

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL  
School of Environmental Sciences, &  
School of Health and Social Work

**Grandfathers Caring for Orphaned Grandchildren  
in Rural Southern Malawi: Invisible in Plain Sight?**

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in the University of Hull

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi. Using an ethnographic approach informed by intersectionality and situated within interpretivist framework, children, young people, and adults from rural impoverished communities of Zomba District were engaged in multiple participatory research activities to collect empirical data as evidence about their views and experiences on/of the topic. The findings suggest that although grandfathers are on the periphery of research and policy on grandparenting in Malawi and other regions of sub-Saharan Africa, they are incontrovertibly at the epicentre of their orphaned grandchildren's lives. They are providers for their orphaned grandchildren, support their formal education, and are key to intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values through socialisation (informal education), roles which are characterised by intersections of, inter alia, culture, gender, age, physical health, generation, and poverty. Paradoxically, despite performing myriad caring roles in the plain sight of their communities, grandfathers remain largely invisible because of gendered conceptions of care. Subsequently, many grandfathers are systematically excluded from social support programmes, thus highlighting the social exclusion of grandfathers [men] who find themselves in roles not associated with hegemonic notions of masculinities in their communities. This social exclusion from welfare programmes may negatively impact their orphaned grandchildren's development. Thus, there is need for greater recognition of grandfathers alongside other carers of orphans, and their targeting in social policy and programmes to benefit and assist orphans, particularly to offset livelihood challenges facing grandfathers. Ultimately, this would improve the lives of their orphaned grandchildren. Given the paucity of research on grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in sub-Saharan Africa, further research is needed to interrogate, inter alia, gendered conceptions of care, gendered social support, and the plight of orphans raised by grandfathers in impoverished communities such as those that participated in this study.

## **DEDICATION**

In memory of my mother, Stella Chinseu, who passed away on 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1992.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS**

ADC	Area Development Committee
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARV	Antiretroviral
CAG	Community Advisory Group
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CERT	Centre for Educational Research and Training (UNIMA)
CHF	Child-Headed Family
CHH	Child-Headed Household
CRECCOM	Creative Centre for Community Mobilization
CSR	Centre for Social Research (UNIMA)
DfID	Department for International Development (UK Government)
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FISP	Farm Input Subsidy Programme
GoM	Government of Malawi
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council (Government of South Africa)
HSA	Health Surveillance Assistant
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK)
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute (United States)
IGA	Income-generating activity
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSO	National Statistical Office (Malawi Government)
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
SRT	Shine Relief Trust
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIMA	University of Malawi
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
YONECO	Youth Net and Counselling
ZDA	Zomba District Assembly

## GLOSSARY OF COMMON CHICHEWA TERMS USED

<i>Agogo</i>	A grandparent/grandfather/grandmother/any elderly person
<i>Chamba</i>	Hemp/marijuana/cannabis
<i>Chigayo</i>	Maize-mill
<i>Chimanga</i>	Maize
<i>Dimba</i>	Small irrigated plot, usually for cultivating vegetables and maize after the rainy season
<i>Ganyu</i>	Casual labour/work
<i>Kabaza</i>	Bicycle taxis – a mode of transport for many Malawians
<i>Katapila</i>	Informal borrowing at high interest [usury]
<i>Kubetsa</i>	Losing something/someone, but has a negative connotation that denotes an unwise decision
<i>Mandasi</i>	Doughnuts
<i>Masache</i>	Brooms made of gathered twigs
<i>Matemba</i>	Small fish used for relish
<i>Mbaula</i>	Charcoal burner
<i>Mg'anda</i>	A traditional dance
<i>Miphika</i>	Clay pots
<i>Miyono</i>	Fishing traps
<i>Mpango</i>	Headtie
<i>Mtondo</i>	Wooden mortar
<i>Mtsuko</i>	Large water pot
<i>Mtukulapakhomo</i>	Localised name for the Social Cash Transfer Programme
<i>Ndiwo</i>	Relish eaten with nsima, rice
<i>Nsima</i>	A bland-tasting thick porridge dish made from maize flour and water. It is the staple food in Malawi consumed during lunch and supper.
<i>Nthano</i>	Folktales
<i>Uchamuna / uphongo / akamuna</i>	Simply means 'man enough' or manliness, and represents hegemonic masculinities in Malawi
<i>Ufa</i>	Maize flour
<i>Wamasiye</i>	Orphan

## CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Well, when people say that it is the grandmother *only* who cares for children, there is no fairness. For us living together in the household, we do work together in caring for the children, but it's the other people who say... it's the people who do differentiate and say, "the grandmother is the one who is caring the children, the grandfather is not". I think that's where people are wrong. For instance, when a child lacks clothes, the grandmother looks up to you the grandfather and expects that you should do something about the problem. So, you the grandfather go out and look for *ganyu* [casual labour/work] somewhere and buy clothes and give the child. But, then, once you the grandfather have done that, it is the name of the grandmother that will be mentioned and glorified and you the grandfather will not be mentioned at all. I don't know why! (Frank, grandfather, 76 years – In-depth interview).

The quotation above highlights the dilemma grandfathers caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi find themselves in as they perform roles not socially associated with notions of masculinities in their communities.<sup>1</sup> Despite their contribution to their orphaned grandchildren's daily lives in various ways (e.g. **Figure 1.1** below), grandfathers remain largely invisible to the eyes of their communities due to gendered conceptions of care. This is also replicated in the hegemonic discourses of orphan care in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), as well as in the welfare programmes as they tend to recognise grandmothers as carers of orphans, but often overlook grandfathers. Thus, this thesis interrogates the dominant gendered discourses of orphan care in SSA by exploring the contribution grandfathers make in their orphaned grandchildren's lives in rural Southern Malawi. The underpinning argument is that grandfathers may contribute significantly to orphan care in SSA than is currently assumed/acknowledged. Hence, their role needs greater recognition alongside other carers of orphans, and their targeting in social policy and programmes is crucial to benefit and assist orphans, particularly to offset livelihood challenges facing grandfathers. To situate this thesis, I begin by examining HIV/AIDS and poverty as the key features of the context both producing

---

<sup>1</sup> Masculinities refer to the "different ways of being a man, or behaving as a man in relationships and in society" (Festus & Gennrich, 2013: 32; see also Hadebe, 2013; Makusha et al., 2013a).

and shaping the circumstances in which orphans and grandfathers' caring for orphans are found.

**Figure 1.1:** *A grandfather minding his granddaughter*



**Photography:** *Author's own collection*

## 1.2 HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

“The AIDS epidemic brought the world to its knees before bringing people to their feet” (UNAIDS, 2014a: 4).

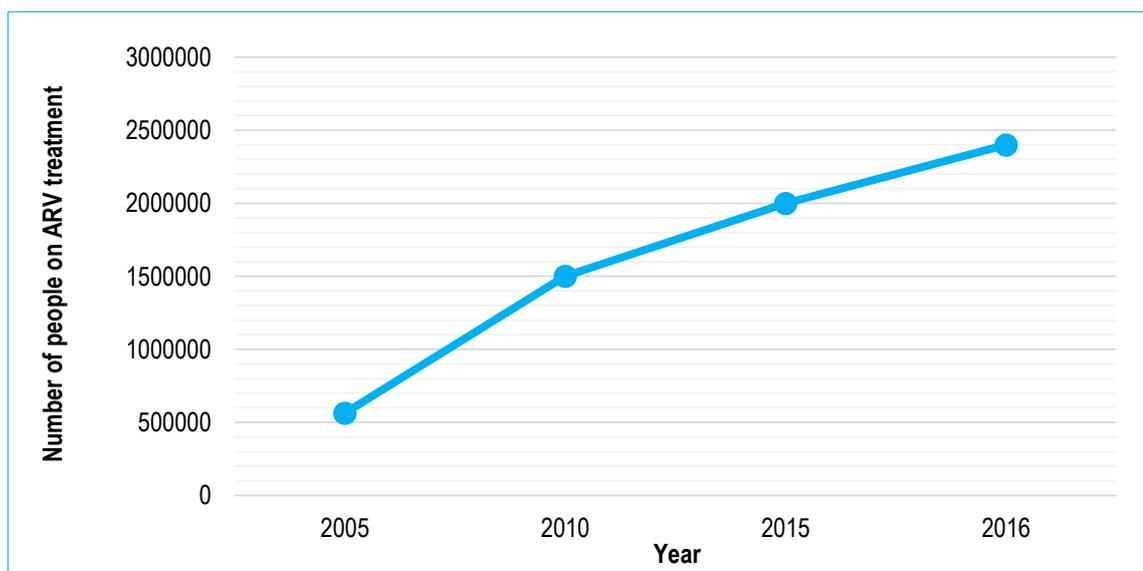
The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (2014a: 4) states that ‘ending the AIDS epidemic’ are four words that “represent more than 30 years of devastation, struggle, and loss.” Since its discovery in the United States in 1981, HIV/AIDS has resulted in over 78 million infections and 39 million deaths globally (UNAIDS, 2014b; WHO, 2014a). Writing in the mid-1990s when the AIDS epidemic was at its peak, Urdang (2006: 65) summed up the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic as follows:

When AIDS enters the household, it devastates the family, drains assets, plays havoc with education, escalates domestic violence, and pushes families into a downward spiral towards greater poverty. Unlike most other epidemics or

pervasive diseases, AIDS tends not to target the very young and the very old. It attacks young adults and those in the prime of their life, those who are healthiest and generally strongest.

However, recent reports by UNAIDS and World Health Organisation (WHO) indicate that despite the number of people living with HIV increasing from 27.7 million to 36.7 million between 2000 and 2017, the AIDS epidemic has reached maturity (UNAIDS, 2014b, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c). This progress is attributed to the global scaling-up of coordinated and improved prevention (e.g. intensified campaigns on reducing the spread of HIV), diagnosis (e.g. free blood testing), and treatment programmes (e.g. free distribution of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs) across the globe (UNAIDS, 2016b, 2017b, 2017c; WHO, 2014a). Recently, UNAIDS and its partners across the globe launched the 90-90-90 approach which aims at ensuring that “90% of all people living with HIV know their HIV status, 90% of all people diagnosed with HIV infection receive sustained ARV therapy, and 90% of all people receiving ARV therapy have viral suppression by the end of 2020” (UNAIDS, 2014c: 1). For instance, the number of people on treatment has increased from 0.5 million to nearly 2.5 million between 2005 and 2016 (**Figure 1.2**). UNAIDS optimistically calls the 90-90-90 approach as “a final, ambitious, but achievable target” (UNAIDS, 2014c: 1). Subsequently, member states across the globe have made the commitment to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 (UNAIDS, 2017b).

**Figure 1.2:** Number of people on ARV treatment across the global

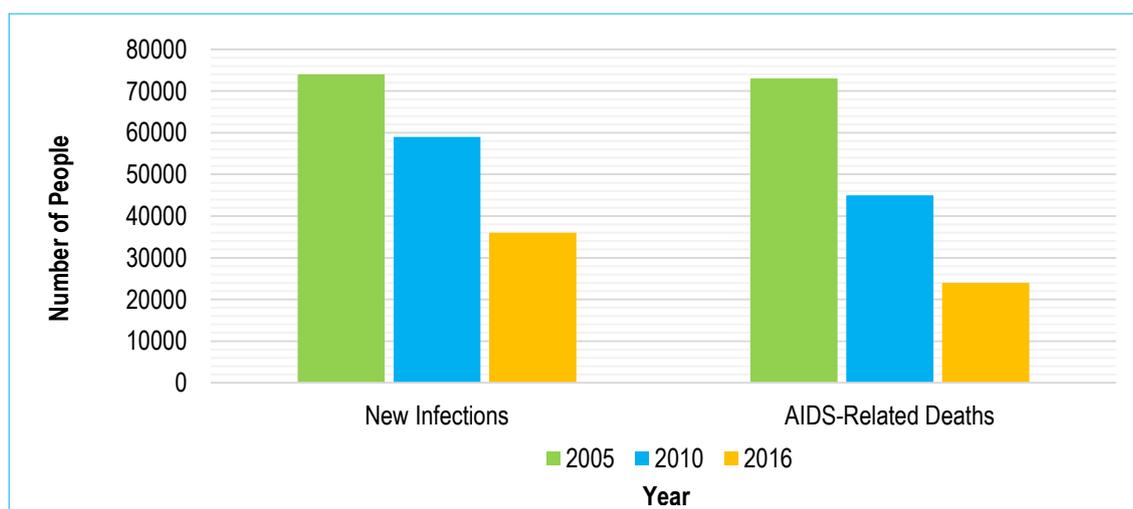


Sources: UNAIDS, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c.

A midterm progress review of the 90-90-90 target conducted in 2016 indicates that the world is on track to achieve the 90-90-90 target (UNAIDS, 2017c). At present, 70% of all people living with HIV know their status, 77% of them are accessing ARV therapy, and 82% who are accessing treatment have suppressed viral loads (UNAIDS, 2017c). Eastern and Southern Africa, which are home to more than half of people living with HIV globally, have recorded the highest progress, achieving 76-79-83 of the 90-90-90 target (UNAIDS, 2017c). Subsequently, these prevention and treatment efforts by various stakeholders have resulted in declining HIV infections from 3 million to 1.8 million, and AIDS-related mortalities from 1.5 million to 1 million globally between 2005 and 2016 (UNAIDS, 2016a, 2017a).

In SSA, AIDS-related deaths have been cut by nearly half (46%) between the same period (UNAIDS, 2014a, 2017b, 2017c). In Malawi, although the number of people living with HIV increased from 950,000 to 1 million between 2005 and 2016, new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths declined significantly (**Figure 1.3**) (UNAIDS, 2017b). This indicates that the AIDS epidemic in Malawi has reached maturity (Government of Malawi [GoM], 2014a, 2015), a situation reflecting much of SSA, particularly Southern Africa (UNAIDS, 2017b, 2017c). Thus, much progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS has been achieved in the last decade.

**Figure 1.3:** Trends in HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths in Malawi



Source: UNAIDS (2017b).

UNAIDS has declared that the progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS signifies a new era: “the beginning of the end of the AIDS epidemic” (UNAIDS, 2014a: 8). There is now growing hope that the AIDS epidemic can be “ended in every region, every country, in every location, in every population and every community” by 2030

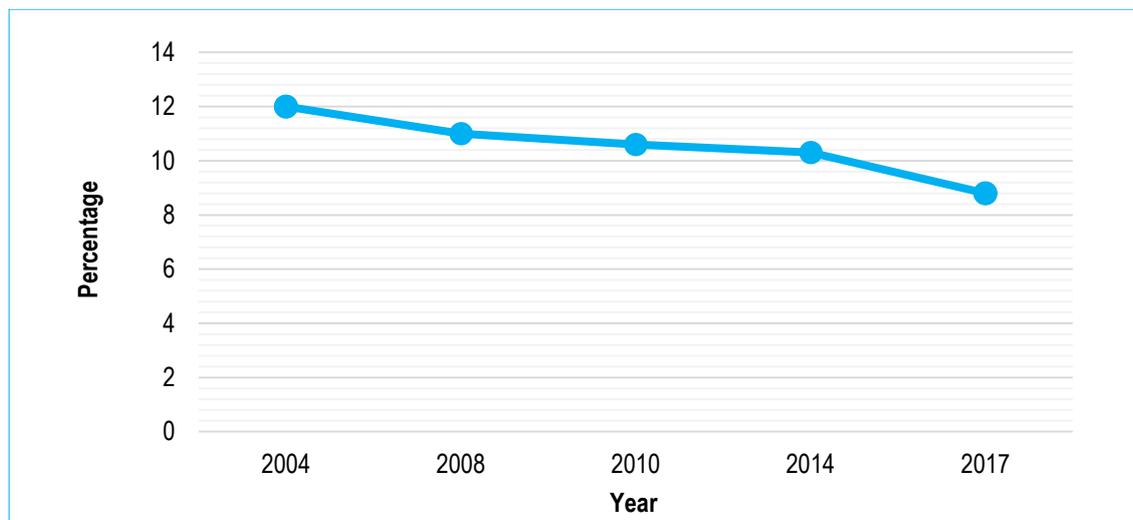
(UNAIDS, 2014a: 8). UNAIDS states that 'ending the AIDS epidemic' does not necessarily mean total eradication of HIV/AIDS, but that the spread is controlled or contained and its impact on society is marginalized or lessened (UNAIDS, 2014a). However, the hope to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 may not be possible universally as UNAIDS declares due to some gaps in the current efforts to end the AIDS epidemic. Although programmes have intensified, not everyone is reached by the needed HIV/AIDS services. For instance, of all the 36.7 million people living with HIV globally, only 53% (19.4 million) were accessing antiretroviral therapy in 2016, and only 44% had achieved HIV viral suppression, which was lower than the 73% required for full achievement of the 90-90-90 target by 2020 (UNAIDS, 2017c). Also, although people are seeking treatment, many do not do so earlier, and less than half (42%) of people living with HIV on treatment globally receive periodic viral load tests (UNAIDS, 2017c). Thus, despite the reported progress, it is still not certain that the AIDS epidemic will be ended by 2030.

In SSA, despite reaching 76-79-83 of the 90-90-90 target in 2016, only 60% of all people living with HIV are on treatment, and only 50% of them had achieved HIV viral suppression (UNAIDS, 2017c). This threatens the achievement of the 90-90-90 target/goal by 2020. For instance, the lack of knowledge of HIV status threatens efforts aimed at improving healthy living for people with HIV, as well as preventing HIV transmission (UNAIDS, 2016a, 2017c). The gap in the knowledge of HIV status among people in this region is largely attributed to stigma associated with disclosure of HIV (UNAIDS, 2014a, 2014c, 2017c). This makes it difficult to identify people for inclusion in prevention and treatment programmes because, as noted by UNAIDS (2017c: 10), "knowledge of HIV status is the first step in the cascade, and when it is low, subsequent efforts to enrol people living with HIV into care and to initiate and sustain treatment are affected."

Further, it is reported that many sexually active individuals in SSA do not have access to condoms. For instance, only eight male condoms were available per year for each sexually active individual in 2013 (UNAIDS, 2014a). This may fuel the spread of HIV infections if people engage in unprotected sex (UNAIDS, 2014a). Thus, stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, and the lack of knowledge of HIV status by some people, present additional obstacles in the fight against the AIDS epidemic that may comprise the achievement of the 90-90-90 by 2020 and ending the AIDS epidemic

by 2030. Moreover, the goal of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 may not be possible for many low-income countries in SSA that are currently severely affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly those in Southern Africa (including Malawi), which is the worst hit region of the world. For instance, despite UNDP (2016: 124) describing Malawi as “a leader in the fight against HIV and AIDS”, there has been little progress in curbing the HIV prevalence among 15 to 49 years-olds which is currently at 8.8% (Government of Malawi [GoM], 2014a; NSO & ICF International, 2017), thus representing a 3.2% decline over the last 13 years (**Figure 1.4**).

