12 acres of farming land, still he appeared as average to other people in the village in his housing standard. He described his living standard as struggling. Although the size of his landholding was considerably larger than the average of the community, he had not been able to utilise the land with sufficient amount of labour and farm inputs.

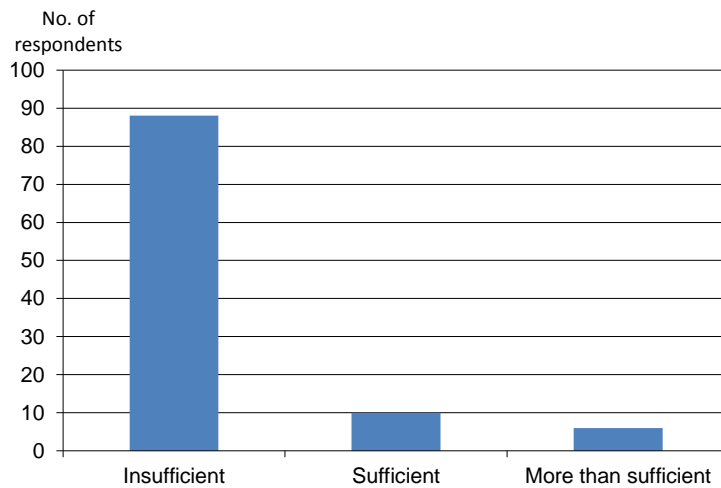
**Figure 6.2: Size of Landholding per Household (in acres)**



Source: created by the author

Although the farmers were able to produce food for living, they sought to generate cash income for different kinds of household needs. For instance, common household expenditures identified by the respondents included: salt; soap; maize milling fee; fertiliser; clothes; body lotion; sugar; and cooking oil. Other larger expenses included hospital costs and school fees for children. Amongst these, salt and soap were mentioned by most respondents as the primary household expenditure. In rural Malawi, due to the distinct rainy and dry seasons, farmers need to harvest enough maize so that it lasts until the next harvest season unless they have a large enough plot close to water source where they can grow maize all year round, called '*dimba*'. At times, those who do not have sufficient stored food need to buy maize (flour). A large majority of interview respondents claimed that their cash income was insufficient last year to meet their household needs (see Figure 6.3).

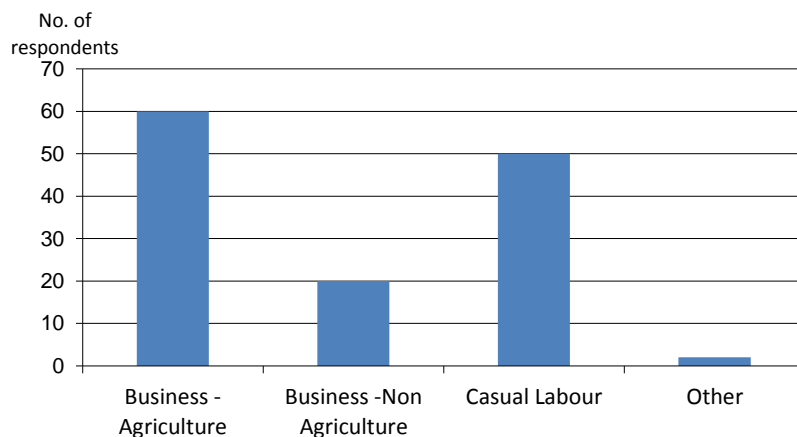
**Figure 6.3: Cash Income Level per Household**



Source: created by the author

The sources of household income identified by interview respondents can be largely categorised into four types: business activities based on agriculture; business activities based on non-agricultural activities; casual labour work based on temporary employment (*ganyu* in Chichewa or piecework); and others (see Figure 6.4).

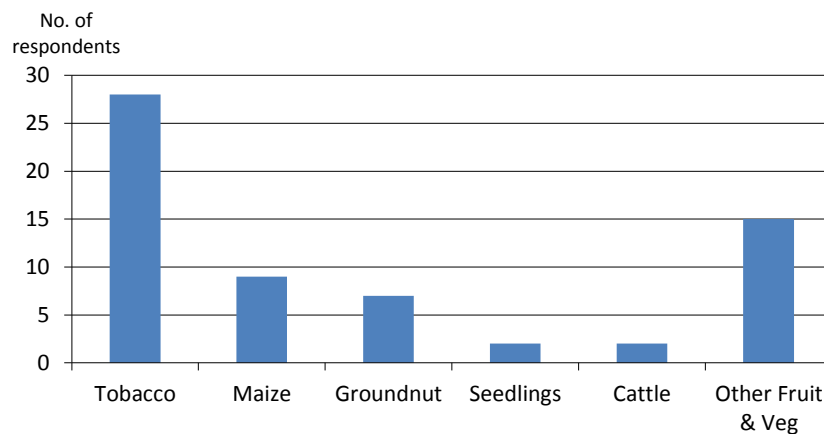
**Figure 6.4: Source(s) of Income (Household)**



Source: created by the author

Amongst agriculture-related business, tobacco farming was the one which was most relied upon as a source of cash income by the respondents (see Figure 6.5).

**Figure 6.5: Types of Agricultural Business**



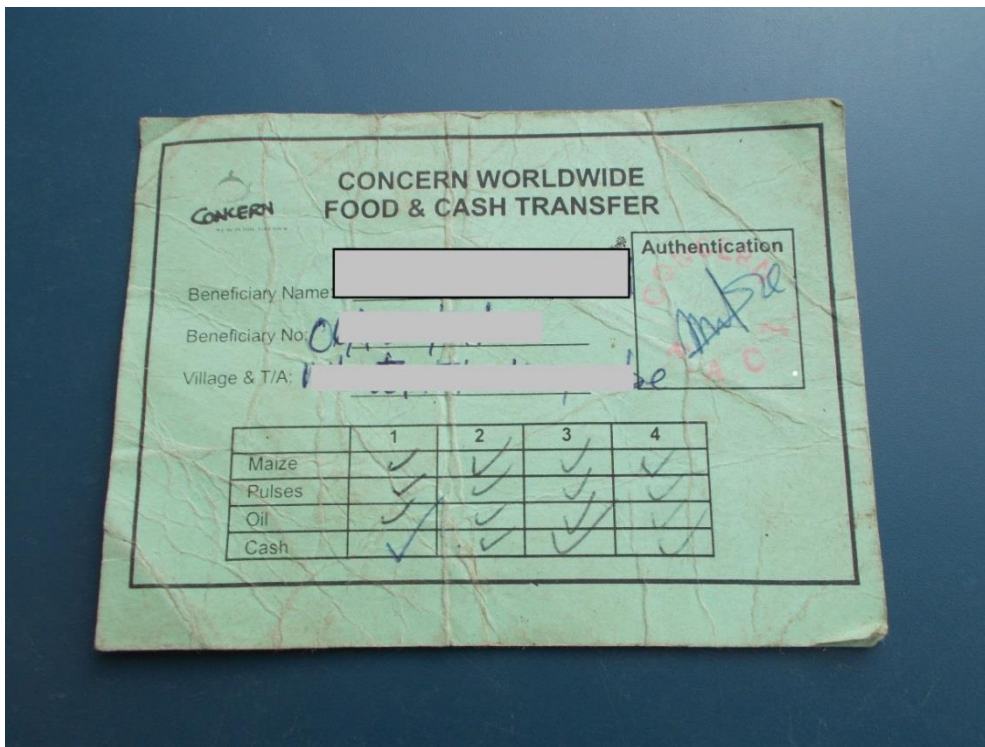
Source: created by the author

Apart from tobacco, farmers sold maize when they harvested extra on the top of what they needed for household food stock, and when the need for cash was acute. There were two respondents who were selling seedlings of particular trees such as moringa and lemongrass, and they started growing the seedlings after JNGO promoted these trees in the area. A variety of other vegetables and fruits sold by farmers, typically harvested from their *dimba*, including sweet potato, tomato, cassava, Irish potato, beans, sorghum, bamboo and mango.

In terms of external development assistance to the area, no other foreign development agencies were confirmed to be operating in the area where JNGO operated at the time of field research, although field observations and interviews confirmed that other forms of external assistance had taken place in the area for the previous 10 years. The most recent intervention and hence most remembered by the people in the community was Concern Worldwide, a UK NGO, which used to implement community development in the area.

Concern Worldwide was remembered by the villagers in two areas of assistance: *dimba* work and material provision. In *dimba* work, the villagers were taught how to cultivate more efficiently by utilising fertiliser and manure and by growing multiple kinds of vegetables in a communal garden. Some villagers mentioned that the technique was helpful while some others explained that it was helpful then but they did not continue practising due to the difficulty in obtaining materials that were necessary to continue the methods. In the material provision programme, about five to ten people in each village were selected as recipients and provided with cash, cooking oil, maize and pulses (see Plate 6.1).

Plate 6.4: Concern Worldwide's 'Cash & Food Transfer Card' Retained by a Villager



Source: the author (some information has been deleted by the author for anonymity)

The primary school blocks and teachers' accommodation were constructed in cooperation with what some villagers called 'Clinton's Hand', a foreign agency described by villagers as the organisation which "used to come by a helicopter" to the area. However the information is unconfirmed by official sources. There is a secondary school and teachers accommodation in the area, which were constructed in cooperation with funding from the European Union.

Although it is difficult to establish clear evidence as to the relationship between the attitude of local people in the area and their previous experiences with external development initiatives, villagers indicated the difference between the previous organisation and JNGO:

"There was Concern about three years ago and I think their purpose was to reduce food shortage. They used to teach us how to find food, like they gave us potatoes, veggies, seeds with different farming skills. It helped a bit. [...] We could go to Concern

when we had problem of food. For JNGO, we can't ask for food as they are about borehole and sunflower.” (Village 2)

“When JNGO came to the village, people were saying ‘oh I wish JNGO was like Concern!’” (Village 4)

Similar comments were often heard during interviews. Based on past experience the villagers would expect that assistance can come from outside and it can help their problems directly. There is also a lesson that could be learnt from the perspective of external organisation. One of the programmes that the previous organisation attempted did not meet the expectation of the local people:

“Concern constructed a silo which we used to keep our harvest, but they left here and did not come back. The activity is not there anymore as the owner has left.” (Village 4)

The silo was protected with a lock and had not been used since the organisation left the village. The previous existence of external development programmes by the foreign donors has led the local people to have specific expectations towards the similar external programmes like JNGO’s.

### ***Context of OVOP Malawi***

OVOP Malawi has an overall aim of promoting economic self-reliance of rural communities in Malawi. In this regard, the project covers a wide range of farmers. Application for the assistance is open to all farmers’ groups as long as their plan is consistent with the principles of OVOP. Although this means the openness and wide availability of assistance, it leads to a question as to how to address the diversity of recipients. According to OVOP Malawi Secretariat, it assisted 114 groups and 16,837 group members in Malawi in 2012. There are various types of value-added farm products (see examples in Plate 6.2). For instance a group in Kaporo in Northern Malawi produces soaps using extract of red palms, which are found in large numbers in the region.

### Plate 6.5: Examples of OVOP Malawi assisted products

(Left: potato crisps, Right: red palm oil soap)



Source: the author

Since farmers' groups propose the ideas of value-added products based on the local context and the local contexts vary from one group to another, it is important to understand the context of the studied groups closely.

#### ***Context of OVOP Malawi-assisted Group A***

The studied groups, Group A and Group B, are both situated in a central region of Malawi. The region's geography is characterised by flat and arable plains with the distinct rainy/dry seasons similar to the JNGO project area (District Office 2010). The factory of Group A is located within a local market area and the members are from neighbouring semi-urban villages. The community is located adjacent to national highways, and is typically characterised by a higher density of population compared to rural areas and economic activities such as local shops and restaurants. Still, they are located distant from established official economic infrastructure in urban areas (see Table 6.2).

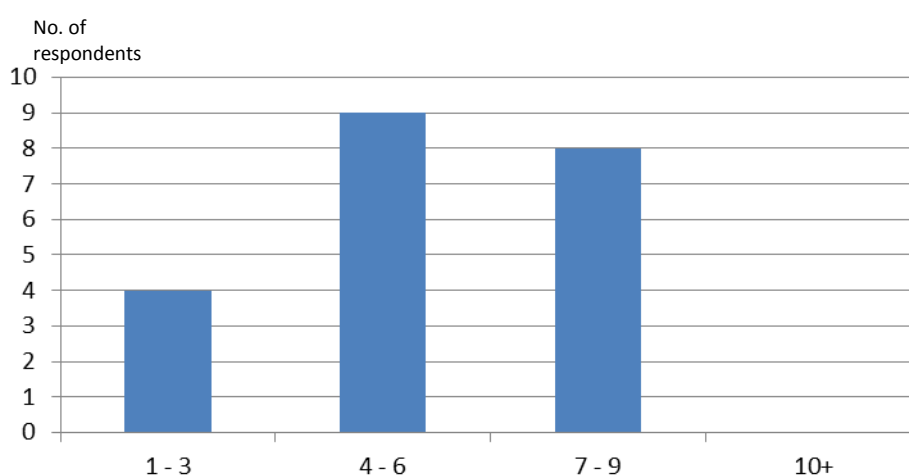
**Table 6.7: Main features of Group A (as of March 2013)**

Group A	
Year Started	2009
Location of factory	Semi-urban Trading Centre
Raw Materials	Sunflower seeds Groundnuts
OVOP Product	Sunflower Cooking Oil Groundnuts Cooking Oil
Number of Members	21 (Male: 6, Female: 15)
Initiator	Community development counsellor from District Council
Members coming from	Semi-urban villages

Source: created by the author

There are 21 members in Group A and most of them live in the neighbouring villages, except for three members who live in a village about 1 hour away from the factory by bicycle. The range of members' household sizes corresponds with the national average (NSO 2012) (see Figure 6.6). The smallest size of household was two people, and the largest was nine. The households were typically composed of a couple and their children, and a few additional close relatives.

**Figure 6.6: Size of Household (Group A Members)**

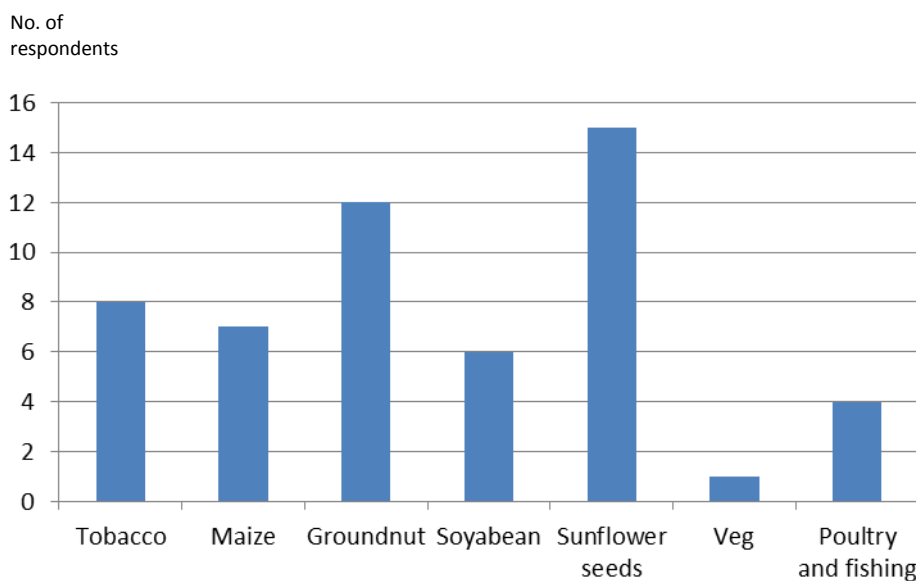


Source: created by the author

Despite the fact that the most of the group members live in a sub-urban village which is relatively more populated compared to rural areas, the large majority of group members own more farming land than the national average of about two acres (IFAD 2013).

The income sources of the group members were predominantly agricultural businesses (see Figure 6.11) while a few of them also engaged with non-agricultural businesses of making and selling *mandasi*<sup>46</sup> and cakes, or trading household necessities such as soaps, salt and utensils.

**Figure 6.7: Types of Agricultural Businesses (Group A Members)**



Source: created by the author

Group A produces cooking oil from sunflower seeds at the factory. Accordingly, most members grow sunflowers in their fields to sell to their own factory. Still, some have specified that the primary income sources were sales of tobacco and groundnuts.

**Context of OVOP Malawi-assisted Group B**

Group B has a factory to produce cooking oil from groundnuts in a small market area in a rural environment. The members of the group live in Village B, which is located about one hour away from the factory by bicycle in a rural area. Village B is remotely located from

<sup>46</sup> *Mandasi* is a doughnut-like snack commonly found in Malawi. It is made of maize flour and deep-fried.



main roads and there are scattered economic activities in the area. There are 56 members in Group B as of March 2013 (see Table 6.3).

**Table 6.8: Main Features of Group B (as of March 2013)**

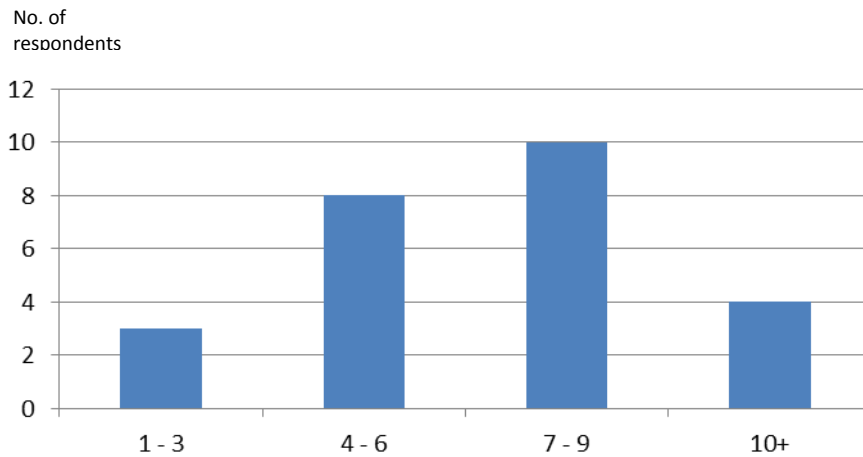
Group B	
Year Started	2009
Location of factory	Rural and small Trading Centre
Raw Materials	Groundnuts Sunflower seeds
OVOP Product	Groundnuts Cooking Oil Sunflower Cooking Oil
Number of Members	56 (Male: 28, Female: 28)
Initiator	Individual members of local community
Members coming from	Remote rural villages

Source: created by the author

One striking fact is that the number of male members and female members is distinctly balanced. Despite the fact that the groups initially started by voluntary participants, it appeared that the number is controlled. This seems to be due to the ACLO who is in charge of the group, as he advises that gender balance is important so as to meet the requirement of the donor. This was further confirmed during individual interviews with non-members, as they commented that when they expressed their will to join the group, they were rejected or told to wait as the capacity of the group is full at that moment. In this way, the gender-balance, which is now a common requirement by the donors, can become a constraint to those who are excluded from the process in making actions.

Among the interviewed Group B members, the average household size was 6.9, which is significantly larger than the regional average of 4.8 (NSO 2012) (see Figure 6.8). The largest size of household was 12. There were two households with 12 persons: one composed of a husband, two wives, and nine children; and the other one composed of a couple, eight children of their own and two of their relative's children.

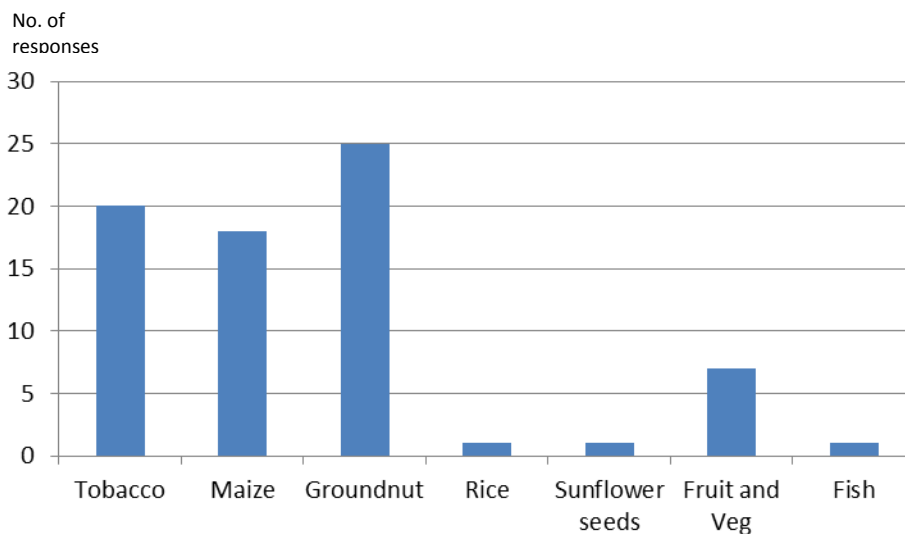
**Figure 6.8: Size of Household (Group B Members)**



Source: created by the author

The main sources of income among the members of Group B were the sales of agricultural products and there were only two members who mentioned non-agricultural businesses, which were tailoring and selling *mandasi*. There were two people who also mentioned *ganyu* labour of farming as a source of income. The two people also described their income level as insufficient, and it appeared that *ganyu* is regarded as a last resort when it comes to generating income. Group B produces cooking oil from groundnuts, and all members responded that the sales of groundnuts are a primary source of income (see Figure 6.9).

**Figure 6.9: Types of Agricultural Businesses (Group B Members)**



Source: created by the author

The second most popular agricultural product as a source of income was tobacco. In the area, tobacco farming was widely observed with some being contract farmers of large tobacco companies such as Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company, Alliance One and Japan Tobacco.

### 6.2.3 Existing Communal Activities

Based on the contextual accounts of the areas and socio-economic status of the recipients of the Japanese development projects the following section analyses existing communal activities. While the geographical, environmental, demographic and socio-economic contexts differ between communities, similar communal activities were observed in the JNGO project site and the communities where the OVOP Malawi-assisted groups are based. A variety of collective activities were observed at different scales (see Table 6.4).

**Table 6.9: Existing Collective Activities**

	<b>Necessities</b>	<b>Hobbies</b>	<b>Vocation / Skills</b>
<b>Village</b>	- Village saving for "emergencies" and " <i>kalimalima</i> "	N/A	N/A
<b>People with shared interests</b>	- Group saving/lending " <i>Bank n'Khonde</i> " or " <i>Kaponya</i> " - Group labour " <i>kalimalima</i> " - Farmers' association - Maternal and child health improvement group " <i>Mai Mwana</i> "	- Church based activities  - Knitting clubs	- Adult literacy classes
	- " <i>Apongo</i> " relationship		
<b>Family, Relatives and Neighbours</b>	- Mutual giving and lending of money	- Mutual learning of specific skills	

Source: created by the author

The communal activities can be analysed from three general purposes: household necessities; hobbies; and vocational skills. These activities take place at the scale of village as a whole, at the scale of groups of people, and between individuals. These scales are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### ***Village emergency fund and “kalimalima”***

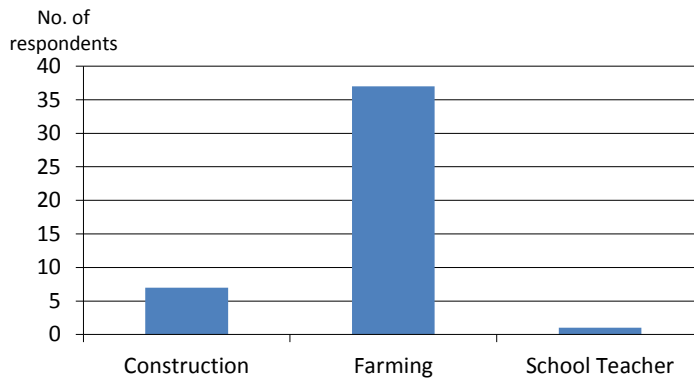
The collective local action that was universally observed was the institution of “emergency fund” at the village level. All the studied villages had a village account, where the residents of the village were supposed to contribute cash or maize flour to a common pool managed by the chief or representative of the village. The purpose of the account was described as to prepare for emergency cases, which essentially meant funeral ceremonies for the people in the villages. Having a funeral ceremony including all members of the local community is common in Malawi and it is regarded as extremely important to be involved when it happens. In the tradition of Malawi, attending funerals in home village represents the fact that one belongs to the community. Thus missing a funeral can lead to social exclusion from the community. The collectiveness of the system was reflected in the way people described in Chichewa. It is called “*linda tsoka*”, which literary means “wait now” or “wait for it to pass” and it was associated with an implied meaning that people should come together for an unfortunate event that could happen to anybody and that is unavoidable, and hence people should share the burden and persist together. Money is needed not only for the funeral ceremonies of the residents within the village, but is used to support funerals in neighbouring villages, as it was explained by a member of a village:

“The chief calls for *kalimalima*, we do group piecework and raise money, and then the money goes to the village account. We use the money for funerals. Also, we buy plates to take to other villages when we attend funeral ceremonies in their village.”

The typical ways of raising cash to deposit to the account was described as “*kalimalima*” by local people. A direct translation of *kalimalima* is “farming and farming” or “enthusiastic farming”. The meaning of *kalimalima* has been explained as a system of inter-household cooperation to supplement labour shortages in household activities not necessarily as a means of generating cash (Moorson 1997); however, in the studied areas, *kalimalima* was always associated with cash reward for the physical agricultural work as it was similarly pointed out by Fairley and Gallagher (2006) in relation to the changing meaning of mutual cooperation in Malawian societies. The term is used to mean ‘group casual labour’, or group *ganyu*, whereby a village organises a group of people to raise funds through ad-hoc labour and the majority of contribution to the village emergency account was sourced from *kalimalima* in the villages. The prevalence of people’s engagement in *ganyu* was evident

from interview responses. A majority of interview respondents claimed to regularly engage in such casual labour work to raise cash income (see Figure 6.10).

