

Beyond the Provision of Education: How do Local Host Communities Benefit from Universities? The Case of Malawi University of Science and Technology in Thyolo, Malawi

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Abstract

University education contribution has for long period of time been viewed mainly through the lenses of its contribution to national development and not particularly on how much they contribute to the host communities' development. This study was conducted to fill this existing gap in literature by assessing the social impacts of university projects on host communities using the case of Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) on livelihoods. The study used narrative qualitative method. The University project increased income opportunities through; employment and business especially for the rural youth thereby altering their social status, improved community interaction mainly through sports, religious activities and music, changes in property rights (housing; land and improvement of municipal and social service infrastructure). On the other side of the coin, there has been a major threat on youth behaviour which was in conflict with local culture; and increased land dispossession from the local host community members thereby threatening the livelihoods of some in the long run as land is the life blood for the poor. The study recommends that local people need to increase their knowledge and capacity to cease opportunities brought by these infrastructural projects in order to enhance their livelihoods.

Keywords: Universities, Local Host Community, Rural Development, Malawi

1. Overview of Universities and Contribution to Development

Universities are important institutions in the development of a nation not only by playing an important role in the education but also preparation of many students for their professional careers (Drummond, 2011). By definition, universities are institutions of higher learning providing facilities for teaching and research and authorized to grant academic degrees (Merriam-Webster 2015). The primary goal of universities is to serve the nation as well as local communities through education and research. Of equal importance, is the fact that they also impact the surrounding communities in a much broader way thereby contributing more to their wellbeing (Kleinsmith *et al.*, 2015). The impact may be in various forms that include employment, providing business opportunities, attracting and improving social institutions such as hospitals and banks and strengthening the community's social capital.

Different studies have been done concerning the impact of universities in different host communities' world over. Many of them have highlighted how universities impact these communities economically (Blackwell *et al.*, 2002; Steinacker, 2005; Carroll and Smith, 2006; Sen, 2011). This is mainly through livelihood diversification, knowledge transfer, induced migration of human capital and attraction of industries amongst others. A bunch of these studies have dwelt on university impact mainly on developed countries and their urban hinterlands. A few have focused on how much they can help build up or revitalize developing countries and in particular rural communities (Weller, 1998). Most studies done so far have focused on the economic aspect of university impact with particular emphasis on employment creation and amount of income added into the local economies. This is either through university expenditures by the institution, staff, students or a combination of the same. For instance, Ohme (2004) stated how the University of Delaware alone created approximately 8,170 jobs through its economic activities. However, consensus on the actual contribution to development of local communities through the eyes of the local residents is varied (Drummond *et al.*, 2011). This paper attempts to explain the spill over impacts of university projects to surrounding communities from the perspective of the local communities.

On the African context, university contribution has mainly been viewed through its contribution to national development and not particularly on how much they contribute to the host communities' development (Zavale and Macamo, 2016). The focus has mainly been towards improvement of the knowledge economy of these nations so as to compete at a global level. However, as earlier stated universities have a much broader impact by contributing economically through employment creation, real estate development and livelihood diversification with particular examples highlighted by (Kleinsmith and Horn, 2015) in Kimberly, South Africa. On this note, Malawi is no exception, more often than not universities have been viewed on their contribution to national development (Kamchedzera, 2015; M'gomezulu, 2015) at a broader level, and hence this study fills the existing

gap by looking into the impact of university projects on host communities.

2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research illustrates the social impacts of construction projects like universities to the rural host community. There are various reasons why infrastructural projects might be located in rural areas especially in SSA countries. Chief among them are political reasons, where it is envisaged that the location of projects like universities will bring development to rural areas and improve the wellbeing of the people. The emphasis here is the benefits of the university projects beyond the provision of education to the rural local host communities. Changes (either positive or negative) are inevitable when projects like universities are implemented in rural settings. These impacts to the community are manifested both during the construction phase and the operation phase. Most notable positive changes that happen to rural communities are changes in population structure which brings in new consumers of local goods and services; increase in income opportunities; availability of livelihood diversification strategies; increase in employment opportunities; and improved municipal and social service infrastructure and/or delivery like roads, health centres, education institution, financial services and energy sources like electricity which is *sine qua non* (engine) for development.

It should be noted that the construction of infrastructural projects in rural contexts also has negative impacts on the host communities. Notable among them are increased land dispossessions; community disintegration and dissolution of traditional values due to immigration (and/or emigration) of various groups of people into and/or out of the community.