**Figure 1.4:** HIV prevalence trends in Malawi



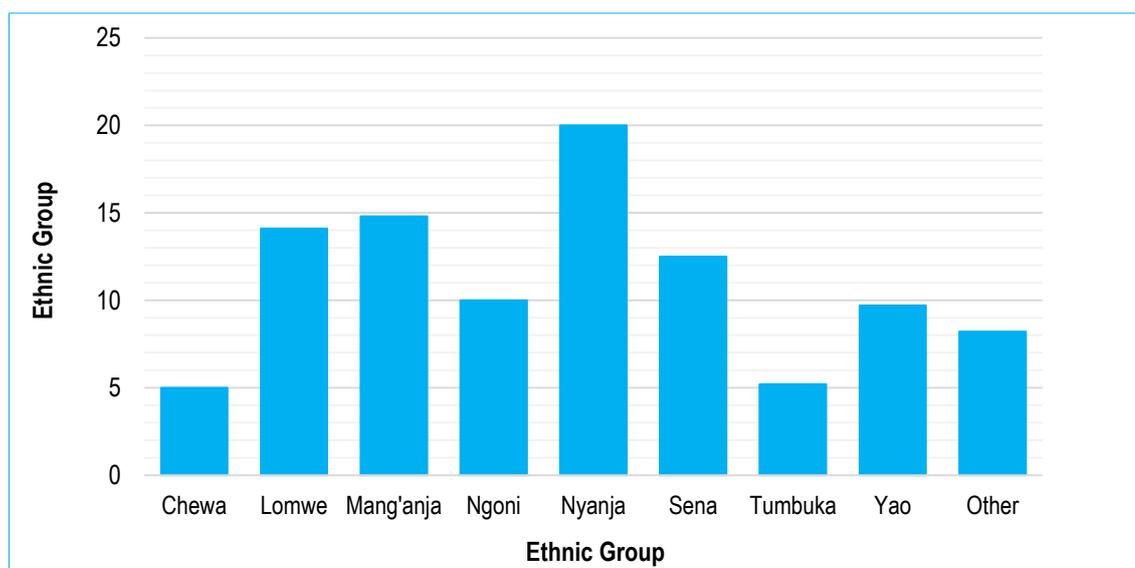
**Sources:** NSO & ORC Macro, 2005; NSO & ICF Macro, 2011; NSO, 2014; NSO & ICF International, 2017.

Thus, despite the ramping up of prevention and treatment programmes through collaborative efforts by government and other stakeholders, it is rather unrealistic to anticipate that HIV/AIDS in Malawi will be controlled or contained, and its impact significantly marginalized or lessened within the next 12 years. Moreover, the reported decline in HIV prevalence in the country may not necessary be real, but rather a result of a change in measurement methods from less accurate surveillance of pregnant women to more accurate blood test surveys of the general adult population. In fact, the small decline in HIV prevalence observed over the past decade is not statistically significant and does not indicate significant progress in the general population (NSO & ICF International, 2017).

Southern Malawi is the hardest hit region, with an HIV prevalence among the 15 to 49-year-olds (12.8%) exceeding that of the Central (5.6%) and Northern (5.1%) regions (NSO & ICF International, 2017). In Zomba District (the study site, and located within the Southern Region), HIV/AIDS is the greatest health problem (ZDA,

2009). There are no recent statistics on HIV prevalence in Zomba, but in 2009 the district had an HIV prevalence of 17% which exceeded that of the country (11%) (ZDA, 2009; NSO & ICF Macro, 2011). Further, HIV prevalence is higher among Lomwe, Mang'anja, Nyanja, Sena, and Yao (**Figure 1.5**) (NSO & ICF International, 2017), which (except the Sena) are also the predominant ethnic groups in Zomba more generally, and the study site in particular. Thus, it is likely that the communities visited during this study are among the most affected in the country.

**Figure 1.5: HIV prevalence among ethnic groups in Malawi**



**Source:** NSO & ICF International, 2017.

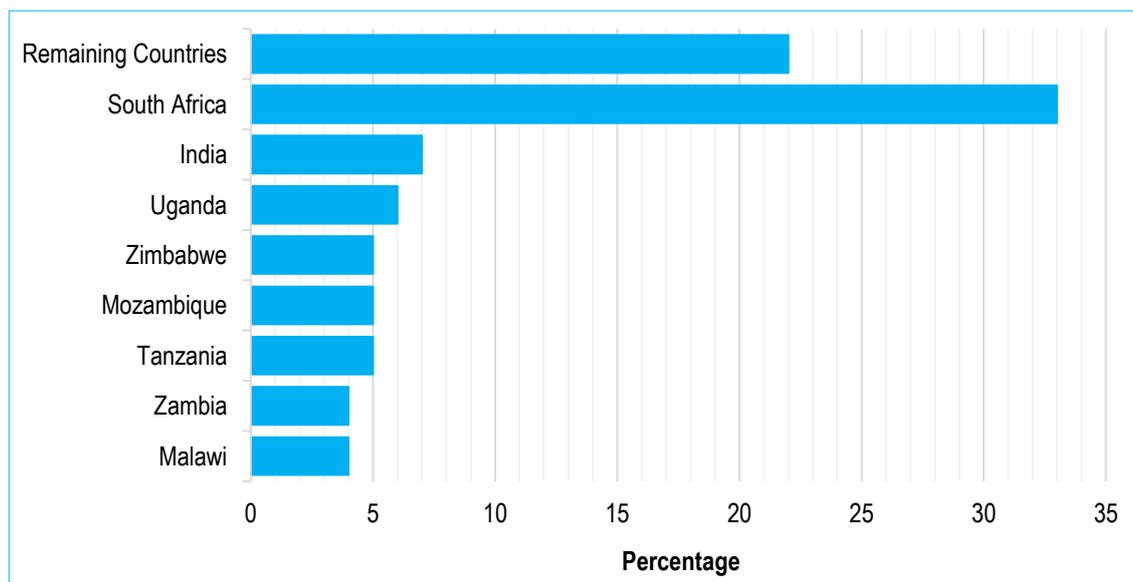
### 1.3 THE HIV/AIDS AND INCOME INEQUALITY NEXUS

An 'HIV/AIDS-free Malawi' may not be possible unless poverty and the resulting income inequalities are addressed significantly. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, currently ranking 174 out of 187 countries on the human development index (UNDP, 2014; FAO, 2015; NSO & ICF International, 2017). Over half (50.7%) of all Malawians are poor (i.e. living at or below the national poverty line) and a quarter are ultra-poor (i.e. households that can hardly afford even the basic daily needs such as food, clothing) (NSO, 2014).<sup>2</sup> Zomba District is one of the poorest districts in Malawi. Seventy percent of the people in Zomba are poor, thus making it the third most poorest district in the country (ZDA, 2009; NSO, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> See NSO (2005, 2012a) for detailed explanation on how the Malawi Government calculates the poverty line).

The HIV/AIDS and income inequality nexus in Malawi and other regions of SSA is well-documented (e.g. see Urdang, 2006; Tladi, 2006; Masanjala, 2007).<sup>3</sup> Acknowledging this synergy, the Government of Malawi states that since the first diagnosis of an HIV case in the country in 1985, acute poverty has hampered efforts to end the AIDS epidemic (GoM, 2014a, 2015).<sup>4</sup> Consequently, HIV/AIDS remains one of the most important national challenges facing Malawi, and many other countries in Southern Africa, owing to the nexus of income inequality (poverty) and HIV/AIDS (GoM, 2014a, 2015; UNAIDS, 2014a). Thus, even though governments in SSA (e.g. Malawi) have rolled out diagnosis (e.g. free blood testing) and treatment programmes (e.g. free distribution of ARV drugs), such interventions do not reach everyone who requires them. For instance, despite sustained progress in ARV therapy programmes, 3 out of 5 people living with HIV in this region are still not accessing ARV drugs (UNAIDS, 2014a). Of all the people living with HIV around the globe, few people in Malawi and other parts of SSA (except South Africa) were added to ARV therapy programme between 2010 and 2013 (**Figure 1.6**) (UNAIDS, 2014a). Thus, HIV/AIDS remains the most important national public health and socioeconomic challenge in Malawi (GoM, 2014a) and other regions of SSA (UNAIDS, 2014a; Cheney, 2017).

**Figure 1.6:** Number of people on ARV therapy newly added between 2010 and 2013



Source: UNAIDS, 2014a.

<sup>3</sup> Some economically better off countries in Southern Africa (e.g. Botswana, Swaziland, and Lesotho) have higher HIV prevalence rate than Malawi, suggesting that poverty is not the only factor fuelling HIV/AIDS.

<sup>4</sup> See the methodology chapter for the economic and other descriptions of Malawi, and Zomba District.

## 1.4 THE IMPACT OF THE AIDS EPIDEMIC IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa is the most affected region of the world in all indicators of the AIDS epidemic. The region accounts for nearly 70% of all people living with HIV globally, 67% of people newly infected with HIV, and 73% of AIDS-related deaths (**Table 1.1**) (UNAIDS, 2017a).

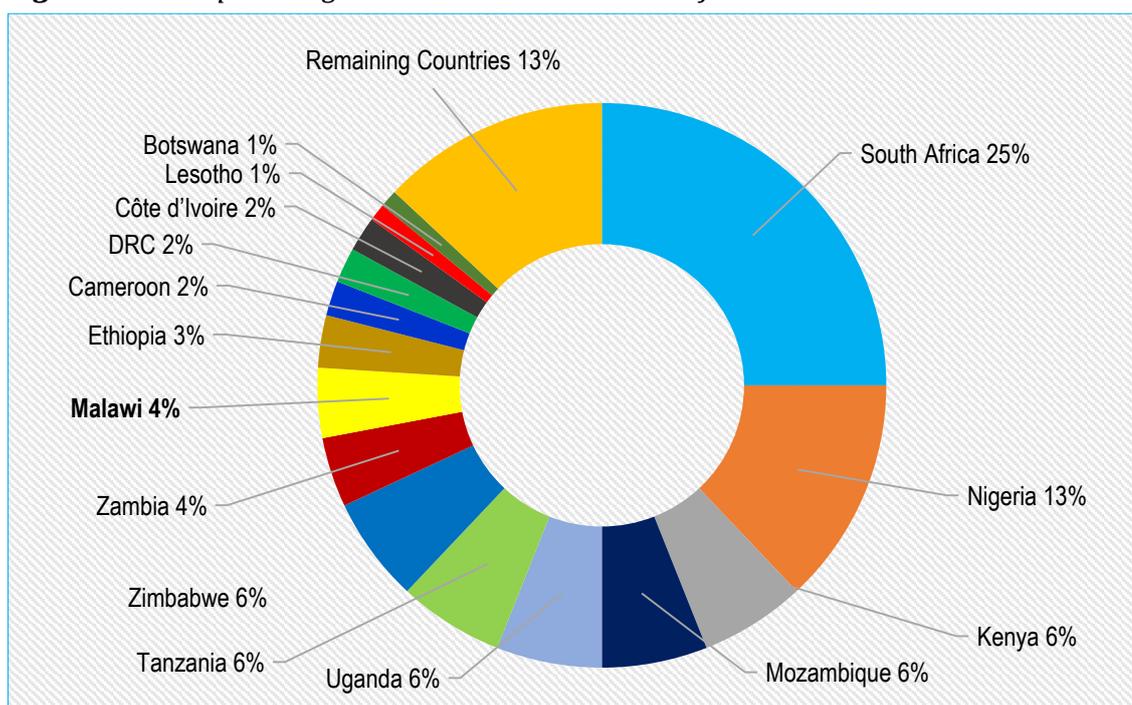
**Table 1.1:** AIDS epidemic statistics (as of 2016)

Impact of HIV/AIDS	Global Total	Sub-Saharan Africa	Malawi
People Living with HIV	36.7 million	25.5 million	1.1 million
People Newly Infected with HIV	1.8 million	1.2 million	34,000
AIDS-Related Deaths	1.0 million	730,000	48,000

**Notes:** Data compiled from reports from GoM (2015); UNAIDS (2017a); and WHO (2014a, 2014b).

According to UNAIDS (2014a), ten countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) currently account for 81% of all people living with HIV in SSA, with Nigeria and South Africa accounting for half of them (**Figure 1.7**). Malawi alone accounts for 4.3% of people living with HIV in SSA (representing 3% the global total), 2.8% of people in SSA newly infected with HIV (representing 1.9% of the global total), and 6.6% of AIDS-related deaths in SSA (representing 4.8% of the global total) (GoM, 2015; UNAIDS, 2014a, 2017a).

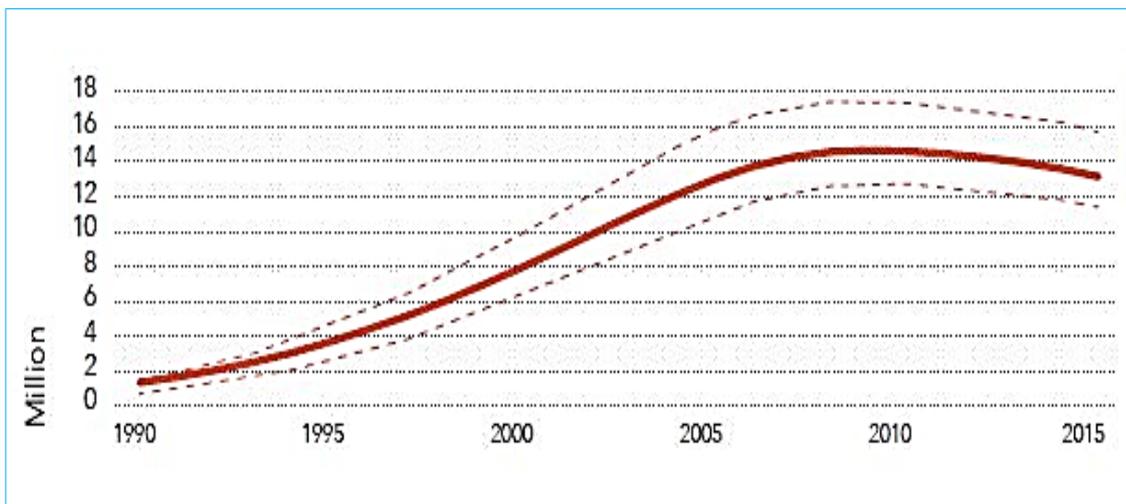
**Figure 1.7:** People living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa



**Source:** UNAIDS, 2014a

The vast numbers of AIDS-related deaths among parents in Malawi and other regions of SSA from the early 1990s to 2010 led to increased numbers of orphans (GoM, 2014a; UNAIDS, 2014b; WHO, 2014a; NSO & ICF International, 2017).<sup>5</sup> This resulted in an overwhelming need for care of orphans (van Dijk, 2008; Skovdal et al., 2009; Evans, 2011a). Although the AIDS epidemic has slowed down and reached maturity (UNAIDS, 2017a), the number of orphans due to AIDS remains significantly high (Figure 1.8).

**Figure 1.8:** Trends in number of orphans due to AIDS over 25 years



Source: UNAIDS (2016b).

Although pathways of care for orphans in this region are multiple, dynamic, fluid, multifaceted, and unpredictable (van Blerk & Ansell, 2007a; Cheney, 2017), the majority of orphans are cared for by extended family (Freidus, 2010; Zagheni, 2011; Schatz & Seeley, 2015), often their grandparents in skipped-generation households (Schatz et al., 2013; Block, 2014). Yet, research on grandparenting in SSA remains scant (Nabalamba & Chikoko, 2011; Apt, 2012; Oduaran, 2014). Notably, while there is generally a dearth of scholarship on grandparenting in SSA and in the Global South more widely, research *with* and/or *about* grandfathers remains extremely scant. Existing research on grandparenting in this region has almost exclusively focused on grandmothers (Ardington et al, 2010; Littrell et al., 2012). Only a few studies have examined the lives of grandfathers' caregiving in the family.<sup>6</sup> For instance, de

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 2 for the number and type of orphans in Malawi.

<sup>6</sup> 'Caregiving' or 'care' of children in this thesis refers to any efforts by an adult or another child directed towards looking after and providing for the needs of another child or children, inter alia, feeding, nurturing, teaching and guiding (Manful & Manful, 2014).

Klerk's (2011) study on being old in times of AIDS focused on aging, caring and relating in northwest Tanzania. Although this study included 17 older men, only four were grandfathers caring for orphaned grandchildren, and the study did not specifically focus on grandfathers, hence offers little insights on the role of grandfathers in orphan care. Mugisha et al (2015) surveyed gender roles in the provision and receipt of care among older Ugandans. This study, however, did not specifically focus on grandfathers. Kachale's (2015) case study explored caring experiences and livelihood challenges of the elderly carers of orphans and vulnerable children in Chiradzulu in Southern Malawi. While Kachale's (2015) study included older men, none of them was a grandfather caring for orphans. Thus, although the few existing studies offer insights, there is need for more research that specifically focuses on grandfathers as carers of orphans.

The lack of research with and about grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in SSA may be attributed to gendered conception of care. In this region, grandmothers are traditionally accredited for the care of orphaned grandchildren because care is traditionally associated with women and feminine roles and responsibilities, including, inter alia, cooking, physical (hands-on) care (e.g. bathing younger children), fetching water and collection of firewood. This may explain why research and policy on grandparenting in the region often excludes grandfathers as they are not expected to undertake these chores, hence not considered as carers of children. However, it raises questions as to whether grandmothers bear the whole burden of care for their orphaned grandchildren as lone carers as it is often implicitly assumed in research, policy, and social protection programmes in SSA. Thus, this study set out to interrogate this gendered conception of care by exploring grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned in grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi. Specifically, the study focused on the following key research questions:

- 1) Who are the carers of orphans in rural Southern Malawi?
- 2) What role/place do grandfathers have in the care and upbringing of their orphaned grandchildren?
- 3) What are the livelihoods of grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren?
- 4) What social support is available for grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren?

## **1.5 EMPIRICAL/PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The findings of this study make an important theoretical and practical contribution to our understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in Malawi, and SSA more generally. Such knowledge is useful for social development policy more broadly, and social work practice with grandparents and orphans in particular. Community leaders, policymakers, and implementers of social programmes, such as social workers working with the government and local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on issues vis-à-vis grandparents and orphans in rural Malawi, may utilise the findings to inform their decisions. For instance, the findings may influence policymakers to expand their focus to grandfathers as additional carers of orphans. This may help in revisiting gendered social support in development of policies, programmes, and services for grandparents and orphans to incorporate the needs of grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren. Ultimately, this may help to improve the situations of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren who, as it is shown in this thesis, are among some of the neediest and poorest people in Malawi.