**Figure 6.10: Types of Casual Labour Work**



Source: created by the author

Mostly, *ganyu* works (casual labour) included tasks in other people's farms, in weeding, making ridges, planting, or harvesting. The extent to which farmers rely on income from *ganyu* varied. Some engaged in *ganyu* as frequently as three times a week, and some others looked for *ganyu* opportunities when cash was urgently needed. Additionally, some farmers conducted *ganyu* in exchange for food. It was performed more often collectively than individually. In this way, collective casual labour is common activity among the local people.

The detailed conduct of the *kalimalima* system varied in different villages. For instance, Village 6 of the JNGO project area wealthier residents were advised to make additional contribution to the account in order for the village to have funding in addition to that pooled from *kalimalima* to hold funeral ceremonies. Village 2 had the system of *kalimalima*, and the raised funds were used not only for funerals but also for assisting individual residents who needed medical treatment. Some of the villages had the system of allocating back to the people in the months of February, whereby the village releases the remaining funds to the people in the village in the month when the food stock of households tends to be most depleted. A resident of Village B said:

“The village helps itself by organising *kalimalima*. As a village, we go to someone’s field, cultivate, and get paid, and the money goes to the village account to be used for emergency cases like funerals or wedding.”

The institution of *kalimalima* is widely practised as a collective action of self-help at the village level, and at the same time the idea is based on mutual help within the community and beyond. Although the detail of conduct of *kalimalima* seems to have been diversified in accordance with the needs of the local communities and the decisions of community leaders, the value of collective work and mutual help appears to be widespread in rural communities in Malawi.

#### **“Kaponya” and “bank m’nkhonde” at the group level**

Another common activity observed in all studied areas was microfinance institutions. There was an activity which local people called “*kaponya*”, which literally means “throwing and catching”, a system whereby a group of people contribute money to give to one of the group members and each member receives the contribution in turn. It is a form of a traditional intra-household support system similar to rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs) in Malawi, which have been known as *chiperegani* or *chilemba* (Chipeta and Mkandawire 1992; Buckley 1997). The *kaponya* groups observed in the studied areas were formed by a group of friends and in one group the members also rotated sugar in addition to money. Similarly to typical ROSCAs, *kaponya* does not incur any interest, and it is “a zero-profits association” (Peterlechner 2009: 111). It was practised by close friends and not necessarily within the boundary of a village. Though it was described as beneficial by a member of a *kaponya* group because of the assistance he had received before, like ROSCAs, it seems to be a system of assistance and social relationships that are mutually reinforcing (*ibid.*).

Another type of microfinance activity widely identified was “*bank m’nkhonde*”, which literally means “veranda bank<sup>47</sup>”. It is a community-based saving and investment activity. It has gained much attention and interest from development agencies in Malawi for the last decade or so, and it has been adopted as village saving and loans association (VSL or VSLA)

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<sup>47</sup> Rural houses in Malawi typically have veranda, which is an outside terrace area where people often sit down and socialise.

among development agencies such as CARE, Feed The Children, and ADRA Malawi (CARE 2014; The Nation 2014). From the field research, it was difficult to identify how exactly the *bank m'khonde* groups were initiated and by whom as the explanations provided by the members were “a counsellor came from somewhere and taught us” or “someone from an organisation came”. It was also difficult to identify particularly in the JNGO project area as many groups have been sustaining the activity on their own. It was also observed that a member who had been taught by a counsellor introduced the idea to another village. In the community of OVOP-assisted groups, *bank m'khonde* had been promoted by local Community Development Agents (CDAs) under the nation-wide official programme called Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) since 2009. COMSIP evolved out of the Malawi Social Action Fund as a foundation for rural farmers' economic empowerment programme (IDA 2013). The purpose of the programme is for the rural residents to have easy access to a banking system within their villages. Under this programme, government extension workers organise the groups based on voluntary participation by the local people (see Plate 6.3).

Each group has a maximum number of members which is decided by the counsellor or the members while it is officially advised as ten to twenty members. Once a group is formed, the members are required to deposit money regularly and they are able to borrow money and return it with specific interest, and share the accumulated interest over a certain period of time among the members. The money is kept in a small box with a lock and a member is responsible for keeping the box safe, while another member is responsible for keeping the key. This way the deposited money is supposed to be kept safe and it is opened in front of members only during meetings. Meeting times, required deposit amounts, repayment periods, interest, how to avoid default and other operational detailed rules are decided based on discussion and consensus among group members with advice from the counsellor. This procedure was standard through other *bank m'khonde* groups in all studied areas.

*Bank m'khonde* groups were observed in all the villages in the studied area although some have been less active than the others. The effectiveness of such microfinance institutions in the context of rural poverty alleviation has been a subject of discussions for many years (Buckley 1997; Hulme 2000; Duvendack *et al.* 2011; Concern Universal 2012).

**Plate 6.6: A Group of Village Residents Meeting for *Bank m'khonde***



Source: the author

The main motivations for participation were identified as the opportunity to borrow start-up capital for small enterprises as one of the participant explained:

“I benefit from the group. When my business of selling doughnuts and maize is not good, I can borrow money.” (Village 2 resident)

However as Hulme (2000) argued, micro-credit can be seen as a micro-debt for the participants. For instance, some groups in the studied areas have already failed to continue their activities due to some people defaulting on their loans.

While *kaponya* is essentially based on existing social relationships often rotating within relatives or friends, *banki m'nhonde* groups are formed by the unit of villages. However, a respondent explained his involvement in *kaponya*:



“I am a member of a *kaponya* group. We discussed the idea and started with my friends doing similar business as me. We come from different villages. Members contribute money and in some coming month we will share money. I can also borrow money with the interest of 30%. We meet every week when we open our business in a local weekly market.” (Village 5 resident)

This comment demonstrates that the traditional mutual help system based on social relationships has been adapted by adopting ideas of loans and investment.

**“Apongo” relationship at the individual level**

*Apongo* is known in the studied area as a relationship between two people forming a friendship, typically between two women. It is popularly practised among women as more than 70% of female respondents answered that they have had an *apongo* while there was only one male respondent who claimed to have had one before. Some respondents explained how the relationship is normally formed:

“It is whereby two people agree to form a friendship. I have one. You can have up to two or three *apongos* at a time. My *apongo* proposed to me. We were friends before but not visiting each other. Now we visit each other almost everyday, just to chat or take maize flour and soap. It is for love between friends.” (Village A resident)

It is a special friendship between women, which involves the practice of visiting each other with gifts. The exchange of gift is not explicitly required, but it is expected as reciprocity. As a woman described:

“I went to a village far from here, and then I asked a lady there to become my *apongo*. She has become my best friend. We must exchange gifts when we visit each other. It is to chat with each other and help one another.” (Village B resident)

“If I fall sick, my *apongo* will be the first one who comes and takes care of me. If I have some funeral in my family, my *apongo* will communicate it through to the other people and take initiative in arranging functions.” (Village 6 resident)

Exchange of gifts plays a role in establishing and maintaining social relationships while it enforces the obligation of reciprocity (Mauss 1990 [1925]; see relevant discussion in Section 2.4.3). For instance:

“I don’t have an *apongo*. They buy things when they visit each other. I know a woman brought two *chitenjis*, a bucket, food, and chickens for her *apongo* when she visited her, but her *apongo* could not manage to take as many things as her *apongo* brought in return. Then she took her *apongo* to the village chief and it became like a dispute.”  
(Village B resident)

*Apongo* is a relationship based on friendship which involves some element of entertainment or hobby. Equally importantly, it is also practised with an expectation of establishing relationships of mutual support and effort to maintain a safety-net at the scale of an individual relationship. Despite the opportunity to build the safety-net in *apongo*, some people who are one of the lowest of socio-economic status were often excluded due to the compulsory exchange of gifts, as these villagers stated:

“I don’t have *apongo*. I can’t afford it.” (Village 7 resident)

“*Apongo* makes you poor. If your *apongo* gives you two *chitenji*, you have to give her four *chitenji* in return.” (Village 1 resident)

As these comments imply, through *apongo* system, people exchange gifts to establish and maintain relationship and this seems to be based on what Sahlins (1972) called balanced reciprocity (see relevant discussion in Section 2.4.3). Furthermore, in *apongo*, exchanging gifts and maintaining relationship are mutually reinforcing, and the both are the means and the ends at the same time. The practice of *apongo* among women in rural Malawi demonstrates how marginalised individuals seek to sustain their livelihood.

### ***Mutual Help and Dependency***

As has been shown in the cases of *kalimalima*, *kaponya* or *bank M’nkhonde*, and *apongo*, there are existing communal activities to cope with livelihood problems in the rural communities. On the other hand, there are other daily practices which individuals engage in at a micro level. Such daily practices include helping one another meet daily needs, as well

as providing support in times of emergency. People in the local communities explained how people help each other in the communities; for example,

“If somebody comes to ask for salt, anybody, I give. They just come and try their luck. Even if I have little, I find some to share. I also have problem and we try to share problems. People in village help me too.” (Village 5 resident)

Throughout my time in the villages I observed and heard about similar practices. In terms of who helps whom, exchange of help at a micro scale was a common practice particularly among family members and relatives. People also ask for help from those who are in a better financial situation, and those who are in a better financial situation voluntarily offer their help to others at times. The following comment indicates that the exchange of help is practised in complicated ways:

“I help poor people build their house for free or give pocket money to the elders when they ask me. They reciprocate by thanking a lot. Sometimes I can't help as I don't have what they would want. I haven't been helped anyone particularly, but when I did some temporary work of digging trenches, my employer gave me a bag of maize flour and money without me asking for them after being paid for work. He also gave me a second hand sofa. I reciprocated by offering free work for him.” (Village 9 resident)

Another example of the complex network is:

“I have helped people and been helped by them a lot with food, *chitenji*, maize, money and so on. Once I sat down with my wife at home and said let's take maize to the elderly of the village because they were struggling. My wife took and distributed a bucket of groundnuts to them and the elderly was so thankful. Other time my neighbour helped me with ox-cart to carry harvest from field and I was so thankful.” (Village A resident)

Although the elderly tend to be regarded as people who should receive help as they are often physically unable to work in field to grow crops even for home consumption, there is no clear distinction between ‘helpers’ and ‘recipients’ among people living in villages due to the nature of mutual help they extend to each other. This indicates that there is a shared assumption that there are bad times and good times in life, and if you get through the bad

times, you will enjoy the good times. This is reflected in the way rural farmers try to endure the off-farm seasons or hunger season, and wait for the harvest season or the season of abundance to come.

As has been seen in this section, there are organised and non-organised communal activities in rural villages. These activities are engaged by individuals or group of people based on the notion of mutual help and reciprocity among the people.

### **6.3 Relationship between External Help and Self-Help**

The space of the development project offers an interesting interface between exogenous assistance and endogenous actions, and it is important to investigate how they relate to each other (Ogura 2012). While sharing the ultimate aim of improving the lives of the people in the recipient community, external development assistance may have different logics and paradigms of problematisation from the way the local people perceive their own problems. Furthermore, as has been highlighted in Section 2.2.2 and 2.4.2, shaping of ideas and behaviours of local people are subject to ‘hidden power’ highlighted by Lukes (1974) and can be influenced by tensions between various actors’ interests (Mosse 2005). It is also important to note that the problems and goals of development programmes can be externally shaped while values and interests of individuals are shaped by various factors such as culture, individual capacities, and institutional processes and constraints. The relationship between external support and endogenous effort can take different forms. The following section investigates whether and how exogenous development assistance and endogenous effort for development are inter-related.

#### **6.3.1 Case of JNGO**

As has been discussed in Chapter 5, the JNGO project aims to achieve the goal of self-help development by implementing a variety of project components including borehole construction and vegetable garden management, installation of improved latrines and income-generation activities. This section analyses some of the key aspect of the project

with specific focus on the mode of external intervention and how it relates to the self-help effort of the members of the recipient communities.

***Borehole construction and water-point garden***

In the area where JNGO operates, there used to be only one borehole where people had access to safe water. The water supply was not enough to be shared by people in the rather large area especially during the dry season and some villages are located far from the borehole, and people were using unprotected dug wells, which are often blamed for health-related issues including outbreaks of cholera (Nyasa Times 2011; Lamond and Kinyanjui 2012) (see Plate 6.4).

**Plate 6.7: A Small Unprotected Well Shared by a Few households**



Source: the author

Since 2010 JNGO has constructed one borehole in each village in the project area. Their borehole project is not simply about constructing the boreholes and securing safe water for the local residents. Next to the boreholes, JNGO also creates what they named as ‘water-point garden’, a vegetable garden which utilises the drainage water from the borehole to flow into the garden (see Plate 6.5 and 6.6). The drainage water is supposed to help water the vegetables particularly in the dry season and the profit generated through selling the harvest from the garden is intended to be saved up for the maintenance cost of the borehole. In this way the borehole coupled with a water-point garden can potentially

achieve two things. First, the users would be able to maintain the borehole without relying on external assistance. A number of boreholes have been constructed in rural areas in Malawi, but sometimes they are left unused because of breakdowns which the users from the community are not able to deal with<sup>48</sup>.

**Plate 6.8: Water-point Garden besides a Borehole**



Source: the author

Secondly, it involves the ideas of resource utilisation and innovation by introducing a way to create something useful by adding a small innovation. The water-point garden is supposed to be an opportunity for the local people to experience this particular method. In carrying out the project, JNGO organises the borehole committee which is normally composed of five to ten nominated members of the village. The borehole builders are employed by JNGO from inside and outside the recipient village and the committee members of the borehole also participate in construction. Malawian NGO officers visit the construction site almost

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<sup>48</sup> According to JICA (2013), 30 percent of boreholes constructed in rural areas are not functional because of breakdowns. A number of non-functioning boreholes were also seen by the author during field work.

every day to supervise the progress of the work and to resolve any issues that might have arisen.

**Plate 6.9: Drain Water from a Borehole Flowing into a Water-point Garden**



Source: the author

***“Water-point garden is a brilliant idea!”***

The idea of water-point garden is claimed to be one of the unique and innovative programmes by JNGO. There is a strong trend in the JNGO strategy to emphasise the aspect of synergetic effects of their project, whereby mutual enhancements are aimed at in relation to the idea of resource utilisation. The idea of constructing a borehole with a garden is pre-decided by JNGO although the idea needs to be accepted by the local

community. The idea is supposed to be *suggested* and *accepted*. A JNGO field officer described:

“I decided to let the local people think about ideas and make decisions in their way of doing things because in that way they will be able to better continue their actions. If they are only given something always, they won’t become self-reliant.”

As the above comment stresses, the idea of borehole construction and water-point garden is raised as a suggestion. However, in reality the suggestion is invariably accepted as generous ‘help’ from an organisation coming from outside the village. A villager explained:

“The chief tells us that we shouldn't turn back any help from outside.” (Village 6 resident)

In Malawian rural villages, the village chief typically has the authority and power to influence rules and norms of his village (Kishindo 2003). Also, they are important symbolic as well as practical representative of the community, with whom external engagement needs to be initiated. Following the custom, JNGO deliver messages to the members of the recipient village in cooperation with the village chief to explain the idea and discuss. The chief of Village 1 proudly described how the idea of water-point garden was a beneficial one:

“JNGO took us to other villages where they already had the water-point garden system. It drains the water from the borehole to a vegetable garden and generates money from there. I have explained the idea to my people in the village. It’s a brilliant idea!”

The concept seems to have reached many villagers and raised levels of understanding regarding the process:

“Their [JNGO’s] role is to encourage us to plant seeds in community garden. It will benefit everyone in that the money made from sales of crops can be used for some communal activities, mostly funeral or maybe borehole maintenance. The idea came from [JNGO]. It's a good idea as no one in the village solely has money to do that.” (Village 1 resident)



While the idea itself was embraced, implementation turned out to be more challenging. In most villages, the idea itself was well-accepted and adopted, but after some time the garden was left almost ignored and forgotten. In the context of a poorly-maintained garden, a Malawian JNGO officer described the situation:

“The agricultural extension worker told me let us gather the whole village to resolve the issue. Then we said, ‘let’s tell them the importance of the borehole, and then they will understand.’ So we called the whole village and we started to explain the importance and they understood. We asked them, what if something happens, if it breaks down, what can you do, what should we do for the sustainability of the borehole? So they were suggesting, some said let’s do the water-point garden, some said we should work in other people’s gardens who want labours and raise money for maintenance. We, as JNGO, only had the idea of the water-point garden. But they introduced these ideas of raising money from temporary work and monthly contributions by households to pool money. They also said the community garden should be used during rainy season to cultivate soya, ground nuts and so on to sell. And later we formed the action plan, and this one was successful. I can say that most of the villages, they had kept money for repair, but from this temporary work and not from the garden. The advantage of monthly contribution is that their input is very small, but it still makes good amount collectively. And the way which brought a lot of money was temporary work.” (James, JNGO Malawian officer August 2013)

After constructing the water-point garden, JNGO needed to resolve the issue of ill-maintenance of borehole as well as the garden. The local people considered the externally brought idea of water-point garden, but eventually decided to adopt the idea of collective work that already existed in the community. The system of *kalimalima* is adopted in the maintenance of the borehole constructed in cooperation with JNGO in this way. This was because the money they could raise from selling the harvest was significantly lower than what they could raise from the purpose-focused and intensive work of *kalimalima*. Despite the ‘brilliance of the idea’ as a concept, it was not practical in the context of local communities in that there were already existing ways to cope with problems based on communal action, which people in the local communities were more familiar with than the idea of a water-point garden. As the above comments reflect, the desire and the wills of

local people were shaped by what was deliverable or what was prepared by the external agencies. In most cases, the villagers sought for alternative ways to raise money for borehole maintenance, such as through *kalimalima*.

Strategies brought by JNGO, especially when it is based on their innovative and unique ideas, tend to be accepted not only by the recipients but also by the local officers of JNGO. It is unusual that JNGO local officers strongly oppose to the idea of JNGO officers unless they face practical problems in implementation. Even practical problems of implementation tend to be seen as a temporary set-back which needs to be overcome, where the capacities of the local staff are evaluated. For the local officers, frequently demonstrating disagreements or making complains too often can potentially lead to tension between the Japanese officers and themselves, which can jeopardise their employment. As finding an employment with foreign development agencies is extremely competitive, it is in their interest to continue working while negating any tension with the employer.

The difficulty of the water-point garden in the local context was understood by Japanese officers too as was mentioned by a field officer:

“I was in charge of monitoring people’s activities in maintaining the water-point garden, which is based on the idea to generate repair cost of borehole by selling vegetable harvested from a garden beside the borehole, well, an idea like a dream...”

Described as a ‘dream idea’, there was concern among the field workers as to the practical applicability of the concept in that it does not fit in the local context. JNGO observed that out of sixteen water-point gardens that they tried to establish, two or three gardens are still functional but they are not necessarily used to raise money for the repair of boreholes. Although the implementation issues were identified, it was important for the JNGO officers not to give up on their idea as it sometimes takes time for people to start appreciating the new ideas and till they start acting on it. Furthermore, while in some villages water-point gardens were not translated into practice in the expected way, they have also provided unexpected and positive outcomes:

“It has actually generated good cash income in some villages from bananas. Fruit trees do not require much care compared to vegetables, and also because of its slightly

broken pump, a borehole was continuously releasing water and bananas grow drastically around the borehole and people in the community could raise a good amount of money from selling the fruits. After seeing that, we decided to focus on growing fruit trees and not vegetables.” (Shinji, JNGO Officer, August 2013)

The project bore an unexpected result and it was taken as a lesson from trial-and-error efforts. It appears that the JNGO strategies are trying to find the balance between the template idea that they stick to and what is practical in the local context. In order to identify this balance, it is important for them to continue their effort and experience trial and error.

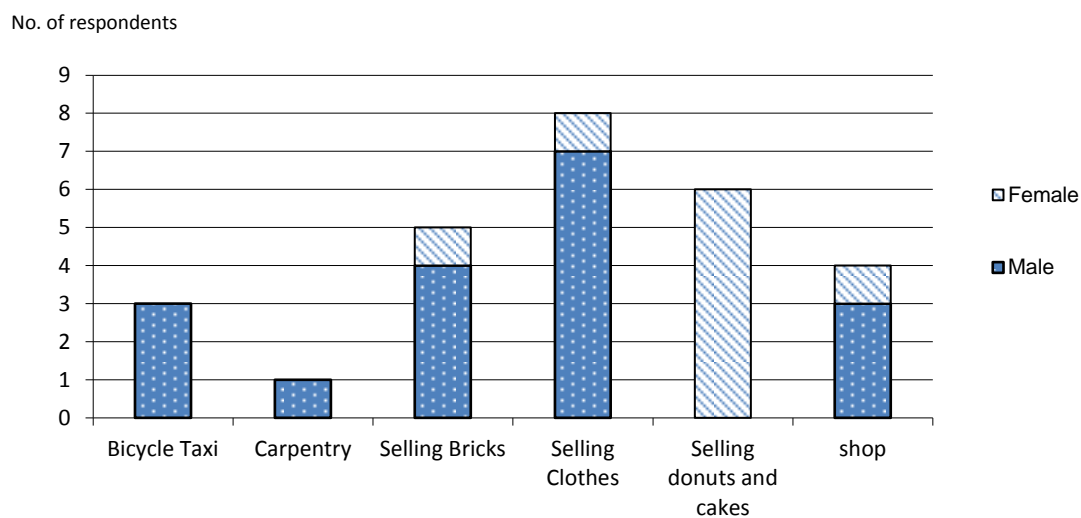
In relation to the persistent effort and principle of trial and error, the core principle of the water-point garden lies not only in generating income for borehole maintenance, but also in nurturing the mentality of utilisation of available resources. The project is supposed to convey the idea of utilising locally available resources; however, the narratives of both Japanese officers as well as their counterparts highlight that their emphasis is placed on the aspect of maintaining the garden and finding the money saved in their borehole account, and they have overlooked the intangible aspect of promoting the concept of resource utilisation. Promoting mental aspects of self-help can be less prioritised in the framework of a development project because of their intangibility. This case indicates the difficulties in promoting the mental aspect of self-help. Tangible results are important in demonstrating the success of the project and reporting to the donors. The unique yet hidden message that the idea of water-point garden could convey was the importance of focusing on locally available resources before looking outside in the pursuit of self-reliant development. However it was overshadowed by the focus on achieving the sustainability of the borehole.

### ***Women's Groups***

Another key area of JNGO's project is assisting women in poor communities. This aspect is included in the project as it is identified as a problem in the recipient community and equally importantly because it is a globally held agenda. It has been designed in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals and one of the issues that the JNGO project proposal consciously covers is gender inequality and empowerment of women. It is almost a prerequisite for JNGO to obtain funding for their projects through schemes such as the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In the women’s project, JNGO formed women’s groups to encourage women to learn skills and obtain knowledge through the process of Income Generating Activities (IGA). It appeared from the interviews with people in the villages that many of them have engaged in IGA in order to supplement the insufficiency of income from agriculture. Furthermore, there is a clear gender difference in the types of IGAs engaged (see Figure 6.11).

**Figure 6.11: Gender Difference in Types of IGA**



Source: created by the author

For instance, the bicycle taxi drivers were all male respondents and in all my field visits I never saw or heard of a female bicycle taxi driver. On the other hand, selling doughnuts and cakes was a female activity. This type of business requires them to cook the products at home, and cooking is regarded as women’s responsibility in rural societies in Malawi (FAO 2011). In the women’s groups initiated by JNGO, such gender difference was reflected in the preference on the type of IGA expressed by the groups. When JNGO female staff gathered women in the villages to introduce the idea of forming two women’s groups, they suggested creating two groups of income generating activities, one from small-scale business and the other from rearing cattle. The business group attracted women living closer to market area, which demonstrated that the level of interest towards IGAs as non-agricultural business activities is higher amongst them compared to those who are living at distance from the

market area. This further implies that their interests are subject to their mobility and also to their responsibilities and engagement in the house choir (see relevant discussion in Section 2.4.3).

About 80 to 100 women attended the initial meeting in response to the request to attend from the JNGO staff. After explaining and discussing the ideas of forming groups by women, the attendees were asked to choose what they would like to do and which group they would like to join. Once they made their choice, the groups nominated executive members and discussed their objective and how to approach the goal. What had already been broadly decided by JNGO was that the local women could form two groups so that they could collectively achieve the goal of obtaining skills and finding some financial return.

“JNGO is not giving the local women money for business, or giving them money to buy animals but it only gives them knowledge. By the local women themselves, they can buy some goats, pig, or cow, or some can start small businesses.” (Mary, JNGO Malawian Officer)

JNGO’s involvement is to provide the local women with skills and knowledge, and extend assistance where it is necessary. For instance, after the groups were formed, the JNGO staff suggested that the groups should have rules of conduct. The following conversations during the meeting illustrate the way in which a JNGO officer intervenes in the group. The meeting was called for at 11 am for all the members of the group, about 40 women to gather; however, there were 15 members at the time of 11.20 am:

JNGO staff: “Why not so many people here?”

Member 1: “Some people were asked to engage in work in their village. They were asked to carry sand to a construction site. Some were busy constructing the toilets. Some more are coming.”

JNGO staff: “Maybe we can start making rules about those who come late for gathering or those who don’t attend the meetings.”

Member 1: “What if we don’t know the reasons why they don’t come? Maybe it’s funeral?”

JNGO staff: "You must communicate well."

Member 2: "It's about us as a group. How can we stay as a group?"

Member 3: "We must love each other."

JNGO staff: "In a group, you must be one. You must forget about the background of members, how old they are and so on. Any other rules you think are necessary?"

Members: - silence

JNGO staff: "You must gather and make rules on your own without me and let me know later. For example, if some member didn't join group activities for making excuses like rain, work, again and again, then what would you do?"

Member 1: "Then maybe the person is not interested. We should just leave her."

JNGO staff: "Any other suggestions?"