3. Rural Challenges in the Malawian Context

Rural people in Malawi continually face challenges that affect their survival. High poverty levels brought about by a lack of opportunities to earn a living significantly contribute to these challenges. As Anker (2014) illustrates; 53% of rural people in Malawi live below the national poverty line of \$1/day (6.80 Yuan/day) and 62% live below the World Bank's extreme poverty line of \$1.25/day (8.50 Yuan/day). There are several factors that lead to a lack of opportunities in rural communities. Chief among them are low education skills; a relatively high dependency on agriculture through subsistence farming; and limited opportunities for highly remunerative non-agricultural income generating activities. With limited business opportunities, it is difficult for the rural people to increase their household income. Anker (2014) further elucidates; only around 6% of workers in rural Malawi are wage or salary workers, 76% of workers are subsistence farmers, 10% are self-employed or employers, and 4% have a family business. As such this has also affected their acquisition of household assets. Only 28% of households in rural Malawi own a bed, only 34% own a chair and only 27% own a table. Migration to urban areas is not an obvious solution to many rural people in Malawi. Mangulama and Zhou (2016) argue that rural urban migration in Malawi (more especially southern region) does not necessarily mean a way out of poverty, but a mere transition of rural poverty to urban poverty.

The community of Thyolo where this study was conducted faces several challenges that threaten its long term progress (Malawi Government, 2014). Firstly, the district has an average of 320 people per km² while the national average is 177.08 people per km² which highlights the pressure on land resources that the district is facing. Secondly, Most of the population is comprised of employable youth (ages 15-24) mainly employed in the tea estates but with the majority lacking employment highlighting the limited livelihood diversification opportunities (ibid). Thirdly, the average income spent per household in a day is MK 192.21 (\$0.26) which is lower than the national average of MK 272.00 (\$0.37). In addition, 47% of household income is derived from enterprises like businesses with agriculture contributing only 13% (ibid). Though this is the case, 55.9% of their total income is spent on food despite them being mostly subsistence farmers and an estimated 97% of the arable land belonging to the local people is cultivated with food crops. There is also a lack of access to social services in the district. Malawi University of Science and Technology was opened under the context of these major socio-economic challenges in Thyolo district to stir the development of the area.

Social service institutions such as schools, churches and post offices are one of the elements of rural communities that help reduce the burden of the above challenges. Lyson (2002) noted that of all these institutions, education institutions serve the broadest constituency. This is so because they meet some of the educational, income generation and employment needs of a community. They also provide social, cultural and recreational opportunities in addition to the aforementioned community needs. Furthermore, with the Malawian rural communities having few resources and civic institutions, the presence of education institutions such as universities could be critical. For instance, the Malawi College of Medicine (MCoM) provides clinical services in the teaching hospitals that no other institution in Malawi can provide like specialized laboratory, consultancy and mortuary services. In some instances, service delivery is done as part of research projects (MCoM, 2016). This is highlighted as one of the core functions of the university which provides for the local community and country at large. Having given a brief background of the rural context the next part gives an overview of the latest major university in Malawi.

4.China-Africa relations in Historical Context (Malawi Inclusive)

We cannot do justice to this study if the China-Africa relations are unpacked. This is mainly because the university under study is among some of the infrastructural projects that were constructed by a loan obtained from Chinese government. China-Africa relations commenced when the Republic of China was founded in 1949 and African countries were gaining their independence. In 1956, China established diplomatic relations with Egypt which was the first country with which China started to develop diplomatic relations with in Africa. By 2011, the number of African countries which had diplomatic relations with China reached 50 including Malawi. As of 2017, the two sides were working hand in hand to build a new type of strategic partnership, featuring political equality and mutual trust, economic win-win cooperation and cultural exchange. (Bodomo, 2014).

China has implemented various projects in the south-south cooperation in several major fields of industrialization, agricultural modernization, infrastructure, finance, green development, trade and investment facilitation, poverty reduction and people's welfare, public health and people-to-people exchanges. Infrastructure built under the grant or privileged loans from Chinese Government to Malawi Government includes Parliament Building, Bingu International Conference Center, Five-star Hotel and Presidential Villa, Karonga- Chitipa Road, Malawi University of Science and Technology and Bingu National Stadium which have tremendously changed the infrastructure condition of Malawi.

5.Malawi University of Science and Technology in Context

The Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) was established on 17th December 2012 by the Malawi University of Science and Technology Act No.31 of 2012 as the fourth public university in Malawi. It is located in T/A Chimaliro area in Thyolo district. The university was built with a Chinese government loan worth \$70 million (around 476 million Yuan). Nevertheless, the project was deemed controversial since it involved a concessional loan and a choice of location; which was the home district of the then president; the late Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika (Banik, 2013).