The use of intersectionality adds an important lens through which to understand how the interplay and intersections of various factors or social categories of difference (e.g. gender, age, culture, and poverty) influence grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren. Moreover, the focus on grandfathers taps into a much-neglected area of grandparenting research in SSA. Thus, this study not only adds knowledge about our understanding of grandfathers, but also raises awareness of this underresearched group of people. In doing so, the findings interrogate gendered conceptions of care (i.e. associating care with women and feminine roles and responsibilities/tasks) currently dominant in research and policy on grandparenting in this region and in other parts of the world (see chapter 2). Further, it is also envisaged that the findings of this study may raise social awareness about the role of grandfathers in orphan care, and initiate constructive debate about the issue in local and broader communities.

## **1.6 THESIS OVERVIEW**

Having laid out the context of this study, and its theoretical and practical significance to research, social policy, and programmes on grandparenting in SSA, this section provides an overview of the remainder of the thesis. **Chapter 2** develops the

thematic context outlined in chapter 1. Specifically, relevant literature on orphans, kinship care, and grandparenting in SSA is reviewed. The focus is on identifying the gaps in knowledge on grandparenting in SSA more generally, and on grandfathers more specifically. The chapter also lays out the conceptual framework for this study, namely intersectionality, focusing on how it has been applied to this study.

**Chapter 3** lays out the methodology for this study. The philosophical and theoretical positions of this study are explicitly described, focusing on how they informed data collection methods, analysis, and interpretation. The chapter also describes my positionality in this study, how rigour/trustworthiness was implemented, and the ethical challenges and dilemmas encountered during this study.

**Chapter 4** addresses research question 1. It identifies carers of orphans in the research communities in rural Malawi. It highlights that there are multiple carers of orphans, and grandfathers are among them. Thus, the chapter challenges the depiction of the grandmothers as lone carers in many of the existing research on grandparenting in Malawi and other regions of SSA. Further, the chapter also shows that culture, poverty, and number of orphans are important intersections that interact and influence the willingness of relatives to take in orphans and care for them, thus influencing pathways of orphan care in the research communities.

Having identified grandfathers as among the carers of orphans in rural Southern Malawi (chapter 4), **chapter 5** addresses research question 2. It explores the specific role/place of grandfathers in orphan care. The chapter demonstrates that grandfathers are at the epicentre of their orphaned grandchildren's lives as providers through securing their livelihoods. This is influenced by normative/cultural views about gender, hence can be situated within the broader masculinities in Malawi, and SSA more generally.

**Chapter 6** addresses research question 2. Thus, it continues to demonstrate the epicentredness of grandfathers in their orphaned grandchildren's lives by exploring their centrality in the formal education of their orphaned grandchildren. The chapter also shows that poverty may persuade some grandfathers to prioritise sponsoring their grandsons over granddaughters. This is based on patriarchy and the subordinate status of women and girls in the rural Malawian society. This

highlights how the intersections of poverty, culture, and gender influence grandfathers' decisions on educating their orphaned grandchildren.

**Chapter 7** explores the third role of grandfathers in their orphaned grandchildren's lives, namely intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values (i.e. informal education), thus addresses research question 2. Specifically, this role includes intergenerational transmission of moral, cultural, and religious values. The chapter demonstrates that the intersections of culture, religion, gender, and age influence how grandfathers fulfil this role.

**Chapter 8** is a continuation of the theme of intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values), hence addresses research questions 2. Specifically, the chapter focuses on intergenerational transmission of sexual education and gender. As with chapter 7, **chapter 8** demonstrates that the intersections of cultural views about gender, and age influence a grandfather's caregiving for orphaned grandchildren.

**Chapter 9** addressed research questions 3 and 4 by exploring the livelihoods of grandfathers to understand how they care for their orphaned grandchildren, focusing on social capital. The chapter shows that social support is limited, irregular, and gendered (i.e. targets grandmothers) due to gendered conceptions of care predominant in the Malawian society. Hence, for many grandfathers in the research communities, social support is unreliable, and in many cases, inaccessible. The chapter highlights how gender and culture intersect and influence access to social support among grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren.

Although much of the thesis centres on grandfathers' contribution to orphan care, the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren are characterised by reciprocities of care. Thus, **Chapter 10** focuses on this symbiotic relationship, thus relates to research question 4. Specifically, it explores orphaned grandchildren's productive and reproductive work, as well as other benefits grandfathers gain because of living with them. The chapter demonstrates that the dominant culture, and orphaned grandchildren's gender and age intersect and influence the nature/kind and volume of productive and reproductive work they undertake.

**Chapter 11** lays out the main conclusions of this study, the implications of the findings for new/further research, and the recommendations for social policy and

practice, particularly for grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren. The thesis concludes by reiterating the point that, as with grandmothers and other carers of orphan within kinship system (e.g. uncles, aunts, elder siblings), grandfathers play a vital role in the lives of their grandchildren. Thus, there is need for greater recognition of grandfathers alongside other carers of orphans, and their targeting in social policy and programmes to benefit and assist orphans, particularly to offset livelihood challenges facing grandfathers.

## **CHAPTER 2: ORPHANS AND GRANDPARENTING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the literature about orphans and grandparenting in SSA to situate the chapters on findings from the research conducted in rural Southern Malawi within the current and relevant scholarship. The chapter problematizes the definition of orphan by demonstrating the conceptual differences between local people, government, local and international NGOs and other charities. It demonstrates that the AIDS epidemic has increased the number of orphans in SSA. Kinship remains the primary care system for many orphans. However, the AIDS epidemic and other social transformations have challenged kinship care, and it appears to be waning. This has led to widespread non-voluntary grandparenting of orphans, often in vulnerable conditions. Despite this, much about the lives of grandparents in SSA remains unknown. The limited research available on grandparenting in SSA has almost exclusively focused on grandmothers and implied or generalised the findings to grandfathers. Thus, the chapter interrogates this tendency and responds to the need for research with and about grandfathers, including their caregiving for orphaned grandchildren. Further, the chapter also lays out the conceptual framework guiding this study, namely intersectionality (also called the intersectional framework). Specifically, the chapter shows how the use of intersectionality in this study aided our understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in the participating communities in rural Southern Malawi.

### **2.2 ORPHANHOOD IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

#### **2.2.1 Contestations about Conceptualisations of Orphanhood**

UNICEF and its global partners define an orphan as a child (i.e. an individual below 18 years) whose father, mother, or both have died (UNICEF, 2006, 2017a). This conceptualisation is common in many national survey reports (e.g. those by the National Statistical Office of Malawi), policy instruments, and published and unpublished research papers in Malawi, and many parts of SSA (e.g. see Subbarao & Coury, 2004; NSO & ICF Macro, 2011; NSO & ICF International, 2017; UNICEF, 2017a). Thus, many governments in SSA, donors, international and local NGOs, faith-based organisations (FBOs) and other charities, scholars, and social workers working with orphans continue to use this definition (Cheney, 2017). For instance,

the Government of Malawi defines an orphan as “a child with one or both parents who are dead” (NSO & ICF International, 2017: 14; see also GoM, 2003).

However, there are contestations regarding the appropriateness of this definition to the African context (Chirwa, 2002; Abebe 2005; Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Riley, 2014). Scholars have argued that notions of orphanhood embedded in the above definition do not match with the local knowledge, practices, experiences, and conceptions in Africa. The definition’s focus on parental death and child’s age fails to capture other equally important socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects of life in SSA that are key to how the local communities conceptualise an orphan (Chirwa, 2002; Freidus, 2010; Riley et al., 2011). For instance, Cheney (2017: 26; emphasis in original) notes that “African languages rarely have words that mean what *orphan* does in international development parlance.” Cheney (2017: 27) criticises the international organisations’ definition of orphan because it emphasises “static, biological definitions of kinship and orphanhood in contexts where traditionally, orphans are socially defined within a broad and pliable kin care network.”

Indeed, setting 18 years as a cut-off point overlooks the fact that in many African societies ‘adulthood’ is associated with life experiences rather than biological milestones. Thus, ‘adulthood’ may be attained prior to reaching the age of 18 years (Chirwa, 2002; Abebe & Aase, 2007; Riley, 2014). For instance, among Malawians, an individual who has gone through initiation is considered an ‘adult’ regardless of the age. Similarly, a married person is considered an ‘adult’ even when he/she is under 18 years old. Though still legally considered a child by the government and donors because of his/her age, such a person is expected by his/her family, friends, and the community to assume adult roles such as providing for their family, attending funeral ceremonies, entering initiation camps, and representing the family in various forums in the community. Thus, a person under the age of 18 who has undergone initiation and/or has/is married may not be considered an orphan because the society considers him/her an adult.

Further, there are also concerns that emphasis on biological stages of human development as a parameter for qualifying an orphan is problematic because a child ceases to be an orphan overnight upon attaining 18 years regardless of need of care (Chirwa, 2002; Meintjes & Giese 2006; van Dijk, 2008; Riley, 2013). However, in Malawi and in other regions of SSA, the term ‘orphan’ is almost exclusively

associated with socio-economic status, that is, “a lack of care and/or resources” (Meintjes and Giese, 2006: 422) rather than biological age. Thus, the official definition of an orphan excludes many young people from government interventions simply because they are 18 years or older despite having no parents and deserving welfare support (Chirwa, 2002; Meintjes & Giese 2006; Dijk, 2008; Riley, 2013).

Furthermore, conceptions of an orphan based on parental death can also antagonise cultural norms surrounding orphan care in Malawi and in other regions of SSA. It is offensive in some cultures in Malawi and much of SSA to call a child an ‘orphan’ when he/she has a surviving parent and/or the extended family caring for him/her. For instance, Mphande (2004: 158) comments that among many Malawians, “a child cannot be described as ‘orphan’ when one of the parents is still alive.” Similarly, Meintjes and Giese (2006: 422) report that among some people in South Africa, “it is not customary to identify a child as an orphan simply on the basis of the death of their biological parents, and it can be improper to do so.” Cheney (2017) agrees and comments that, among Ugandans, a child is considered an orphan only if they lose not only their father and mother, but also their aunts, uncles, and grandparents. Also, it appears the society in Malawi and much of SSA considers a person over 18 years as an orphan if they lack familial care and are destitute (Chirwa, 2002; Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Freidus, 2010; Riley, 2013). Thus, the equivalents of the term ‘orphan’ in many (if not all) African communities emphasise care, and orphanhood is reversible by a positive change in access to care (Chirwa, 2002; Meintjes & Giese, 2006). This contrasts the conceptualising of an orphan by governments and donors that considers orphanhood as an irreversible change of status after parental death.

In addition, Chirwa (2002; see also Cheney, 2017) explains that conceptualisations of orphanhood in Malawi and in other parts of SSA is constructed on the premise of social inclusions and/or exclusion. Freidus (2010: 55) agrees and states that, among many Malawians, the term ‘orphan’ [translated as *wamasiye* in *Chichewa*] inherently connotes “someone who is socially disconnected and isolated, with no one claiming ties or responsibility for their care and well-being, a situation that is relatively rare.” Thus, children may not be considered ‘orphans’ on the basis of parental death unless they are isolated, abandoned, or disconnected from the family and are lacking

kinship care, something that is rare in the Malawian society (Chirwa, 2002; Freidus, 2010) and in much of SSA (Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Cheney, 2017).

Evidently, significant differences exist in how an orphan is conceptualised by governments and donors versus the local people. UNICEF (2017) acknowledges that defining an orphan based on loss of one parent differs from how an orphan is conceived in many industrialized countries. In the industrialized countries, only a child who has lost both parents (rather than one parent) is categorised as an orphan (UNICEF, 2017a). This definition of orphanhood seems to match one of the definitions of an orphan by local people in Malawi and other parts of SSA as presented above, that a child is not considered an orphan if they have a surviving parent. However, while acknowledging the mismatch between local notions of an orphan and that of governments and donors in SSA, UNICEF clarifies that the definition used by governments and donors was adopted in mid-1990s as a response to the millions of parental deaths as a consequence of HIV/AIDS in this region and in other parts of the world that led to increasing numbers of orphans without one or both parents UNICEF (2017).

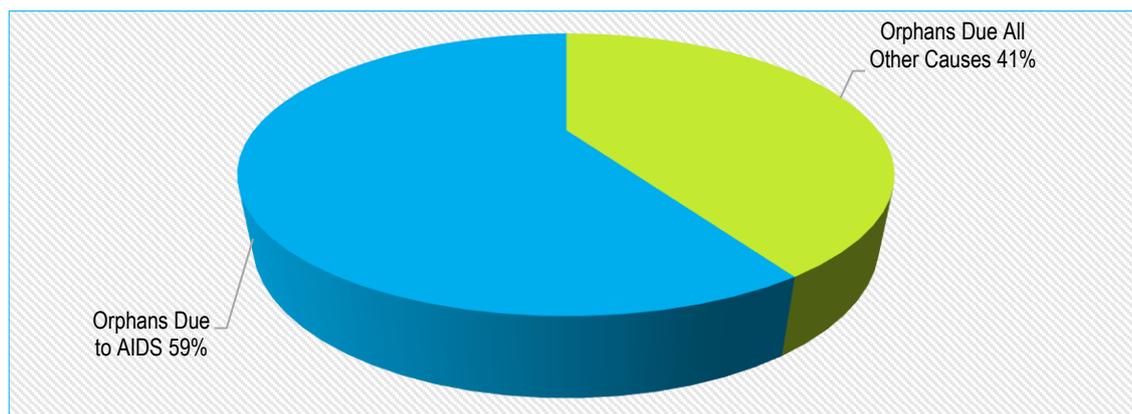
Because of this definitional mismatch, there have been calls to revisit official definitions of an orphan to accommodate local notions of orphanhood (Chirwa, 2002; Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Freidus, 2010; Riley, 2013). However, despite these contestations, the research in rural Southern Malawi laid out in the remaining chapters of this thesis has adopted the official definition of an orphan as provided by the Government of Malawi – i.e. an orphan is a child who has lost one or both parents (see GoM, 2003; NSO & ICF International, 2017). If the findings of this study may go on to inform policies and programmes for grandparents and orphans in rural Malawi, aligning the study with the official definition may make the findings more relevant to policymakers and social workers as they plan and implement interventions targeting grandparents who are caring for orphans.

### **2.2.2 Pathways of Orphan Care in Sub-Saharan Africa**

There are several contributors to children lacking parental care in SSA, including parental death (Skovdal et al., 2009; Evans, 2011a) and other factors resulting in the inability of parents to fulfil a parenting role due to mental incapacity, disability (Payne, 2012), incarceration (Ward & Eyber, 2009), alcoholism (van Dijk, 2008;

Payne, 2012), prostitution, labour migration (Adato et al., 2005; Mturi, 2012), and armed conflict (Subbarao & Coury, 2004; Ward & Eyber, 2009). Death and chronic illness of parents from HIV/AIDS is the greatest contributor to the large numbers of orphans in SSA (UNICEF, 2006; Parker & Short, 2009; NSO & ICF Macro, 2011; Riley, 2013). For instance, in Malawi, nearly 60% of orphans are due to AIDS alone (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1:** Proportions of orphans in Malawi by cause of parental death



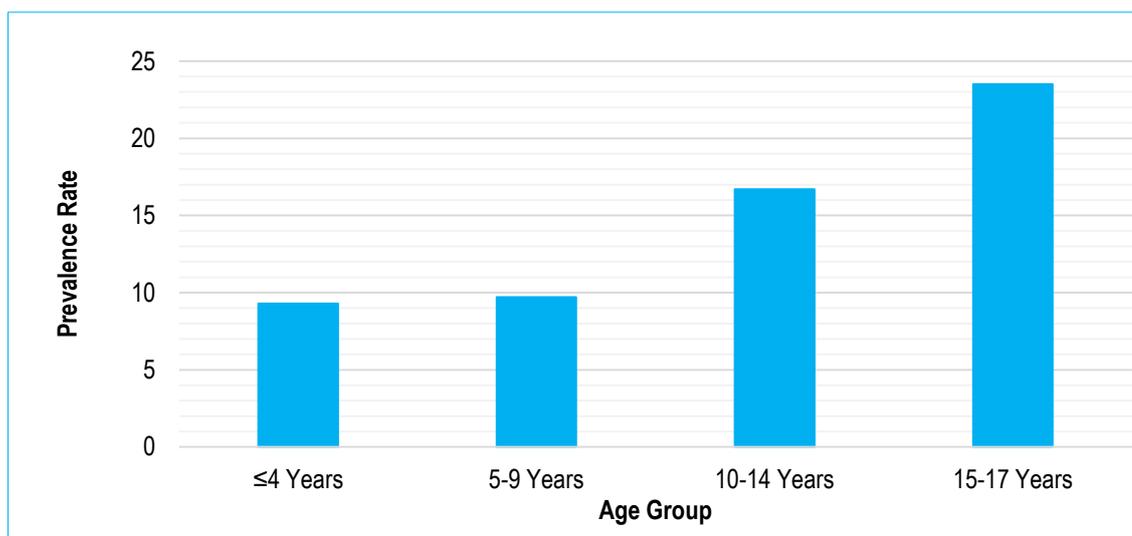
**Source:** NSO & ICF Macro, 2011.

As stated in chapter 1, pathways of care for orphans in SSA are multiple, dynamic, fluid, multifaceted, and unpredictable (van Blerk & Ansell, 2007a). Thus, orphans may move from one caring system to another, between and among those caring systems, as well as back and forth depending on their situations. However, much of the existing research shows that kinship care, which includes grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings in child-headed households/families (CHHs/CHF) and other relatives, is the primary caring system for the majority of orphans in SSA (UNICEF, 2006; Kidman & Heymann, 2009; Freidus, 2010; Richter & Norman, 2010). Besides kinship care, other pathways of orphan care in this region include street children, child labourers, foster care by non-kin, or institutions, and intercountry adoption.

### 2.2.3 Orphans in Malawi

Malawi has a population of 17.2 million people (52% female; 48% male), and children account for 51% of the population (NSO & ICF International, 2017; World Bank, 2017). Orphans account for 12% (1 million) of children in Malawi, and 14.1% of children in Zomba District (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Zomba District making it ranks sixth in the country on orphanhood prevalence. Orphanhood prevalence in Malawi is highest among children 10 years and above (Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2:** Orphanhood prevalence in Malawi by age group



**Source:** NSO & ICF International, 2017.

Orphanhood prevalence is generally similar for both male and female children (11.5%, and 11.3%, respectively) and place of residence (11.6% rural; 11.5% urban). Orphanhood prevalence is higher in Southern region (13.6%) than Central (9.6%) and Northern (10.8%) regions (NSO & ICF International, 2017). This reflects a higher HIV infection rates in the Southern Region than Central and Northern Malawi as shown in the previous chapter. In total, 33% of households in the country are caring for orphaned or foster children (NSO & ICF International, 2017).