Member 4: "We should call her and ask why she is not coming. If the reason is understandable, then maybe she can pay 50 kwacha for her absence from a meeting or activity."

Member 1: "That way, if the person is absent for too many days, then she would just leave because of the accumulated penalty fee is too big. What should we do?"

JNGO staff: "Don't ask me, you must decide."

Member 1: "We decided to rent a land to grow soybeans together to raise money. Everyone contributed 90 kwacha for rent and we started working in the field. Now, a new person wants to join us. What should we do?"

Member 1: "This lady, she is really interested in the group activity and she always attends. But she doesn't have money to contribute at the moment. What should we do with her?"

JNGO staff: “Those who don’t contribute money or who don’t even attend the activities are not interested. So don’t worry about them. But you must discuss issues and decide what to do.”

The conversation continued and the meeting agreed that the members should consider what rules they want together. In this way, the JNGO staff intentionally tried to keep their involvement as little as possible while stressing the importance of self-help and self-reliance by giving opportunities for the group members to think and act on their own. This style of intervention led two groups to move in different directions later. The above-mentioned group continued to have a low attendance of members in meetings and other activities, while the other group had more active involvement by the members and they made decisions by themselves and acted upon them. The first group consisted of many members from Village 1, which was located close to a local market area. From my observations and interviews it emerged that many women in Village 1 engage in non-agricultural business activities, typically selling doughnuts and the like near the market area, and they tend to be busy in individual enterprises. The aim of the group was decided as “to raise funds collectively so that members can engage in business”, which showed their interest in extending their individual business activities. The group had started with a low rate of meeting attendance and lack of initiatives to take actions. The attitude of the members from Village 1 might be a reflection of how the village is organised as the village chief of Village 1 was least interested in the matters of the village compared to other villages in the JNGO project site, and was busy with his own matters, as was recognised by JNGO staff. In contrast, the latter group, which aimed to raise funds to buy cattle to pass on among the members, considered the aim together with JNGO staff, but how to meet the aims was discussed and decided by the members themselves. The members decided to raise initial capital to buy livestock collectively, and found land to rent so as to grow soybeans by themselves. The idea of raising initial capital collectively through group cultivation work was clearly inspired by the tradition of *kalimalima* (see Plate 6.7 and 6.8). Their choice to grow soybeans was influenced by other activities taking place in the area. There were two private companies trading tobacco offering farmers in the area to take soybean seeds and fertiliser on credit from them while promising the company would buy up the harvest at a good price.

**Plate 6.10: Kalimalima by a women's group (going to the field together)**



Source: the author

**Plate 6.11: Kalimalima by a women's group (sowing soybean seeds together)**



Source: the author



In addition, coincidentally there was another group activity across a wider local area initiated by local people outside the JNGO project site, which was gathering members to apply for OVOP funding to start a soybean processing factory in the market area adjacent to the JNGO project site. Many people mentioned a rumour “somebody constructing soybean factory in trading centre, and they will be buying a lot of soybeans from us.” This rumour was later confirmed by the OVOP Secretariat that a farmers’ group was granted OVOP funding and the process was underway.

The women’s group made constant effort to realise the objective of buying livestock by group. While many members explained their motivation to be involved in the group work as to make financial profits from the engagement, some members explained their motivations to be actively involved:

“I join the women’s group because I have seen the benefit of doing group activity. I have learnt it from *bank M’nkhone* group in the village. I learnt how to manage account and money.” (Village 5 resident)

“We are still on our way to achieve our goal, but it has been helpful. If I have problem like sickness, the other members come and offer their help. [...] We also do *bank M’nkhone* within the group. I have borrowed money for my household problem. I have never had any problem in paying back the money. I normally look for *ganyu* to raise some money to pay back.” (Village 9 resident)

These comments indicated that people regard group activities as beneficial from their past experience of being involved in one, and further they combine different kinds of group activities that they have practised before to meet necessities that might arise outside the primary objective of the group activity. Collective activities like *bank M’nkhone* have been practised among local people in various other forms, such as *kalimalima* as has been previously explained in Section 6.2.3.

JNGO responded to the request made by the women’s group for providing them with the soybean seeds. While JNGO values the principle of no hand-outs, responding to such a request was considered as reasonable as the people had made self-help effort to achieve self-reliant development collectively. This represents the element of JNGO approach of

assisting self-help in that the commitment and action made by the members were seen as their self-help effort, and JNGO assisted them to enhance the group's self-help activity to another level; in other words, the role of JNGO is a connecting agent for the local group to evolve from one stage to another. By the end of my field research, the group harvested soybeans. The market of soybeans was not as good as their expectation, and they decided to invest in more land to harvest in quantity.

### ***Ecological Agriculture and Income-Generating Activities***

Income Generating Activities (IGA) does not only concern women in rural communities. In fact, such activities are nothing new or strange to rural smallholder farmers (Delgado 1997). Diversification of their household income from farming to non-farming economic activities has helped rural farming households in reducing financial poverty and mitigating uncertainty in income from agricultural harvest (Davis *et al.* 2010). The rural population also engage with informal enterprises by utilising social networks and in accordance with the specific local context (Meagher 2010). In rural Malawi, such activities vary from trading agricultural produce, rearing cattle, bicycle taxi, carpentry, construction, to digging (see Figure 6.6.6). Development projects have recognised the importance of cash income and diversification of household income strategies, and it has become common for development agencies to include IGA in their project<sup>49</sup>. It often consists of providing capital to small-scale entrepreneurs.

JNGO includes IGA as one of the project elements, recognising the importance of securing income during off-farming seasons. It has focused on agricultural crops and trees, and particularly moringa trees<sup>50</sup>. Moringa is processed into powder and marketed as highly nutritious and healthy condiments in some regions in Malawi, but it is uncommon in the project area. JNGO learnt about moringa when they implemented their initial project in another region in Malawi. It has distributed the seedlings to the farmers so that they can grow the trees for home consumption and income-generation purposes. They have also provided other tree seedlings such as orange, lemongrass, jatropha, and neem. These seedlings are provided to selected members of villages, as a part of the project component to promote ecological agricultural practices. According to the idea of ecological agriculture,

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<sup>49</sup> For instance, JICA promotes IGA in India and Malawi.

<sup>50</sup> Moringa is indigenous to the Lake Malawi regions.

planting trees along with other field crops and plants improves the quality of soil, and use of organic manure instead of chemical fertiliser is encouraged at the same time for the same reason. Trees are selected from the indigenous species which are useful as food, medical supplements, or natural insect repellents.

In this approach, the idea as to what tree should be introduced is based on JNGO's research and decisions. It was considered an introduction of new knowledge and an opportunity for experimentation by JNGO within the project element of agricultural technical transfer. Once the knowledge is introduced, it was then for the recipient to decide whether they would agree with the idea and practise by themselves or not. In reality, the decision as to whether the people start practising by themselves is not drawn from rigorous research and assessment based on careful experiment. Among the recipients of the seedlings, some simply planted without much care, and stopped growing them after they found the leaves of the seedling eaten by their cattle, while some have continued to grow the plants. Among those who still grow, some grow them mainly for home consumption, and the others extended their engagement with the programme. JNGO also provided training to the recipients as to how to make powder from the moringa leaves, how to use the powder in cooking, and how to propagate the trees.

The distribution of seedlings was meant to be managed by the village chief in cooperation with JNGO staff and it was meant to be provided to everyone who was interested in growing the trees. In reality however, the seedlings were not always distributed in the way it was initially designed. In some villages, it was often found in the interviews that the village chief distributes the seedlings in favour of his close kin while some others were left with none. In terms of distribution of assistance, although this was not admitted by the village chief, there were similar complaints by villagers that there is the aspect of uneven representation in the provision of agricultural fertiliser by the Malawian government. As Cleaver (2001) and Francis (2001) also claim, assisting and empowering a community is a vague concept as there can be social categories and groups whereby individuals assert their power and agency, which can result in disempowering the excluded groups at times (see relevant discussion in Section 2.2.2). Such power structure seems to have been in place in some villages as complaints were heard regarding the subsidies. In this aspect, it could be said

that JNGO's provision of seedlings through the village chief has contributed to reinforcing such power structure.

How many of the recipients exactly continued to grow is unknown, but during my transect walks in villages I observed that about one in seven to ten households were growing moringa trees. In the following phase of the project, JNGO asked the people who continued to grow the trees to form representative groups to attend training to learn how to make soap using moringa powder, and business management skills including basic accounting skills, product development skills, and marketing skills. In addition to such training, materials that are necessary but difficult to obtain by the local people are provided by JNGO. For soap making, JNGO provides caustic soda and packaging containers and labels. The soap, powder and other related products are sold locally, and also in trade fairs in Lilongwe and Blantyre. Involvement in the trade fair was arranged through JNGO, but local sales were essentially generated by the group members without relying on JNGO. The trees were first distributed in between January and March 2011, and by the time of the field research in November 2012, 60 local people had registered as members. The group was making soap every week by themselves without any supervision from JNGO. In fact, the group members provided a comprehensive lecture about how to make soaps using moringa during field observations to me and my translator (see Plate 6.9).

The group making moringa soaps was combined with the activities of another element of the project to promote sunflower farming. The purpose of promoting sunflower farming was to secure another income source for individual farmers as well as to raise funds for a farmers' association they had formed. The individual farmers can sell the harvest (sunflower seeds) to the association and the association will be better positioned in finding buyers as they will be able to sell in volume. The sales are supposed to be distributed to the individual farmers.

### Plate 6.12: Soap making group

(Top: A member teaching my translator how to make soap, Bottom: Packaging stage)



Source: the author

JNGO had also found a market to sell the sunflower seeds through a contact who manages a project with a Japanese development agency. Sunflower farming was not common in the project site, and the NGO chose to distribute the seeds as a trial first. Sunflowers can grow

along with maize and the farmers do not have to reduce the size of maize farming to increase the plot for sunflowers. Local people's expectations were high as it was a new idea which came from an external organisation and JNGO promised to buy up the harvest at a certain price. However, after the harvest JNGO could not buy from the farmers at the promised price because of a drop in the market price. It naturally led to mistrust and demotivated some people to continue with sunflowers. For example, one villager said:

“I received sunflower seeds. JNGO first told us that they can buy as high as at 150 kwacha / kg but they actually bought the seeds at 70 kwacha / kg. It was like we were tricked so I sold some and threw away some. We planted sunflower instead of planting maize. People were angry. There is no way I'm planting the sunflower again. For the price they buy, it is better to grow maize.” (Village 6 resident)

There were many people in the village who received sunflower seeds but had given up because of the unexpectedly cheap price of sales. On the other hand, there are those who persisted in the group by seeing it still as beneficial. JNGO formed a farmer's association mainly with the remaining people who were interested in growing sunflowers and those who continued to grow trees including moringa, and were involved in making moringa soap. Although forming an association in this way was not in the initial plan of JNGO, the formation of a formal association was inspired by the idea that it could function as a gateway for smallholder farmers in the area so that they have a better access to the larger market to sell their farm produce, and also could help the group raise income by selling value-added products based on their active engagement. It was a reflexive response by JNGO in observing how the ideas were (not) received by the local community. Ecological agricultural practice has transformed into income-generating activities and further it has grown into a farmer's association.

### ***Material provision and assisting individuals***

The aforementioned components of the JNGO's project demonstrated that JNGO promotes self-help of local people by assisting them in initiating ideas and supplementing them with materials that are difficult for the local people to obtain. The assistance is provided at a community or group level, such as boreholes to villages and organising women's groups and farmers' groups. In providing the assistance, provision of material goods is limited to the

minimum that the project requires and it is an important principle of JNGO so that it discourages existing dependency among people in local communities while encouraging self-help effort in improving their livelihood. This principle was recognised by local people as one resident commented:

“There was an organisation before JNGO came. They used to give oil, food, and money. But JNGO don't provide any material goods. JNGO say they can't give any material goods. It helps in a different way. JNGO don't give food, fertiliser but teach us how to make manure. [...] Skill is better than material goods as it will remain with me in the future life.” (Village 7 resident)

The project prioritised provision of non-material support to a group of people or a community. On the other hand, there were other components of the project which work in a different way.

One such component was a part of health programme, in which JNGO provided mosquito nets to individual households to prevent malaria. In order to make sure the recipients of the nets utilised them appropriately, it first organised preliminary workshops to provide knowledge about malaria to the recipient communities and additionally, it organised village committees to develop a set of rules for the use of the mosquito nets by themselves. It also paid preparatory visits to each one of the 848 households in the targeted villages, door to door, to ensure that the knowledge was transferred appropriately and that the beneficiaries felt responsible to utilise it in the right way upon receipt. In Malawi and other countries in Africa, mosquito nets provided by international aid donors are often used for other purposes such as fishing nets and wedding dresses (Brieger 2010; Lusaka Times 2012). JNGO has similarly observed the net was used to protect seedlings in a farming area (JNGO blog, 27/03/2014). Still, in the JNGO's evaluation after the provision, malaria infection rate decreased by 22%.

In order to make sure appropriate usage of the provided nets, the community came up with their own rules. According to a JNGO Malawian officer:

“We were surprised to know that some village chiefs have implemented a rule that if you sell the provided mosquito net, you will not be allowed to attend funerals of

other villagers. We didn't expect they will take such a drastic measure, but we are happy that they understand the importance."

Although the assistance targeted individuals, there was important element of engagement as a community. Furthermore, JNGO was relaxed in terms of material provision to cope with health-related issues as having a good health is the basic requirement for people to make self-help efforts.

JNGO also assists construction of improved latrine systems called ecological sanitation toilets (Eco-San Toilets) for individual households. The majority of people in the area did not have toilet facilities, and the local population used to suffer from rampant cholera because of contaminated water from people using wells and the bush instead of using toilets. The construction of toilets therefore concerns sanitation and health issues, while construction of eco-san toilets also helps the farming practice as the manure made from the decomposed waste can be used by farmers who are not able to afford fertiliser. It was similar to and linked with the borehole construction programme, concerning water and securing basic and healthy rural livelihoods. The Eco-San Toilets programme was designed to encourage individual recipients' self-help effort during the process of construction. Similarly to the borehole programme, JNGO provides cement, iron-sheet rooftop material and builders as long as the recipients prepare bricks by themselves. Thirty-four Eco-San Toilets were constructed in the research site, during July 2012 and August 2013<sup>51</sup>.

While some people in the recipient villages understood the intention of JNGO in promoting self-help and respected the ideal that people should make effort to be self-reliant, some others still expected JNGO to extend material help to them particularly when it came to provision of help to individuals such as the case of Eco-San Toilets. There is a clear gap between JNGO and some villagers in their attitude towards help in the context of a self-help process to self-reliant development. As has been discussed in the previous section, there is a common practice of mutual help among people in rural communities and provision of help or receiving help in material form is part of their daily practice. Although the practice does not normally extend beyond the circle of relatives, friends and people in the same

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<sup>51</sup> Although the period covers about 14 months, the actual duration of time they could spend on building the toilets was from April to August 2013, in the dry season only.



community, the underlying mentality that those who are in trouble can be helped and those who are better off can, or should, help is reflected on the way they regard external assistance such as the one from JNGO. This attitude was observed in comments made by people in the village, such as:

“When will you give us more of the improved toilets?” (Village 1 Chief)

“I don’t know why JNGO is not giving us the whole toilet and asking us to prepare bricks. They say they don’t have money but... I don’t know. They come with big vehicles...” (Village 3 resident)

Importantly, the people’s perception that external agencies, particularly foreign development organisations, are supposed to provide material help was formed from their previous experience:

“Some white people came before as an organisation and formed farming groups, and they provided seeds, bicycles and other things in the village. This organisation was very different from JNGO. This organisation was very helpful. JNGO doesn't give any materials. They are not really helpful as they can't provide the improved latrines to everyone. The previous organisation was here for a long time and helping people a lot. Giving only knowledge is not help.” (Village 2 resident)

In contrast, JNGO regards the material provision of help as a potential accelerator of mutual dependency extending to external agencies like JNGO, which is not a part of their endogenous social network and hence it would turn to be not a ‘mutual’ but simply dependency. In other words, JNGO’s project has an aspect of creating a new hybrid norm of reciprocity among the rural communities that people reciprocate to external help with self-help to achieve the collective goal of development. This, however, demonstrates that there is a fundamental difference between the Japanese officers and the Malawian recipients in interpretation of help and self-help. The Japanese officers regard such difference as a gap to be narrowed by changing the mind-set of the recipients and placing importance on the mental aspect of self-help. The nature of mutual dependency and collectivism is prevalent partly due to the institutional impact of autocratic domestic policies in Malawi in the latter half of the twentieth century as has been discussed in Section 2.2.3.

### **6.3.2 Case of OVOP**

External assistance is provided and received in various ways. Whereas JNGO essentially intends to aggregate improvement of the livelihoods of the population across the villages in the project site, OVOP Malawi is designed to assist farmers who are the members of groups which are registered with OVOP. The relations between external assistance and self-help of the farmers that arise during the process of OVOP's assistance can be different from those of JNGO. During the process of project delivery, unintended impacts can emerge. The unintended effects of the project often carry a great importance in creating synergetic relationships between external assistance and local people's self-help.

#### ***The Starting Point***

The OVOP programme aims to achieve economic self-reliance through assisting rural farmers to establish organised income-generating activities on the basis of their own effort. The mode of assistance varies from one group to another, but typically it provides an opportunity for farmer's groups to have access to agro-processing machines to produce value-added agricultural products and assist them through the process of production, marketing and sales (see Section 5.3.5).

The very first stage of the process starts from the farmers forming a group to apply for OVOP's assistance, which typically comes with agro-processing machines and a factory building on a low interest rate credit. At the application stage, the farmers are required to exercise their own initiative and make efforts to identify problems and discuss how to improve among the group, and then make decisions as to what they should ask for in applying for the OVOP assistance. This first process is normally, but not always, assisted by local extension workers or Assistant Coordination Liaison Officers (ACLO) in deciding what to apply for and how to write an application for OVOP assistance.

#### ***From Orphan Care to Cooking Oil***

Group A (see Table 6.3 for their basic information) has been assisted by OVOP since 2009 and produced sunflower cooking oil. Originally it started in the early 2000s as a community-based group to take care of orphans. Actions similar to Orphan Care were officially emphasised since the late 1990s in Malawi and some community-based organisations have been set up to resolve the problem of orphans based on the mutual help within the

community (Chirwa and Chizimbi 2007; also it was confirmed by interviews with people in villages). After a few years, the same idea of tackling a problem based on mutual help was extended to other problems in the community. It was then converted into a mushroom-growing club with additional members from local areas, which was organised by a local government extension worker for their income-generating activity around 2005. The mushroom group was not fruitful because of the lack of income. The members concluded that there was no good market for mushrooms and the extension worker advised them to consider applying for OVOP assistance to process sunflower oil. Almost half of the group members were convinced and remained, and continued to apply for the OVOP scheme.

On the other hand, for Group B (see Table 6.4 for basic information) was brought up by the members of a community where a number of people engage in groundnut farming. The idea of groundnut oil processing was discussed among the members and the application to the OVOP scheme was collectively made by the group members. After three years of the submission of the application, when they were “even forgetting about the OVOP application,” they were notified that they have been granted the machines on credit.

#### ***How it works on a daily basis***

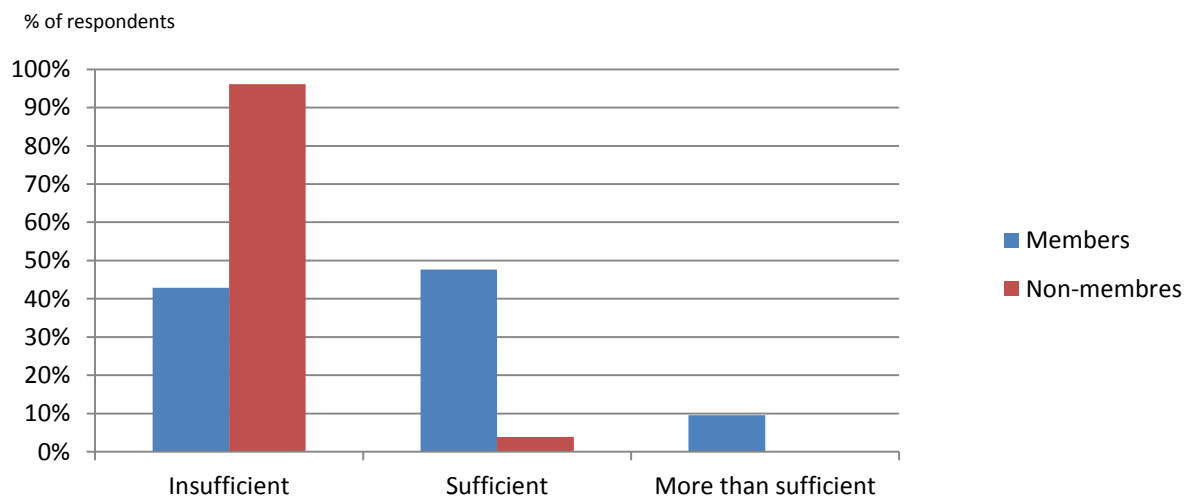
OVOP Malawi accepts applications for assistance from group of farmers across the country. Once the application is accepted and the machine is allocated, the groups normally have to find the factory premises to install the machine and process products. While some other groups previously had to build their own factory by themselves, OVOP have recently started to support machines as well as factory building. Both Group A and B were not assisted for the factory premises, and like many other groups which received OVOP funding earlier, both rent a factory premise. Both groups were trying to build their own factory so as to avoid rent expenses, which was one of the major expenditures of the group business. ACLO extension officers visit the groups within their catchment areas about once a month to supervise the group activity to advise on matters such as cleanliness and tidiness of the place, and to deliver communications on an ad-hoc basis. Special training sessions are provided by the OVOP officers a few times a year on the usage and maintenance of machines, basic business management and group management. Apart from production support, the OVOP office assists the farmer’s groups with opportunities to market and sell their products in their dedicated shop in Lilongwe and in trade fairs and other events. In this

regard, external intervention by OVOP in the daily activities is limited and the activities are primarily managed and carried out by the members of the groups by themselves.

**External support affecting endogenous livelihoods**

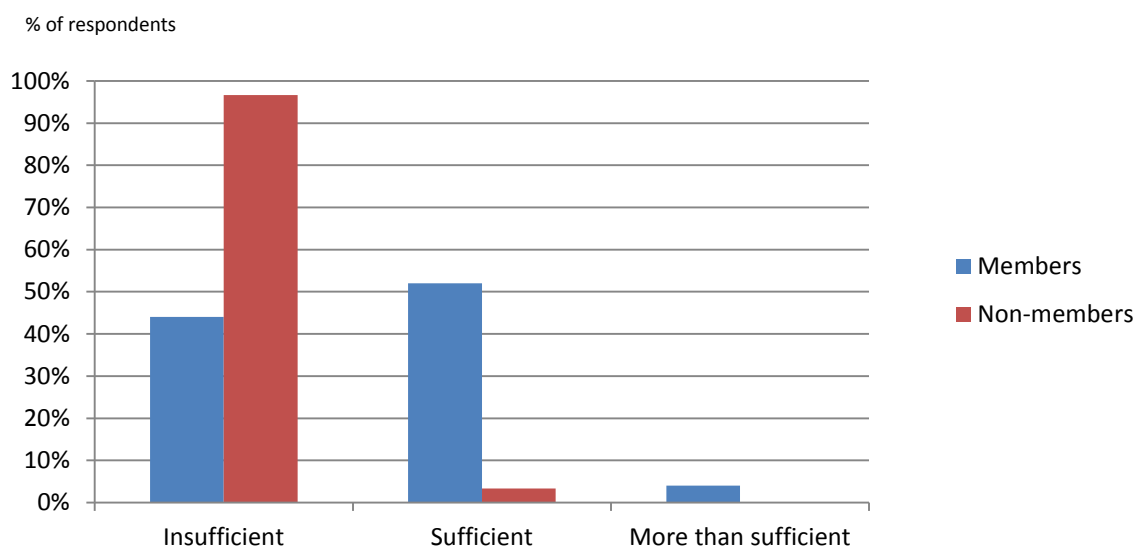
One of the main purposes of OVOP in assisting farmer’s groups is to improve the income level of the members of OVOP-assisted groups by generating a new income source from the sales of value-added agricultural products. According to the sales record of the group and daily observation of their production and marketing activities, there has not been a sizable profit that the members have been able to share. However, interviews with the members revealed that the members’ quality of life has improved since they joined the group and they attribute the improvement to the participation in the group activity. For instance, compared to non-members of the group living in the same community, the group members’ financial situations are relatively higher (see Figure 6.12 for and Figure 6.13).

**Figure 6.11: Income Levels per Household (Group A)**



Source: created by the author

**Figure 6.12: Income Level per Household (Group B)**



Source: created by the author

The tables clearly demonstrate that the members are better off than non-members. Furthermore, the following comments by group members underline that the members became better-off after they joined the group:

“I have benefitted by being in the group. Last year, I made money that I have never made in my entire life by selling seeds to the group.”

“What I didn’t have before, I have now. It used to take a while to buy new soaps and body lotions for example, but now with OVOP group, I am not lacking much. It’s essentially because I can sell my harvest here. Now I am renting some additional plot to grow sunflower in volume, nearly for four acres.”

As claimed by the group members, their income has improved owing to securing the market to sell their farm harvest at a reasonable price. Other changes that were pointed out by the members include:

“The change I have had? Now I am strong! I work hard at home and take care of my family responsibilities. Before, I wasn’t like this. We now employ some *ganyu* workers

in our field and I give maize to them. It's from our sales of sunflower to the group. Commercial vendors used to almost steal from us by offering bad prices, but we can sell at a good price here. I also took loan from the group to start poultry business. It has been very profitable.”