It was opened with one of the main objectives being to act as a catalyst for development in the area. It officially opened in March, 2014 (MUST, 2014). The university has a total plot area of 215,000 m² and currently has a total building area of 46,000 m² (Ruforum, 2016). It is located in Thyolo district and is surrounded by 14 villages which are divided between 3 group village headmen. When fully operational the university will enrol 3,500 students, but as of now only a limited number of courses are offered with only 300 students enrolled. It will offer degrees in health and medical sciences, applied engineering and technology, and Earth and climate change sciences, among other areas due a demand and deficiency of professionals in these fields (Tongai, 2013).

It was built firstly, as a way to tackle the higher education crisis where there is a lack of enough quality facilities to provide opportunities for education. Secondly, as a path to the abolishment of the quota system which emphasized on enrolment of students based on origin and not merit. The university was established as one of 5 Chinese government funded education institution projects (Manyukwe, 2010). The five proposed institutions would include the University of Bangula, devoted to cotton research and water resources management, to be constructed in the south. The University of Marine Biology would be built in the western district of Mangochi and would focus on aquaculture (Tongai, 2013).

6.Operational Definition of Terms

6.1 Local host community

According to Rykun et al., (2015), this is a community that hosts a university within its borders which includes institutional structures and social groups that interact with this university.

6.2 Social Impact

This may be defined as an adaptation on the part of a social system to external agents of change and/or endogenous change (Barrow, 2000).

7.Research Methodology: Sampling Techniques, Study area and Data Collection Techniques and Analysis

The research employed mainly narrative qualitative methods and supplementary quantitative methods to deeply understand the underlying aspects pertaining to the impact of MUST on the surrounding host communities. Primary data was collected in Thyolo, particularly in the GVH Mangazi area. There were a total of 5 villages where data was collected under the village headman. These villages were selected for this study because they are located within the vicinity of MUST; within a 20 km radius and therefore fitting the definition 'host community'. Thyolo District is located in the Southern region of Malawi, within the Shire Highlands area 47 km from Blantyre (Malawi Government, 2014). It shares common boundaries with the Republic of Mozambique and the districts of Mulanje to the east, Chiradzulu to the north east, Chikwawa to the west and Nsanje to the south. Its total land area is 1715km² and it lies at an altitude ranging from 350 to 3,500 metres above the sea

level. Like many of the Malawi districts, it faces a lot of socio-economic and environmental challenges that are threatening its long term survival. Some of the major challenges as listed by its local government are; poor social service infrastructure, lack of markets, food security and low household income among others.

The labour force in the district comprises both skilled and unskilled labour, and it is estimated that 97% of the people are employed in the agriculture sector like farming and the estates which is the main source of income. A large majority of the employable population are the youth which make up an estimated 80%. Major social services in the district are in the areas of education, health, transport, and post and telecommunications. Access to these social services is constrained by poor and inadequate delivery systems exacerbated by a difficult terrain which renders most roads inaccessible during wet season. The average expenditure of a household in Thyolo (about MK192.21/day or \$0.26/day) is below the mean household expenditure of the nation (about MK272/day or \$0.3/day).

This comprised of the people living in the Traditional Authority (T/A) Chimaliro area which is within the vicinity of MUST (a radius of about 24 Km), particularly those living under GVH Mangazi in Thyolo district. These included the people living in the villages of M'mina, Mitabali, Mangazi Grimishoni and Chirombo. These were those that lived in the area before MUST came into being as they were able to experience firsthand the influence that it has had on their communities.

The respondents for interviews were chosen using purposive sampling. This method was convenient way to get an in depth understanding of the impacts from the perspectives of the people who had lived within the period before and after establishment of MUST. Data collection took place between 20th August and 20th September, 2016; a period of about a month. Semi-structured and in-depth Interviews, Focus Group Discussions and Participant Observation methods were all used. The study involved use of narratives and case stories. Qualitative data was analysed through content and thematic analysis.

8. Impacts of MUST on the social lives of the surrounding rural host communities

8.1 Typical Resident around MUST

The researchers were interested in understanding the livelihoods of local people living in the vicinities of MUST. The following delves into the life of a local resident in the surrounding host communities explaining how MUST has influenced their social lives.

A move towards viable development or more marginalization?