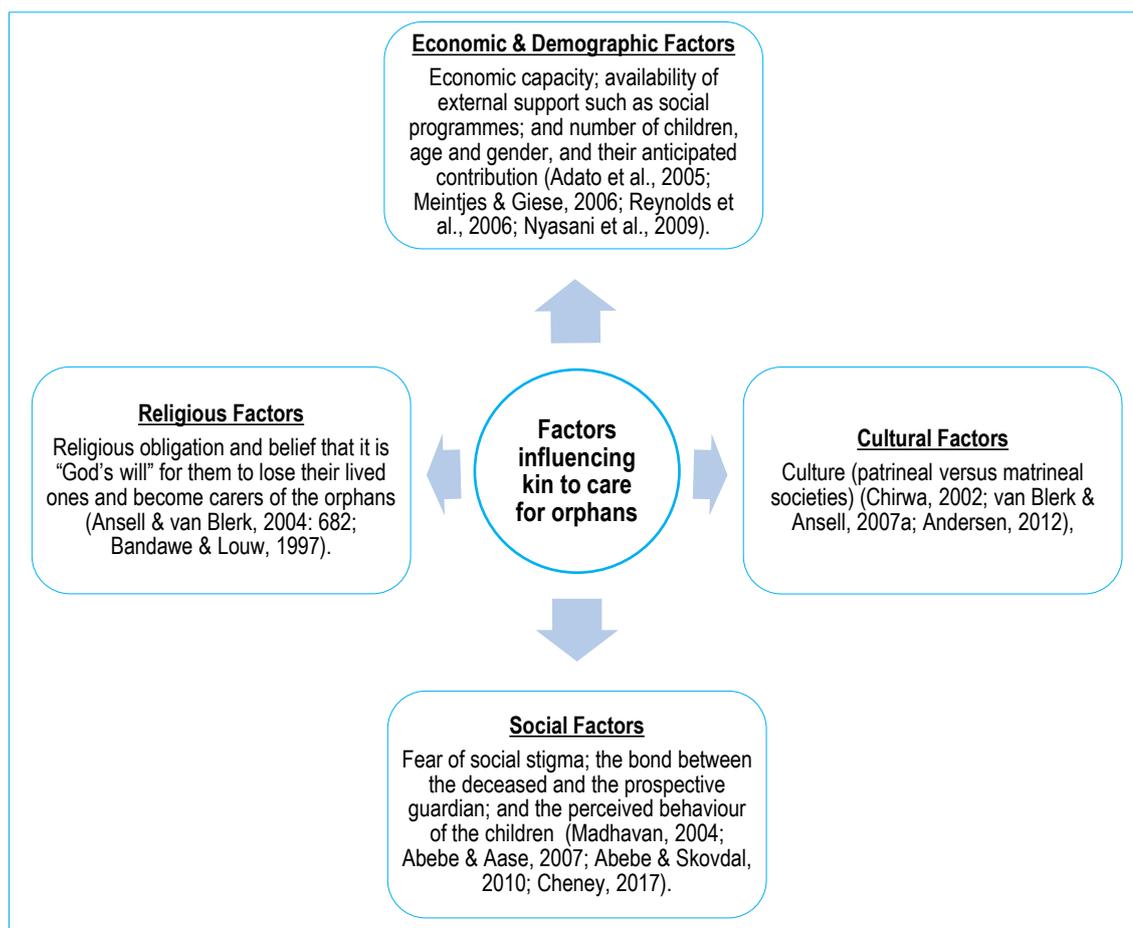
Generally, following the internationally used definitions elaborated in section 2.2.1, orphans are categorized as single orphans (children who have experienced death of one parent) or double orphans (children whom both parents have died) (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Single orphans can either be maternal orphans (i.e. mother dead only) or paternal orphans (i.e. father dead only) (NSO & ICF Macro, 2011). Based on this definition, there are currently over 140 million children globally regarded as orphans (UNICEF, 2017a). Of these, 125 million (89%) are single orphans, and 15.1 million (11%) are double orphans (UNICEF, 2017a). In Malawi, the number of single orphans is nearly four times (73%) that of double orphans (27%) (NSO & ICF International, 2017). This reflects the general trend in Southern Africa where double orphans are relatively few (NSO & ICF Macro, 2011; Hampshire et al., 2015). Surprisingly, although HIV prevalence is higher among women (13%) than men (8%), paternal orphans account for the largest proportion (57%) of single orphans in Malawi, probably because of men's shorter lifespan (NSO & ICF Macro, 2011).

### 2.3 KINSHIP CARE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Among Malawians and other Africans, there are widely held cultural attitudes that a child belongs not only to the biological parents, but also to the extended family (Chirwa, 2002; Eke, 2004; Freidus, 2010). Traditionally, Africans place a great importance on children. Children symbolize many things. They are like ‘gold’— a resource, “wealth in people” (Ansell & van Blerk, 2004: 677). They are assets in cultural and socio-economic production, and a source of security for parents as they age. Thus, the belief that the more children you have, the wealthier you are— albeit living in abject poverty— still exists in some cultures in Africa, including rural Malawi. Having children also symbolizes a transition into adulthood. For instance, among some communities in rural Malawi, having a child accords them the social status of being ‘an adult’ (as mentioned earlier) even if the person is under 18 years. Conversely, and as Bandawe and Louw (1997) note, for married people, not having a child makes one feel ‘socially incomplete’. Thus, “in the eyes of traditional Malawi society, a marriage is never considered complete unless it produces children” (Bandawe & Louw, 1997: 542).

This culture of viewing children as economic resource, source of security for parents in old age, and a symbol of adulthood is manifested in the duty of kin to care for orphans in SSA. The region is diverse and different cultures have different models of family life (Mphande, 2004; Oduaran & Oduaran, 2004), hence kinship care is seen/experienced as not homogeneous (Ansell & van Blerk, 2004; Madhavan, 2004). However, a commonality in many societies of this region, including Malawi, is that kinship care comprises extensive networks bonded by blood relations comprising of maternal and paternal relatives (Chirwa, 2002; Freidus, 2010; Richter & Norman, 2010). It may also comprise more distant relatives based on other factors such as marriage and social and economic support (Abebe & Aase, 2007; Riley, 2013). Thus, paternal and/or maternal kin (e.g. uncles, aunts, grandparents) form the “front-line” (Abebe & Aase, 2007: 2059) of care for orphans through what Chirwa (2002: 100) describes as the “economy of affection.” Nonetheless, the willingness of relatives to care for orphans varies greatly, depending on various social, cultural, economic, and religious factors, as presented below (**Figure 2.3**). Cheney (2017: 147) suggests that reason for the kin to take in and care for orphans may sometimes be based on “their own self-interest” rather than the children’s.

**Figure 2.3: Factors influencing kin to take in and care for orphans**



Notably, in the wake of the AIDS epidemic, taking in and caring for orphans in SSA appears to be predominantly crisis-led rather than voluntary (Subbarao & Coury, 2004; Adato et al., 2005; de Klerk, 2011; Hampshire et al., 2015). The death of relatives may persuade the extended family to assume the responsibility of caring for orphans. However, although kinship care remains the primary caring system for orphans in SSA, the significant numbers of orphans and the need for their care have raised concerns about the capacity of kin to meet this obligation. Subsequently, two schools of thought have emerged: one advancing the discourse that kinship care in SSA no longer has the capacity to care for the orphans; the other refuting such a discourse as misrepresentation of reality, as explored below.

### **2.3.1 Has HIV/AIDS Weakened Kinship Care in Sub-Saharan Africa?**

Whether the AIDS epidemic has changed the kin and care dynamics in SSA is a topic of contention (Cheney, 2017). On the one hand, there is a school of thought that contends that the economic, emotional, and social capacity of kinship care appear to have been diminished in the wake of HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS, acute poverty and other

contextual forces are challenging kinship care for orphans in Malawi and other regions of SSA (Chirwa, 2002; van Dijk, 2008). Kinship care appears to be weakening, and subsequently, altering caring and support practices (Foster, 2002; Ruiz-Casares, 2009; Riley, 2013). For instance, in the past, it was a widespread practice in Malawi and other regions of SSA for relatives to discuss the fate of orphans soon after a funeral had taken place and immediately take them in. This is no longer a usual tradition, and in some cases, families leave soon after the burial ceremony without discussing the fate of orphans because they are not willing to take the orphans into their household (Nyambedha et al., 2003; van Dijk, 2008). This has led some to conclude that kinship care for orphans has been overwhelmed and ruptured by HIV/AIDS, leading to what some have called the 'AIDS orphan crisis' (Richter & Norman, 2010; Shaibu, 2013).

However, others have observed that although the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic on society is undisputable, it is rather erroneous to overlook the heterogeneity existing among orphans, families, and communities in this region, to focus on negatives and overlook the strengths, capacities, resilience, and coping of kinship care (Chirwa, 2002; Abebe & Aase, 2007; Richter & Norman, 2010). It is equally incorrect to make "sweeping statements", "blanket generalizations", and "definitive statements" (Meintjes & Giese, 2006: 416) about the situation of orphans and the extended family in SSA as overly destitute. Kinship care in SSA may have been weakened, but not necessarily eroded (Richter & Norman, 2010; Hampshire et al., 2015). People have developed complex and innovative ways to address the impact of AIDS by abandoning strategies that appear not to work and adopting those that seem to work to ensure care of orphans (Chirwa, 2002; Freidus, 2010; Skovdal & Campbell, 2010). For instance, a study in Zomba, Southern Malawi by Peters et al (2008a) reports that people have found ways of dealing with the AIDS epidemic and orphan care (e.g. allocating orphans to different kin rather than one household), and strive to normalize it, rather than taking a defeatist approach. In other cases, children's migration has been used as a strategy for dealing with high numbers of orphans in need of care (Ansell & Young, 2002; Ansell & van Blerk, 2004). Thus, the 'AIDS crisis' discourse may have been as a result of moral panic or exaggeration by governments and NGOs to provoke response from donors.

Others have also cautioned against the binary view of kinship care in SSA as either waning or not fading, arguing that there is a continuum of change at play (Abebe & Aase, 2007; Cheney, 2017). Thus, Abebe and Aase (2007: 2062-2065), in the context of Ethiopia, propose four typologies, namely: *rupturing* – family in chronic poverty and destitution, and is overstretched by the AIDS epidemic, and is collapsing; *transient* – family not presently in destitution, but may easily sink into deprivation because of lacking a principle adult breadwinner; *adapting* – ordinary households with relative economic security, access to basic needs and social amenities (e.g. food, water), and general level of well-being; and *capable* – families with material and social and economic capacity to meet their livelihood needs such that they remain viable even in the absence of external support. In my view, unlike the binary descriptions of kinship care for orphans in SSA put forward by some scholars, these four typologies capture well the reality in Southern Malawi and other regions of SSA beyond Ethiopia.

Nonetheless, although kinship care remains the primary system for orphan care in SSA (de Klerk, 2011; Zagheni, 2011; Hampshire et al., 2015), it is widely agreed that its capacity has been weakened by the AIDS epidemic and other socio-economic transformations. One of the signs of this weakening is the growing lack of willingness and/or capacity by relatives (e.g. uncles and aunts) to take in orphans, and the consequential emergence of widespread non-voluntary grandparenting (Ruiz-Casares, 2009; Littrell et al., 2012). Although grandparents' roles in the lives of their grandchildren predates the onset of the AIDS epidemic, their role as primary carers has been precipitated by the hollowing out of adults in middle age group (Schatz & Ogunmefun, 2007; Ogunmefun et al., 2011; Schatz & Gilbert, 2014). For instance, studies in Southern Africa (e.g. Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and other regions of SSA (e.g. Kenya, Namibia, Uganda) indicate that grandparents are caring for over half of orphans (Mudege & Ezech, 2009; Ice et al., 2010; Porter et al., 2015). This suggests that although kinship care has not entirely disappeared in this region, it seems that it is actually the grandparents (rather than other relatives within kinship such as uncles and aunts) who are usually caring for many of the orphans (Foster, 2000; de Klerk, 2011). This has repercussions on grandparents due to their socio-economic situation and other factors affecting their daily lives, as discussed below.

## 2.4 GRANDPARENTING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

As stated above, grandparents' involvement with their family and grandchildren in SSA is neither new nor only a response to dominant social forces such as the AIDS epidemic. For instance, children are often sent to stay with grandparents for various other reasons including cultural transmission, service to them, companionship, and kinship solidarity (Alber, 2004; Whyte & Whyte 2004; Abebe & Aase, 2007; de Klerk, 2011; Block, 2014; Hampshire et al., 2015).<sup>7</sup> However, grandparents' involvement with their grandchildren as primary caregivers has increasingly been initiated by a pressing need to resolve crises. These crises are often precipitated by contextual factors such as morbidity and mortality caused by HIV/AIDS and other diseases, labour migration, and teenage pregnancies and premarital and non-marital childbearing (King, 2008; Ardington et al., 2010; Wild & Gaibie, 2014).

Grandparents living in communities severely affected by AIDS usually have little or no choice but to become [primary] caregivers of orphans because of lack of willingness and/or capacity by other relatives to take responsibility for orphans (van Blerk & Ansell, 2007a; Thabethe & Usen, 2012). For instance, in Thabethe and Usen's (2012) study on older women's caregiving experiences in South Africa and Nigeria, some of the participants expressed that the society expected them to care for their ailing children and grandchildren without any excuse whatsoever and regardless of what the grandparents preferred. Importantly, their caregiving may start long before their adult children die (which may also shape the future relationship) and continues until their grandchildren become independent or the grandparents themselves die (Ssengonzi, 2007; Boon et al., 2010).

Further, in many parts of SSA, deteriorating economies and the resulting proliferation of rural impoverishment have led to increased internal and cross-border labour migration to cities for economic opportunities (Dodson, 2000; Hampshire et al., 2015). Although labour migration is not new in SSA, its impact on grandparents, particularly those living in communities affected by AIDS and poverty, cannot be overlooked. Labour migration is affecting grandparents in two major ways: Firstly, many people who migrate to cities often leave their children with

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<sup>7</sup> Other reasons are outlined in chapter 5.

grandparents in rural communities (Whyte et al., 2004). This may be burdensome for some grandparents because although some people may send remittances, finance is not the only burden of care. Secondly, those who take their children with them to the city tend not to visit their parents frequently. This creates a sense of moral loss because grandparents may feel the social value of involvement with their grandchildren is not honoured (Alber, 2004; Ingstad, 2004). Thus, both HIV/AIDS and migration create a sense of frustration for grandparents such that “instead of enjoying dignity and respect, grandparents face loss, overwhelming responsibilities, and lack of resources” (Whyte, 2004: 4). Thus, despite their vulnerability (discussed below), grandparents in many rural communities of SSA, including Malawi largely assume the care of orphans out of necessity rather than choice.

#### **2.4.1 Vulnerability of Older People in Sub-Saharan Africa**

The Government of Malawi recognizes that older people in rural communities in the country are generally vulnerable persons (NSO, 2010, 2012a, 2014).<sup>8</sup> In Malawi, 81% of older people have no any formal education qualification (GoM, 2010a). Consequently, many are outside formal employment, and are extremely poor (GoM, 2010a). Ninety-four percent of them live in rural areas, many (80%) almost entirely depending on subsistence farming (GoM, 2010a; NSO, 2010; Kapulula, 2015) and foraging wild foods such as mushroom, fruits, insects, and plants, particularly during the rainy season. This suggests that caring for their orphaned grandchildren may be a burden for grandparents in such situations despite the gains they obtain from living with them (see chapter 10).

The vulnerable situation of the elderly in Malawi resembles that of other rural communities in many parts of SSA and the Global South more widely. Numerous micro-level and macro-level socio-economic challenges in this region create and exacerbate impoverished conditions, hence proliferating the vulnerability of older people. These challenges include HIV/AIDS, poverty and material deprivation, poor health, social exclusion, ageism, stigma associated with suspicions of witchcraft or HIV/AIDS, lack of social support, and widespread labour migration of younger

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<sup>8</sup> In this thesis, older people are defined as individuals aged 50 years and above. Scholars researching ageing in SSA usually use age 50 years and above as the marker of older people because of the shorter life expectancy as well as social definitions as conceptualised by the local people (e.g. see Ssengonzi, 2007, 2009; Kachale, 2015).

adults to the cities which often result in increased growth of nuclear families, fragmentation of generational relations, and growing inadequacy of kin support for older people that traditionally and historically characterized African social relations (Aboderin & Ferreira, 2008; Nabalamba & Chikoko, 2011; UNDP, 2014).

Further, like many other carers of orphans in SSA, grandparents (or orphans) may receive little or no support from relatives, the community, and state-provided welfare safety nets (Foster, 2007; Littrell et al., 2012; Njororai & Njororai, 2013). For instance, state-provided welfare safety nets are usually limited except in a few countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, and South Africa that have older-age pension schemes and child support grants and/or foster care grants for orphans (Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Nyasani et al., 2009; Tamasane & Head, 2010; Shaibu, 2013). These programmes are crucial for grandparents and orphans because they provide a lifeline for carers with economic challenges by mitigating financial and emotional burdens. For instance, the old-age pension system benefits not only older people but also orphans and others around them (Schatz & Ogunmefun, 2007; Schatz & Gilbert, 2014). However, in many parts of SSA welfare safety nets are in most cases underdeveloped, limited, and not universal, hence unreliable (Foster, 2007; Kidman & Heymann, 2009; Njororai & Njororai, 2013).

In Malawi, there are no universal old age pension schemes, child support or foster care grants. Social welfare programmes from government and key development partners (e.g. DfID, FAO, Save the Children, UNICEF, World Bank, and WFP) available in the country include the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) Programme, subsidized agricultural inputs through the Farm Inputs Subsidies Programme (FISP), the school feeding programmes, free food rations (e.g. during natural disasters such as famine, floods), and other public works programmes such as food for work (WFP, 2009; Miller et al., 2011). However, unlike the situation in other regions of SSA (e.g. cited above), these welfare safety nets are in most cases irregular due to limited funds, not universally available in all communities and to every deserving person, and are marred by widespread fraud and corruption at both the grassroots and national levels (see Chilowa & Devereux, 2001; Baltzer & Hansen, 2011; Kato & Greeley, 2016; Basurto et al., 2017). Consequently, support from these social programmes hardly benefit more than a very few grandparents and/or orphans. Thus, grandparents

raising orphans must fend for themselves even though their livelihoods are often challenging due to being mainly dependence on rainfed agriculture (see chapter 9).

Furthermore, many governments in SSA, including Malawi, have formulated policies for improving the lives of orphans (Foster, 2007; Kidman & Heymann, 2009). For instance, in Malawi, the National Policy on Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2003, the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2005-2009, the Extended Plan of Action 2010-2011, and the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act 2010 are all designed to alleviate the sociocultural and socio-economic problems children, including orphans, encounter in their lives (Republic of Malawi & The World Bank, 2006; UNICEF, 2011). However, little measurable impact has materialized from these policy instruments (Republic of Malawi & The World Bank, 2006; Kidman & Heymann, 2009). Thus, the absence or limited support from family and/or community members in Malawi and many parts of SSA compounded by the lack of, or limited availability of, state-provided welfare safety nets means that grandparents are left with the overwhelming responsibility to care for orphans. This challenges their ability to adequately care for orphans (van Dijk, 2008), and may compromise their own health and well-being and have 'spill-over' impacts on their grandchildren.