Apart from the claims that were made by the members that they are financially better-off owing to OVOP group activities, there is another possible explanation for the members to have higher income among the group members than non-members. Due to the financial requirement to become a member of the group, there is a possibility that those who have joined are originally better-off than others. The joining fee for the group is 200 kwacha per person, and it is also required to purchase a share of the group, which is 1,500 kwacha per share in the case of Group A<sup>52</sup>.

In fact, the financial requirement has been identified as a reason for not joining the group by some people:

“When they started the group, I was in financial problem so I could not.” (Village A resident)

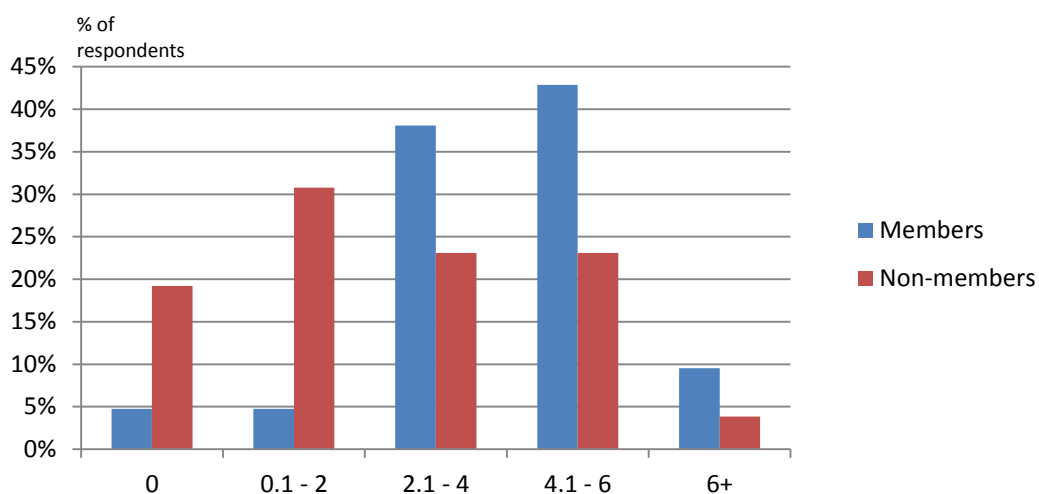
“When this group was formed, I was a part of another group with 23 other members growing mushrooms. A government counsellor came and advised us to join this group, but only five of us joined because to join this group I needed money.” (Group A member)

Similarly, non-members of the group living in the same community are likely to have smaller farming plots than the members, which is in accordance with the national average (see Figure 6.14 and Figure 6.15).

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<sup>52</sup> At the time of field research, 200 kwacha was equivalent to about US\$ 0.5. GNI per capita of Malawi in 2012 was \$320. In the studied areas, common cash expenditure of rural households included a tablet of soap for about 40 to 60 kwacha, 1 kilogram of sugar for about 300 to 380 kwacha, and a popular snack, *mandasi* (doughnut), for about 20 to 40 kwacha.

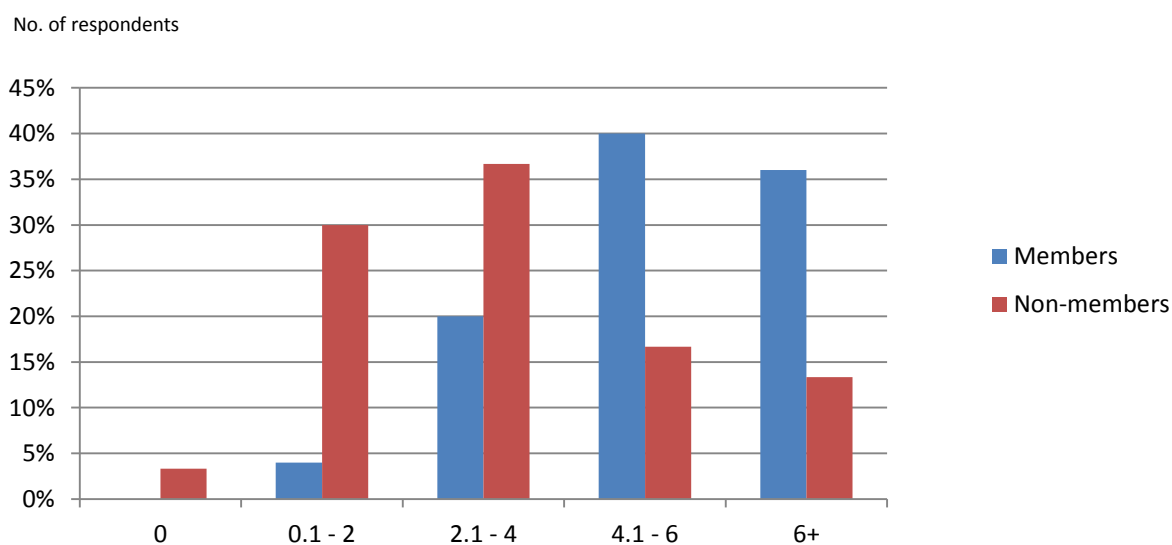
**Figure 6.13: Size of Farming Landholding (Group A) (in acres)**



Source: created by the author

While some members had recently purchased additional farming land, their land was usually inherited land. With regard to the size of farm landholding, most of the members own more farm land than regional average of 1.9 acres and none of interviewed members were landless. Similarly to the case of Group A, a clear contrast was observed in the size of farm landholding between the members and non-members (see Figure 6.15) The largest amount of land held by a member was 26.5 acres, which was by far the largest size compared to all other interview respondents including JNGO project area and Village A.

**Figure 6. 14: Size of Farming Landholding (Group B) (in acres)**



Source: created by the author

In addition to the possible factors affecting the difference in the size of landholding between members and non-members, Village B is situated in a rural area, about 35 to 40 kilometres from the closest semi-urban community, and with a lower population density than areas like Village A. This might contribute to the larger landholdings.

The difference in the size of landholding between the members and non-members indicates that the members may have been better-off with larger farming land compared to the non-members even before they joined the groups. In this context, the assistance by OVOP benefits more of those who have resource and network to search for opportunities and exercise their agencies. This raises the concern over the criticisms represented by Kelsall and Mercer (2003) and others that 'community empowerment' does not necessarily empower the 'community, and rather it potentially reinforce the gap between the better-off people and marginalised groups of the community (see Section 2.2.2). OVOP Malawi claims to empower the local community; however, it requires critical reflection on negative effects that are not clearly observable.

### ***Exclusivity and Ownership***

Group A has 21 members and they have five executive members, chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, vice secretary and a treasurer. The five executive members are supposed to come to the factory every day to work. In addition to them, other members are expected to work in the factory at least a few times a month on a shift basis. The commitment by the members in the daily work of the factory is high and it was observed that the members feel the ownership of the factory strongly. The members are attached to the factory as well as to the group as they explained about their commitment to the group activity:

“People admire us as a group now.” (Group A Member 1)

“In the future, the executive members will be taken over by other people, those who didn't even join when the group was growing. Maybe we will be taken over by newcomers. We have put so much effort, you know.” (Group A Member 2)

These comments imply that there is a sense of exclusive ownership among the members. Exclusive ownership can be a source of the high level of commitment to the activities



undertaken by a group or a community while it can also become an antagonistic force to achieving inclusive development or having positive spill-over effects to the community at large. As a non-member living in the community claimed:

“I was actually the one who wrote the proposal to OVOP, but I was kicked out from the group after that... I mean, the members did not tell me to leave the group, but according to their behaviour and words, I became uncomfortable. They started talking about me as an outsider because I am not originally from the area and originally not their friend as such. I decided to leave the group and join some other group based on other area for agricultural knowledge.”

Although the validity of the above comment could not be verified, it was observed that the group members have formed almost a community that is tightly knit, and they are not willing to open the door to non-members.

The project is designed to focus on the self-help aspect of the farmers by specifically assisting the farmer's groups which have been autonomously organised and made applications for agro-processing machines. The group also organises a group saving / micro-loan group among the members, whereby the members contribute a certain amount of money from 500 kwacha to the common pool, and when any of them is in need of money, they can borrow money and pay back with interest. This group saving / micro-loan activity is named as “Home Bank” by the members and the members borrow money for different purposes such as house needs or start-up capital for doing small business. Apart from this formalised mutual-help system, members help each other on a daily basis in different situations.

It is also indicative from the members' narratives that their lives in general have become more meaningful. The improved financial situation does contribute and it leads to other aspects of their life. Particularly, it seems to be because of the new relationships they created with the other members of the group, which have contributed to finding their position in the society in that they have established new relationships with other group members who they interact with on a regular basis, who respect each other and who they enjoy being together with. Similarly in terms of position in society, the members seem to

feel that they are admired by people in the community, which leads to improvements in their self-esteem and confidence. As some members commented:

“We have machines that nobody else has in this area.”(Group A member 3)

“We have visitors from all over the world, White people, Black people.. and someone like you as well! People in the community notice and we feel proud of having visitors like that.” (Group A member 6)

The participation in the group activity gave rise to the new social status, identity and living space, which contributed to enhance their agency.

### ***Exclusive model and self-reliant actor***

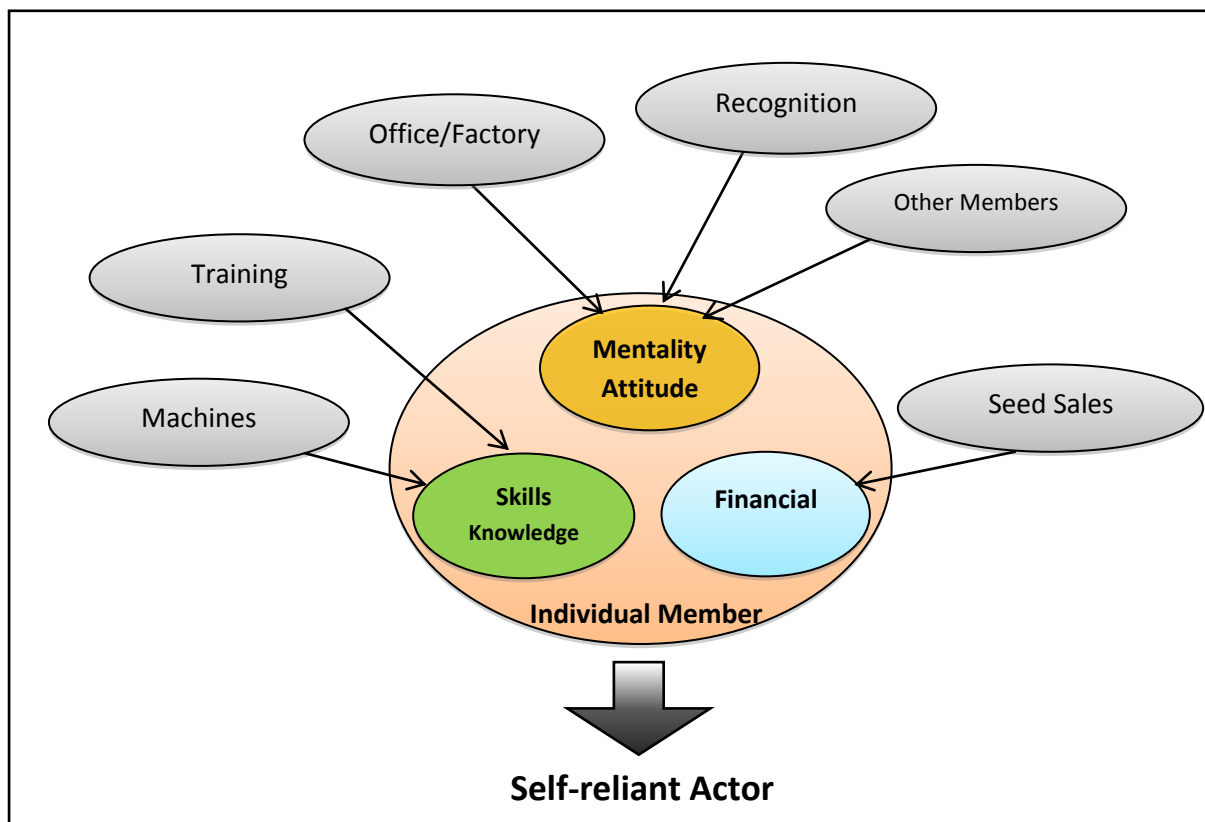
OVOP Malawi's objective is to achieve economic self-reliance of communities. By selling value-added farm products, farmers are expected to generate more income by cutting out the middleman or venders. Skills and knowledge are required to achieve such a goal and mental self-reliance is expected to emerge automatically from the process. The case of Group A suggests that multi-faceted project implementation and human relationships among the members leads to a complex situations whereby the three aspects of self-reliance interrelate with each other to shape self-reliant actors (see discussion on different aspects of self-reliance in Section 5.4 based on Table 5.4). Various social and economic phenomena emerge during the process of OVOP project delivery at the level of individual members (see Figure 5.4). Physical inputs such as machines and training provided by OVOP to the individual members contribute to improvement of the skills and knowledge of the members.

“I know something that other people in my area had never been able to get to know [...] we have a machine that no others have in the area.” (Group A Member 2)

The new knowledge that they gain, whether it is actually useful in their day-to-day lives or not, seems to have improved their confidence and motivation towards life in general. Furthermore, in the case of this group, due to the large running costs of their factory, it has not recorded any measurable financial profit from the sales of their products. The members have only had some extra income by selling the sunflower seeds to their own cooperative. Regardless of this situation, the members appear to be feeling more positive and satisfied

about their livelihood owing to their participation in the cooperative. This situation seems to derive from the acquisition of new social space and status. The members seem to enjoy coming to the factory and they are mentally attached to the factory. Similarly, they seem to enjoy interactions with other members and interactions with people from outside their community, including visitors like myself. All these three elements combined, it could eventually lead them to be self-reliant actors in the process of self-reliant development (see Figure 6.16).

**Figure 6.15: Social and Economic Factors and Self-reliance**



Source: created by author

***Accumulation of self-help effort***

In the case of Group B, as the members live in remote villages where there is no electricity, they needed to rent a factory premise in the closest trading centre where there is an electricity supply to power the machines. It takes one hour for the members to travel to the factory from their homes by bicycle and not everyone owns a bicycle. Additionally, because the number of members is too large (more than 50 members) to work all together at the

same time in a small factory, they have decided to employ two engineers, a clerk, a housekeeper and a watchman from the neighbouring community of the factory and the members visit the factory on a shift basis, normally one to two members per day to supervise and instruct the employees. So the level of involvement of the individual members in the day-to-day factory activities is rather low compared to Group A.

Regardless of the low level of members' physical involvement, this group has made a profit which is good enough for all the members to receive dividends (7,000 kwacha per share and a share costs 1,500 kwacha to buy). The profit is not mainly from the sales of the cooking oil, but from the money they charge to the customers when they want to use the machines to process oil from the seeds brought by themselves. Also, a good profit was made by selling by-products of oil processing, such as sunflower hulls. Because the activities involve multiple dimensions, in a sense that it is not only selling cooking oil but is also letting the customers use the machines and also employing non-members to run the factory, the number of people and kind of people involved in the factory at large is diversified.

At the factory, the members receive knowledge about business, machines and other social norms through training, and members make financial profit from dividends on shares. Also, the members now have easy access to good-quality cooking oil, which was very scarce before the factory was opened. As one of them explained:

“Though I must say the life is still not very easy financially, now we are using cooking oil in our food. Before, we were just eating vegetables. Now we eat better, I appreciate this little change.” (Group B member 19)

Furthermore, members are personally connected with non-members in their respective villages based on their personal relationships and networks:

“We try to tell other people in the village (non-members) about hygiene at home when we have some village meeting or just in daily conversations. When the village chief organise a village meeting about the cleanliness for example, I share what I learnt from OVOP training and discuss other issues. These meetings are for me good chance to address to people.” (Group B member 28)

“People in the village, my neighbours or friends come to me and ask how my life is better now. So I tell them how we teach each other in the group, and they get motivated to join us. In fact a lot of people joined the group after we discussed.” (Group B member 41)

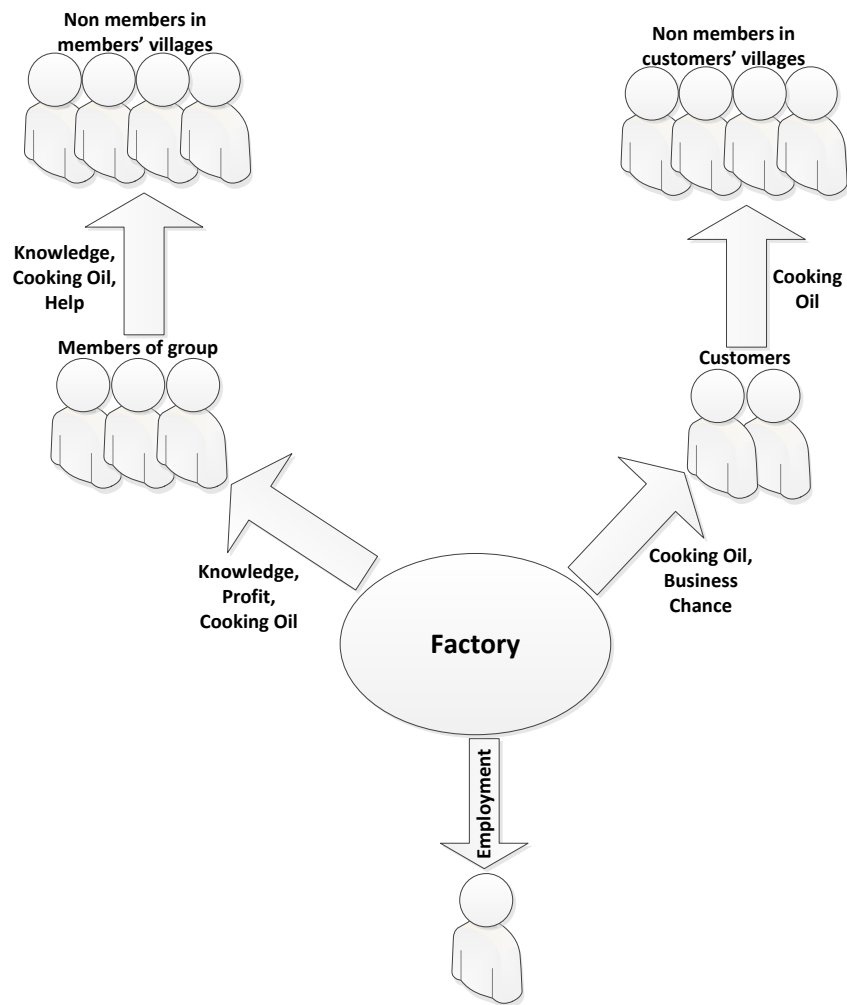
“Now people in the village have seen us changing our life better. They admire us and they are coming close because they want to learn from us. The people visit me to ask questions about different issues.” (Group B member 32)

The knowledge spreads via these personal connections, particularly the knowledge concerning the improvement of their daily life, such as hygiene and cooking. As the members bring cooking oil to the village, the non-members now also have easy access to the cooking oil which can help them improve their daily calorie intake. Also, in accordance with the system of mutual help that is prevalent in the Malawian society, the members who are now financially better off are capable of extending their help to the needy in their village, especially help with food and money.

The customers visit the factory to buy cooking oil or process cooking oil by themselves using their own agricultural harvest. The customers who process oil at the factory take the oil to sell in their villages. Then the people in their villages can have easy access to cooking oil. Moreover, these villagers often start coming to the factory to sell their agricultural harvest to the factory, which benefits them in income terms. Finally, it provides employment opportunities to the people (see Figure 6.17).

Through this network, the socio-economic impact of the OVOP group is spread well beyond the group's members, improving livelihoods. On the one hand, the members are not physically involved in the group activities on a day-to-day basis and the direct benefit for the members is limited to financial gains; on the other hand, the effect of the factory seems to be spreading to non-members in various ways.

**Figure 6.16: Expansive nature of activities by Group B**



Source: created by the author

The consequences for this group can therefore be described as a rather expansive model, as compared to the case of Group A which was more exclusive. At the end of the field work, the chairman of the Group B was going to report to the OVOP Malawi Secretariat that they had 20 new members.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the field implementation stage of self-help development projects carried out by Japanese agencies, with a specific interest in how the idea of self-help development has been received by the local communities through the projects of JNGO and OVOP Malawi in rural Malawi.

The existing practices of communal activities were observed in the studied areas, ranging from organised form of communal labour work at the village levels, to daily practices of exchanging help between individuals. Based on the analysis of the existing practices, this chapter further highlighted that the Japanese projects were sometimes transformed in accordance with the local contexts, as was observed in the case of water-point gardens and boreholes in JNGO's case, and also complemented by local people's initiatives to achieve the aim of the project, such as the case of women's groups in JNGO. As Mohan and Stokke (2000) critically reviewed, emphasis on localism or local participation in development programmes can be used to legitimise the interests of different development actors. However, the localisation process of JNGO showed the aspect of the localism which is importantly associated with Morimoto (1991), who argues that endogenous development needs first to recognise the local characteristics and then transform itself into a wider context.

It is observed that there was evidence of externally formulated template being replicated. Although the Japanese agencies carefully makes an effort to establish understanding of the local ideas and obtain consent from the local people, there is an aspect of unintendedly and controlling the agenda and reshaping the local norms in the programme. The idea of self-help development assistance is associated with the idea of 'helping those who help themselves' (see Section 2.2.2). The cases of JNGO and OVOP Malawi demonstrate that 'helping those who help themselves' can be interpreted as 'helping those who agree with it'. The objective of this thesis is not to evaluate the success/failure of Japanese development programmes and rather aims to explore how they are carried out, and

On the other hand, the case of OVOP Malawi suggested that external assistance has provided an opportunity to groups of farmers to make efforts towards self-help as a

collective action, and furthermore the participation in the collective self-help effort has established the foundation for the members to make self-help efforts at the individual level. The self-help effort is feeding back to the external assistance at the factory production, in maintaining the group activity and making the project sustainable and persistent regardless of lack of profitable performance as a business. The OVOP assistance has expanded the members' living space, enhanced their social status, and diversified their activity patterns and relationships. The members' attitude started to be optimistic and positive towards their life and their livelihood has been enriched. Although the policy of OVOP Malawi has been transformed to a poverty reduction policy from the NPC movement in Japan (see Section 5.2.1), it contributed to 'endogenous development' as defined as individuals' pursuit of self-improvement and pursuant to enrich ones' lives (Tsurumi 1989; Suzuki 1990). It is however important to note that, as Mercer (1999) and Kelsall and Mercer (2003) argued, while external assistance can contribute to improving people in targeted communities, the participants were sometimes originally better off in the local community and the poorer and marginalised people were unable to join due to a lack of funds or time to participate. This situation was observed in OVOP-assisted groups as well as JNGO's project site.



# Chapter 7: Individuals in Development Assistance

## 7.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 analysed how Japanese development agencies' primary approach of promoting a self-help process to achieve self-reliant development has evolved in their original context and how it was adopted in the project designs in the context of international development using the cases of OVOP and JNGO. Chapter 6 further investigated how then the ideas are transformed into practice on the ground and how such external assistance interacts with existing self-help activities, while highlighting different ways of transformation influenced by specific social contexts, and also by individual actors and the relationships between them. This chapter further focuses on how the individual actors engage with development assistance, and how their lives and development practice are interrelated. It explores how the individuals are personally and professionally involved in development projects, and how diverse sets of actors produce and reproduce development practice.

As has been highlighted in Section 2.4.2, the roles of individual actors are significant in shaping the practice of development assistance in that it is individuals who transform institutional and governmental policy into practice. In the cases of the Japanese development projects studied in this thesis, individual actors can be categorised into the three main groups: Japanese expatriate workers, their Malawian counterparts, and people in the recipient communities of the projects. Each grouping has a diverse set of individual actors, with each individual having his or her own everyday experiences in interacting with other individual actors, and version or interpretation of events. This chapter provides a perspective of looking at development practice through the eyes of individual actors involved in the process, which contributes to meeting the third overall research objective of this thesis (see Section 1.2).