I am Edward Banda (not real name), 39 year old male security guard working full time at MUST. I am a resident of M'mina village since birth and married with 5 children. I was born in a family of farmers and have continued the practice after dropping out of secondary school when I was around 20 years old. I still indulge in farming even after I got employed at the university in the beginning of the year (2016). To me, farming is very important because it gives us food on the table, the MK16, 000.00¹ salary I get from the university is needed for other uses. I work in 11 hour shifts; from 6a.m - 5 p.m or 6 pm – 5 am. Before MUST, farming was my full time occupation which I supplemented with a piece job on the rare occasions it was found. "It was difficult to get a job then especially in the estates as the people who got employed were a few and also the same ones. I have a friend working there for about 4 years now with a salary of about MK9,000.00. So I was depending on ganyu (piece work) from which I got about MK5, 000.00 per month" The uncertainty of the weather was a worry to my future survival. The rainfall patterns have been changing for the worse, last season (2015-2016) we harvested 4 (50 Kg) bags as compared to 11 bags the previous season from the same land because of poor rainfall. Almost all the money I got was spent on education of my children and buying food. The coming of MUST has reduced the burden on my family. I have now been able to buy enough fertilizer for the next growing season and even bought some iron sheets and cement to improve my house! You know these days with these migrants that have come in, having a house with Iron sheets and burnt bricks shows you are becoming modern my friend.

My wife has also managed to supplement our income. She has managed to start a Mandasi² business around the university from the ganyu she has got on the 2 occasions she worked harvesting the Nandolo field (local name for pigeon peas) at the university. My wife sells Mandasi at MUST which started after she got a job harvesting Nandolo. The coming of the University has reshaped how my children views education; I think they have a positive attitude towards education. I think this a great thing. I do not need to motivate my children much to go to school now, they have seen young students of their age pursuing high education levels, they feel a little embarrassed that they are behind. They are determined to make it to MUST or a comparative university one day. Many people in this village are losing land mostly to outsiders. They are offering us money that we could only dream of, like a neighbour of mine who lives about 3 houses away from here sold 1 acre for about MK400,000.00 about a year ago. The same land before the university was worth about MK20, 000.00. I fear for this village will lose most of its land to outsiders in a few years to come and our children will not have places to

¹ 1 Yuan = MK 108.00

² A food product made from wheat flour that is popular among the locals

farm. Apart from this these days the children are behaving strangely, their mode of dressing is moving away from what our elders taught us. I fear this 'modern' dressing will make them lose focus on their education. Overall, I am happy with the coming of the university as it has made this place look like the cities and has brought me income for my family."

The above story gives the general life changes of the university project; before and after it was instituted. The livelihood of the people has changed with the coming of the university project.

8.2 Increases in Population

8.2.1 Increased Market Base

There has been a general increase in the population of people in the area. This has been as a result of influx of migrants that have come in as the result of MUST. Some have come in because of employment at the university while others have come to do business in the area. According to a senior MUST administrator, a total number of about 1,200 people have come in as a result of the university. Of this number, the total staff establishment is around 130, almost 100 out of these commute from Blantyre¹ and other areas like Zomba². Almost 70 use the university bus every working day. The migrants also come from outside the district and from the surrounding areas within the district but outside the communities surrounding the university.

8.2.2 Increased Social Interactions

Many of the incoming migrants are the youth which may further skew the population age profile and limit the chances of employment among the local youth who are already the majority of the population (Malawi Government, 2014). Some of them are renting houses within the surrounding communities. It has had an influence on the local population in several ways. Firstly, it has resulted in the diversification of livelihoods among the locals as farmers have found a larger market base to sell their farm produce. This has been a breath of fresh air to the farmers as there were complaints highlighted among the respondents that there was an oversupply of their farm produce to the local market in Goliati. This was resulting in huge losses through reduced sells and expiration of the farm products. It was prompting the farmers to sell their products at what they perceived as low prices.

8.3 Increased Income Opportunities

8.3.1 Increased Incomes from Commoditization of Goods and Services

There has been an effect on household income among the locals since the arrival of MUST. This has been in two fold; one in diversification of livelihood strategies and the other on increased returns from the already existing livelihood strategies. On diversification, the local residents have been engaging in businesses that were not there before. These include opening small restaurants that sell food stuffs like vegetables which include Velvet beans (*Kalongonda* in vernacular), Pigeon Peas, Tomato and Mustard (*Mpiru* in vernacular) and also other products like *Nsima* and French fries. They also sell local brews like *Thobwa* (sweet beer) and an alcoholic beverage called *Chibuku* (local alcoholic beverage). The latter are mainly sold in small bars around the MUST area. They also sell different fruits depending on the season like papaya, mango and pears. The *Nsima*³ and fruit business are new to the area as it has come in because of the demand from the migrants especially the students at the university. It has changed the social aspect of *Nsima* and fruits as a whole in the area as they are now seen as a commodity that can be bought and/or sold in addition to being a staple food. Below is an excerpt of an interview with a 65 year old male farmer, a resident of M'mina village.

"...in this area, we are blessed with different types of fruits. We did not need to buy from our peers as we could just get from them as gifts whenever we visited each other. But now people are a bit reluctant to give such gifts as they believe they can sell to people at MUST and get money from that. Even Nsima these days is now being sold imagine! People before did not know you could make a lot of money from selling products like Nsima, bananas, pears and mangoes."