#### **2.4.2 Caregiving for Orphaned Grandchildren: Bitter-Sweet?**

Research on caregiving by grandparents in SSA indicates that it has physical, financial, emotional and psychosocial benefits for the caregiver. Caring for grandchildren (including orphans) may bring a sense fulfilling moral obligations or perceived traditional roles. This may result in a sense of pride and purpose in life, emotional closeness, the strengthening of kinship ties, and reciprocal rewards for grandparents and grandchildren (Ingstad, 2004; Whyte & Whyte, 2004; Mugisha et al., 2015; Schatz & Seeley, 2015). For instance, Littrell et al (2012a) found that, among grandparents in Malawi, caring for grandchildren brings positive emotions such as self-worth, joy, pride, and satisfaction. At the same time, grandparenting is associated with reduced depressive symptoms and enhanced prosocial behaviours among children, as noted in studies in South Africa (Parker & Short, 2009; Thabethe & Usen, 2012).

Even though grandparenting is associated with these rewards, the challenges grandparents meet and the resulting negative impacts on their lives and those around them cannot be disregarded. Although some evidence suggests caregivers are not in poorer health than their counterparts (e.g. see Ainsworth & Filmer 2002; Dayton & Ainsworth, 2004; Ice et al., 2008, 2010), numerous studies indicate otherwise. For instance, studies in Malawi and other parts of SSA (e.g. Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda) have consistently shown that grandparenting is associated with stressful situations (e.g. increased financial strain), physical and emotional demands, and general poor health over time (Oburu & Palmérus, 2005; Munthree & Maharaj, 2010; de Klerk, 2011; Schatz & Gilbert, 2014).

Further, a study in Malawi observed that poor health and wellbeing among grandparents is likely to worsen where existing conditions increase their vulnerability, for instance, in communities that experience perennial problems, including food insecurity and acute poverty (Littrell et al., 2011). Given the synergy of HIV/AIDS, poverty, and chronic food insecurity, or the new variant famine in Malawi (Masanjala, 2007; Robson et al., 2007; Hajdu et al., 2009; Miller et al., 2011; Mambo, 2016), particularly in rural households, it raises important questions about the health of grandparents such as grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren. Moreover, in some circumstances, caring for grandchildren orphaned by AIDS may bring social stigma and discrimination to the caregiver (e.g. grandparents) and the children (Howard et al., 2008; Ogunmefun et al., 2011).

Furthermore, there is some evidence suggesting gender differences regarding the negative impact of caring responsibilities. Studies indicate that caring responsibilities seem to have a negative impact on men more than on women because men encounter challenges adjusting to their new caregiving roles and have fewer social resources compared to women (Mudege & Ezeh, 2009; Ice et al., 2008, 2011). This raises concerns about the situation of grandfathers who are caring for orphans in single-grandparent households. Nonetheless, despite these challenges, grandparents are not passive. They engage in various strategies to mitigate the challenges, for instance, by diversifying their livelihoods (see chapter 9). Importantly, personal assets, social and spiritual capital also play a significant role in mitigating some of these challenges, as explored below.

### **2.4.3 Coping Mechanisms: Social and Spiritual Capital and Personal Assets**

The availability of material and immaterial resources pertinent to a unique situation both within the immediate and the extended family, and beyond, is crucial to how grandparents in SSA cope with caregiving challenges (Ardington et al., 2010; Mhaka-Mutepfa et al., 2014). Often, grandparents adopt multiple strategies involving tapping from various resources available in their social milieu, as well as utilizing personal assets. For instance, studies in South Africa found that grandparents form and actively participate in support groups where they share their experiences and offer each other friendship, emotional, financial, moral, and practical support (Kiggundu & Oldewage-Theron, 2009; Nyasani et al., 2009). Studies in Botswana and Uganda have reported that grandparents use spirituality (faith in God and prayer) to deal with the adversities of their caregiving role (Hodge & Roby, 2011; Shaibu, 2013). Also, some grandparents find material and psychosocial support from religious institutions (e.g. counselling and material support from their church). This signifies the importance of spiritual capital in times of need.

In addition, grandparents may use personal assets such as having positive appraisal of their situation and developing coping skills to offset the adversities of caregiving (Mhaka-Mutepfa et al., 2014). For instance, it is common for grandparents in Malawi to view their orphaned grandchildren as a source of comfort and consolation — a substitute and connection to their deceased child (see chapter 10; see also de Klerk, 2011). Similar findings have been recently reported in Uganda (Cheney, 2017). Thus, grandparents may appraise their situation as beneficial and supportive, rather than labelling it as adverse.

## **2.5 GRANDFATHERHOOD: ROLE AND IDENTITY OF GRANDFATHERS IN MALAWI**

As with grandparenthood (i.e. being a grandparent; *ugogo* in Chichewa) in general, grandfatherhood (i.e. being a grandfather) is a socially constructed role and identity (Thiele & Whelan, 2005; Tarrant, 2012; Stgeorge & Fletcher, 2014). Specifically, grandfatherhood “involves myriad social expectations, behaviours, and role-related meanings or identity, age, and relationship with grandchildren” (Thiele & Whelan, 2005; Whyte et al., 2008; de Klerk, 2011). Subsequently, grandfatherhood influences how men perform and construct their identities in their everyday life (Bates, 2009; Tarrant, 2012). For instance, as a grandfather, “a man defines who he is, where he fits, what is expected of him, what his hopes and desires are for others, and the

socially and culturally constructed rules of what to do and not do” (Bates, 2009: 335). Thus, grandfatherhood encompasses a biological stage/time in the lifecourse (i.e. age), a historical generation/time (i.e. generation cohorts), and a social time (i.e. everyday life experiences with other people such as grandchildren and other kin) (de Klerk, 2011), all of which result in a particular social role and identity (Thiele & Whelan, 2005; Bates, 2009; Tarrant, 2012). Specific studies on the role and identity of men in Malawi, including grandfathers, are lacking (see section 2.6), hence, below, I discuss these aspects of grandfatherhood and extrapolate them to the Malawian context to illuminate the role and identity of grandfathers in rural Southern Malawi.

### **2.5.1 Biological time**

Grandfatherhood is often associated with old age identity resulting from the physical changes as people grow older (de Klerk, 2011). Grandfatherhood may vary from men less than 50 years old with children’s children (i.e. grandchildren) to those over 90 years old. In SSA, age 50 and above is usually used as a marker of old age identity (e.g. see Ssengonzi, 2007, 2009; Kachale, 2015), hence associated with grandparenthood. However, age 50 may not be an accurate marker for grandfatherhood in Malawi as some men may become grandfathers before reaching the age of 50. For instance, due to early marriages and early childbearing, it is not uncommon for men in their late 30s in rural Malawi to have grandchildren. Despite this, among many Malawians, grandfatherhood (and grandparenthood more generally) is often associated with images of old age, frailty, and vulnerability (see chapters 2 and 9; see also de Klerk, 2011 for similar observations in neighbouring Tanzania). Thus, grandfatherhood in Malawi is often defined based on age, as well as having grandchildren.

### **2.5.2 Historical generation (generation as cohorts)**

As with grandparenthood in general, grandfatherhood is also associated with the notion of generation cohort or historical generation (i.e. the location of age cohorts within history). Historical generation poses that “people born in the same period of time may share common experiences, potentials and destinies” (Whyte et al, 2008: 5). Subsequently, generational cohorts may have different life experiences (e.g. social/cultural, economic, political). Such differences are reflected in how different generations “perceive and relate to each other within the family, the wider community and on a more national level” (Twum-Danso, 2010a: 352). Thus, as

Whyte et al (2004: 4) note, intergenerational relationships in Africa, including in Malawi, “must be understood in historical time and in relation to patterns of change” (see also Whyte et al., 2008; Twum-Danso, 2010a).

In the case of contemporary rural Malawi, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and modernity create intergenerational differences that typify the significance of generation cohort in the contested lives of grandfathers and their grandchildren. Specifically, grandfathers (as with grandparents in general) are identified/viewed as individuals who were born in a different generation, hence have different worldviews to that of other generations born after them such as their grandchildren. For instance, many grandfathers in rural Malawi who were not exposed to technologies such as videos and mobile phones during their childhood, youth, and adulthood (because of unavailability) face the reality of coming to terms with how these technologies are changing the landscape of children and young people’s lives such as easy access to information on sexuality, and subsequent disinterest in traditions such as initiations (see chapters 7 and 8). Thus, historical generation provides the lens through which to understand the lives of grandfathers and their grandchildren (e.g. intergenerationality), which also illuminates grandfathers’ social role and identity.

### **2.5.3 Genealogical relation of kinship**

Whyte et al (2008: 2) state that “relations make persons” because “people come into being through their relations with others.” Kinship is one of the examples of the important human relations in SSA. For instance, writing from the West Africa, van der Geest (2004: 56) contends that “kinship is the first social ordering in which people find themselves and is therefore an important determinant of a sense of ‘belonging’.” Thus, kinship is enacted through relatedness (Whyte et al., 2004), that is, “the experiences and practices of relations between generations” (de Klerk, 2011: 7). It includes “giving and receiving, mutual dependence, reciprocal exchanges concerning material, cognitive and emotional matter” (van der Geest, 2004: 56).

Similarly, grandfatherhood is not only a biological stage and a historical time (generation cohort), but importantly, an example of relatedness within the context of kinship (Whyte et al., 2004; de Klerk, 2011). It constitutes the relationships that grandfathers forge with their children and grandchildren, for instance, through everyday interaction, reciprocities and emotional closeness (Whyte et al., 2004,

2008; Bates, 2009; de Klerk, 2011). Whyte et al (2008: 3) conceptualise this as “genealogical relation of kinship.” Specifically, genealogical relation of kinship encompasses the “links between parents, children, and children’s children fixed upon descent, exchanges (reciprocities), filiation and succession, and the continuity across generations, and the ways in which it is ensured” (Whyte et al, 2008: 3). It also includes “attitudes and sentiments” and “the ambiguity and tension inherent in relations between adjacent generations with the warmth and informality between alternate generations” (Whyte et al, 2008: 3). Drawing on this, relatedness is thus another aspect that defines grandfatherhood in Malawi, hence grandfathers are traced/identified through kinship more generally, and their relationship with grandchildren more specifically.

### **2.5.3.1 Experiences of grandfathers in different kinship configurations**

According to Whyte et al (2004: 3), “a key position in the concept of relatedness is the perception of 'biological' substances as symbolising relatedness between people.” Thus, kinship is usually constructed through blood relations interlaced in the everyday practices among a people that are related by blood and/or marriage. Since kinship is usually based on blood relations, grandfathers in different configurations of kinship (i.e. matrilineal versus patrilineal kinships) may have different relatedness with grandchildren and other kin. This is because grandchildren “are placed differently in relation to grandparents” in matrilineal and patrilineal cultures (Whyte et al., 2004: 2; see also Ingstad, 2004).

Specifically, in matrilineal cultures, a husband is expected to move and live with his wife among her relatives in her natal village, a practice called *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage] among Malawians (Phiri, 1983; Peters, 1997, 2010; Kachapila, 2006; Peters et al., 2008a, 2008b; Kishindo, 2010b). A husband practicing *chikamwini* is called *mkamwini*, which literally means ‘someone who belongs to elsewhere and can be claimed by someone else somewhere else rather than in the present place he is living’ by marriage (see chapters 6 and 9 for further discussion).<sup>9</sup> Thus, a grandfather’s children and grandchildren belong to the maternal lineage (i.e. his

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<sup>9</sup> This is often differentiated with *chitengwa* [virilocal/patrilocal marriage] which involves a wife living at the husband's place among his relatives.

wife and her relatives), and he is not considered as belonging there (see chapters 6 and 9). This may influence the relationships that he forges with his children, grandchildren, and the maternal kin, as well as community members. For instance, grandfathers in matrilineal societies may have less influence over their grandchildren because they belong to their grandmother's lineage. Thus, it is usually the uncles who exercise more power/authority and control over the children despite the grandfather raising the children.

Notably, the negative experiences grandfathers have/undergo in matrilineal families may also be replicated at the community level. Despite spending much of their lives in the community, grandfathers may still be viewed as not belonging there. Thus, grandfathers in matrilineal communities may face challenges of belongingness not only at family level, but also at community level. For instance, Kachapila (2006: 327, 328) states that men practicing *chikamwini* in Malawi are considered as "marginal members" of the community, and "may have limited access to networks of support and solidarity in their wives' villages." This resonates with de Klerk's (2011) observations in neighbouring Tanzania. de Klerk (2011) notes that unlike grandfathers in patrilineal societies, grandfathers in matrilineal may have less land, hence less influence and fewer resources that link them to their grandchildren within the context of inheritance. Thus, matrilineality may disadvantage some grandfathers which ultimately defines their role and identity.

Contrary to the situation in matrilineal cultures described above, in patrilineal cultures, it is the wife who follows her husband and live with him among his people. Subsequently, the children and grandchildren belong to the grandfather and his people. This may create amicable kinship relations for grandfathers as they are considered as belonging to not only the kinship network, but also as elders of the extended family. This may also be the case at community level as grandfathers are viewed as natives and elders of the community. Thus, grandfathers in patrilineal communities in rural Malawi may have more kinship and community support compared to those in matrilineal communities. For instance, in patrilineal cultures, the grandfather may have control and power over his grandchildren because they belong to him (see also Whyte & Whyte, 2004 for similar observation in Uganda).

Despite these differences, genealogical relation of kinship still forms an important aspect through which a grandfather's role and identity can be understood both in

matrilineal and patrilineal cultures. Thus, besides biological stage and historical generation (generation cohort), the identity of grandfathers in Malawi can also be traced through their relationships with grandchildren and other kin in their everyday life. In addition, as is the case in other societies/cultures around the world, the role and identity of grandfathers in Malawi can also be traced through their role in their grandchildren's lives through their generative work (see Bates, 2009; Bates & Goodsell, 2013; see also Thiele & Whelan, 2005; StGeorge & Fletcher, 2014; Schrijner, 2017), as discussed below.

#### **2.5.4 Generative Grandfathering**

Generativity refers to “the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1950: 231, as cited in Bates & Goodsell, 2013: 28) by “caring for and nurturing offspring” (Bates, 2009: 336; see also Thiele & Whelan, 2005; Tarrant, 2012). Grandfathering refers to “the things a man does and does not do in the process of enacting his identity, perceptions, and goals about grandfatherhood” (Bates, 2009: 336). Thus, generative grandfathering is founded on the premise that “humans are relational beings and recognize opportunities to teach, care, and nurture their kin” (Bates 2009: 347). Specifically, it poses that engaged/involved grandfathers actively and willingly put forth physical and emotional energy/effort, time, and material resources to care for, serve, meet the developmental needs and interests of their grandchildren, and build and maintain amicable intergenerational relationships that are relationally, physically, morally, emotionally, psychologically and intellectually beneficial to both parties and other kin (Bates, 2009; see also Thiele & Whelan, 2005; Bates & Goodsell, 2013). Not all grandfathers, however, are engaged/involved in their grandchildren's lives. Some grandfathers are passive or disengaged.

Likewise, although aspects of generative grandfathering are all positive, not all grandfathering is positive. There is also dysfunctional and destructive grandfathering that may have negative impact on children, for instance, violent, oppressive, harsh or abusive grandfathering. For instance, the corporal punishment that some grandfathers use for moral socialisation of their grandchildren in rural Malawi (see chapter 7) may be detrimental to children's wellbeing and development. Thus, there are different ways of being a grandfather. This may be construed based on doing (engaged) or not doing (disengaged/passive) certain aspects of

grandfathering. Nonetheless, generative grandfathering is a useful concept crucial for understanding grandfatherhood in many societies across the world, including in Malawi.

Although the concept of generative grandfathering originated from the Eurocentric and North American contexts, particularly from the extensive work of James Bates and his colleagues (Bates, 2009; Bates & Goodsell, 2013; see also Thiele & Whelan, 2005; Tarrant, 2012), some of its aspects can be applied to understanding engaged/involved grandfathers outside the Western context such as in Malawi. For instance, grandfathers who participated in this study live with and care for their orphaned grandchildren, hence can be seen as engaged in many of the aspects of generative grandfathering. Thus, drawing on/from the concept of generative grandfathering, involved grandfathers in Malawi (e.g. those who participated in this study) engage in a number of generative work. Firstly, they play a role in lineage work. Grandfathers are viewed by their families and the wider society as wardens of culture, fountains of wisdom, and family historians connecting the past and present, hence key to intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values. Grandfathers are also custodians of family identity. For instance, they use *nthano* [folktales] to teach their grandchildren about family heritage and what it means to be a family to forge lasting and trusting relationships (see chapter 7). Further, grandfathers mentor their grandchildren in various practical knowledge and skills through socialisation by using the knowledge and skills they accumulated over their life to prepare them for adulthood (see chapters 7 and 8). Furthermore, grandfathers make investments in their grandchildren's lives, for instance, through transferring social, human, and financial capitals to meet their grandchildren's interests and needs such as food, education, and health (see chapters 5 and 6). In addition, grandfather also play a crucial role in spiritual work by, for instance, providing advice, encouragement, and emotional support during times of need, as well as socialising grandchildren into religion (see chapter 7). Lastly, grandfathers are also stewards of moral character. They are a moral guide/compass, constructing and shaping their grandchildren's character and personality into what is socially expected and acceptable, for instance, through disciplining (see chapter 7). Thus, generative grandfathering is another important lens through which the role and identity of grandfathers in Malawi (as is elsewhere) is constructed and can be understood.

Notably, the different experiences of grandfathers in matrilineal versus patrilineal cultures outlined previously suggest that some of the generative grandfathering work (e.g. lineage and family identity) may be encouraged in patrilineal cultures, but hindered/inhibited and/or limited in matrilineal communities. For instance, it is not uncommon for a grandfather in matrilineal cultures in rural Malawi to be told not to 'infiltrate' and 'contaminate' his wife's culture by introducing his grandchildren to a 'strange' culture (see chapter 7). Such limitations/restrictions may influence what a grandfather can and/or cannot do for their grandchildren, for instance, what he can and/or cannot teach his grandchildren about culture and family heritage.

Thus, although some aspects of the role and identity of grandfather and generative work may be similar in matrilineal and patrilineal cultures, there are also notable differences (i.e. emanating from constructions of 'belongingness') that affect their lives, including what they can and/or cannot do for their grandchildren, as well as their relationship with grandchildren, other kin, and the wider community. Nonetheless, as will be demonstrated in chapters 5 through 9, generative grandfathering is still an important aspect of the grandfather's role and identity in rural Malawi, just like biological stage, historical generation (generation cohort), and genealogical relation of kinship are. This is particularly important in the wake of HIV/AIDS whereby grandfathers are playing the role of grandparents and parents unexpectedly and differently in the absence of the middle generation. Taken together, all these aspects of grandfatherhood provide a nuanced understanding of what it means to be a grandfather in the Malawian context, such as the communities visited during this study in Zomba District in rural Southern Malawi.