## 7.2 Diversity of Actors in Development Assistance

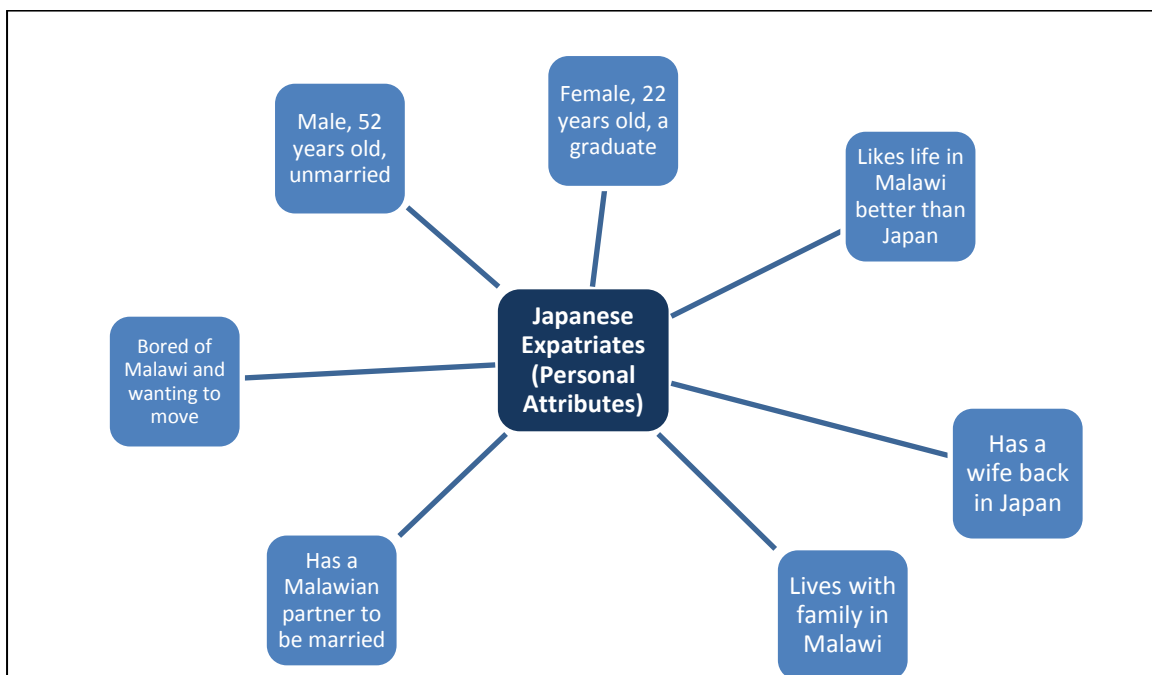
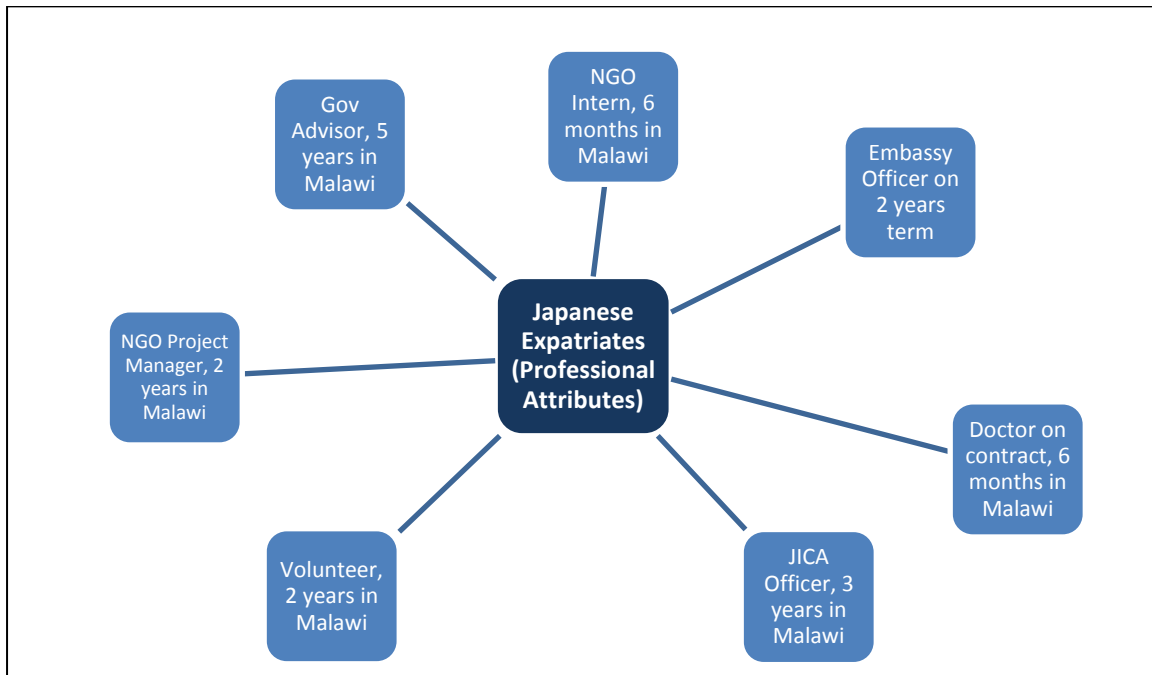
### 7.2.1 Who are People who 'Carry' Ideas?

As argued by Temenos and McCann (2013), policies are 'carried around' by people who are involved in the mobility process. Those people include expatriate officers of development agencies and their local counterparts. Investigation into the people who work in international development has gained attention recently (see for example Irvine *et al.* 2006; Fechter and Hindman 2011; Eyben 2012; Fechter 2012; Mosse 2013). While there are common impressions about development professionals as humanitarian and benevolent helpers across borders, the realities of the individual workers are more complicated than the general impressions (Apthorpe 2012). Fechter (2011) argues that recognising the diversity of development professionals allows more nuanced approach in understanding why and how they are involved in development assistance in the field.

Fechter (*ibid.*) demonstrates the diversity of expatriate workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia by using the narratives of an Australian volunteer, an American NGO officer, a Canadian civil servant, a Scandinavian technical expert, a Dutch charity worker, and a French doctor. Such diversity can be similarly observed in the expatriate community in Malawi, and even within the expatriate community of Japanese nationals, there are various actors. A snapshot from a social gathering among Japanese expatriates is a good place to start in order to understand how diverse the Japanese development expatriate community in Malawi is though they all belong to the same nationality (see Figure 7.1).

Although the particular setting of 'social gathering' would exclude individuals who do not attend such gatherings, it is extremely rare in the expatriate community in Malawi for its small size and closely connected community. According to MOFA (2013c), 183 Japanese people were registered as a long-term resident (living for more than three months) in Malawi in 2012. The largest group is the JICA volunteers, which amounts to about 100, and JICA officers follow with about twenty. There are about ten to twenty development consultants, about ten to fifteen NGO workers, and about five to ten officers working in the Japanese Embassy.

**Figure 7.1: A snapshot of profiles of Japanese expatriates in Malawi**



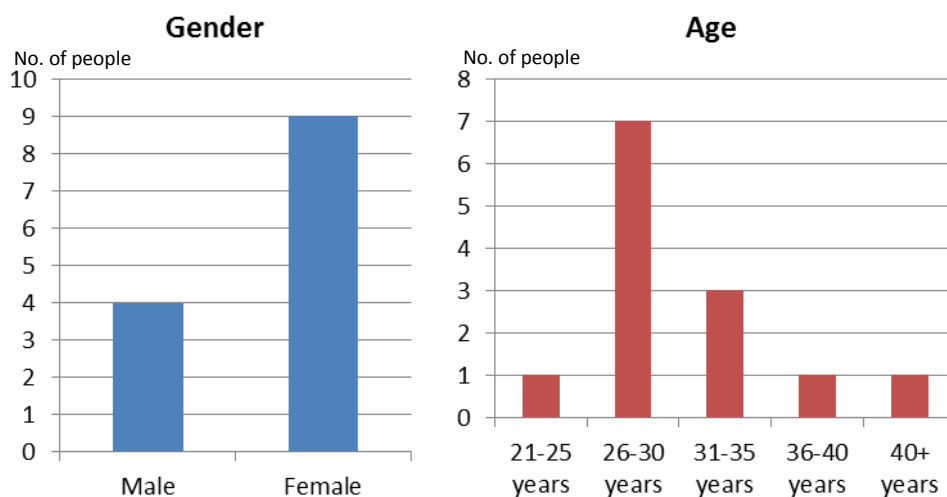
Source: created by the author

The field research specifically focused on field workers involved in OVOP and JNGO projects, and investigated their professional and personal experiences in Malawi through in-depth

interviews (see Section 3.3.2 for the research procedure). Interviewed field workers were predominantly female with more than three-quarters in between the ages of 26 and 35 (see Figure 7.2). This could be a reflection of how professionals in the international development field are positioned and perceived in Japanese society. As a male field worker commented:

“I will be around 30 years old when I finish this assignment in Malawi and go back to Japan. I will need to be more ‘serious’ about life then... People will say I am just wandering around the world and not seeing through my future. I will also need to get married... I envy those who decide to do similar experience like mine at a younger age!”

**Figure 7.2: Personal characteristics of Japanese expatriates**



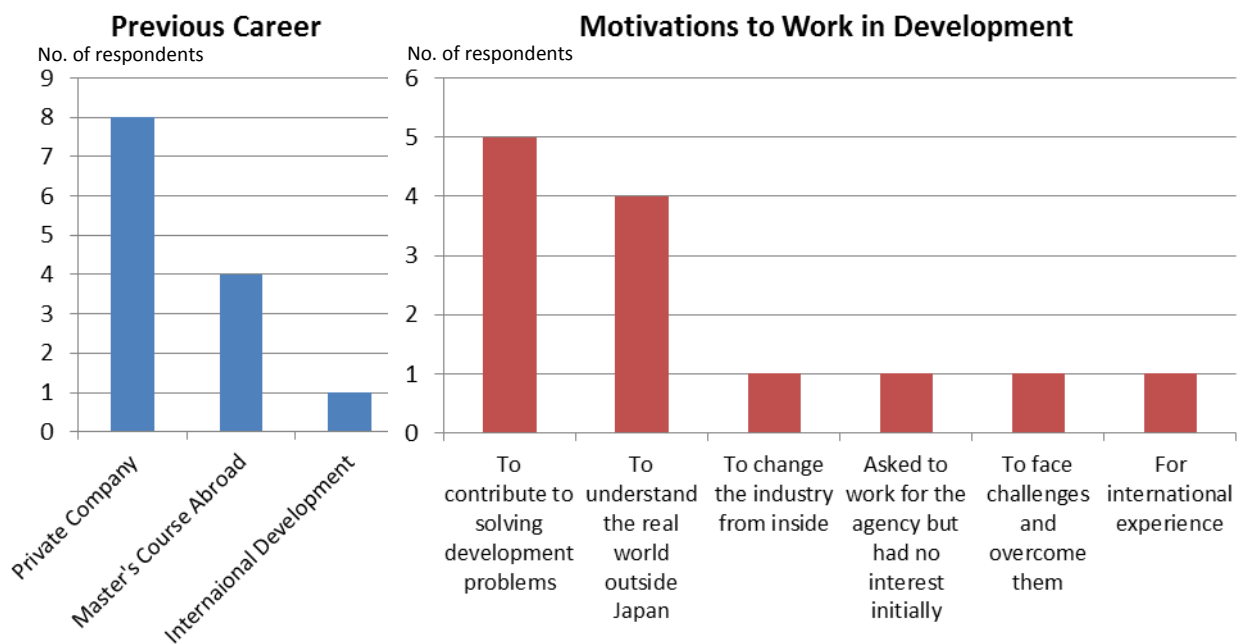
Source: created by the author based on interviews

A similar comment was made by another male respondent:

“I will need to find a job in a ‘normal’ private company after this assignment; otherwise I will end my professional career with no substantial saving at the age of 60 if I continue working in this sector. [...] Some people in Japan would tell me, if I tell them that I have worked in Africa at the age of 35, ‘Why are you acting like a young chap? Get serious about your life.’”

Being in permanent employment in a private company is commonly valued in Japanese society and having stability is associated with a person’s maturity. This social context is reflected in the trend of the Japanese professionals working in Malawi. As can be seen in the concentration of age between 26 to 30, many field workers had worked in private companies after they completed their undergraduate course at university, while some started the job after completing postgraduate studies abroad (see ‘Previous Career’ on Figure 7.3). In fact, all the interview respondents had an undergraduate qualification, in subjects as varied as from Art History and International Studies. Many had worked in private companies after graduation, but they decided to move to third sector work led by different thoughts from their experiences and original interests.

**Figure 7.3: Japanese development workers’ career paths**

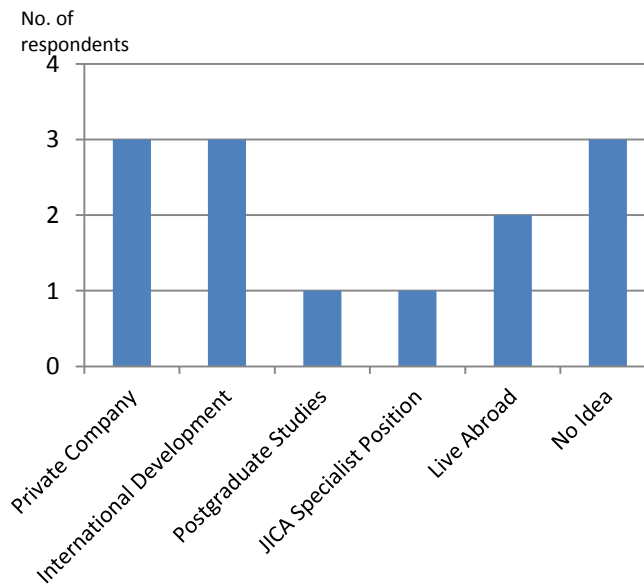


Source: created by the author based on interviews

The motivations for them to work in or to shift their career to international development are diverse although there are some common themes (see ‘Motivations to Work in

Development' in Figure 7.3). Based on the experiences in their current positions in Malawi, their future plans were similarly varied (see Figure 7.4).

**Figure 7.4: Future plans of Japanese expatriates**

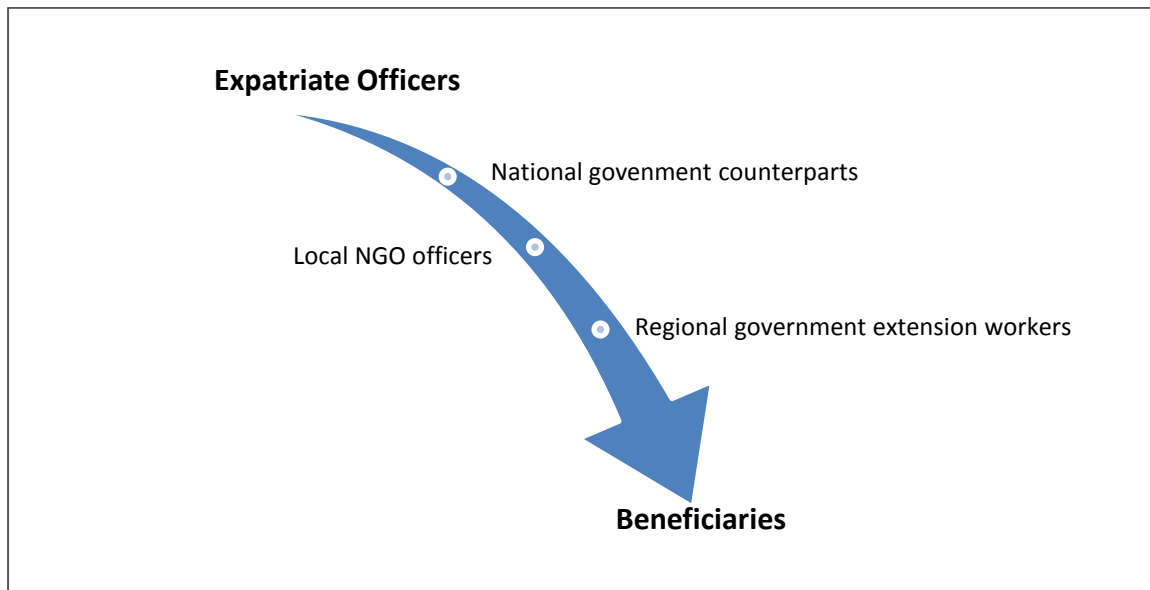


Source: created by the author based on interviews

The ideas that have been carried by the expatriate officers of development agencies are normally shared with their local counterparts, who play the role of mediator between the external development workers and local recipients. Historically, actors who carry out the function of brokerage of external relationships in rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa have played important roles during colonial periods in establishing political and socio-cultural linkages between colonial authorities and local populations (Bierschenk *et al.* 2002). After independence, the brokers have continued to play a significant role in development assistance in rural communities. In the complex sphere of development assistance, the profiles of brokers have become more diverse (Ramalingam 2013). There are many types of actors who mobilise external resources and at the same time represent local communities, such as extension workers, local cooperative managers, and community leaders (Lewis and Mosse 2006; Swidler and Watkins 2009; Bierschenk *et al.* 2002). The socio-economic status

of those who work as a government counterpart can be significantly different from the chief of an impoverished rural village although both would exist somewhere in between donors and beneficiaries on the vertical spectrum of the delivery process of development assistance (see Figure 7.5).

**Figure 7.5: The Carriers of Policies in the Field Implementation Stage**



Source: created by the author

This thesis specifically considers local counterparts who work within the frameworks of development projects as the mediators between the Japanese field workers and the people in recipient communities (see Section 3.3.3 for field research procedure). They are the ones who link the actors whose positionalities are distant from each other. They produce the realities of development projects by translating policies, interests, and emotions of actors positioned on the two sides of the spectrum. In this aspect, they need to be on the both sides. Such ‘brokers’ play significant roles in the implementation of development projects. A Malawian counterpart characteristically commented:

“It’s important to understand the groups and individuals. Then you have to be in their shoes. I change myself like a chameleon.”

While this comment represents the nature of their roles as brokers, it importantly indicates that there is a gap between the different groups of actors to be narrowed. Before

investigating further on how the individuals experience development assistance, this section provides a brief analysis on what constitute such gaps between different groups of actors.

## 7.2.2 Individuality in Collectivity

### *Individuals Constituting Community Development*

A Japanese field worker stated the following after spending nearly two years engaged in a project in Malawi:

“I can’t say I know the people in villages well still now[...] It is also really difficult to describe who they are because I think they are various people in the village. Some are very willing to make effort and they engage with our project well, some are just observing what we do, and some are least bothered by our activity. Some don’t seem to be so poor that they have no food to eat. And I see some have money to buy stuff from market...” (Miki, Japanese field worker)

This comment highlights the ‘mysterious’ nature of people in the recipient communities. The field workers recognise that the situation on the ground is more complicated than the project is framed to address.

There are common characteristics among rural communities in Malawi. For instance, people living in rural villages mostly engage in small-scale and rain-fed subsistence farming (FAO 2002; Peters 2006). They normally belong to a village which is traditionally governed by a village headman within boundaries of a community composed of geographically adjacent households (Kishindo 2003). Despite such commonalities, as Miki’s narrative suggested, communities are not homogenous entities and people have various interests and priorities (Nelson and Wright 1995; Mohan and Stokke 2000).

In relation to the issue of viewing a community as a homogenous group and overlooking the heterogeneous realities of individuals, other field workers commented about the people in villages:

“Before I was involved in the field project, I had a very simple image of the people in local communities. I simply thought that people in villages are not thinking about how



they can improve their living standard and they just focus on whether they can eat for the day. I used to think that they just eat and sleep almost. But I realised that they actually think a lot about their issues and they live in complicated human relationships.” (Yuki, Japanese field worker)

“I think people in villages do whatever they want or need to do individually.” (Ryo, Japanese field worker)

As the field workers have realised, development projects are designed to assist ‘communities’, field implementations need to deal with individual members of the community and not the entity of the ‘community’. In this way, understanding of individual actors’ interests, priorities, and livelihood patterns can foster the appropriate understanding of the local people and local communities.

### ***Understanding of Development Assistance and Self-help by Different Actors***

At the stage of field implementation of a project, individuals’ livelihoods and individuals’ engagement in activities are important in realising the community engagement. When the diverse set of individual actors are involved in the process of field implementation, the question of what development means to different actors needs to be understood. Although terms such as “development”, “problem” and “self-help” are commonly used by field officers as well as beneficiaries, the particular meanings associated with these terms as they are understood by different actors can differ.

Interviews with individuals in the local communities suggested the meaning of development as they understood:

“Development is for us to live a better life. Better life means good health, eating nice food, sleeping at a nice place without leak, and nice water.” (Village 9 resident<sup>53</sup>)

“Development is for good life and good life means food, clothes, money, and livestock. [...] The purpose of development is to be improving. Like JNGO, they brought modern toilets which weren't there before.” (Village 1 resident)

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<sup>53</sup> In this chapter the villages are given numbers and letters instead of stating the real names for anonymity. The numbers and letters correspond to the overview of the villages provided in Section 6.2.1.

Many respondents from local communities explained that development leads people to better living in general. The meaning of 'better living' depends considerably on individual situations, but the perception as to what better living is does not vary greatly in rural communities in Malawi. For many people in rural communities, better life means maintaining good health and improving food security or diet, clothing and housing standards. These are their immediate concerns which reflect their day-to-day living. The purpose of development is clearly associated with the improvement of their individual living conditions. However, from the accounts of people in local communities in rural Malawi, it has emerged that development is talked about mainly in relation to two scales. First, development is for individuals. It means:

“working hard and harvesting well” (Village A resident),

“good future and living well with people” (Village A resident), or

“hard working to get all your needs and people say development is here” (Village B resident).

Second, it is also for the village. At the village scale, development means:

“doing a certain work that is beneficial to the village” (Village A resident),

“doing something together for the purpose of changing something together and it has to be done together” (Village A resident), or

“every work done in the village for the village, which is important for you to take part” (Village B resident).

Importantly, when it comes to how development is practised, it was more commonly associated with the sense of communal work, rather than individual households:

“Development means working together and it means unity. I get involved in building clinics and schools. I don't get paid for the work, but still I participate because it is for our own good.” (Village A resident)

“There is a development club in the village. Last year we made bricks for school building. I don't want to remain behind the others in knowledge. The purpose of development is to learn new things and to work together.” (Village 7 resident)

“Development means working without payment, like carrying bricks for school building. There are also works like clearing the surrounding of the borehole and the health worker visit homes in rain season to prevent disease.” (Village 1 resident)

In some villages, development work appears to be almost a synonym for school development, or more precisely, a synonym for carrying sand and water, and moulding bricks in order to construct communal infrastructure, such as school blocks, teachers' accommodation and boreholes. People participate because it is for the communal good although it may not directly be for their individual gain. In this sense, their engagement in community development work is voluntary and charitable work. In these works, people feel they have helped development and not that the development has helped them. Furthermore, local people explained development in relation to their contribution to 'emergencies' of the community.

“We do development together in the village. We plant and cultivate in group piece work to help the village, mainly for funerals.” (Village 5 resident)

“We do village development together. We contribute food or buy plates for the village. When there is funeral, we must take maize flour to the house of the deceased.” (Village 1 resident)

“We raise money for village emergency account by cultivating field of someone with other people in the village. The money we raise is for emergencies, like funerals. [...] We can't use the money for hunger problem, no way. It's an individual problem...” (Village 2 resident)

'Emergency' situations of the village, as was explained by people in the villages, mainly refer to funerals. Some respondents even referred to “funeral development” to describe how collectively the village work in case of the 'emergency'. People's engagement in communal work demonstrates their expectation for future reciprocity.

“I make bricks for school development. It's compulsory and ordered by the chief. I participate in the hope that one day the village will help me.” (Village 1 resident)

Using social relationships as a safety net has been prominent and traditional in Malawian societies as noted by Chinsinga *et al.* (2001) in that mutual support in moral, financial and material aspects during funerals is a cultural obligation (see discussion in Section 6.2.3). However, the social safety net built in the form of “funeral development” is organised on the order of community leaders and seems not relevant to their future problems at the individual level. The reciprocity that arises in this form of communal work is a form of balanced reciprocity (Sahlins 1972, see Section 2.4.3) in that people help each other in relation to funerals with each other, but it does not go beyond the context of funerals. Furthermore, communal work at local schools or clearing weeds from local roads is considered a part of village development; however, these activities can be considered simply as communal activities and not necessarily development work from the viewpoint of other actors.

‘Emergency’ in the context of development would be most commonly understood as food shortages, natural disasters or cholera outbreaks. However, no respondent answered positively to the question whether hunger would qualify as one of the emergency cases so that people have access to the emergency fund or stock of food. The problem in finance or hunger is measured at the household level and people tend to distinguish between household problems and community problems although development has a strong sense of communal work among the local people.

While development is practised as communal work at the village level by local people, they also have a perception that development is something that is brought from outside.

“Development comes from outside. More people participate, better result we get because many people put much effort and hard work, and then we will have greater change.” (Village 1 resident)

Some people were even more specific:

“Development means that someone brings an organisation for rearing cattle.” (Village 6 resident)

“When development is coming to this village, we receive and distribute with Group Village Headman.” (Village 9 resident)

On the other hand, the ‘development’ is perceived by Japanese expatriate workers:

“I think development means people living their lives without being forced to do what they are not willing to do, having met basic needs of food, clothes and shelter.” (Miki, Japanese field worker)

“By doing this development work, I am hoping that this one village becomes slightly wealthier so that they can lead lives that meet basic needs. I am not thinking I want to change the country for instance. I am just trying to help this small village.” (Ryo, Japanese field worker)

From these accounts, it can be understood that the Japanese expatriates’ accounts of development are rather simplified with an emphasis on the aspect of endogenous actions and meeting basic needs of people’s livelihood.

On the other hand, a Japanese expatriate provided his version of interpretation:

“I think, development as *kaihatsu* comes from outside but development as *hatten* is what the Malawians are doing. They are just using foreigners to achieve *hatten*.” (Ryo, Japanese field worker)

*Kaihatsu* is a Japanese term used in the context of development assistance (see Section 2.2.2), and has an exogenous connotation, whereas *hatten* in Japanese means the act of development itself, close to the meaning of endogenous advancement. The expatriate workers appear to be aware of the subtle distinction between the two as demonstrated by the sentiments in the following comments:

“I think the local people should be essentially left on their own. Development assistance is good for those who are making best effort but are not able to achieve

their goals because of their structural constraints. It's like a 'headhunting' process because it helps those who make effort to be successful." (Yoshiko, Japanese worker)

This comment shows another way of explaining the principle of self-help development, "help those who help themselves". They particularly refer to the attitude to learn and willingness to change in terms of self-help.

"I have come to feel that developed countries try to develop developing countries by providing them assistance, but these people in developing countries don't look like they *want to* develop! More I see them, more I feel that developed countries are forcing them to develop... I have seen many cattle herders who come to examine the quality of their produce and I saw some of them continued to show bad quality for a month. But they do not appear to be trying to resolve the quality issue. They are just told that the centre cannot buy due to the bad quality, and they just go home. After some time of the refusal, they just stop coming to the centre, [...] They don't think like they have to consult with veterinary office for practical solutions." (Yoshiko, Japanese field worker)

These comments are representative of the perspectives that Japanese expatriates form from their experiences in being involved in the field implementation.

External assistance normally focuses on the collective good and not providing assistance directly to individuals. The distinction between individual problems and community problems seems to be overlooked by external development organisations.