8.3.2 Increased Demand for locally produced Products

According to the local residents, some of the businesses like *Thobwa* and vegetable ones were not as profitable before. Some of the locals in the surrounding host communities have formed groups that have won tenders to supply vegetables like *Mpiru* and tomato to the university catering department. A large part of business is also done at the Goliati trading area where most of the university employees and some students go buy at the market. Here farmers have had a bigger market base not only from MUST; through the employees, students and the

¹ Blantyre is the commercial capital of Malawi, located in the Southern Region with a distance of about 41 km to get to Thyolo where MUST is located.

² Zomba is another district in the Southern Region which hosts Chancellor College; a constituent college of the University of Malawi. Some professors commute from the college to MUST with a travel distance of about 96.1 Km

³ Main staple food in Malawi that is made from maize flour which is cooked into a semi-solid paste and eaten with a side dish of one or a variety of relish

catering department but also from visitors and traders that have come in as a result. Other businesses that have blossomed include transportation through motorcycles that have benefitted from an increased market base which has added to their income. This is narrated in the interview below with a 54 year old senior village leader.

"...the university buys foodstuffs from the locals which include; cabbage, tomatoes and onions. Some of the locals, especially those with the money supply the university on a tender basis of which they are paid sometimes month-end."

MUST has also contributed to diversification in that it has employed some of the locals in the surrounding villages mostly the youth and women. Most of the youth in the area were unemployed with a few working in the tobacco and tea estates as stipulated in the district profile (Malawi Government, 2014). Some have been employed in the restaurants and shops that are around it thus further contributing to employment indirectly. This has also encouraged the unemployed youth to venture into agriculture and business as now they see that they have a market to sell their products.

8.3.3 Boom in Prices of Local Goods as a result of increased demand

In addition, income in the surrounding host households has increased through an increased market base that has resulted from people coming in as a result of the university. Some have come in as employees and students while others have come as tourists, visitors and traders. This resulted to some of the locals getting better prices for their products. For example, the local business women revealed that a basin of tomato (weighing around 6Kgs) was selling at about MK1,000.00 but now it sells at about MK5,000.00. The major problem before was oversupply of farm products in the market which resulted in losses through expiration. These products were most perishable products like Tomato and vegetables. According to the locals, one of the reasons that the traders have come in is through word of mouth from the visitors and tourists that have been exposed to the Goliati trading market. Another reason is because of the improved road infrastructure and transportation. According to the local farmers their major challenge is they still feel that their products are being bought at a low price.

8.3.4 Increased Wages among Locals Employed by the University

There are two ways that MUST has contributed to increased income among the locals in the surrounding host communities. The wages from employment and piece-jobs have increased as compared to before it was established. For example, the locals used to get less than MK10, 000.00 per month working in the estates while now with MUST they get MK17, 000.00 to MK18, 000.00 per month which according to them is above average minimum wage in the area which is around MK15, 000.00 per month.

The increased income and diversification of livelihood has been all the more important on the residents in that in the time of the research the area had experienced poor rainfall patterns the previous year (that is the 2015-16 growing season). According to the respondents, this had led to poor harvests which resulted to small amount of produce being available for sell. For example the conversation below with a local farmer reviews the extent of the poor harvests.

"...in the past (before the school) we depended mainly on farming and the weather was also good but now farming is difficult due to change in weather conditions. For example of a piece land that we used to get 10 bags (50 Kgs) we now get 2 bags for which we get little from selling..." (married man, 46 years old)

This resulted to more women making themselves available for work at the university or other areas within the surrounding host communities together with the men. This was done to share the burden of income generation in their household.

8.4 Impacts of University Projects on Local Youth

8.4.1 The University (and Students) as Good Role Models for the Local Youth

Many youth in the local area initially had the view that completing secondary education was the end of their formal education journey. This might explain how remote this area was before the coming of the university, lacking role models who have excelled in the academic ladder and succeeded. This contributed to the general education level in the area to be low. The coming in of the school has spurred the local youth to work hard and according to local sources some that dropped out are contemplating on returning to school. The major motivation has been seeing students within their age range at the university enrolled to such high levels of education. One young person had this to say:

"...many of my friends are now taking education seriously because we are taking lessons from seeing the students at the university taking education seriously. We are inspired to see people of our own age, no different from us enrolled there. We also want to go there someday. . ."

Education visits organized by MUST have helped inspire local youth to work hard at school. During these visits they have been able to interact with some students from other districts which have led them to have acquaintances to encourage and help each other in school activities. This was highlighted during an interview with an 18 year old female respondent.