## **2.6 STATUS OF RESEARCH ON GRANDPARENTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

Despite grandparents being the most common carers of orphans within a predominantly kinship care, as well as encountering important challenges as they care for orphans, research about grandparenting in SSA remains scant (Nabalamba & Chikoko, 2011; Apt, 2012). Although a few existing studies offer important insights about grandparenting in SSA, the focus has mostly been on the younger generation of grandchildren/orphans and much about the everyday lives of the older generation of grandparents remains unexamined. Oduaran (2014: 170) recently observed that "...Africa has gained so much strength from the traditional influence of grandparents on their grandchildren, but research has not zeroed in on

such pillars of strength.” Thus, the need for research about grandparenting in this region is of paramount importance.

Also, the proportion of older people (50 years and above) in SSA is growing remarkably (Ferreira & Kowal, 2008; Nabalamba & Chikoko, 2011; Tam & Yap, 2016). For instance, it was less than 5% of the total population of SSA in 2002, but is projected to reach 5.5% by 2025 and 10% by 2050 (UNFPA, 2008; Apt, 2012). In Malawi, older people accounted for approximately 5% of the population in 2010, and this was expected to increase due to increased lifespan, owing to improved health despite the impact of HIV/AIDS (NSO, 2010; NSO & ICF Macro, 2011). This reflects part of the ageing populations and increasing life expectancy, which is a global trend. Thus, more people are now expected to live into old age (Aboderin & Ferreira, 2008; Apt, 2012) and assume challenging responsibilities such as caring for orphans. Yet, we understand little about their everyday lives such as their role as grandparents of orphaned grandchildren. This warrants more research on grandparenting in SSA, and this study responds to this knowledge gap.

### **2.6.1 Research about Grandfathers in the Global North and Global South**

Research on grandfathers’ caregiving, practices, and experiences within families remains significantly limited in both the Global North (Bullock, 2006; Mann, 2007; Lesperance, 2010) and Global South. Several researchers in the Global North have commented that although grandfathers are part of the grandparent dyad, much of the existing research and knowledge on grandparenting has a matrifocal tilt (i.e. is largely skewed towards grandmothers) and little is known about the lives of grandfathers (Mann, 2007; Bates, 2009; Mann & Leeson, 2010; Tarrant, 2012; Bates & Taylor, 2013; Mann et al., 2016). For instance, Tarrant (2013: 193; see also Tarrant, 2012) notes that grandfathers’ “situated practices of care in the family have rarely been acknowledged or critically examined.” Mann and Leeson (2010: 236) observe that “explicit investigations of grandfathers have been minimal.” Mann (2007: 281) asserts that there is “a paucity of information regarding the specific roles of grandfathers within contemporary families.” Many researchers argue that the lack of research with and about grandfathers can be attributed to the gendering of grandparenting research (i.e. a focus on grandmothers). For instance, Mann (2007: 281) notes that “grandparent research has focused primarily upon grandmothers, either explicitly, or implicitly as the primary participant within the grandparent

couple.” Knudsen (2012: 232) agrees and states that “the idea of grandparent is often implicitly synonymous with grandmother.” Bates (2009: 333) notes that “in studies where grandfathers are included, they are often a small minority of the sample and their data are either compared against or combined with grandmothers’ data and reported as findings from ‘grandparents’.” Bates (2009: 333) further states that “a search of the literature supplied only six peer-reviewed studies published since 1985 solely on traditional grandfathers, and only three peer-reviewed articles existed solely on caregiving grandfathers.” Stelle et al (2010: 686) agree and contend that “when grandfathers have been examined, there has been a tendency for them to be seen through a feminized conception of grandparenting derived from the focus on the experience of grandmothering.” They observe that:

In this way, grandfatherhood has often been examined with grandmothers as the point of reference, comparing how grandfathers are similar to and different from grandmothers. This has often resulted in the application of a deficit model where grandfathers are not only seen as different, but as less important, less active in intergenerational relations, and offering less to grandchildren (Stelle et al., 2010: 686).

While this lack of research with grandfathers largely epitomises research on grandparenting in the Global North, it also mirrors the current state of research and knowledge on grandparenting in the Global South, particularly in SSA. Like in the Global North, this paucity of research on grandfathers in SSA may be attributed to gendered conceptions of care. Care is often associated with feminine roles and responsibilities/tasks (e.g. fetching water, cooking, bathing children, emotional support), which are, in many cases, undertaken by grandmothers. Subsequently, there is generally a conventional and implied assumption that, within the context of HIV/AIDS, grandmothers are increasingly the common primary carers of orphans and other grandchildren (Ardington et al, 2010; Schatz et al., 2013; Mugisha et al., 2015). For instance, AIDS is sometimes referred to as the ‘grandmothers’ disease’ (Wilson & Adamchack, 2001; Oppong, 2006; Shaibu, 2013) or ‘grandmothers’ burden’ (Cheney, 2017: 135) because, although it is mainly the younger sexually reproductive adults who get ill/sick and die of HIV/AIDS, it is the grandmother who has the burden of care for her ill/sick and dying children and the burden of raising her parentless grandchildren. Grandfathers seem neglected or excluded from or left on the periphery of the existing research on grandparenting in SSA. Thus, this study interrogates this situation to ascertain whether grandfathers are indeed “less

important, less active in intergenerational relations, and offering less to grandchildren” as seen by other researchers (Stelle et al, 2010: 686).

This social phenomenon of marginalising grandfathers seems to be replicated in social support programmes targeting grandparents who are caring for orphans. Although scholarship on gendered social support in SSA is lacking, there is some evidence from several studies in Kenya conducted by Ezech et al suggesting that compared to older men, older women are more likely to receive social support from government, religious organisations, community members, and sometimes their kin (e.g. see Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Ezech, 2005; Ezech et al., 2006; Mudege & Ezech, 2009). Grandfathers may be largely excluded from social support programmes on grandparents and orphans because they are not viewed as carers of children, owing to their gender being male and that it is women who care for the children (see chapter 9 for detailed discussion).

However, this thesis is premised on the argument that a focus on grandmothers’ feminine roles and responsibilities/tasks in grandparenting of orphans may overshadow the contribution grandfathers make through their masculine roles and responsibilities/tasks. This may be problematic in a holistic understanding of orphan care in SSA because it does not provide a comprehensive picture of orphan care in this region. Thus, there is a need to interrogate this social phenomenon to ascertain whether there are other carers of orphans besides grandmothers, and explore what role they play. This study attends to this by exploring grandfathers’ caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi. Thus, it adds a theoretical contribution to our understanding of grandparenting of orphans in SSA by going beyond a conventional focus on grandmothers.

Furthermore, there is a tendency among scholars researching grandparenting in SSA to generalise research with grandmothers to the lives of grandfathers. However, evidence (albeit limited) suggests that grandmothers and grandfathers differ in their roles, involvement with children, and caring experiences (Adjaye & Aborampah, 2004; Geissler & Prince, 2004; Ingstad, 2004; Wild & Gaibie, 2014). For instance, in their study on intergenerational cultural transmission in Ghana, Adjaye and Aborampah (2004) found that both grandfathers and grandmothers traditionally played an important role in transmission of cultural values (e.g. rite of passage). However, their respective role was gender-oriented such that

grandfathers were concerned with boys while grandmothers with girls, thus indicating differences in societal expectations, and resulting gender roles and gender-matching (see further discussion in chapter 8). Similarly, in their study on practices of positive relations between grandmothers and grandchildren in Kenya, Geissler and Prince (2004) observed differences in caring experiences for grandfathers and grandmothers. Grandfathers were less likely to be involved in household activities, thus grandmothers developed more affectionate bonds with their grandchildren than did grandfathers. Another study on grandparents' involvement and adolescents' psychological well-being in South Africa by Wild and Gaibie (2014) observed that grandmothers were more involved with younger children and their daughters and granddaughters than with sons and grandsons, and the opposite was the case for grandfathers. These differences suggest that using research with/about grandmothers to infer insights about the lives of grandfathers and/or their caregiving of orphans may misrepresent them. The need for research not only *about* grandfathers, but most importantly, *with* grandfathers warrants attention. This study responds to this research gap.

Within the context of Malawi, research on grandparenting and orphan care remains extremely scant. A few studies that exist have investigated orphan care by focusing either on children, or grandmothers/older women or other stakeholders rather than grandfathers as the unit of analysis (e.g. see Kidman & Heymann, 2009; Freidus, 2010; Littrell et al., 2012). Only a few studies have involved older men in studies on orphan care. Moreover, none of the existing studies in Malawi and SSA has (to the best of my knowledge) specifically focused on understanding grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren. Further, although intersectionality has been used in studies on grandparenting and/or ageing in the Western context (e.g. see Pain et al., 2000; Minkler & Fuller-Thomson, 2005; Tarrant, 2010; 2014), no study has yet specifically used it on research with grandfathers in SSA, and Malawi specifically. There is need for more research about grandparenting in Malawi, particularly focusing on grandfathers, and using various methods and approaches that enhance our understanding, hence the purpose of this study.

### **2.6.2 Absence of Grandfathers in Research on Grandparenting**

The reasons for grandfathers' absence in/from research, policy, and social interventions/programmes on grandparenting in SSA are hardly stated in much of grandparenting research in this region. However, scholarly debates surrounding the issue in the Global North provide valuable insights (albeit with significant cultural, social, economic, and political differences) on why grandfathers are largely absent from research on grandparenting. Scholars suggest that the proclivity to focus on grandmothers emanates from the taken for granted notion that grandfathers rarely participate in family research and are "far more reticent in talking about 'family matters'" (Mann, 2007: 282) than are grandmothers. Consequently, study participants within grandparenting research are usually dominated by grandmothers and their narratives. Thus, grandfathers are subsequently less present in the research literature compared to grandmothers.

It is also possible that researcher bias for grandmothers as carers of grandchildren may contribute to this focus on grandmothers. Scholars have suggested that grandfathers' absence in grandparenting research and body of academic knowledge is primarily due to a feminised tradition prominent within sociology and related disciplines that customarily recognise grandmothers [women] as kin keepers and guardians with a greater degree of involvement with grandchildren compared to grandfathers (Mann & Leeson, 2010; Mann et al., 2013; Tarrant, 2013). For instance, grandmothers are viewed as informal and emotionally and socially attached to grandchildren. In contrast, grandfathers are viewed as formal and emotionally and socially detached from grandchildren. Thus, care of grandchildren is traditionally associated with grandmothers and not with grandfathers, which may contribute to the researchers' bias for grandmothers in researching on grandparenting.

Nonetheless, there is still a small body of scholarship from the Global North demonstrating that the contribution of grandfathers in family care (e.g. caring for their grandchildren) may be largely underestimated (Mann 2007; Mann & Leeson, 2010; Tarrant, 2013). The predetermined conceptions of grandfathers as formal and emotionally and socially detached from their grandchildren may overshadow their actual contribution in care of their grandchildren. For instance, there is evidence, particularly from the Global North, indicating a departure from more traditional and gendered grandfather roles (mentioned above) to new ones as, for instance,

nurturers and mentors (Harper, 2005; Mann, 2007; Mann & Leeson, 2010; Bates & Goodsell, 2013). For instance, Bates and Goodsell (2013: 44) state that while “early scholarship on grandfathers often characterized these men as largely disengaged from research on grandparenting, forgotten in the family system, and concerned primarily with instrumental family matters or play”, recent scholarship on generative grandfathering has found grandfathers to be “involved in all seven grandfathering work domains: lineage work, mentoring work, spiritual work, recreation work, family identity work, investment work, and character work.” Mann and Leeson (2010: 238; see also Mann, 2007) assert that a “new grandfatherhood” seems to emerge from grandfathers’ roles and relationships with their grandchildren. Whether these transformations are occurring in SSA remains inconclusive due to a paucity of research on masculinities in general and grandfathers specifically. Still, knowledge from the Global North triggers interest to examine what is happening in contemporary SSA. Longstanding prescribed traditional gendered roles must be interrogated, for instance, by exploring grandfathers’ role in contemporary families (e.g. in their grandchildren’s lives), thus, this study responds to this.

Presently, though (as stated above), evidence shows that research and theory on grandfathers’ lives remains largely limited in both the Global North (Mann & Leeson, 2010; Bates & Taylor, 2013) and the Global South. While there has been growing research on fathers and fatherhood in men’s studies (a relatively new sub-discipline) over recent decades (Mann et al., 2016), little has been directed towards researching the lives of grandfathers, for instance, their roles and relationships with grandchildren. As Bates (2009: 335) rightly observes, “the area of grandfather studies is in its infancy....” Thus, grandfathers are an “emerging focus of research in the grandparenting literature” (Stelle et al., 2010: 685) in the twenty-first century. Arguably, SSA is lagging behind in this trend. Knowledge from this current study set out in this thesis will contribute to the emerging research interest in grandfathers, hence may shape present and future policy affecting grandfathers’ lives by examining issues such as their roles and relationships with orphaned grandchildren. To aid a holistic understanding of this, innovative methodological approaches are inevitable. Thus, this study uses intersectionality to investigate grandfathers’ caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi, as described below.

## 2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality refers to the worldview, philosophy, understanding, or notion that people's lived experiences are a product of multiple intersections of identity categories (e.g. gender, race, class, culture, religion) influenced by power relations and institutions in that particular context (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006b; Anthias, 2013). Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (an African-American socio-legal theorist and feminist scholar) is credited for coining the term intersectionality in the mid-1980s when she investigated domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform for women of colour in the United States (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006b; Anthias, 2013). However, the underlying tenets of intersectionality emerged from the championing work of several feminist researchers and scholars studying social inequalities both in the Global North and Global South before 1980, notably Frances Beal, Deborah King, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Jacklyn Cock, and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (Davis, 2008; Anthias, 2013; Carastathis, 2014). For instance, Jacklyn Cock's classic book *Maids and Madams* published in 1980 (Cock, 1980) documented how female Black domestic workers were exploited by their White employers and social institutions (including capitalism) during apartheid in South Africa based on gender, race, and class, in what she termed 'triple jeopardy'. Thus, intersectionality originated from feminist theory (Staunæs, 2003; Knapp, 2005; Bowleg et al., 2013; Mattsson, 2014).

Earlier conceptualisations by black feminists and other pioneers of intersectionality tended to focus on theorizing the intersections of gender, race, and class among women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991; Valentine, 2007), what Anthias (2013: 4) calls "the big three", and is popularised as 'triple jeopardy/oppression'. However, this attracted strong criticism because social inequalities (or discrimination, or exploitation) may as well be produced from intersections of other social categories of difference in addition to the triad of gender, race, and class. Also, intersectionality has been applied in various disciplines, in different ways, in investigations involving not only women but also men, and also beyond people of colour (Choo et al., 2013; Warner & Shields, 2013). Thus, later conceptualisations of intersectionality have moved beyond the focus on women of colour to various social groups (Yuval-Davis, 2006a; Dhamoon, 2010; Bowleg, 2012) and beyond difference of gender, race, and class to incorporate other social categories of difference such as age, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, and disability (Zhao, 2013; de Vries, 2015). However,

“intersectionality research focusing exclusively on men is rare” (Bowleg et al., 2013: 26). Thus, this study contributes to this methodological gap by using intersectionality as a conceptual framework and analytical tool on the investigation of grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural Malawi.

### **2.7.1 Theorizations of Intersectionality in Social Research**

Branded variously as a theoretical/conceptual framework (Anthias, 2011; Garry, 2011; Bowleg, 2012), a paradigm (Winker & Degele, 2011), a perspective (Warner & Shields, 2013), or a theory (Davis, 2008), intersectionality is a greatly contested concept among researchers studying various social issues. Some scholars/researchers view it as a confusing and problematic concept, and therefore, in need of improvement (Acker, 2012; Anthias, 2011; Dhamoon, 2010). As such, there have been a number of important debates on and about intersectionality ever since the concept was coined. Overall, these contestations have revolved around ontological, epistemological, and methodological challenges of intersectionality (McCall, 2005; Bowleg, 2012; Davis 2008; Acker, 2012; Anthias, 2013). Specifically, which approaches in intersectionality is ideal, how many and which social categories of difference should be used, and what methods are suited for intersectionality, as discussed below.

#### **2.7.1.1 Approaches in intersectionality**

##### **2.7.1.1.1 One-category (unitary) approach**

The first approach in intersectionality is the one-category approach (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013; Carastathis, 2014). The one-category approach denotes using one category of social difference (e.g. gender) to explain social inequalities. Several scholars have been critical of such an approach. They have argued that the dimensions of social categories are not independent and unidimensional, but rather multiple, interdependent, and mutually constitutive, thus they mutually construct, interact, and impact one another in lived experiences of people (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983; Yuval-Davis, 2006a; Bowleg, 2012). Thus, one category of social difference is not sufficient enough to explain the social inequalities encountered by the marginalized groups because there are multiple oppressions in the society that affect people’s lives (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1998; Yuval-Davis, 2006b; Anthias, 2013).

### **2.7.1.1.2 Additive approach**

The additive approach entails that “social inequality increases with each additional stigmatized identity” (Bowleg, 2008, p. 314). Some scholars have proposed that one/some categories (e.g. gender) can be accorded more prominence/salience and the other categories (e.g. race and/or class) can be examined by adding them to this ‘primary’ category (e.g. see Lykke 2003a, 2003b cited in Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). For instance, de Vries (2015) developed 12 categories and then selected five, which she considered as “beginnings” (p. 12), from which other categories were extrapolated. Other scholars have argued that certain social identities may be more or less salient than others depending on the specific contexts and the research problem. For instance, race may be more salient in research on political situations and opinions while gender may be more salient in inquiries on domestic violence (Stewart & McDermott, 2004; see also Yuval-Davis, 2006a).

However, there have been criticisms against prioritizing or privileging one or more categories over the other(s) (Valentine, 2007; Anthias, 2011, 2013; Davis, 2008; Carastathis, 2014). Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983) argue that social categories of difference are “intermeshed in such a way that we cannot see them as additive or prioritize abstractly any one of them” (p. 68). Yuval-Davis (2006a) concurs and states that “the intersecting social divisions cannot be analysed as items that are added up but, rather, as constituting each other... there is no separate concrete meaning of any social division” (p. 200). Cole (2009) concludes that “to focus on a single dimension in the service of parsimony is a kind of false economy” (p. 179).

In addition, there is also a wide recognition that the intersections of social categories of difference are not static; rather they are fluid and may change (Valentine, 2007; Anthias, 2011; Trahan, 2011). Thus, many scholars using the concept of intersectionality in their research or arenas of scholarly debate avoid the “additive intersectionality model” (Yuval-Davis, 2006a, p. 197), and embrace the idea of diversity within the categories, and that each division is fluid and is constituted via an intersection with the others (Anthias, 2008; Bowleg, 2013).