How then do the people who are in the middle, the Malawian counterparts of Japanese agencies, understand 'development'? A Malawian officer working for a Japanese agency explained her understanding of 'development' which echoed other Malawian counterparts' understanding:

"Development means to develop a community to a better community. For women for instance, development is for them to have something to generate income from. For the community, they have to have good water and sanitation system. And people

manage to build good houses, kitchen, and bathroom. It is for them to have better living standard.” (Mary, Malawian officer)

Development meant ‘better life’ for the Malawian counterparts, and their imagination of ‘better life’ was associated with better standard of housing, health, and income. This seems to be associated with what their job involved to achieve ‘development’. A Malawian counterpart to a Japanese agency analysed the situation of Malawi’s development:

“Development means to achieve certain goals. Any goals set by the person, the project or the country. For Malawi, the goal that people should achieve is to eradicate poverty. In Malawi, we have two different dimensions in this context. First, you look at these farmers as individuals. They are producing individually. They have to sell their farm produce at a cheap price to vendors. They haven’t joined group, and they can’t make much profit. On the other hand, those who are in a group can sell their produce in better conditions because the group is sharing information, resources, and also external assistance like training.” (Daniel, Malawian officer)

It indicates that the individual effort is important, and yet it is not solely an efficient way to achieve development. The individual involvement in group activity or community activity is what facilitates the individual goals of development. A Malawian extension worker who has been working in the areas of community development for fifteen years left a positive note:

“There has been a lot of development in these local communities, like school blocks, bridges, and even changes in the attitude of people. Attitude of people changed for men especially. In Malawi, cooking is for women for example, but now they are saying it is for men as well. So there are at least these changes [...] In development, we have a process whereby we do it gradually, for the people to be independent. We cannot just leave them abruptly and say now you are a grown-up.” (Richard, Malawian counterpart)

Richard’s narrative suggests that self-reliance is to be achieved over a certain period of time and cannot be achieved in a short time. It is something to be achieved based on accumulation of small changes and continuous self-help effort.

Like the case of Richard, some Malawian extension workers have been involved in the community development of Malawi for a significant time period. Similarly, the Malawian officers working for foreign development agencies tend to change jobs within the industry and continue to be involved in the development sector in Malawi. As a Japanese expatriate worker explained regarding his contribution to the self-reliant development of people in Malawi:

“I think what I should do to achieve people’s self-help development is to do everything I can do while I am here. In other words, I transfer everything I can while I am here and then disappear. It is also important to transfer what we can transfer little by little for the basic things. But you can never achieve self-reliance as long as I am here. Even if I say to them that they are not making self-help effort, they would argue that because I am still here!” (Naoki, Japanese field worker)

The transferred knowledge and skills are expected to be transformed by people in the way that works best for them by Malawian counterparts. The long-term development is in a way sustained by Malawian counterparts’ continuous involvement to work as brokers by dealing with different actors who come and go over a certain period of time.

The above indicated that development projects can be interpreted differently by individuals from different categories of actors, the individual recipients in local communities, Japanese expatriate officers, and their Malawian counterparts. The following section investigates how the people from the different categories of actors shape their lives around development projects. Building up on the analysis provided in this section, the successive sections further investigate the lives of individual actors by focusing on the three categories of actors.

### **7.3 Being Helped in Self-help? : Life Stories of Individual Recipients**

As expressed in the narratives of Japanese field workers, it was a puzzle for them to understand how some people in the villages are active and cooperative while some others are not. This can be caused by the fact that individual people in the community are not in the same position in that their standard of living and personal circumstances vary more than



it appears to an outsider. Chapter 6 analysed how the Japanese projects have been received by the recipient communities while highlighting challenges and breakthroughs that were faced during the process. Building on this analysis, this section provides another perspective to investigate development practice by focusing on how individual recipients have shaped their lives by utilising external assistance. The following cases shed light on individuals' stories as to how they experienced the Japan's assistance in their lives that consist of mixture of personal, social, and professional dimensions. It starts with a narrative of Pemba, a member of a group assisted by OVOP Malawi, followed by the case of Teresa who is a member of another OVOP-assisted group, and finally it introduces the case of Jason, who is a resident of a village where JNGO runs the project. The following cases are discussed with a specific interest in the process of making the Japan's assistance relevant to their individual lives.

### **7.3.1 Case of Pemba**

Pemba is one of the founding members of the OVOP-assisted Group B (see Section 5.3.2 for basic information), and is an executive member of the group. He lives in a remote village, from where he travels to the group factory taking one hour on bicycle or he sometimes travels to regional government office by two hours' bicycle ride and half an hour ride by public mini-bus. The original form of the group was established in 2000 by him and two of his friends in his village:

“One day in 2000 I went to a meeting organised by the government's regional office. In the meeting I learnt about the idea of CBO (community-based organisations). I went back to my village and told about the idea to two of my friends and discussed the problems we had in the village and how we could improve the situation by organising CBO. It was very difficult to make people in the village including the village chief understand the importance of organising something based on the village. So what I did was to start a nursery school in order to attract people's interests because we had problem of orphans and poverty. I was buying food for children from my pockets, and then parents got convinced that it's good for them. The teachers at schools also recognised that children from this area were more knowledgeable because of the nursery school. Any child could attend the nursery school, not only orphans. I

remember there were 36 children. We used to use a village church for the nursery activity, but the village worked collectively and constructed a house, what we now call 'Orphan Care' house in 2004."

The initial form of the OVOP group was rooted in Pemba's individual effort to improve the problem of the village based on self-help and cooperation (see relevant discussion in Section 2.5). The village's cooperative work to construct the Orphan Care house was initiated by the village chief who understood Pemba's "courageous" attempt, calling it 'development work' for the village. The initial form of the OVOP group was formed based on his effort to contribute to collective good of the village, and it was responded by the people in the village who saw his dedication and sympathised. The group then faced its turning point. Pemba's story continued:

"In 2005, when I submitted a report about the Orphan Care group to the social affairs department at the regional government office, I saw a form. It was the OVOP application form and officers explained about how it works. I was interested. I brought the form back to the village, and we sat down together with the participants of the Orphan Care group and discussed what we wanted. Some suggested bee-keeping tools, some others suggested water pumps for irrigation farming, and I suggested something to do with groundnuts because that is what we produce in volume in our area."

The idea that helped them to decide which one they should choose to apply for the OVOP assistance came from an unexpected source:

"At that time, we happened to have a man from Blantyre staying in the village for two or three months. He was a buyer of groundnuts. When he came to the village, he was sleeping in a church house. I felt pity and offered him to stay at my house. One day he told me that he is buying all the groundnuts to make cooking oil, and it also makes profit from by-product of extract (feedstuff for cattle). I thought maybe we can do that by our group. I suggested the people the idea of requesting machines to extract oil and to process cooking oil to OVOP and they loved the idea of making cooking oil as it was not much available in the village."

This was how the group put together the application for OVOP. The application was accepted by OVOP and they received the machine to process groundnuts and extract oil in 2008. Pemba recalls a challenge that the group faced then:

“What I never forget is that in 2008 the bosses from OVOP in Lilongwe came and told us that we needed to merge with another group which was already operating within their factory because the OVOP officials said that the machine was too big for the factory we had at that time. We discussed the situation, and thought about two points: one, another group’s factory was far from where we live. Two, we were different from the members of the other group in that they lived in much more urban set-up and engage with more business activities than we did. We believed that farmers should be benefiting farmers by using the machine without involvement of businessmen or commercial vendors. On that basis, we refused the request. Thankfully, the OVOP bosses listened to us and we did not have to merge as a result.”

In Pemba’s account, the incident was a traumatic event in that the plan that they initiated and thought through was about to be taken away by the top-down decision of the donor. However they were successful in defending their position and made a serious case by themselves, and their claim was accepted by the OVOP Secretariat.

They also found a factory where they could rent in a market area. Pemba reflected the impact of OVOP:

“Before the OVOP came in, we used to sleep with empty stomach. But now, it seems these problems are minimised. The biggest benefit is the fact that now we have a place (the OVOP group as a farmers’ cooperative) to sell our harvest at a reasonable price. I am now very confident in foreseeing my profit and I grew a lot of groundnuts this year.”

Pemba’s story highlights that there was a persistent self-help effort made by Pemba for the improvement of people’s lives in the village. On the basis of his initiatives which were supported by some other villagers, the important moments in the evolution of the initial form of the group have arisen importantly from external encounters. External encounters indeed played significant roles in the course of his action. In his case, such

external encounters did not come to him, but rather he did not miss such opportunities when he kept looking based on his “curiosity about the outside world” amongst other autonomous actions (Jingzhong *et al.* 2009: 200, also see discussion in Section 2.5). He ended the interview with following comment:

“We, as a group, really wish, that we can go and see Japan, where OVOP originally started. Anyone from the group has never been to any other country before for learning. That is what I and we as a group really hope to achieve.”

Consistent with the idea of social assets in Jingzhong *et al.* (2009), the members have been able to diversify livelihood activities not only financial aspects and exchange of information, but importantly also the elements of trust, reputation, small-group interactions, experience, curiosity, and self-help and cooperation.

The case of Pemba introduced how a member of a farmers’ group initiated the evolution of the group and how he mobilised resources during the process. The following case of Teresa focuses on how her daily life is spent in relation to her involvement in the group activity assisted by OVOP Malawi.

### **7.3.2 Case of Teresa**

Teresa has been a member of a farmers’ group since 2005, which started receiving assistance from OVOP (Group A, see Section 5.3.5 for basic information) in 2009. She is in her early 40s, married and has one daughter and five sons. She goes to the group’s factory every day by walking for about half an hour, except for Sunday when she attends church functions. Teresa’s household owns four acres of farming land (one acre of *dimba* and three acres of *munda*<sup>54</sup>) where they mainly grow maize and sunflowers. Compared to other members of farmers’ groups studied in this thesis, her financial position is significantly better than the average of other members of OVOP-assisted groups. Her husband runs a small shop in local market to sell cooking oil, which generates a relatively stable cash

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<sup>54</sup> *Dimba* as a Chichewa word refers to field which retains enough moisture all year round which allows farmers to grow crops with supplement of water from irrigation or wells (Orr and Orr 2002). *Munda* on the other hand means upland field which is not necessarily moist and is typically used only during the rainy season .

income for the household. Although the size of the plot that they own is not very large, they invest the income they raise from the shop in farm inputs to increase yield of maize and sunflower and to hire casual workers to work in the field, which leads to a significant contribution to household food stock and income. In 2011, they raised about 250,000 kwacha from the shop and about the same amount from the sales of sunflower seeds and maize. In addition, her husband engages with different trading opportunities of agricultural products. She described her motivation to be involved in the group:

“My main motivation is to have some extra income and not primarily to help my household income as such. I also want to learn business management skills. I think it’s important to be in a group to learn skills and share ideas.”

Teresa is a busy woman. Her typical day starts at around 5 am, and she manages domestic duties of washing plates, washing clothes, cleaning the house, preparing breakfast and so on. Her husband often shares the work bathing the youngest child, a three year old boy, or drying maize flour at times, and her daughter also helps her work. At about 8 am, she leaves home for the group’s factory. She sometimes drops by at a market or meets somebody on her way to work, but she normally starts her factory duties by 9 am and stays there till 6 pm. Apart from engaging with duties at the factory from cleaning to managing sales, she also helps other people learn the management of the factory. She says,

“My eyes are focused on business. I stick to it and cope with problems. [...] I also take other people’s duties when they can’t fulfil or when they are not able to perform well.”

She teaches other members how to deal with duties at the factory because she is at the factory almost every day and she is capable of writing and logically keeping records. She also learns business procedures more quickly than others in training organised by OVOP. As she observes,

“Many other members are uneducated, so I teach them. I understand what needs to be taught so there is no problem in terms of what to teach but to make them understand is difficult.”

Although her formal designation is supposed to only involve secretarial assistance, she is involved in most of desk-based tasks and administration duties, which the members are most unfamiliar with. She also represents the group when the chairman is absent. For instance, when the group received an award from the OVOP Secretariat, she wrote and gave a speech as a representative of the group. She was nervous but her speech was received with praise by the officials from OVOP. She does not only the busy duties, but also she enjoys spending time with other members of the group particularly after sharing lunch together, it is the time for chatting, singing and dancing.

She leaves the factory for home at 5 or 6 pm with other members. At home, she cooks and has dinner with her family, and goes to sleep at 8.30 or 9 pm. This is her typical living pattern for Monday to Saturday. Her family follows Christianity and they participate in a church. On every Sunday, she attends church service with her family. Her church runs programmes from morning to late afternoon on Sundays. For the church service, she prepares lunch for all attendees with other women involved in the church service from morning.

Teresa's daily life was transformed after the group began to receive assistance from OVOP. Before, she was much more involved in domestic duties and farming activities, but now her day-to-day living revolves around the group activity at the OVOP. Unlike the case of Pamba's group, Teresa's group made an application to OVOP following advice from the local government's counsellor. The engagement with OVOP was not initiated by the members; still, her group is sustained by a member like Teresa who is motivated to persistently make effort and actively engage with the group. In her case, she is capable to take instructions and the recognition she received from others led her to establish a new social status.

The example of Teresa demonstrates how a member of a group assisted by OVOP has woven the group activities into her daily life. The high level of engagement can be also attributed to the fact that she has established her position within the group, in terms of her identity as a capable and trusted co-worker. To further understand the roles of individual actors as a member of recipient communities, the case of Jason demonstrates how he engages with JNGO projects.

### 7.3.3 Case of Jason

Jason is a resident of a village where JNGO runs a development project. He is in his late twenties, living with a wife and a small child. His family is not significantly wealthier than his fellow villagers and he himself is a smallholder farmer, living in an average village house which is made of bricks and mud, with little furniture and a thatched roof. His living standard and daily practices appear to be similar to other people in village at first sight and he would be classified as just 'one of the villagers' by an outsider.

However, there are important distinctions between him and the others. He actively takes part in different activities that JNGO implements. He is a member of the borehole maintenance committee, a member of the farmers' association, and he works as a builder in constructions required in the projects. His involvement in external initiatives is not limited to JNGO, and he looks for other opportunities to be involved in workshops organised by other agencies outside his village too. He explained his motivations:

"I take part in these activities because I aspire to be rich. Because I am knowledgeable, I join. Majority of people in the village are ignorant about the benefit of being in a group due to a lack of education so they don't join."

His attitude to distinguish himself from the rest of the people in the village seems to be based on the knowledge he has. He has completed his secondary education and is adept at English to some extent, and his pride in his educational background was highlighted in his comment:

"I'm the only one who completed secondary school in the village. I want to be rich and it's only me who can be financially strong or trust-worthy among my relatives."

He described the initial involvement in JNGO:

"Last year JNGO came and I was selected as a committee member for the borehole management committee that we organised with JNGO for the borehole they were constructing. No one had suggested the construction of borehole before they came. It was a good idea as we had problem of water. I feel so happy and obliged about the borehole work."

Since JNGO implements multiple programmes within the framework of comprehensive community development (see Section 5.3.6 for the project design), it is not only through the borehole construction that local people can engage with JNGO. Jason actively engages with most of JNGO's activities except women's groups.

"I'm happy with development opportunity with the seed bank, they taught us how to cook, and they introduced moringa and lemongrass to us. They are like counsellor to me because of the knowledge we are taught. [...] JNGO is different from the organisation that was here previously in that JNGO really talk about self-help a lot. They teach us but never give us money. Well, it's Fanta only that they give us. What JNGO does here is very beneficial as they teach skills and give knowledge. Once the previous organisation was gone, everything was gone too, there was nothing left."

He is in fact recognised as one of the most active people in the village in engaging with the project by JNGO officers. He clearly understood that JNGO focuses on the self-help of people while he interpreted that the self-help idea is associated with knowledge and skill that people acquire to make further effort by themselves. He described how he has expanded the assistance he received from JNGO:

"Self-help means depending on myself in everything I wish, like, I do farming by myself to sustain my family. I also look for seedlings of lemongrass, moringa and some other fruit trees. I noticed the seedling make much profit when I went to the trade fair with JNGO to sell our products. Since then I have been growing the seedlings and expanding my customers."

After he built his confidence in the seedling business, he has made an enclosure in front of his house to grow seedlings specifically. He gathered information from people in another village that there was a workshop organised by an organisation introducing different kinds of trees, and he went to the workshop by cycling two hours. He said:

"We don't own any land. But we rent small land and we have enough food stock from there for family. We manage well in that."



Jason is still in the midst of his journey to move up from the living standard of a subsistence farmer to a better situation with more cash income, but he seems to be hopeful in achieving better standard of living in the coming years.

The examples provided in this section highlight the ways in which individual members of recipient communities of Japanese development assistance engage with projects and make the external assistance relevant to their lives. The cases introduced above are the ones who have been able to make the most of opportunities. Compared to other people living in the similar structural contexts, Pemba, Teresa and Jason have managed livelihood strategies better than the others due to their own initiatives which derive from their individual motivations and also importantly from their engagement with other people in the context of group activity.

## **7.4 Shaping Life around Helping People's Self-help**

Section 7.2.1 introduced the background of the Japanese development workers in Malawi. This section explores how they shape their lives evolving around the field work in Malawi, and how their individual perceptions and attitudes affect their work in promoting the self-help of local communities.

To start with, a Japanese development worker's comment provides an interesting angle to analyse their individual experiences in Malawi:

“When I walk around the villages in our project site, people approach me and tell me how unwell they are, and ask me for medicine. They sometimes see me and just shout ‘medicine!’ As soon as they meet me they start saying ‘it pains here and it pains there...’ or ‘I want medicine.’ My friend who was installing latrines in villages told me that in her case people see her and shout ‘toilet!’” (Yuki, Japanese field worker)

Yuki was involved in a mobile-clinic project in rural villages in Malawi. For the people in the village, she seemed to have become almost a source of free medicine. To understand what kind of people work in development assistance abroad and what their experiences are fosters a better understanding of the realities of development assistance. In addition, it is

important to analyse how the development workers are identified in the specific context of self-help promotion and how it affects the project delivery on the ground as has been commented by Yuki.

#### **7.4.1 'Mobile Professionals'**

Previous research has identified development workers abroad as “mobile professionals” (Fechter and Walsh 2010: 1198) or “development cosmopolitans” (Peters 2013: 278), as they are involved in development projects at the field operation level, and tend to move from one country of assignment to another on a relatively short-term basis. These views are consistent with the cases of Japanese development workers in Malawi; for instance, one of the interview respondents, a Japanese expatriate worker, worked in Malawi for ten months after which he moved to Palestine, and worked in Japan for a couple of months before again being assigned to Malawi for one year and two months. Another one worked in Malawi for seven months and shortly after that moved to Jordan to work for seven months. Another expatriate worker has moved around the world, starting from Japan, and then Haiti, Japan, Malawi, Japan and Philippines, within a span of six years. The fact that they tend to move on a regular basis is evidence of their interest in international development work and at the same time it is also a factor that makes them shape their identity in the particular way as observed in some comments made by Japanese field workers:

“I just wish to be involved in the sphere of global health in my career. The rest doesn't matter. I don't think it matters where I am based. [...] I think I would describe myself as an apprentice development worker working in different places in the world.” (Yuki, Japanese field worker)

“I am not sure what I am going to do and how I will be after here, but at least I am a development worker at the moment. I think so because that is what I do and I am always thinking about development of Malawi.” (Miki, Japanese field worker)

Once they start working in development field, their personal motivations and professional instincts increasingly interact and the boundary between the two becomes vague. Shinji expressed his concern with regard to his future career and life-course:

“Sometimes, people in Japan are sceptical about us development workers fitting back in Japanese society. For instance if you want to find a job in a private company back in Japan, their human resource will interrogate you about your experience abroad and ask you to justify your experience working abroad like me right now. They would ask you if you are ready to adopt to Japan’s relentless business environment.” (Shinji, Japanese field worker)

The development workers in Japan, particularly those who have spent a long time as a ‘mobile professional’ expect to face some difficulties in going back to ‘normal’ life in Japan. The international development sector is growing in Japanese societies as an established industry; still, there are issues in terms of segregating the development professionals from ‘normal’ jobs in Japan. In this respect, it is not a simple career choice for them but also a choice that involves some concerns and risks.

#### **7.4.2 ‘Benevolent’ helpers and ‘selfish’ helpers**

In addition to the basic characteristics of them being mobile, previous ethnographic studies on expatriates identify that historical relationships play a role in forming the identity of professionals working abroad; for example, British expatriates working in former-colonies (Fechter and Walsh 2010; Fechter and Hindman 2011; Kothari 2006; Eyben 2012; Yeoh and Willis 2005). The identity of expatriates is often associated with the colonial history for the nationals of former colonialist. However for the Japanese expatriates in Malawi, what contributes to forming their identity stems from something other than such a colonial history.

The common images that people in Malawi associate with Japan or Japanese people are: ‘rich’, ‘second-hand cars’, ‘technology’, ‘JICA’, sometimes ‘Japan Tobacco’ (JT) in the areas where there are JT-contract farming activities. The images of cars and technologies were often noted by urban Malawians, whereas in rural villages people often did not have any perceptions of Japan, except for Kung Fu and Bruce Lee (which are actually a Chinese martial art and a Hongkongese actor). However, it was also common to hear their experience of encountering a Japanese volunteer or infrastructure established by Japanese agencies,

typically boreholes. 'Prosperity' and 'development assistance' are the central, if not the only, ingredients for people to form the image of Japanese expatriates.

Benevolence and development assistance are often associated with each other in the literature as well as people's perception (Vaux 2001; de Jong 2011). Sacrificing, giving, and selfless attitude are similarly linked with the attributes of professionals working in the development industry. The antinomy of altruism and selfishness is highlighted in the ethnographic study by de Jong (2011), with regard to perceptions towards the NGO sector by development workers from Europe. The NGO sector and similarly 'volunteers' are associated with the connotations of 'non-profit' or 'charity' activities with the specific resonance of altruism, while government agencies in development assistance have not been discussed as much mainly due to their political and diplomatic motives and their roles as official government organisations. However, when it comes to the level of individual actors, there is no difference in their personal motivation to choose the job whether it is with government or with NGOs, and the same perspective should be applied to understand their personal experiences. Also, it needs to be stressed that NGOs are now operating hand in hand with government agencies (Mercer 2002; see also Section 5.3.2 for the complementary function of NGOs). This particularly applies to Japanese NGOs in Malawi. As the general presence of Japanese organisations is small, whether it is government, private corporations, or NGOs, they tend to cooperate with each other. Thus de Jong's (2011) analysis can be therefore extended to field officers working for JNGO as well as JICA in this regard.

According to their primary motivations to work in development assistance shown in Figure 7.3, some expressed their interest in contributing to the development of livelihood of those who are less fortunate outside Japan, however people generally indicated their mixed feelings about being 'altruist' and being 'selfish'. For instance:

"I was working in an insurance company to administer insurance claims for seven years. I did not dislike it but I thought I wanted to create a plus. Dealing with insurance claims for traffic accident cases will bring a minus to zero, but I wanted to do something to actually create a plus. Then it was simple thought, 'If I want to help something, international development would be good.' [...] I'm doing this job for my

self-satisfaction. It's a selfish choice. My selfishness should not be reflected on the outcome of the project but that's how I am doing this job really."

Another field officer part of whose job is marketing and communications described his motivation:

"I don't think I'm driven by the mission to help others in Malawi. I would even say that there are people who need help more within Japan to be honest. But I do enjoy this job, and I am enjoying the most among any other jobs I have done. [...] I am just hoping that my work contributes to raise interest among people in Japan. I do my work while I imagine maybe some children in Japan will decide to become a doctor to help those who are in need, or maybe they will know how people in a country in Africa live and they realise how fortunate people in Japan are."

These comments evoke the analysis of de Jong (2011) that NGO workers claim to have selfish motives so that their motives are "on a more equal level with those they seek to assist" and so as not to victimise the local people by making them dependent on external assistance (37). Regardless of their thoughts, the understanding among people in the recipient communities as to why the Japanese workers are there and who they are has turned out to be different:

"I think they are 'helper' to me. They provide very few things but these things are beneficial. I think they see us as poor people and they think that they must help us."  
(Village 1 resident)

"They come from Japan. Their purpose here is to develop the village and reduce the problem of poverty." (Village A resident)

These comments reflect the perception among the people in recipient communities about who the Japanese development workers are and why they are there: helpers and sympathisers.

In development assistance for self-help, it is almost a prerequisite to have a situation where the local people are able to make self-help efforts and that they are willing to make autonomous actions. Arguably in this context, Japanese development workers are more

likely to have the attitude to 'equate' and regard the local people as actors who have agency to act to improve problematic situations and change their fate by themselves. For example;

"When I was a college student, I was in a rugby team. My senior used to tell me that there are two types of people in the world. One is those who feel satisfied when achieving something by themselves. The other ones feel satisfied when helping others achieve something. In the game of rugby, I love it when my teammate gets a goal with my assist. (Ryo, Japanese field worker)

In other words, the dimension of altruistic personal motivation has been mixed with the professional instinct to be selfish while respecting the principle of self-help development.

"I have been driven by, something like, the feeling of being inferior to the people who are making a lot of effort to overcome their problems. I feel inferior that I was born without any problem, still not making effort much. I in a way feel inferior to those who go through struggles..." (Tomoko, Japanese field worker)

This comment further implies that her attitude to equate her position of being a helper, who assumes the capacity to help others, to those who receive help. It also indicates that she was under no compulsion to make self-help effort in her life in Japan and a sense of guilt not to make self-help effort in Japan.

Development assistance affects the lives of expatriate development workers, their local counterparts, and the recipients quite differently. In the case of expatriate development workers with Japanese agencies in Malawi, one of the obvious and great changes in their everyday living is that they shift their living space due to relocation. Naturally in their daily lives, professional space in a way invades their personal space. Furthermore, given that the assigned country tends to be unfamiliar to them, social relationships tend to start and expand from their professional relationships. Their personal domain is again mixed with the professional domain in the aspect of social relationships. The boundary between professional and personal spaces is blurry.