"...It has also helped in changing the attitude of us youth in that they we are now working hard so that

one day they make it there. At some point, MUST took some of the primary and secondary school students from different schools around the area for an educational visit. They met students from other districts during these educational visits. Some came from places as far as Dedza to have a tour of the university. We interacted with them and formed friendships to encourage and help each other with school."

By virtue of MUST being in the area they now have an ambition to be enrolled there as they are now aware of another level above secondary school education. It has also led to a paradigm shift among the older generation as they used to believe in educating the male child as opposed to the female one. But upon seeing young females of similar age range as their children enrolled at the university has resulted to a change in mentality towards educating females.

8.4.2 Contributing to Youth Employment

Most of the youth before were unemployed as stated above and so it has provided a lease of life to some of them through provision of employment. A majority are employed as cleaners with a few numbers working in the landscape, farm, cooking and security departments. Unemployment was also leading some to migrate to other areas hence a few were employed in the tobacco and tea estates and low skilled work in the nearby city of Blantyre. According to the locals, the girls tended to marry at a young age some as young as 15 years of age as parents saw marriage as a more important social step than education.

8.4.3 Universities Contributing to Youth Entertainment in the Local Area

The University has helped improve the level of entertainment among the youth in several ways. To begin with, the university has a football pitch that hosts MUST matches which they go watch. At one particular point, the Malawi under-17 national football team used the university's pitch as a training base. According to an interview with the local youth leaders, this brought an unprecedented *level* of excitement as they were happy to grace the future stars of the national team. This also brought a general level of gratification to them as they were proud that their area can host such big events

Some of the youth are able to play on the pitch alongside the university students which allows them to mingle with them as well as improve on their wellbeing. Also the students have brought in some sporting activities that the local youth never knew about like basketball and volleyball. This has further helped raise the general level of excitement as they have now been exposed to new forms of entertainment and healthy living.

7.4.4 Social Differentiation among the Rural Youth with the coming of the University

The university has affected local social class dynamics in that the youth working at MUST are now considered of a higher class in the area than owning and working in a farm or the estates. According to the respondents even though some may not get much income working at MUST but the mere fact that they work there gives them an added respect amongst their peers. This also adds more insights that in many areas in Malawi and SSA in general, employment in subsistence agriculture is considered inferior even if they are getting more incomes from it.

8.5 Improved Local Community Interaction

The university community has fully integrated with the locals in the mutual benefit of both groups. In terms of religion, it has had a huge significance in this area especially the actions of the students. For example a local Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) Church before the university was dilapidated, people used to sit on the floor and the preaching area had no altar. In addition, the walls were fragile as they were plastered with mud. The students who attend church services there organized themselves and raised enough funds to buy 15 bags of cement to renovate the church and build sitting areas as well as the altar for the local preacher. This resulted to a much improved church structure. The students contributed a lot of funds to help with the administrative activities and growth of the church. Offerings on Sunday services have tripled which are used towards such endeavours.

8.6 Increases in Local Security

The security in the area has also been affected by the coming of the university. Firstly, the university itself has its own security team that provides additional man power to keep peace around the communities close to the university. These work in collaboration with the local security team as well as the government police unit of the area. They organize meetings which are hosted by MUST to share experiences and best practices in maintaining and improving security in the area. These changes in security is further collaborated by a key informant at the district office in the excerpt below:

Another important aspect on how the university has improved security is through the lighting system that it has in the night. According to the local residents, the lights illuminate most of the surrounding host communities which helps in providing a feeling of safety among them. They believe that the light does make some of the criminals to stay away as they are afraid of being spotted indulging in their criminal activity.

8.7 Adoption of Technologies

The coming in of the university has also led to the locals adopting some technologies that were rarely in use. According to the local youth leaders and some of the local residents, the usage of mobile phones among them especially the older generation has increased. This has come in two forms; most of students at the university use a mobile money transfer applications called Airtel Money and TNM *Mpamba*. These are run by two of the biggest telecommunications firms in the country; Airtel and Telecom Networks Malawi (TNM). So the students send and receive money through these applications via a local agent of which the locals have also embraced. In this case, the local agent is a telecentre, a government run information technology hub located at Goliati trading area. The interview excerpt below with Dania (agreed to mentioning name), the manager in charge of the telecentre established in 2009 highlights this aspect.