### **2.7.1.1.3 Multiple-categories approach**

Due to the limitations of both one-category and additive approaches, some researchers have argued that a multiple-categories approach is the most suitable way for investigating and understanding social inequalities (Hancock, 2007; Dhamoon, 2010; Carastathis, 2014). For instance, Carastathis (2014) states that theorizing social inequality based on one category of difference or according to its salience over the other and adding others to it cannot provide a more meaningful understanding of people's lives because "multiple, co-constituting analytic categories are operative and equally salient in constructing institutionalized practices and lived experiences" (p. 307). Thus, scholars have recognized that no single social category (e.g. gender only) is independent or salient enough to explain the oppressions that the marginalized encounter in the society, but rather multiple categories are at play (e.g. race, gender, class). Subsequently, scholars have advocated for a multiple-categories approach, hence this study adopts this intersectional approach to aid our understanding of the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi.

### **2.7.2 Application of Intersectionality in This Study**

The usefulness of intersectionality in social research is widely acknowledged. Scholars have argued that non-intersectional approaches to social research fall short of attending to the complexity of social structures and subjective lived experiences of people, thus resulting in less meaningful ways of understanding social phenomenon (Yuval-Davis, 2006a; de Vries, 2015). As a result, intersectionality has become an influential concept in what is currently widely considered as good research in investigations of social inequalities and other topics (Hancock, 2007; Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). Although it seems to have not yet been used in research relating to grandparenting in SSA, it has, however, been applied in various research on, inter alia, gender and violence, disability, sexuality, politics, environment, labour, and manufacturing (e.g. see Warnat, 2012; Moolman, 2013; Whitehead, 2013). Thus, its use in the study of grandfathers in rural Southern Malawi makes an important theoretical and methodological contribution.

Since its conception over 30 years ago, intersectionality has been adapted, adopted, and applied in various ways in research (Yuval-Davis, 2006a; Hancock, 2007; Davis, 2008; Anthias, 2013). However, evidence suggests that intersectionality has been

used in three major ways: as 'a framework', or as 'a theory', or as 'an approach to social activism' (Warner & Shields, 2013). Some have claimed that intersectionality has mostly been used as a framework (e.g. see Warner & Shields, 2013). Also, although largely associated with feminist theory (Bowleg et al., 2013), intersectionality is now applied or used in various topic areas and in social interventions (Anthias, 2013; Choo et al., 2013), to many social groups (marginalized or not; beyond women of colour), and in various contexts (Yuval-Davis, 2006a; Dhamoon, 2010; Anthias, 2013). Davis (2008: 72) sums up the wide application of intersectionality, stating that it is "useful for understanding and analysing any social practice, any individual or group experience, any structural arrangement, and any cultural configuration." In this study, and as stated earlier, intersectionality was used as a conceptual and analytical tool to aid our understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren.

In applying intersectionality, this study is informed by the ontological, epistemological, and methodological contestations about intersectionality among social researchers, as outlined previously/earlier (McCall, 2005; Acker, 2012; Anthias, 2011). For instance, the study avoided using the one-category approach because it would not have offered a holistic and comprehensive exploration of the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. For instance, by using a one-category approach, the study would have focused on gender alone to understand grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren, yet other factors such as culture, poverty, and religion were likely to be equally important in shaping their daily lives. Thus, the one-category approach was thought to be insufficient to explain the lived experiences of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren.

The study also avoided using the additive approach. Drawing on Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983: 68), the lived experiences of grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural Malawi are multiple, co-constituting, fluid, and are "intermeshed in such a way that we cannot see them as additive or prioritize abstractly any one of them." Thus, the additive approach was not the most appropriate intersectional way to understand grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. By using additive approach, the study would have underplayed, for instance, the ways in which culture and gender are likely to co-constitute to affect social support for grandparents who are caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural

Malawi. Consequently, the additive approach would not have provided nuanced understanding of the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren.

Due to the limitations of both one-category and additive intersectional approaches, it was inevitable that the multiple-categories intersectional approach was most appropriate in this research. This approach is typified by complexity and multiplicity (Yuval-Davis, 2006a, 2006b; Bowleg, 2012; Garry, 2011; Anthias, 2013). Thus, the multiple-category intersectional approach aided the identification of complex and multiple intersections/interactions (e.g. culture, gender, age, generation, poverty) as they played out in the daily routines of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. The investigation and analysis of the interplay of these intersections offered a holistic and comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences. For instance, during data collection, analysis, and interpretation, rather than identifying one category (e.g. culture) as affecting the lived experiences of grandfathers (one-category approach), or according it more salience (e.g. culture) and adding other factors (e.g. gender, age) to it (additive approach), a multiple-category approach allowed a consideration of multiple factors outlined above and how their interplay and intersections influenced grandfathers' caregiving for their orphaned grandchildren. Thus, it is the additional layer resulting from this framework which is important in understanding grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi, as demonstrated in chapter 4 through 10.

Using a multiple-category intersectional approach also helped to avoid focusing on one category of identity (e.g. culture) as this would have obscured the importance of the other categories such as gender, culture, generation, poverty and privilege, and religion. At the same time, there was scrutiny of what categories were likely to be most relevant and useful to the data collection, analysis, and interpretations about the research topic of grandfathers. This helped avoid "an infinite number of cross-cutting categories... and endless specification" (Anthias, 2013) that would have rendered the study less meaningful. Thus, kinship, generation, age, physical health, gender, and poverty are the key dimensions of social identity that this study focused on in using intersectionality as a conceptual framework and analytical tool to explore the lives of grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural Malawi.

Further, intersectionality worked well with the qualitative (interpretive) research design used in this study (see Bowleg, 2008; Stewart & McDermott, 2004; Trahan, 2011). Shields (2008: 306) notes that:

The theoretical compatibility and historic links between intersectionality theory and qualitative methods imply that the method and the theory are always already necessary to one another. Intersectionality theory, by virtue of its description of [the] multidimensional nature of identity makes investigation through qualitative methods seem both natural and necessary.

Thus, intersectionality and a qualitative research design situated within the interpretivist theoretical/methodological framework (discussed in chapter 3) were compatible. For instance, as with the tenets of intersectionality, using the interpretivist framework denoted collecting, analysing, and interpreting data by paying attention to the voices of research participants with a goal of accurately representing their lives (e.g. see Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a; Lincoln et al., 2018).<sup>10</sup> Further, as with intersectionality, qualitative methods innately give room for implicit complexity and multiplicity, and thus, the ability to delve into micro-level complexities of individual lives (Acker, 2012; Bowleg, 2008, 2012). Thus, these characteristics of intersectionality were instrumental in the investigations of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in rural Malawi.

As noted by researchers (e.g. Shields, 2008; Warner, 2008; Winker & Degele, 2011; Zhao, 2013), there is no blueprint regarding how to integrate intersectionality in research methodology. Thus, the onus is on the researcher as to how best to integrate it. As aforementioned, besides being a conceptual framework and aiding in data collection (e.g. searching for complexity during discussion with the participants), intersectionality was also used as an analytical tool. Again, as stated earlier, this aided complex data analysis and interpretation by looking at complexity of multiple/various social categories of difference (e.g. gender, culture, age, ethnicity religion) in shaping grandfathers' caregiving of and for their orphaned grandchildren.

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<sup>10</sup> See chapter 3 for definition and description of interpretivist theoretical framework.

Needless to say, though, as others have noted (see Stewart & McDermott, 2004; Bowleg, 2008; Carastathis, 2014), using a multiple-categories intersectional approach was not without challenges. It complicated data analysis and interpretation. Though the study did not primarily use one-category or additive intersectional approaches, using multiple-category intersectional approach meant that elements of the two were at some point utilised. For instance, there was an iterative process whereby each category of social difference (e.g. gender alone, or culture alone) was considered separately, or two categories (e.g. gender and culture) simultaneously (Stewart & McDermott, 2004; Carastathis, 2014) to aid deeper understanding of the interplay and intersections between and among multiple categories. Thus, though not employed as the primary conceptual lens, one-category and additive intersectional approaches were useful at some points of data analysis and interpretation. Nonetheless, the multiple approach was primary.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has expanded the highlights presented in chapter 1 by drawing on relevant literature on orphans, kinship care, and grandparenting in SSA, as well as laying out the conceptual framework for this study. The chapter demonstrates that there are discrepancies between official and local conceptualisations of orphan or orphanhood. Whereas the official definition focuses on parental death and age of an individual (i.e. a child), the common African cultural views of orphanhood are not limited by these social markers. Yet, the use of official definition of orphanhood in this study is embraced to ensure relevance of the findings to policymakers and programme implementers who are addressing issues of social support for orphans in rural Malawi, including those raised by grandparents.

The chapter also shows that the population of orphans in Malawi is significant, owing mainly to the AIDS epidemic. Many of these orphans are single orphans, and largely paternal orphans. Although orphans have various and fluid pathways of care and living arrangements, many are cared for by the extended family in what is described as a kinship care. However, the research reviewed in this chapter suggests that kinship care may have been overwhelmed and weakened by the numbers of orphans due to the impact of the AIDS epidemic. Although schools of thought differ on the issue, the hegemonic narrative points to the diminishing kinship role in care for orphans as evidenced by the diminishing other kin (e.g. uncles, aunts) as carers,

and subsequent emergence of widespread non-voluntary grandparenting of orphans.

Further, the chapter demonstrates that grandparents in Malawi and other regions of SSA are living in impoverished conditions, yet many have little or no access to kin, community, and/or welfare support. This leaves them more vulnerable compared to other groups of carers in their communities as the older generation is the poorest group (NSO & ICF Macro, 2010) as old age and poor physical health limit them from productive livelihoods (Ellis et al., 2003). Many grandparents rely on personal assets, and social and spiritual capital to buffer some of the challenges they encounter as they care for orphans. Yet, research about grandparenting in this region is limited. While there is some research with and about grandmothers, much about grandfathers remains unexamined as the existing research seems to focus on grandmothers due to gendered conceptions of 'care'. Thus, the chapter not only identifies the gaps in research with and about grandfathers in SSA, but also provides the justification and basis for this study on grandfathers' caregiving of orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi.

Furthermore, the literature reviewed in chapters 1 and 2 has highlighted the complex issues surrounding the lack of research about and with grandfathers. To understand the situation of grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi, therefore, required complexity and multiplicity (e.g. exploring various categories of social difference), rather than simplicity (e.g. focusing on just one category). This entailed exploring various factors playing out in their particular context. As such, the chapter highlights intersectionality as suitable lens through which to accomplish this. Intersectionality offered a greater opportunity for opening a wide range of avenues through which to interrogate and [de]construct existing views on orphan care in rural Southern Malawi, which may also apply to other regions of SSA. This resulted in alternative and/or additional narratives about orphan care in SSA that go beyond grandmothers as carers of children, as presented in the next chapters.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays out the methodology for this study, including details of the study location, philosophical and theoretical positions, research design, as well as ethical challenges and dilemmas encountered during this study. Using a qualitative research design and interpretivist framework, children and young people as well as adults from rural communities of Zomba, Southern Malawi, were engaged in participatory methods and approaches to obtain empirical data as evidence about their views and experiences on grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren. Ethnographic methods used include FGDs, in-depth interviews, key-informant interviews, drawing-elicited interviews, photovoice interviews, observation, and stakeholder and dissemination meetings, which are explained in detail in this chapter. Overall, this methodology aided the understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi. The next sections expand on these points.

### 3.2 STUDY LOCATION: ZOMBA DISTRICT, SOUTHERN MALAWI

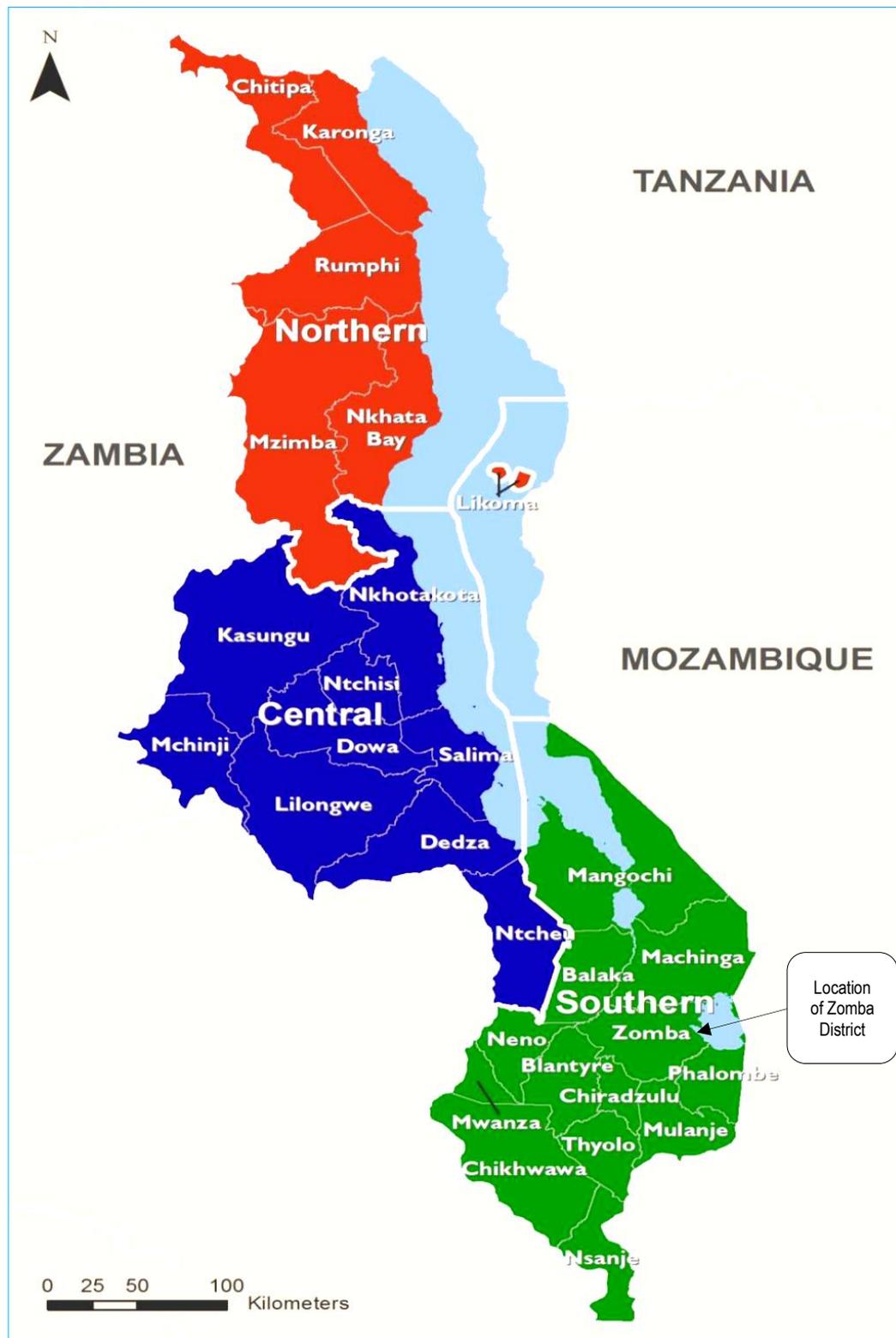
The study was conducted in Malawi, a small landlocked and densely populated (17 million people, 177 persons per Km<sup>2</sup>) country located in Southern Africa (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Malawi has 28 districts and three major regions, namely Southern (13 districts), Central (9 districts), and Northern (6 districts) Regions (NSO & ICF Macro, 2011).<sup>11</sup> The study was conducted in rural communities in Zomba District, a densely populated (230 persons per Km<sup>2</sup>, and 4.1 persons per household) and third most populous district in the country (represents 4.5% of Malawi's population) (NSO, 2008; ZDA, 2009) located in Southern Malawi (**Figure 3.1**). Southern Malawi, Zomba District, and rural communities were selected because of the following reasons: 1) Southern Malawi has highest HIV infection rates in the country, hence there are more orphans in this region (as established in chapter 2); 2) least is known about rural grandfathers; 3) rural areas are poorer than urban areas, hence Zomba rural would provide a suitable context for understanding the

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<sup>11</sup> Compared to Mozambique's 35, Zambia's 21, Zimbabwe's 39, South Africa's 45, and Tanzania's 59 persons per Km<sup>2</sup> (World Bank, 2015c). The average annual population growth in Malawi is 2% to 3.3% (NSO & ICF Macro, 2005, 2008, 2011; Kishindo & Mvula, 2017; NSO & ICF International, 2017).

livelihoods of grandfather; 4); the study site was easily accessed by the researcher via Chancellor College (University of Malawi), and also through Shine Relief Trust (SRT) Malawi, a local NGO with UK connections that works with orphans in the research communities.

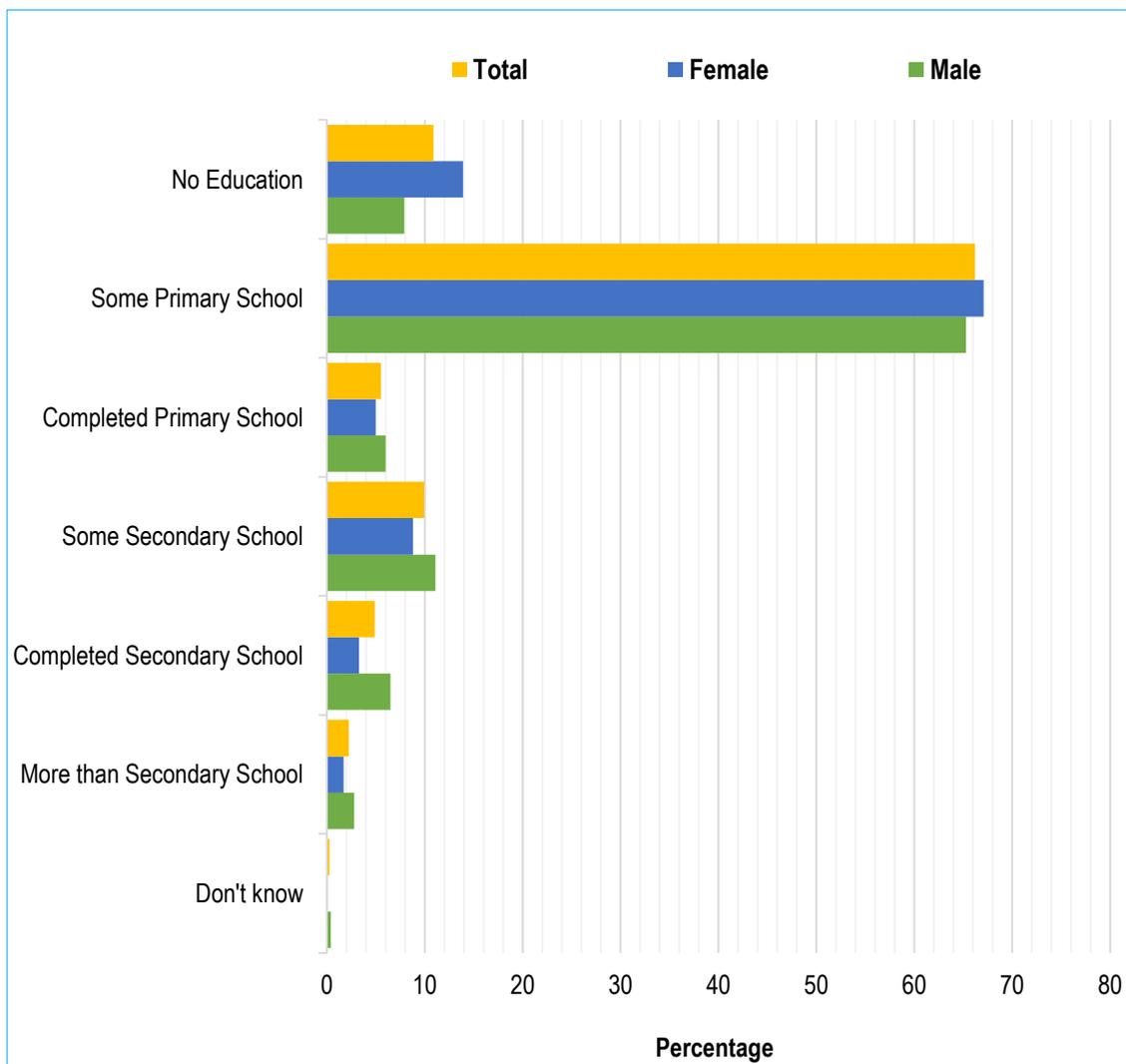
**Figure 3.1:** Map of Malawi



Source: NSO & ICF International, 2017.