Yuki is an expatriate worker who works closely with local counterparts and people in rural villages. Her life in Malawi is all about being a development professional. Her personal space,

in other words, home, is combined with professional space, office. When she goes out, she normally goes out with her colleagues to have meal or to meet other Japanese development workers. In introducing herself to someone she meets for the first time, she would introduce herself as a person with the organisation affiliation.

She is greatly dedicated to her role in a community-based rural development project, which demands long work hours often including weekends. Her office is combined with her living space. The officers have breakfast on a dining table where they will be having a project meeting two hours later. On the same table where they have worked on writing reports and communicating with headquarters for hours, the officers have dinner over a long chat. Naturally, the officers tend to think about the project and by extension the development of Malawi, almost twenty-four hours a day. Despite her long hours of work and a remuneration package which is lower than average, she does not have many complaints about the amount of work she is required to do. However, she confessed her frustration:

“Although I have a lot of work and I live in this unfamiliar place, I don’t actually have many complaints about living conditions in here. [...] But I sometimes feel angry actually while at work. Well, when I am tired especially, I end up feeling that ‘this is not my country, but it is yours! It is you who have to make an effort and it is you who have to do your best, not me! Why do I cut down on my sleep and work hard, and they are just wandering around, eating bananas, and chatting with people, and they get ‘rewards’ also’.”

This narrative suggests that development workers feel their development programme is somehow dis-oriented in that the people who are *supposed* to be the driver of the implementation and the people who are *intended* to benefit from the project do not appear as interested in the project. In extension, their professional work which occupies most of their everyday life becomes root-less.

A conversation between two Japanese expatriate workers implied how they orient their work:

Yoshiko: “I have read somewhere that this work is not for those who want money but for those who see challenges as reward and who enjoy the effort you make to overcome the challenge.”

Satomi: “That is a really important thing, challenge and effort to overcome it. I don’t have that in my work right now, and I think that is why I am de-motivated these days!”

Yoshiko: “That’s right, but you will find your motivation when you find local people who are willing to make effort and at least try your method.”

(A conversation between Japanese field workers, Yoshiko and Satomi)

The benevolence and selfishness exist in a complicated way among the Japanese expatriate workers. This confusion arguably derives from the nature of assisting self-help development, as it assumes that people are capable of making self-help effort in a wider sense, not only in terms of actively working in the development projects but equally importantly by showing the attitude to address problems by themselves.

### **7.4.3 Tyranny of Language**

“If I forget the Japanese language, I would feel, like, rootless... You can’t literally see yourself from outside so it wouldn’t matter how you appear to others visually as much as what you speak out using your own words. Japanese language is what is coming from inside me. If I forget the language, I will become someone else...” (Tomoko, Japanese field worker)

Language plays a significant role in forming ideas and communicating them through to different actors effectively. In particular, the ideas of self-help promoted by the Japanese agencies are shaped in Japanese originally (see Section 5.2), and it needs to be first translated to English and then to Chichewa during the travel from Japan to rural communities in Malawi. As Chambers (1997a) maintains, English dominates in the world of development assistance.



“What is hard in doing this job is the language... I can’t communicate in Chichewa, so what I want to tell does not really reach the villagers. It might be also because of cultural difference too, but how Japanese people think is not understood sometimes because of the language barrier and people don’t really understand when I try to tell what I think is a better way in field project...” (Shinji, Japanese field worker)

Like many other current Japanese development workers, Shinji was born in the late 1970s and grew up in Japan. Upon completion of an undergraduate degree in Japan, he worked for a company in Japan for seven years, and moved to a development agency three years ago where he works currently. Like the majority of his generation in Japan, he received all his educational qualifications in Japanese and his professional career required him to communicate only in Japanese before his current employment<sup>55</sup>. Now he is working in Malawi, with Japanese colleagues, but also with Malawian officials, counterparts and people in villages. Language proficiency is often a requirement for international development jobs, and in the case of Malawi, a good command of English is a requirement, as it is largely used as a primary official language along with the indigenous language of Chichewa.

The difference between Japanese ‘mobile professionals’ and those who are coming from countries where one of the globally common languages such as English and French is widely spoken is the issue of communication. Most literature on mobile professionals tends to overlook the issue of communication in their everyday lives perhaps because it is actually not a distinct problem for the majority of expatriate workers from Western countries. For Japanese development agencies, the language tends to appear as an additional barrier compared to the agencies from English-speaking countries in Malawi. Organisations’ principles and project guidelines are formulated in Japanese and they need to be communicated via field officers through to local counterparts in English. It is common that even in the UK recruitment scene for field officers in development projects abroad, indigenous language ability is not necessarily required, and it is the same for the Japanese

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<sup>55</sup> From primary education to higher education in the majority of schools and colleges in Japan, subjects are taught in Japanese. Although the curriculum has been diversified and changed to include training of English communication, for the generation currently older than mid-20s, most people would have studied English starting from how to write the English alphabet from the age of 12 or 13 in accordance with the official educational curriculum (see, for example Guardian (2011)).

recruitment scenes; however, Japanese candidates first face the language barrier as a good command of English or often French is desired for a position in Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>56</sup>.

Similar to Shinji's educational and professional background, Ryo also followed a similar path, but in his case:

"I wanted to work in the international cooperation sector, but I was not adept at English, so I went to study English in a language course abroad as a Holiday Maker<sup>57</sup>. After that I joined a development agency based in Japan for three years, and then I started off in my current employment, and within three month after commencement, I was sent overseas."

Ryo's communication ability in English is enough to discuss matters related to project implementation with his counterparts though it seemed not to the extent that he could engage in in-depth discussions outside rather standardised topics of project. Communication ability matters in that it impairs the flexibility of project officers in altering the course of project implementation, but the limited language ability in a way contracts the nature of their job to become more implementer or realiser of the project proposal.

Having recognised the importance of communicating in a common language, Hiroshi, a field worker who has a relatively good command of English, argued that communication is not only about the language. He said:

"For the first few months since I came to Malawi, when I was trying to tell people in the village what my suggestions and opinions were, they would agree with me verbally. But soon I realised that they did not really try or practise my suggestions even though they said they liked. I think that was because of a lack of trust between us. I tried to build trust by demonstrating my commitment, like creating a marketing poster. I also made a conscious effort to learn their behaviour. People like making interactive speeches here in gatherings. People like to have meetings in particular ways in here. I

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<sup>56</sup> Based on research on Charityjob.co.uk, one of the most popular on-line spaces for advertising job vacancies in the charity sector and on Partner, an on-line advertisement space specifically for job vacancies in international development sector in Japan.

<sup>57</sup> Working Holiday Maker is a migration category agreed between Japan and New Zealand whereby people under 30 years old can attend language courses or have a paid job for up to one year.

used to think the way they conduct meeting was ridiculous but now I myself do. Like, when I speak, I use a lot of body language now. People like that. I adopted some communication strategy which is not dependent on words.”

Hiroshi has liked learning English since he was in school, and has always wanted to work in the international environment. His English is intermediate level as he had not worked overseas before his Malawi assignment. When he described his ‘progress’ in communication with people in villages, he spoke with passion, and he also stressed that he now enjoys it. In contrast to Hiroshi was Yoshiko, who had studied in a university in the UK for several months and also had spent several months in volunteering for an education programme in Malawi prior to her current assignment. Her Japanese colleagues regard her as the one who is able to communicate with the locals in Chichewa more than other colleagues and who has a significantly better command of English. However, as she herself admitted, it was actually a struggle for Yoshiko. One day, she was trying to teach rural farmers how to record stocks of crops and how to use a calculator to do basic maths to record sales of their farm products.

“Yoshiko has a rather hard approach to assisting the farmers. Partly because of her limited ability in communicating in Chichewa and English, she is straight to the point and does not appear to hesitate in telling them what is right and how things need to be done. She would demonstrate how things should be done and if it is not done, she asks them to justify. If it is not done without any justifiable reason she would appear angry and give them a lesson.” (Field Note, February 2013)

She later made a comment that she has decided to be a little pushing when teaching farmers because she only has two years to understand each other, which, she thinks, is not possible.

As has been argued, in communicating the ideas including the idea of self-help, language plays a significant role. Some of the development workers have a good command of English and some are able to have a basic communication in local languages; still, it appears no easy task for them to directly communicate the ideas through to people in the recipient communities.

Communication ability potentially gives a great impact in professional as well as personal dimensions of everyday living in a multi-cultural environment. Tomoko's narrative shown at the beginning of this section is representative of expatriates working in a culturally-different environment and how communication ability can have an impact their life abroad. While some development workers are managing their expectations from their employers, others feel more frustrated and dismayed by their own inability in communication. Satomi, a development worker who was just completing the third month of a two-year assignment in Malawi, repeatedly claimed with a certain degree of depression:

"I don't have a good command of language, so I can't express even when I feel something is wrong with the programme. Initially I thought I can take time and will make local people understand slowly, but these days I really feel the people don't pay attention to me if not making a fool of me... [...] If they were Japanese people, they would try to read my facial expression to understand what I mean, but when I make face here, they don't even pay attention. [...] I know I cannot help, but I get even more confused when people in villages speak other indigenous languages than Chichewa. They laugh at me when I make mistake. A few days ago, I just reached a point and I just left work there and came home."

It is a reality that development projects are carried forward even when field workers are not adept at English or local languages, and it is made possible by the pre-existing text of the project proposal, or pre-existing system of programme. However, having a good command of English can potentially be significant in making development projects more reflexive and it is significant in terms of transferring information and skills, and creating knowledge. In Satomi's case, communication in local languages was also involved in many aspects of the work. An inability to communicate effectively contributed to locking her into a power-relation whereby her counterpart behaved as her senior, which has made her lose confidence and motivation to work. English ability itself and issues associated with language are common concerns for and peculiar problems of Japanese development workers.

## 7.5 Malawian counterparts

### 7.5.1 'Struggling Elites'

While the Japanese agencies send off their personnel to the field operation as expatriate project managers or project officers, the field implementation heavily relies on Malawian 'brokers' who are in the middle between the Japanese agency and the intended beneficiaries in rural villages, and who are hired locally to pursue their field operational tasks in the implementation process. Many have suggested that brokers in development play a critical role in a development project (Swidler and Watkins 2009; Neubert 1996; Bierschenk *et al.* 2002; Mosse and Lewis 2006). Better understanding of who the people in the community are and how they live is arguably important for the development donors to design and implement projects effectively. In this regard, the gap between the policy and implementation, and the gap between the donors and recipients, are addressed by those who are in the middle. In the cases of Japanese agencies in Malawi, their Malawian counterparts are the 'brokers'.

Swidler and Watkins (2009) provide a helpful analysis on identities of such brokers as 'elites'. Based on successive field research conducted on an HIV/AIDS programme in Malawi, Swidler and Watkins (*ibid.*) refer to a group of young subsistence farmers aiming to have a salaried job as "aspiring elites" (1188), whereas those who are university-educated, employed by an established or large international or national development organisation are referred as "national elites" (1191). In the case of Japanese grassroots development projects in Malawi, the 'brokers' somewhat fall in-between these two layers of elites. The brokers in the Japanese projects are significantly different from the 'aspiring elites' as they are in a formal employment. However, most of the Malawian officers working for Japanese development agencies are paid significantly less than the 'national elites', and are less job-secure as their job designation is often linked to the duration of project which is often limited to a few years<sup>58</sup>. Many of them are not university-educated and live a humble lifestyle compared to the 'national elites'. On the other hand, some of their attributes overlap with those of 'aspiring elites'; for example, they are often originally from a rural

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<sup>58</sup> During interviews with Malawian officers, their salaries were described as about 4000 kwacha or 5000 kwacha per day, which they claimed to be significantly lower than people doing similar jobs.

village and grew up with a farming family. But they were intellectually able and financially stable enough to complete secondary school, and able and lucky enough to find formal employment in the development sector. Here can be observed blurred boundaries between different categories of elites.

“Our salaries are low but the project’s budgets are fixed. For example, there was a devaluation of Malawian kwacha, but because the budgets are fixed, we didn’t get pay rise. We need a lot for house or food. The cost of things has gone up. I still want this job, but our salaries are low. (Chimweme, Malawian Officer)

The local staff are likely to work on a project basis and their long-term job security is limited. In this context, their economic and social status is dependent on the existence of foreign donors. They are the ‘struggling’ elites who represent a situation of the brokers well.

As Swidler and Watkins (2009) similarly evidenced from her field experience, the Malawian counterparts tend to be responsible for other members of the family and relatives because they are relatively wealthier and better educated. It is commonly practised in Malawi that poorer members of a family send their children to wealthier ones to take care of living expenditure including school fees (Chinsinga, *et al.* 2001). When one is ill, it is these urban, wealthier family members who need to take care of hospital expenditure and the cost of medicine. The Malawian counterparts are often in such situations to the extent that their professional work appears to be almost an extension of what they do in a personal capacity with family and relatives. Working for a Japanese development organisation raises their financial position in relation to others in their personal and social network. This can be seen as a form of intervention by foreign development agencies whereby it plays a role in the mutual-help system of kinship that is prevalent in Malawian societies.

“When your family member dies, there is normally financial support provided by your employer in Malawi. But with [my employer], there is no support. [...] When I told them that my sister has died, they just said, oh, sorry. Sorry and sorry, and told me to just go home. In Japan, you don’t respect funeral?” (Chimweme, Malawian officer)

His view was echoed by another Malawian officer working with a Japanese agency, who told a story with anger, that when he had to prioritise attending a funeral of his neighbour over a

workshop organised with the Japanese agency he was not allowed to receive the per-diem for the workshop he was supposed to attend. He argued that he was entitled to receive per-diem because the absence from the workshop was due to an emergency beyond his control, and he also had to spend money to help the funeral. These stories represent situations of tension in the practice of development assistance caused by the different social norms of the donor agency and the recipient. The Malawian officers need to adjust to the way it works according to their Japanese colleagues or employer. Hearing the story of the angry officer, another officer commented:

“He is supposed to pay back because it’s for the work, in theory. However, it’s the culture. [...] It’s a bad behaviour of course, but I also sometimes understand the situation when their salary is small. The only boost they get is the allowance (per-diem).” (Dyson, Malawian officer)

The prevalent system of per-diem payment among Malawian institutions was almost invariably regarded as bad practice by the Japanese workers.

“In my opinion, per-diem practice is pulling Malawi down. [...] They work so slow so that they are entitled to be paid more per-diem. They say that they won’t do workshop without per-diem. I understand that they need more money, but it is not good. [...] It is their culture but is actually escalated by the Japanese agency too though. The agency does pay a good per-diem because that is the way it works here. I think we need to change this system from our side. For example, we can change it to a bonus system based on result of their work and not for the number of days they have worked.” (Naoki, Japanese field worker)

This demonstrates a conflicting situation between Japanese workers and Malawian officers as to which idea should prevail, whether the existing practice which has been widely accepted as a norm of the place, or external ideas which can work conducive to achieve a goal of development.

### 7.5.2 Helping the Poor from Outside or Working Together from Inside?

The narratives of participatory development have mostly stressed the level of participation by local people in external development projects (Chambers 1997b; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Cornwall 2008). As far as the externally-initiated project is concerned, it is not only the beneficiaries in the target community but also the officers of development agencies and their counterparts who can be considered as participants of the project. Although they may be called 'elites' and their identity can shift away from impoverished villages as Swidler and Watkins (2009) and others point out, their involvement in development work links them back to the problems they have experienced before or to the problems that are still experiencing in the society to which he/she belongs. In this sense, the Malawian workers are outsiders as well as insiders.

Chimweme works for a Japanese agency in rural communities in Malawi. He has been working for foreign-funded projects since 1997, with different organisations including USAID. He chose this career because:

"Water has been a problem in my village and we had regular occurrences of diseases, because of which people died. An NGO came and supported us in my village and the problem started to disappear. I was encouraged to do the same thing because my village was saved. [...] At first, people in villages take me as somebody from outside although I'm a Malawian. But as time goes, with the linkages we establish, and with the relations we build, the people in villages see me as associated there. [...] I also do physical work with the local people and I also get dirty. Working together is important element in building linkages." (Chimweme, Malawian officer)

Chimweme's narrative is suggestive of his transition of identity between one of the city-dwelling elite who has been lucky enough to work for established foreign development organisations and one of the people in rural villages. In his case, the catalyst to move in-between was the amount of time that he worked together with people in the village. He continued:

"The villagers know that I come on the vehicle, and then they think I am smart. So I leave the car, go and carry the bricks together. The villagers thought that I am smart



but now the villagers think I am also dirty and they are able to appreciate. 'Let's work hard, look at Chimweme, he is carrying bricks, he is also dirty.' The villagers say. So they can understand that we have one goal to achieve to have the water not only by words but also you are doing it together."

So the Malawian officers change their ideas of performance in the pursuit of the project's goal. The approach reflects the principle of working together and sweating together to realise the project goal (see relevant discussion in Chapter 5.2.2). One of the situations that has enabled them to bridge the gap is to share the burden of physical work and not to mind getting dirty. In Malawi, it is commonly perceived that to maintain clean image is an important factor to be a part of educated and developed population. A driver of a development agency working in rural areas in Malawi once warned me that:

"You want to be careful about shaking hands with people in village... They are dirty."

He himself actually did not shake hands with them. Similarly, an urban-dwelling youth temporarily working in rural villages told me:

"This is my pair of trousers for my work in villages. I can't walk around in these in town. Also I can't walk around in town with plastic bags that you see in villages... People will look at me strangely in town."

He would wear a pair of spotless trousers and frequently washed shoes to visit project sites in villages. Wearing clean clothes and keeping surroundings generally clean is what is required to be associated with the middle-class and urban population in Malawi. The above comments and behaviour were not extreme or exceptional cases, and in fact a Japanese expatriate pointed out:

"I find it kind of strange that people here wash their cars a lot, or their shoes for that matter, although it is not necessary. My shoes are normally dirtier than our Malawian officer. Like, the cars we use to go to villages, they wash them every single day. It will get dirty again by the end of the day so why bother washing again and again! Maybe you want to wash once in a week or something, but every day... It is not really necessary. I don't understand!" (Tomoko, Japanese field worker)

The comment made by the expatriate worker corresponds with a field notes I took during my stay in village, which read:

“These days, the girls living together with me and my neighbourhood come to me and repeatedly tell me to wash my clothes and shoes. For me my clothes and shoes are kind of dirty but it is still totally fine to my standard. Finally today they grabbed my shirts and washed them for me (while teaching me how to wash!)” (Field Note, November 2012)

While they have personal and historical connections with the rural farmers' lives and still associate themselves with them, they have attempted to maintain a certain distance from the rural farmers and widen the gap. The gap symbolises that they are different from poor people in villages. It can be said that in some senses there can be even a wider identity gap between smallholder farmers in rural villages and the Malawian elites who are living in urban areas and who are in formal employment, than between the rural farmers and the Japanese expatriate workers working in rural Malawi.

In a society like the one in Malawi, the inequality in economic and social status is evident. It is evident in how people and their belongings appear in public. On the other hand, living standards in Japanese society are significantly higher than Malawi and income equality is high. In Japanese society, people differentiate their identity in other aspects such as the type of clothes that they wear, music they listen to, other cultural preferences, or sometimes which region they are originally from. These attributes are not directly relevant to economic status.

Another Malawian officer working for a Japanese agency was born to a typical small-scale farming family in rural area and was adopted by her relative because her parents were too poor to raise her. She later received a government scholarship to complete her university education. Although her own life has been shaped by moving away from her home village, she is still deeply associated with the life in village where her mother still lives. The development assistance as their professional sphere of their life in a way allows them to move across the different groupings of actors. Similarly to the previously highlighted comment made by a Malawian counterpart describing his attitude as ‘chameleon’ (see the

quote in Section 7.2.3), the flexible attitude was observed from a comment made by another officer:

“I feel that I am helping them from outside, and when people in village participate, I feel that I am working from inside because I can see their contribution.” (James, Malawian officer)

The above examples show that, on the one hand, the Malawian officers make an effort to move away from the status of being poor rural farmers; on the other hand, they are in a way ‘returners’, moving away from the rural areas but returning as an outsider to help people in the similar situations as they were before. Some of the Malawian officers are born to a relatively wealthy family and have never lived in rural villages, like the case of Mary. She said:

“I feel that I am no different people from the people in the village. Of course I grew up in town but I have my home village where my parents come from. I have visited there some times.”

The Malawian counterparts in a way float between different groups of the Malawian society depending on the context that they need to deal with, and this very nature of adaptability is what characterises their roles as brokers.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on investigating experiences and perspectives of individual actors who are involved in self-help development projects implemented by Japanese agencies in rural Malawi. It first highlighted the diversity of individual actors and how they are different particularly in terms of their understanding of development, while orienting them in accordance with three distinct groups of actors: Japanese expatriate workers, Malawian counterparts and people in recipient communities. It then analysed individuals’ experiences in making the development assistance relevant to their lives.

The case studies on individuals who are involved in development projects of Japanese agencies illustrated how they make the project a part of their lives from their viewpoints. The narratives of Japanese expatriate workers demonstrated how professional and personal spheres of their life interact with each other and shape their everyday practice in the development field overseas. The development workers can be both altruistic and selfish at the same time (de Jong 2011). In fact, the two aspects interplay in their everyday encounters with people in recipient communities while they try to orient their identity in the particular context of being mobile professionals (Fechter and Walsh 2010). The lives and experiences of Malawian officers who work with Japanese development agencies were similarly examined to illustrate their attributes of being the mediator between Japanese donor agencies and people in recipient communities. It further showed that the Malawian counterparts are emerging middle-class of the Malawian society while they have the aspect of being struggling elites of the society (Shrestha 2006; Swidler and Watkins 2009).

This chapter stressed the importance of individual actors; however, it does not mean that the individuals are more important than thinking about development at the scale of community. The analysis on individual perspectives in this chapter rather illustrated that the individuality needs to be understood from the viewpoint of how they are relevant to collective system at a larger scale.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

This study began with the aim of understanding how development assistance promoting ideas of self-help is practised by Japanese agencies from the perspectives of individual actors involved in the process of implementation. The process of implementation was then considered through an examination of three stages: the evolution of initial ideas into development assistance projects, field implementation of the projects, and the stage where the project implementation entered into individuals' lives. Correspondingly, the three stages were associated with three research objectives. The first objective was to understand how self-help development evolved in Japanese institutions and is applied to development assistance at various institutional scales and in diverse geographical spaces. Secondly, the research explored the relationship between endogenous actions and external assistance by Japanese agencies in practising self-help development. Finally it investigated how Japanese assistance for self-help development is made relevant to individual actors' everyday lives. This chapter first summarises the contributions of this thesis. Subsequently the empirical findings are synthesised under specific themes which were highlighted throughout the thesis. Finally the chapter discusses future research that can be developed from this thesis.

### **8.1 Contributions**

#### **8.1.1 Knowledge Gap**

There are two levels where this thesis makes contributions to existing knowledge. First this thesis addresses the dearth of knowledge regarding Japan's human and social development assistance at the grassroots level. Despite the fact that Japan is among one of the world's most significant development assistance donor countries, the implementation of this

assistance has not been appraised comprehensively. While Japan's assistance is most commonly recognised as large infrastructure programmes and economic cooperation, its involvement in social and human development at the grassroots level is less known. Similarly, while Japan has embraced the global development agenda and is a major member of traditional donor circles, it is important to recognise that Japan's development ideas evolved within its own historical, social and cultural contexts which can be distinguished from the other major Northern donors, who often have more commonalities.

The Japanese emphasis on the self-help effort of recipients and self-reliant development does not stem from one identifiable factor. Instead, it has evolved from and grew through various historical experiences and social and cultural influences. The post-war experience of rapid national economic growth was such an experience (Rix 1993; Nishikgaki and Shimomura 1999; Miura and Watanabe 2003). In addition to the historical experience of economic growth, the important role of Japanese cultural values of respecting individual persistent effort in achieving collective goals should be recognised in forming the basis of Japan's emphasis on self-help and self-reliance in development (Sawamura 2004; Sato, H. 2012). On the other hand, some others have analysed the systems and methods of how self-help is supported in development projects carried out by Japanese agencies (King and McGrath 2004; Nakamura 2007). Importantly, the self-help idea of development assistance is rooted in the experience of Japan's own rural development experience, which is framed as endogenous development in Japan (Tsurumi 1976; Tsurumi and Kawada 1989; Nishikawa 1989; Kawakatsu and Tsurumi 2008). Linking how the idea of self-help or endogenous development evolved in Japan and how it has been transformed into international development is important to provide a comprehensive understanding of Japan's self-help development assistance. This thesis showed how these various factors, experiences and current practice have together shaped Japan's present-day development assistance at grassroots levels.

Another knowledge gap identified by this thesis concerns the lack of an 'international development discourse' *per se* in Japan. International development activities by Japanese agencies largely extended and became prominent in the early 1990s; as a consequence, international development began to receive more attention from theorists as well as practitioners around the same time (Saito 1991). In particular, development assistance

debates in Japan have only sporadically engaged with the conceptual frameworks concerning human and social aspects of development (Ogura 1982; Onda 2001; Sato 2003). Although there have been discussions, the perspectives have been generally dependent on imported ideas of development such as participatory approaches and perspectives of empowerment (Sato K. H. 2012). Furthermore, due partly to the short history of international development studies in Japan, there have only been limited attempts to adopt multi-disciplinary perspectives to development assistance in Japan (Tatsumi and Sato 2012). In this context, this thesis has contributed to narrowing the knowledge gap by grounding an understanding of Japanese international development discourse on the 'Japanese roots' of endogenous development, which includes various disciplinary dimensions, such as the studies of localism and folklore studies beyond economic development (Tamanoi 1979; Miyamoto 1986; Morimoto 1991; Kawakatsu and Tsurumi 2008).