“...more people are coming in to use our services than before our establishment. Then less than 5 people per day used our services but now we go up to around 10 per day. We are the only reliable providers of Airtel money and TNM Mpamba around here in Goliati. Students from MUST and around the area come very frequently to photocopy of large books, notes and assignments. ”

This has proven to be an easier way to transfer money as before they used to travel to the post office a lot more to do such a transaction. This is located at the Thyolo District Office area about 25 km from the surrounding host communities. The students also mostly use the phones as a communication device with their relatives and friends. According to the local village leaders, usage of mobile phones for communication by the older generation was low. Some of the youth that interact with the MUST students have learned to use these phones. They in turn have taught their elders on how to use them for communication who in turn teach their peers. Through such means it has led to the increase of mobile phone usage. The interview with the local youth leaders below highlights the increased uptake of mobile technology.

8.8 Impacts of MUST on Local Housing Infrastructure

8.8.1 New Housing Designs

The coming of the University in this locality has brought changes in local housing infrastructure. Some local investors outside the study villages have built several housing infrastructure in the communities. Some of which include restaurants, students hostels and houses for occupation and renting. According to the local residents, this has affected them in that they have adopted new ways of building their houses which they deem modern and of a higher social status. To them a typical house of this nature has to have basic features like burnt bricks, cement plaster on the walls and floor and roofs with iron sheets. Before the university, a normal house used to have unburnt bricks, mud plaster on the walls and floor and grass thatched roofs. In addition, the number of such houses has increased in the area which has contributed to the beautiful scenery of the area. It has also made it desirable place to live as many outsiders including people from the surrounding villages have come in because of its attractiveness in addition to its employment and business opportunities.

8.8.2 Adoption of Skills in New Houses

During the construction phase, the locals gained new housing construction knowledge from the Chinese construction workers. Most of the people in the area lack professional skills to diversify their livelihoods. Some of the locals learned some housing construction skills and techniques that they have added as part of their income earning strategies.

8.8.3 Increase in Housing Rentals

The university has also contributed to increase in rented houses and rental fees in the area. Before, there were very few people renting in the area due to lack of opportunities to obtain income and it was not as attractive as now. There were also very few incentives to induce migration into the communities so only a few locals saw the need to build houses to be rented out. As such rental fees were low as compared to the time of the research (2016). Some of the university employees and other people attracted by the attractiveness and income generating opportunities in the area have rented some houses. This has led to a surge in rental fees as well as houses built. For example a typical 2 bed roomed house, before MUST it was costing around MK2, 000.00/ month, now a house of such nature costs around MK5, 000.00/ month.

8.9 Commoditization of Land

According to the respondents, most of the land is being bought by people from outside the area of study. The buyers are in two groups; people from within the district but outside the surrounding host communities. The other group, which is the largest group, consists of people from outside the district. The motivation for the first group is mainly seeking employment and small business opportunities like selling cooked foodstuffs e.g. *Nsima*, sweet Potatoes etc. This latter group is mainly interested in relatively bigger business opportunities like providing hostels for rent to the university students when it attains full capacity in the near future. This group also intends to provide more commercial services to the current students like restaurants.

The surge in demand for land has led to a general increase in land prices in the area. Most of the land in

demand is that close to the road between the university and Goliati trading area. This is due to the proximity with MUST and other customers that frequent the trading area. It has led to a sharp increase in the price of land in those communities. For example, according to the local residents, before it used to be sold at about MK20, 000.00/ acre but now it is being sold for about MK350, 000.00/acre. The finances are used to buy more land mostly in the periphery of the surrounding host communities and in other areas within and outside the district. Most of the households that have sold land have used the proceeds to buy basic necessities like food, renovate their houses and pay for their children's education.

8.10 Effects of University Projects on Local Social Services

These are mainly public infrastructure and services that are provided by the government to the locals. These include water, electricity, roads, sanitation and the like. The coming of the university has influenced municipal infrastructure and services in that there has been a development of water and electricity infrastructure in the area. According to the local residents and official government records, these were significantly in limited supply and were in the surrounding host communities (Malawi Government, 2014).

8.10.1 Easy Access to Portable Water

Access to portable clean water sources was specifically highlighted as a major problem in these records. For example *M'mina* village, the village closest to the university, had only one borehole for use by the entire village. *Mangazi* village had 2 boreholes to be used also by the entire village. In addition people also used to get water from a *Chithapwi*¹ which was a health risk. The university has helped ease access by apportioning some of its water for use by the residents of the surrounding communities. In addition, residents who have financial means can be able to connect tap water at the comfort of the homes at a fee.

8.10.2 Access to Electricity

Electricity infrastructure in the surrounding host communities has also been improved with the establishment of the university. This was meant to provide electrical power to the university but some local residents mainly in the *M'mina* Village have benefitted by connecting through the university power grid. This has prompted some of the locals to open energy intensive businesses like maize mills which are being used by the residents.

8.10.3 Expansion of health Service Delivery

There has been an initiative by the government to renovate some local building structures to cater for the demand for public services due to an influx of people. For example the *Chisoka* Health Centre; a local medical facility, was renovated and additional personnel brought so serve the population in the area. The local primary and secondary school were renovated and some new blocks added to cater for the demand for education and also motivate the local population to get educated. In addition, the local market infrastructure was upgraded and additional blocks are now being built to provide more space and organization for the local traders to sell their products and services. There is now also a privately owned filling station that is about to be fully operational as the transportation business has boomed in the area with more people moving in and out of it. To accommodate some of the local social and cultural activities like weddings, prayers, the government built a hall that is used to host these local events.

8.10.4 Roads Maintenance to rural Areas

The Malawi government has also embarked on an effort to renovate and maintain some of the roads that link the university, Goliati trading centre and the villages. For example the MUST- Goliati road was renovated with the coming of the institution so as to provide for the increased transportation to and from the area. The roads linking the villages were maintained by the residents themselves chosen by the village leaders after being given the mandate to do so by the government. These people were paid about MK5, 000.00 per month. This further added income generating activities to the residents to sustain their households.

9. Negative Effects of the University Projects on the Local Host Communities

The coming of the university has also brought some negative effects to the rural host communities. The following section documents the major negative effects to the rural host communities, some dating back from the construction phase to the operation phase.

9.1 Changes in Population Composition

There has been an increase in single mothers in the area. This has been because of intermarriages between the migrants and the locals. These were mostly high during the construction phase of the university than any of the phases to the point of the research (2016). The reason being most of the migrants and temporary workers came at this point. This included the local migrants as well as Chinese construction workers. According to the local leaders and village residents, there has been offspring that have resulted from relationships with both the local migrants and the Chinese construction workers. Few of the marriages survive as the migrants working at the

¹ Local name for unprotected stagnant well

university leave their spouses behind as soon as their contract expires. One local resident explains:

Some of the workers in the construction business at the university come in the villages and married the women in the area. Most of the marriages don't last, maybe 3-4 months and some maybe a year and the men go back to their original homes (and countries in case of Chinese workers). They just leave the women pregnant and some with children but with nothing to take care of them. The women are usually attracted that they work at MUST and the money they get from working there..."

9.2 Increased Pressure on Land and Water Resources

The study found out that there has been increased pressure on resources such as land and water. This is because a lot of the outsiders are buying land from the locals to build housing infrastructure for mainly business purposes. The areas of land that are mostly being bought are the ones close to the road which leads to the university and Goliati trading area and also the surrounding village closest to MUST which in the researchers case was *M'mina*. This is particularly significant as there was already a high population density in the district (320 people per km²) and limited water resources; the latter also verified by the respondents (Malawi Government, 2014).

The surge in demand for land has led to a general increase in land prices in the area. Most of the land in demand is that is close to the road between the university and Goliati trading area. This is due to the proximity with MUST and other customers that frequent the trading area. It has led to a sharp increase in the price of land in those communities. For example, according to the local residents, it used to be sold at about MK20, 000.00/acre but now it is being sold for about MK350, 000.00/acre. Table 4-8 below summarizes this case.

The local community has its fears that the surge in land values is tempting many of the residents to sale their land. Some fear that many people around the university will be landless which they fear will greatly affect their livelihood as majority of Malawians (80%) eke their livelihoods through smallholder agriculture.

9.3 Negative effects of MUST on local youth behaviour

The study found out that the local youth had adopted some of what their communities consider deviant behaviour from the university students. This includes excessive drinking of alcohol, swearing and smoking marijuana. According to local sources, this behaviour has increased with the coming in of the students. These practices have been reinforced through direct interaction as the students interact with the local youth and through observation. They feel that if the students at the university, whom they look up to, are doing it then it must be something worthwhile even though it may have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing.

10. Conclusion

This paper has filled the most important gap in literature on whether it's really viable that universities improve the livelihoods of the local host communities especially in less developed countries like Malawi. This is because the results have portrayed the impacts of universities beyond their traditional role of providing education to the masses. Results from this study suggest that universities located in these rural communities have the potential to change people's wellbeing for the better. It is up for the local community to develop mechanisms to benefit more from the coming of these projects. We suggest that the benefits should not end at acquiring skills for day to day life, but also community agreements like association to pool funds together and bid for the provision of services to the university like foodstuffs and cleaning services hence acquiring more incomes. There is need for communities to utilize these projects for the betterment wellbeing in rural areas. Results from this study cannot be generalized for all infrastructural developments in rural areas in the whole country, but paints a picture that there are more benefits than costs to the rural people when infrastructural projects like universities have been located within their rural localities.

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