### **8.1.2 Theoretical Contributions**

This thesis has made theoretical contributions to two main areas: one on policy mobility and the other related to actor-oriented approaches in development. Firstly, international development assistance involves development ideas moving from one place to another. Not only does the movement occur between geographical spaces, but equally importantly it moves across different institutional scales. The discussion concerning such diffusion of ideas has been greatly studied from the perspective of political science considering how a policy is diffused (Stone 2004). However, as the 'diffusion' model has been regarded as insufficient in capturing the movement within nations, between nations, and between local authorities across the globe, some have responded by changing the perspective from 'diffusion' to 'transfer' to encapsulate movements across various authorities at different levels and a wider set of institutional actors (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Stone 2004). However, the transfer model is still limited in its ability to explain the multiplicity of spaces and actors, and scales and social contexts involved in the process of transfer (McCann and Ward 2013; Temenos and McCann 2013). In contrast to the 'transfer' of ideas, researchers have started to analyse the movement of policy as a process of transformation and mutation, which is shaped by various factors while the ideas are carried by individual actors not only

institutional actors (Ward 2006; Larner and Laurie 2010; Peck and Theodore 2010; Peck 2011). Building upon these perspectives, this thesis has extended the 'mobility' approach to analyse the mobility of development ideas during the implementation of Japanese development projects in Malawi. The mobility perspective enabled a focus on certain factors such as institutional scales, geographical spaces, the role of individual actors, and other social contexts. Not only did the thesis help, but also demonstrated that the mobility perspective can bring an effective approach to a comprehensive understanding of international development projects. It also revealed the factors that influence the ways in which development ideas are applied in different places and at different scales, and how they affect the field practice of the ideas.

The second area that this thesis contributes to is through its adoption of an actor-oriented approach to analysing the implementation process of development projects. An actor-oriented approach was adopted primarily because the thesis considered development assistance as a process that is continuously produced and re-produced by people involved at different stages of the implementation (Long 2001). There were further three main viewpoints towards adopting this approach. Firstly, the idea of self-help development is transformed into practice by different individual actors from the stage of designing a project in the agency's headquarters in Japan to the stage of working together with people in recipient villages in Malawi. As has been also highlighted in the discussion of the mobility of development ideas, development ideas do not naturally move around but they are carried by individual actors (Peck and Theodore 2010; Temenos and McCann 2013). In the cases of Japanese agencies' development assistance in rural Malawi, the idea travels a long distance. The distance is long in physical terms, but also importantly in cultural, historical, and institutional aspects. For the idea to travel across such a long distance, individual actors who are involved play particularly important roles in transforming the ideas. Related to the first point, more attention needs to be paid to the roles of individual actors who act in between the project design as an idea and field implementation as development practice. These actors, who can be called 'brokers' or mediators, play important roles in translating ideas into practice through interacting with the both sides of development practice, the external actors and endogenous actors (Mosse and Lewis 2006). Also those who enact the brokerage and translation include the Malawian counterparts of the Japanese agencies, and also the



Japanese expatriate workers designated by the agencies. The engagement by the expatriate workers in field project deliveries has previously been investigated from the perspective of how their professional and personal spheres are also part of field project (Fechter and Hindman 2011; Fechter 2012). Actors include not only the development workers and the brokers, but importantly the local people as the recipients of the development assistance (Long 2001). The thesis therefore investigated how the individual actors in the local communities make the external assistance relevant to their everyday lives. Building up on these views, this thesis analysed the lives of the individual actors and furthermore sought to analyse the relationships with other actors which they build during the process of project implementation. Finally, the idea of self-help development that evolved in Japan is significantly associated with the aspect of individuals' engagement in development in that the core principle of self-help development, self-help effort, in improving day-to-day lives leads to self-reliant development (Tsurumi and Kawada 1989; Kawakatsu and Tsurumi 2008). On the other hand, the development projects studied in this thesis placed importance on community development through self-help. There appeared a missing link between local individuals' activities and community development, in other words, it addressed a question as to how the individuals engage with collective activities in various forms and establish relationships with other actors to improve their day-to-day living standards. Actor-oriented perspectives allowed an analysis into this missing link. In addition to in-depth inquiries into individuals' experiences, the thesis simultaneously maintained the focus on how their experiences were relevant to collective activities at a meso-level (Long 2001; Jingzhong *et al.* 2009; Pieterse 2010). By combining all three viewpoints, this thesis contributed to exploring the potential of actor-oriented perspectives in understanding development assistance as a comprehensive process of social and individual changes through the eyes of individual actors.

## 8.2 Empirical Findings

### 8.2.1 Mobility of Ideas and Individual Actors

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of Japanese self-help development projects in Malawi, this thesis considered the project process as a chain of implementation. During the implementation process, original ideas are transformed into a project design and the ideas are further transformed into practice on the ground in accordance with the project design. The translation process was greatly influenced by the mobility across institutional scales and geographical spaces, and who interpreted the ideas and how they were communicated. Importantly, some ideas are given more mobility than others conforming to the problems and solutions identified by the specific development agencies. Furthermore, the ideas are put into practice while being continuously re-interpreted and re-produced by the individual members of the recipient communities involved in their engagement in externally initiated development practice.

As was the case for OVOP Malawi, the idea of self-help development has roots in a grassroots movement in rural Japan, and the idea was scaled up from local community level to regional level and travelled to Malawi at the national policy level. The idea was transformed into a specific poverty reduction strategy in Malawi. It seems that the non-economic aspect was immobilised during the process; however, the assistance was assimilated differently by the recipient farmers' groups in their self-help activities to improve their daily lives. On the other hand, JNGO's case demonstrates that the idea of self-help development also travels at the inter-community level, maintaining the original model relatively unchanged. The initial idea was transformed in accordance with the local specific emergency situations and later developed into longer-term self-reliant development projects. At the same time, JNGO's experiences from past projects in different places in the world reinforced its original ideas, leading to a consolidation of the approach to self-reliant development, which could be replicable in other cases.

As was stressed throughout the thesis, individual actors, including Japanese expatriate officers, Malawian counterparts, and people in the recipient communities, played a significant role in carrying the ideas of self-help development. The ideas were translated at different stages, and importantly, were interpreted according to normative understandings

of the individual actors as to what external assistance is for, how the locals should engage with the project, and how development problems to be solved by the assistance are identified. By focusing on individuals' perspectives and experiences, the thesis also argued that the development assistance needs to be understood as a comprehensive process of social change which is intrinsically woven up in different dimensions of individuals' lives.

### **8.2.2 Helping Those Who Help Themselves**

When self-help is discussed, there is an assumption that individuals are independent and making their lives better by themselves. Furthermore, when assistance for self-help is considered, it alludes to the principle of helping those who help themselves. There are questions that constantly emerged during the research process for this thesis; "what about those who cannot help themselves although they would like to?", and furthermore, "what about those who do not have capacity to have an idea of helping themselves?" These are questions that scrutinise the idea of self-help and assisting self-help at the fundamental level.

The common understanding of self-help typically points to learning knowledge, acquiring skills, taking action to resolve problems or working towards a goal. In development practice for instance, local people's engagement to build housing units by themselves has been recognised as typical of self-help schemes (Turner and Fichter 1972; Choguill 1996). This thesis demonstrated that the common understanding of self-help offers too narrow a definition of self-help to analyse the case of development assistance by Japanese agencies. The relationship between self-help and endogenous development is very important in that the concepts were intertwined and evolved as a significant element in Japanese development thinking. Endogenous development is achieved through the process of individual self-realisation by being aware of one's own capability and non-capability, and by recognising one's self-identity and identity in relation to others. In this context, it can be said that the endogenous development emanates from individuals' internal self-realisation process, which is an important dimension of self-help. Having this interpretation of self-help development at their core, the Japanese agencies carry out their field projects to effectively

assist the self-help process to achieve self-reliant development. On the other hand, however, it has also emerged that Japan's development assistance with the ideas of self-help share common criticisms towards development projects deriving from ideas other than the Japanese developmental thinking and self-help. The influence of external donor agencies and power relations were observed in the Japanese projects even when the agencies and officers did not intend or acknowledge as such. This suggests that Japan's development assistance is not exclusive when it comes to field practice although the types of power relations may differ from a project to another.

### **8.3 Future Directions**

OVOP Oita has not spread only to Malawi. Malawi was the first case where the OVOP Oita was adopted as a national policy of a country in Sub-Saharan Africa. It has also been implemented in many other countries in the region, with a notable example of Kenya, which has been seen as producing good outcome. After the original idea had spread to different countries in the world, there were collaborations between the countries which adopted the idea of OVOP Oita, such as the one between Malawi and Kenya. From the perspective of mobility of ideas, a further study could be carried out on the issues around South-South development cooperation based on the ideas of OVOP. Also in relation to the mobility of ideas, as has been discussed in this thesis (in Section 5.2.2), JNGO's idea of self-help and self-reliance in development assistance in a way came back to Japan when a great earthquake occurred in 2011 which required emergency relief and a mid- to long-term recovery programme from the aftermath of the disaster. It would be interesting to research the process of 'returning' ideas in terms of understanding how the process of the mobility affects the way the idea is practised in the returned home, and whether/how a replicated idea becomes a consolidated model in responding to a particular social/political/economic problem.

Equally importantly, there are potential areas for future research in relation to the themes around development projects focusing on the self-help process. It would be useful to investigate the relationship between self-help and mutual-help in the specific local context

of development project sites and have a clear strategy as to how to synergise both aspects in one project. It will particularly help development practice in steering the currently aid-dependent countries to establish self-reliant foundations of development from the grassroots level. Furthermore, future research could potentially investigate individual actors involved in implementation process. Particularly, it could adopt means of data collection other than interviews, such as systematically collecting information and stories from people's blogs. Another aspect that was limitedly analysed in this thesis is the effect of social categories that exist in local communities and their effect in receiving the external assistance and benefits. Local social groups and institutions such as class, ethnicity, religions, and other associations can be further explored in details. These are potential areas of further research.

## **8.4 Concluding Remarks**

“I think ‘self-reliance’ exists within a person. [...] One needs to establish one’s self, and live among others. People live on each other.” (Japanese field officer)

“Self-help means working hard for yourself, like the way I do farming. It is important. But it is also important to help each other. No one can manage to do everything by him/herself.” (Village B resident)

These comments by no means entirely encapsulate the intricate process of project implementation and complex world of development assistance. However, they point to the core conclusion of this thesis. Self-help exists in mutual-help. No one can lead a completely self-reliant existence. Helping one another is a key element of endogenous development.

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## Appendix 1: List of blog entries

1. "Diary of Seiko Sei with Malawi"

By JOCV in Malawi from January 2012 to December 2013. Community development assistant.

Available at <http://seikoseimalawi.blogspot.co.uk>, Accessed 10 September 2014.

2. "MalaWill - With Your Smile-"

By JOCV in Malawi from March 2011 to April 2013. Nutritionist.

Available at <http://judy21.blog77.fc2.com/>, Accessed 10 September 2014.

3. "Mattari Malawi nikki"

By JOCV in Malawi from October 2009 to October 2011. Home economics assistant.

Available at <http://mattarimalawi.jugem.jp>, Accessed 10 September 2014.

4. "Malawi taizaiki"

By JOCV in Malawi from April 2005 to December 2007. IT trainer.

Available at <http://www.b-factory.net/malawi/index.html>. Accessed 10 September 2014.

5. "Malawi nikki"

By JOCV in Malawi from June 2010 to June 2012. Local NGO assistant.

Available at <http://www.b-factory.net/malawi/index.html>, Accessed 10 September 2014.

6. "Nchito yanga ndi volunteer ku Malawi"

By JOCV in Malawi from June 2008 to July 2010. System Engineer.

Available at [http://blog.livedoor.jp/msyk\\_kz00/](http://blog.livedoor.jp/msyk_kz00/), Accessed 10 September 2014.

7. "Tumbuka 5 +1"

By 6 JOCVs in Malawi, from June 2012 to June 2014. Collective blog entries.

Available at <http://ameblo.jp/tumbuka5/>, Accessed 10 September 2014.

8. "Tobe UFO!"

By JOCV in Malawi, from June 2013. Community development assistant.

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## **Appendix 2: Interview schedule for residents in JNGO project sites**

Date:

Start time:

End time:

Name of village:

### **About interviewee's personal and socio-economic status**

Age:

Gender:

Composition of household members:

Size of farming land holding:

Cash income level: more than sufficient / sufficient / insufficient

Main sources of cash income:

### **Main guiding questions**

#### **Topic 1: Offered Help**

Q1-1: Have you helped anyone before in the village? Yes->Q1-2, No->Q1-4

Q1-2: How did you help? Can you tell me some stories?

Q1-3: Was your help reciprocated?

Q1-4: Has anyone asked for help, but you didn't help in the village? Yes-> Repeat Q1-2 to

#### **Topic 2: Received Help**

Q2-1: Have you been helped by someone in the village? Yes-> Q2-1, No-> Q2-4

Q2-2: What was the situation? Can you tell me some stories?

Q2-3: Have you reciprocated?

Q2-4: Have you asked for help but you were not helped?

#### **Topic 3: Self-Help and Community Activities**

Q3-1: How do you define self-help?

Q3-2: How do you define self-help of a village?

Q3-3: What self-help activities do you personally engage?

Q3-4: What kind of self-help activities does the village do?

Q3-5: Do you know any groups or meetings or clubs in the village? What kind of community activities are there in the village?

Q3-6: What does the group do?

Q3-7: Have you been participated?

Q3-8: What changed since you joined the group in terms of your daily lives, living standard, or relationship with other villagers? Please tell me anything that you think which have changed.

Q3-9: Are there any other things that you do together with other people in the village?

Q3-10: Who initiates these activities? How and why do you / do you not participate?

#### Topic 4: External Assistance

Q4-1: Do you know any organisation which is coming from outside this village but doing some activities in the village? Were there any in the past?

Q4-2: What do they do and why are they here?

Q4-3: Have you been involved in their activity?

Q4-4: Have they been beneficial to you or to the village?

#### Topic 5: Development and Problems

Q5-1: What kind of problems do you have in terms of your livelihood?

Q5-2: How have you been trying to cope with your problem?

Q5-3: How do you think the village can help your problem?

Q5-4: How do you think external organisations can help your problem?

## **Appendix 3: Interview schedule for the members of OVOP-assisted groups**

Date:

Start time:

End time:

Name of village:

### **About interviewee's personal and socio-economic status**

Age:

Gender:

Composition of household members:

Size of farming land holding:

Cash income level: more than sufficient / sufficient / insufficient

Main sources of cash income:

### **Main guiding questions**

#### **Topic 1: Engagement in the group**

Q1-1: How and why did you join the group?

Q1-2: How do you participate in the group? What kind of activities do you engage?

Q1-3: What are the advantages of being in the group? What do you enjoy?

Q1-4: What are the disadvantages of being in the group?

Q1-5: What is the objective of the group?

Q1-6: How much do you think it has been successful?

#### **Topic 2: Changes**

Q2-1: What have changed in your daily life since you joined the cooperative? In terms of pattern of activities, social relationships, mobility, mentality, skills and knowledge and financials, etc.?

#### **Topic 3: OVOP**

Q3-1: What do you know about OVOP?

Q3-2: What do you understand the objective of OVOP?

#### **Topic 4: Relationship with OVOP officers**

Q4-1: Who are involved in your group's activities apart from the group members?

Q4-2: What role does OVOP Officers and Japanese volunteer play in your cooperative?

Q4-3: What kind of conversations have you had with them?

Q4-4: Have you had any discussion about self-help and self-reliance with them?

Q4-5: What would you like them to do for you?

Q4-6: If he or she leaves then what do you think will happen?

#### Topic 5: Offered Help

Q5-1: Have you helped anyone before in the group or in your village? Yes->Q5-2, No->Q5-4

Q5-2: How did you help? Can you tell me some stories?

Q5-3: Was your help reciprocated?

Q5-4: Has anyone asked for help, but you didn't help in the village? Yes-> Repeat Q5-2 to

#### Topic 6: Received Help

Q6-1: Have you been helped by someone in the village? Yes-> Q6-1, No-> Q6-4

Q6-2: What was the situation? Can you tell me some stories?

Q6-3: Have you reciprocated?

Q6-4: Have you asked for help but you were not helped?

#### Topic 7: Self-Help and Community Activities

Q7-1: How do you define self-help?

Q7-2: How do you define self-help of a village?

Q7-3: What self-help activities do you personally engage?

Q7-4: What kind of self-help activities does the village do?

Q7-5: What kind of community activities are there in the village?

Q7-6: What does the group do?

Q7-7: Have you been participated?

Q7-8: What changed since you joined the group? Please tell me anything that you think which have changed.

Q7-9: Are there any other things that you do together with other people in the village?

Q7-10: Who initiates these activities? How and why do you / do you not participate?

#### Topic 8: External Assistance

Q8-1: Do you know any organisation from outside but doing some activities in the village?

Q8-2: What do they do and why are they here?

Q8-3: Have you been involved in their activity?

Q8-4: Have they been beneficial to you or to the village?

#### Topic 9: Development and Problems

Q9-1: What kind of problems do you have in terms of your livelihood?

Q9-2: How have you been trying to cope with your problem?

Q9-3: How do you think the village can help your problem?

Q9-4: How do you think external organisations can help your problem?

## Appendix 4: Interview schedule for non-members of OVOP-assisted groups

Date:

Start time:

End time:

Name of village:

### **About interviewee's personal and socio-economic status**

Age:

Gender:

Composition of household members:

Size of farming land holding:

Cash income level: more than sufficient / sufficient / insufficient

Main sources of cash income:

### **Main guiding questions**

#### **Topic 1: Offered Help**

Q1-1: Have you helped anyone before in the village? Yes->Q1-2, No->Q1-4

Q1-2: How did you help? Can you tell me some stories?

Q1-3: Was your help reciprocated?

Q1-4: Has anyone asked for help, but you didn't help in the village? Yes-> Repeat Q1-2 to

#### **Topic 2: Received Help**

Q2-1: Have you been helped by someone in the village? Yes-> Q2-1, No-> Q2-4

Q2-2: What was the situation? Can you tell me some stories?

Q2-3: Have you reciprocated?

Q2-4: Have you asked for help but you were not helped?

#### **Topic 3: Self-Help and Community Activities**

Q3-1: How do you define self-help?

Q3-2: How do you define self-help of a village?

Q3-3: What self-help activities do you personally engage?

Q3-4: What kind of self-help activities does the village do?

Q3-5: Do you know any groups or meetings or clubs in the village? What kind of community activities are there in the village?

Q3-6: What does the group do?

Q3-7: Have you been participated?



Q3-8: What changed since you joined the group in terms of your daily lives, living standard, or relationship with other villagers? Please tell me anything that you think which have changed.

Q3-9: Are there any other things that you do together with other people in the village?

Q3-10: Who initiates these activities? How and why do you / do you not participate?

#### Topic 4: External Assistance

Q4-1: Do you know any organisation which is coming from outside this village but doing some activities in the village? Were there any in the past?

Q4-2: What do they do and why are they here?

Q4-3: Have you been involved in their activity?

Q4-4: Have they been beneficial to you or to the village?

#### Topic 5: OVOP

Q5-1: Have you heard of OVOP?

Q5-2: What do you know about them?

Q5-3: How did you get to know?

Q5-4: Do you know any members of the group assisted by OVOP?

Q5-5: Do you want to participate in their activities? Why yes/no?

#### Topic 6: Development and Problems

Q6-1: What kind of problems do you have in terms of your livelihood?

Q6-2: How have you been trying to cope with your problem?

Q6-3: How do you think the village can help your problem?

Q6-4: How do you think external organisations can help your problem?

# Appendix 5: Interview schedule for Malawian counterparts

Questions

## **Personal profile**

Gender:

Age:

When did you start your current job?:

## **Topic 1: About work**

1. What are your responsibilities in your position?
2. What is your understanding of JNGO/OVOP's objectives and principles?
3. Who do you mainly work with?
4. How much or how often do you interact with people in the local communities/OVOP-assisted group members?
5. How do you describe them?

## **Topic 2: Self-help and self-reliant development**

1. How do you think your project promote self-help of people in the local communities/group members?
2. Have you discussed self-help with them? If you have, how did you discuss?
3. What is your definition of self-help and self-reliance mean?

## **Topic 3: Counterparts**

1. How much do you think you share understanding with your counterparts, Japanese workers and other partners?
2. How is it like to work with Japanese people?

3. How do you describe your relationship with Japanese officers?

**Topic 4: Concept of development**

1. How would you define development?

2. What do you think the role of external organisations for development of Malawi?

3. What do you think about aid dependency?

4. How do you think poverty problem can be best improved?

5. Have you seen any evidence of changes in people in the local communities?

**Topic 5: Personal life**

1. Why have you decided to do this job?

2. What are the things you like about this job? What are the things you don't like?

3. What is your previous career?

4. Do you see poverty problem as something you help from outside or working from inside?

5. What is your plan after this project?

## Appendix 6: Interview schedule for Japanese field workers (Original in Japanese)

設問

### 基本プロフィール

- ・ 性別、年齢
- ・ いつからマラウイで仕事をしているか

### 設問①—担当プロジェクト・仕事内容など

1. まず、今携わっておられるプロジェクトについてお聞きしたいのですが、プロジェクトでは、どのようなお仕事を担当されていますか？プロジェクトの目的は、どのようにとらえられていますか？
2. なぜそもそもマラウイでプロジェクトが始まったのか？
3. 裨益農民個人と接する機会はどれくらいありますか？また、接したとき、どんな会話をし、どのような印象を持ちましたか？
4. プロジェクトの成功している点、改善すべき点はどんなところでしょうか？

### 設問②—自助努力、自立支援理論と実践

1. お仕事している最中、自助努力、もしくは住民の自立を目指した支援ということは考えることはありますか？
2. このプロジェクトのなかで、裨益対象の人たちの自助努力を促したり、自立を目指すという側面はありますか？
3. 実際にお仕事をされていて、援助によって自助努力を促して、自立を支援することは、可能だと感じますか？
4. マラウイ人の現地スタッフについてお伺いします。マラウイ人の現地スタッフの方たちとは、目的や理念の共通理解はできていると感じますか？
5. マラウイ人と共に働く上で一番感じることはなんですか？うまく活動するためにはどうすべきだと思いますか？

### 設問③ー開発・国際協力コンセプト

1. Development という英語、日本語にすると、開発、発展、など、色々と訳が考えられると思うのですが、どう思いますか？
2. 開発援助、もしくは国際協力の目的は、どうあるべきだとお考えですか？
3. 開発援助に関しては、開発援助のもたらす弊害にかんしての議論もさかんに行われています。依存体制をつくってしまうとか、搾取の一環だとか、汚職や役人の墮落を促すとか、開発援助に反対する声も様々ありますが、これに関してはどうお考えですか？
4. マラウイでの Development とは、どんな訳になると思いますか？
5. マラウイでの開発目的は、何に置かれるべきだと思いますか？
6. マラウイの貧困問題、なにがネックになっているとお考えですか？

### 設問④ー一人として

1. 途上国での長期の赴任では、色々と良い面、悪い面とあるとおもいますが、良い面、悪い面、どんなところがあるか、教えてもらえますか？
2. 大変なことや、ストレスなど、どうやって乗り越えていますか？
3. マラウイでお仕事をされている現在のご自分を考えられて、ご自分のアイデンティティを、どのように説明されますか？
4. 日本で決まっている政策やポリシー、プログラムを現場で運営、実行に移す役目、という側面が強いですか？
5. 自分の人生の中で、この経験はどのような存在になると思いますか？
6. 途上国で困っている人たちを救う救世主的な自分、ひとつの団体のフィールドオフィサーとして、団体の方針や政策を現場で実行に移すポリシーデリバリーの役目、そして途上国で働く一人の人間としての自分、どの部分を一番強く意識しますか？また、この3種類以外にも、他の自分の側面がありますか？

### 設問⑤ー過去の経験～マラウイでの仕事、これから

1. 今のお仕事につかれるようになったきっかけは？
2. 国際協力の分野で仕事をされるようになったのはなぜですか？
3. 今のお仕事を担当されるまでは、どのようなお仕事をされていましたか？
4. これから、どんなことをしてみたいですか？

# Appendix 7: Interview schedule for Japanese field workers (English translation)

Questions

## **Personal profile**

Gender:

Age:

Your position in current job:

When did you come to Malawi?:

## **Topic 1: About Work**

1. What do you do in your job and your responsibilities in your role?
2. Can you tell me about the project you are involved in?
3. How much do you interact with people in local communities? What kind of interactions do you have?
4. What do you think the successful aspect of your project and what do you think need to be improved?

## **Topic 2: Self-help and self-reliant development**

1. In what kind of aspects do you think about self-help and self-reliant development in your work?
2. Does the project promote self-help and self-reliance of local people? If so, how?
3. From your experience, do you feel that it is valid to promote self-help of local people and achieve their self-reliance?
4. To what extent do you feel you are sharing understanding about the approach of the project with your Malawian counterparts?

5. What else do you feel when you work with your Malawian counterparts? How do you think you can work well with them?

### **Topic 3: Concept of development**

1. How would you translate development as an English word to Japanese?
2. What do you think the objective of development assistance should be?
3. There are critical views towards development assistance. For instance, aid dependency has gained much attention recently. What do you think about it?
4. What do you think the meaning of development in Malawi is?
5. What do you think the objective of development in Malawi should be?
6. What do you think is the key issue of Malawi's development?

### **Topic 4: Personal Life**

1. What are good things and bad things about your life in Malawi?
2. How do you cope with issues or stress in your daily life?
3. How would you describe your identity?
4. Do you feel you are like a policy deliverer or project implementer?
5. What role do you think your experience in Malawi will play in your life in the future?
6. Do you feel you are saviour of the poor, or project officer for your organisation, or do you feel you are still yourself strongly?

### **Topic 5: Experience in Malawi and future prospect**

1. Why did you decide to do this job?
2. Why did you decide to work in international development?
3. What were you doing before you took up this job?
4. What would you like to do after this job?