Malawi is a predominantly patriarchal and multi-ethnic society (35.6% Chewa, 18.7% Lomwe, 12.8% Yao, 12.4% Ngoni, 9.4% Tumbuka, and 3.4% Mang'anja/Nyanja, and 8% all other minor ethnic groups). The Mang'anja/Nyanja, Yao and Lomwe are the main ethnic groups in Zomba (Zomba District Assembly [ZDA], 2009). Nearly 70% of the households in Malawi are male-headed (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Most Malawians identify themselves as religious, predominantly Christians (87%), followed by Muslims (11%), few (1.5%) belong to other religions (e.g. Buddhism, Hinduism), and very few people (<1%) have no religion (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Further, many people in Malawi have low [formal] educational attainment, with only few completed primary school (5.5%), or secondary school (4.9%), or gone beyond secondary (2.25%) (**Figure 3.2**). Though the specific statistics for Zomba for some of these demographics were not found, the national outlook presented here generally mirrors the district.

**Figure 3.2:** Educational attainment in Malawi



Source: NSO & ICF International, 2017.

### **3.3 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study is situated within the interpretivist framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a). By adopting an interpretivist framework, this study naturally used a qualitative research design because qualitative research designs generally draw from interpretivism (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a). This had important ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications in the design of this qualitative study. Firstly, it meant recognising that realities or knowledge about grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi would be subjective, multiple, and socially constructed by individual persons or groups within specific historical, social, and cultural contexts, and that they would be alternative social constructions on the topic (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012; Lincoln et al., 2018). Thus, the participants' social world (i.e., normative expectations and shared understandings) influences their views, and vice-versa, because their views and the social world co-exist (Humble & Morgaine, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a). Similarly, as a researcher, I was a key instrument of data collection. This implied that I would influence the participants and the research process. Thus, I employed reflexivity (discussed in section 3.8) to enhance rigour/trustworthiness of the findings.

Secondly, using interpretive framework entailed that the participants' point of view was crucial to understanding the topic (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Flick et al., 2007; Bryman, 2015). The research participants were the creators and co-creators of knowledge rather than objects of the research process (Grant & Giddings, 2002; Wardekker, 2009; Eglinton, 2013). Thus, to understand grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren, there was need to interact with them using humanistic and naturalistic qualitative methods and approaches (Tuli, 2010; Walliman, 2011; Saini & Shlonsky, 2012). Subsequently, humanistic and naturalistic qualitative methods and approaches were used to allow a close and prolonged (i.e., eight months) contact with the participants, immerse in their everyday lives, and build rapport and trust to optimise interaction (Creswell, 2007; Saini & Shlonsky, 2012; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a). This was possible by using an ethnographic approach that incorporated various participatory methods and approaches (see section 3.6) (Haight et al., 2014; Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014). This allowed collection of in-depth and extensive data that revealed complex, holistic, and contextualised

accounts/meanings of participants' views and experiences of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren.

During analysis, interpretivist language, concepts, and principles were adopted in establishing the empirical evidence of the research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018b; Morse, 2018). Thus, instead of using positivist concepts such as objectivity, validity (i.e. correctness or truthfulness of the inferences made from the study results), reliability (i.e. consistency or replicability or repeatability of the study results) and generalisability, the study adopted the concept of 'rigour' or 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln, 1995; Lietz et al., 2006; O'Leary, 2010; Rolfe, 2006). Subsequently, credibility (consistency between participants' views and the researcher's representation), dependability (providing sufficient information to determine how dependable the study and the researcher are), transferability (case-to-case application of the study findings to other contexts), and confirmability (how the researcher reached conclusions and interpretations) were used to establish the trustworthiness of the findings (Morrow, 2005; Flick, 2005, 2009; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

The focus of data analysis and interpretation was on capturing the [thick] descriptions from the participants that emerged during our interaction. This involved exploring the "meanings people construct, how they construct them, and how these constructions guide their actions..." (Wardekker, 2000: 266) with regards to grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren. Thus, their views (induction) rather than a priori views (e.g. deduction, that is, having a hypothesis as is the case with positivist research) were used to build theory and concepts (Tuli, 2010; Bryman, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a). Further, although the implementation of this research was conceived prior to data collection, a flexible research design (i.e. one that was emergent rather than fixed/rigid) was used (Creswell, 2007). Thus, as the study unfolded, appropriate changes were made to address the limitations that occurred. Overall, situating this study in an interpretivist framework aided robust collection of rich and extensive data crucial for addressing the research questions, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

### 3.3.1 Ethnography

As stated earlier, the study employed an ethnographic approach. This approach was suitable because it aided in-depth exploration of individual and collective knowledge about grandfathers' caregiving of orphaned grandchildren that captured localised social and cultural views and experiences (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Walford, 2007; Packer, 2011; Markham, 2018). For instance, through ongoing informal observations, photos, and drawings, the ethnographic approach offered an opportunity to learn about the daily routines of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. Thus, although I did not live in the rural communities alongside the research participants as some ethnographers would, an ethnographic approach still provided "an effective means to learn *about* people by learning *from* people" (Olliffe, 2005: 395; emphasis in original), and aided collection of empirical evidence about their daily lives. Also, an ethnographic approach was suitable for researching with children and young people who participated in this study because it helped to capture their lived experiences (James, 2001; Cheney, 2017). This was possible because the approach allowed the use of methods and techniques that facilitated their participation in the study, hence researching *with* and not *on* children, as explore below.

### 3.4 RESEARCHING *WITH* [AND NOT *ON*] CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

"Grown-ups cannot, on their own, understand the world from the child's point of view and therefore they need children to explain it to them" (Antoine de Saint-Exupery, 1945, in *The Little Princess*, cited in Christensen & James, 2008, p. 9).

The quotation above comes from Antoine de Saint-Exupery's 1945 novella, *The Little Prince*. Though written within the context of poetic discourse, his views have been echoed by many researchers and organisation working with children, particularly from an ethical premise. For instance, Freeman and Mathison (2009: 165) contend that "eliciting children's perspectives and involving children in research is a necessary element of inclusive, empowering, and socially just research designs." Bourdillon (2006: 1206) argues that "if we want to understand children, we need to learn from them." Recently, the United Nation Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC) project (Graham et al., 2013: 13) has emphasised that "children's involvement in research is vital in ensuring their right to participate in matters that affect them, as recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the

Child (UNCRC), is upheld.” This reflects a turn in the social studies of childhood from viewing children as objects, “passive, incompetent and incomplete, and a product of socialization” (James & Prout, 2015a: xi) whose lives were understood from the accounts of adults (e.g. parents and/or caregivers), to viewing them as participants in matters that affect their lives, experts in their own lives, and able to express their voices/opinions about their lives and be listened to (van Blerk, 2006; Holland et al., 2010; James & Prout, 2015b; Ansell, 2017). This shift is widely credited to the pioneering work of the UNCRC and the *new sociology of childhood* movement (UN General Assembly, 1989; James & Prout, 1990, 1997, 2015a, 2015b). Hence, there is now growing advocacy that children’s views should be sought from them rather than adults speaking on their behalf, by researching *with* them and not *on* them (Holloway, 2014; James & Prout, 2015b; Pinter & Zandian, 2015).

Further, scholars have challenged the notion of childhood as [only] biological and universal. There is now a recognition that childhood cannot be reduced to a “given biological reality” (James & Prout, 2015a: xii), and that childhood varies across social, cultural, geographical, and historical contexts (Christensen & James, 2008; Ansell, 2017). Childhood is not only a biological moment in the lifecourse, but also a social construction (Holloway, 2014; James & Prout, 2015b). Children are “part of society and culture rather than a precursor to it... are already social actors not beings in the process of becoming such” (James & Prout, 2015a: xi). Thus, the children’s rights movement (partly inspired by the UNCRC) and the *new sociology of childhood* have shaped research, policy, and practice on issues concerning children’s lives both in the Global North and Global South, giving rise to inclusive and children-centred participatory research methods and approaches (Christensen & James, 2008; Holloway 2014; Pinter & Zandian, 2015).

Thus, this study follows this best research practice by using research methods and approaches that embody researching *with* and *not* on children. Subsequently, carefully developed methods and approaches were devised and used to facilitate children’s participation (discussed later in this chapter in section 3.6.) while also familiarising with the challenges outlined above. It was deduced that the stories would not be complete if children’s and young people’s views were not sought. Thus, children and young people participated in this study. Thus, the children were viewed as social actors, as research participants (subjects) and not objects of research, and

as sources of data and co-creators of knowledge (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Aldridge, 2012; Pinter & Zandian, 2015).

### **3.4.1 Ethical Challenges and Dilemmas when Researching with Children**

Researching with children is not without challenges. It presents important methodological and ethical challenges and dilemmas (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; Dockett et al., 2009; Mortari & Harcourt, 2012). Christensen and Prout (2002: 477) note that children's inclusion in research as social actors "has created a field with new ethical dilemmas and responsibilities for researchers within the social study of childhood." Cheney (2017) highlights the antagonism between participatory/empowerment versus protectionist approaches in researching with children. While participatory approaches advocate for working with children, protectionist approaches such as those adopted from the UNCRC and used by governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders in child issues make it difficult to work with children "even at semiequal level" (Cheney, 2017: 60) due to restrictions placed on access to children and their engagement in research.<sup>12</sup>

Researching with children is even more challenging when researching in communities devastated by the AIDS epidemic and acute poverty such as those who participated in this study. Negotiating with gatekeepers such as parents and guardians to allow their children to participate in the research may not always be straightforward. This is even more challenging when researching with orphans. Some orphans may become emotionally fragile when discussing issues about taking care of their bedridden parents and/or the loss of their parent, hence their guardians may be protective (Cheney 2017). Also, researching with children may involve disrupting the children's daily routine such as household work and play (Cheney, 2017), thus may not be welcomed by the children and/or their parents and guardians. Moreover, there may be expectations of financial benefit from the children and/or their parents and guardians (Cheney, 2017: 75-76), thus raising

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<sup>12</sup> For a comprehensive discussion and guidelines for researching with children, refer to UNICEF's Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC) authored by Graham and colleagues (2013). See also <http://childethics.com/> for further discussion on/about researching with children, including a resource archive.

dilemmas with ethical boards that proscribe compensating research participants with money (section 3.9).

Another challenge regards the power imbalances in intergenerational relationships. Punch (2002) notes that “children are not used to expressing their views freely or being taken seriously by adults because of their position in adult-dominated society” (p 325). Cheney (2017) agrees and asserts that although participatory approaches encourage children to express their views, the local culture in much of SSA socialises Africa children not to voice their opinion. This spills over to research activities, and consequently, some children may be reticent to talk in the presence of adult researchers (Cheney, 2017). Thus, inherently, researching with children entails skilfully and reflexively creating enabling environments that not only minimise unequal power relations/relationship if the children are to participate productively and freely express themselves (van Blerk, 2006; Punch, 2000), but also attend to the challenges such as those outlined above (Cheney, 2017).

Despite the challenges, when properly planned and executed, the merits of researching with children outweigh the limitations, hence the popularity in advocacy for using participatory research (Beazley & Ennew, 2006; Holloway, 2014; James & Prout, 2015b). For instance, Punch (2002: 325) states that participatory research methods and approaches “not only provide opportunities for children to express themselves, but are also a potential source for empowering them for a fuller participation in society and for decision-making in matters which affect them.” What is crucial in participatory research is to critically and reflexively assess the methods and approaches to ensure that they not only promote children’s participation and generation of “useful and relevant data” (Punch, 2002: 330), but importantly, are ethical, as well as attending to the challenges such as those outlined above.

Drawing from the guidelines for researching with children and young people, particularly those outlined by Shaw et al (2011) and Graham et al (2013), all appropriate ethical requirements were incorporated into the research process. Further, Oberg and Ellis (2009: 107) state that researching with children and young people “requires considerable sensitivity to proceed in ways that respect their competence while acknowledging their different life experience, knowledge, and prior experiences of interacting with adults.” Thus, research activities (see section 3.6) were tailored to the specific needs of the group of children (e.g. their

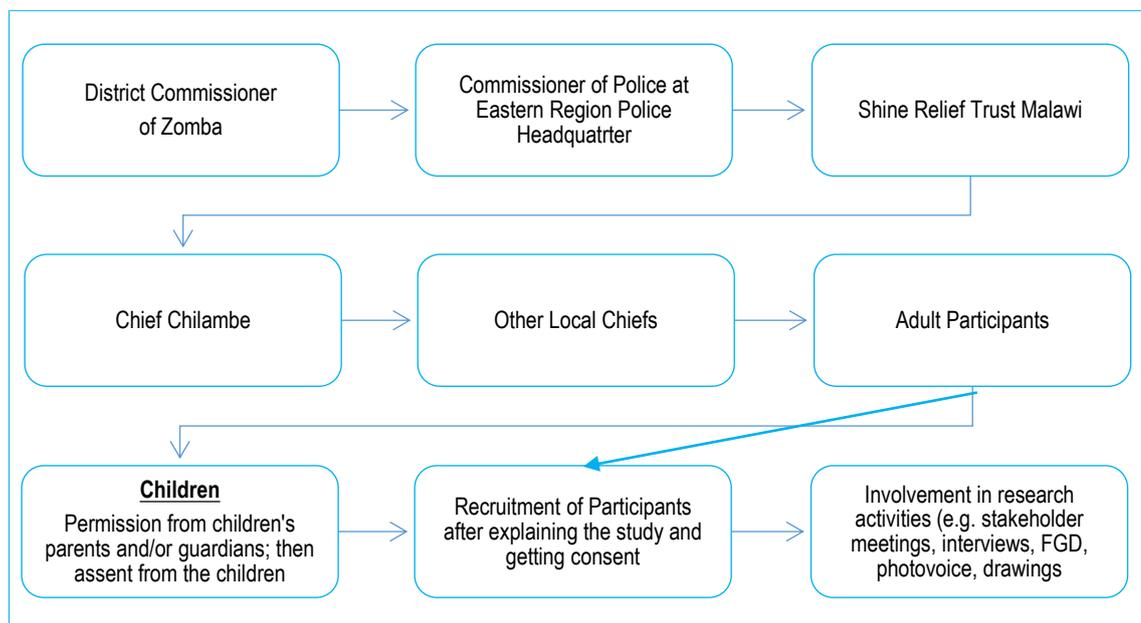
level of competence, generational gap), and culturally and socially accepted task-based methods and approaches were adopted. For instance, the language that the youth in Malawi use in their daily interactions rather than that of adults (see appendix 13) were used during discussions with children and young people to ensure that generational gaps were addressed and they were free to express their views. Overall, all these enhanced the interactions with children and young people, and ultimately aided the collection of useful data.

### 3.5 RECRUITMENT OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

#### 3.5.1 Entrée into the Field: Gaining Access

Lewis (2003: 62) states that “the way in which access is negotiated on the ground can be critical to the success of a study”. Thus, drawing from Lewis (2003) and Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), careful consideration and planning were taken to access the research communities and recruit the participants for this study. Specifically, entrée into the study site involved careful navigation through several gatekeepers, as presented below (**Figure 3.3**).

*Figure 3.3: Depicting entree into the field*



Preliminary meetings with the Chiefs were central in forging networks with other gatekeepers, and facilitated smooth logistics during the subsequent research activities (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006; McLennan et al., 2014). Further, I had an internship with SRT throughout the entire period of the fieldwork. SRT was crucial to entrée to the research communities and the participants, and provided useful

access to the place/venue for meetings and FGDs. Also, working with SRT helped enhance trust with the local communities.

### **3.5.2 Sampling**

Purposive (also called criterion based) sampling and snowball (called chain-referral) sampling (Polkinghorne, 2005; Ryan et al., 2007; Flick, 2009; Walliman, 2011) were used to identify and recruit participants for the study. Snowball sampling was used to locate, access, and involve grandfathers because they were hard-to-reach (Heckathorn, 2011) due to their small population in the research communities. The participants were recruited from 12 predominantly matrilineal villages (Chilambe, Chinyangala, Kalinde, Khomoli, Kumtenga II, Lundu, Makale, Malika, Mwima, Namadingo, Sopwe, and William) within Traditional Authority (T/A) Kuntumanji in Zomba, Southern Malawi. They represented different categories of people from the research communities, with ages ranging from 3 years to 92 years, and participated in various research activities during the study. The following eligibility criteria were used to recruit the participants:

- 1) Willingness to participate in the study;
- 2) Able to give informed consent. For children, consent from their guardians, and the child's assent;
- 3) Grandfathers and grandmothers had to be caring for orphaned grandchildren;
- 4) All professionals had to be working in the research communities.

In total, 142 people participated in this study. This sample size was not predetermined. Rather, the principle of 'saturation' or 'data redundancy' or "data adequacy" was used (Morse, 1995: 147). Morse (1995: 147) considers saturation as the "key to excellent qualitative work." Thus, the sample was deemed adequate when additional research activities in the field no longer added new information to the understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren (Ritchie et al., 2003; Wong, 2008; O'Leary, 2010). The focus was not on the frequency of data, but rather on the richness/thickness of the participant's descriptions (Polkinghorne, 2005; Tuckett, 2004).

Of the 15 grandfather-headed households interviewed in this study, 10 were from single-grandparent households, and 5 were from dual-grandparent households.

Many grandfathers were old (ranging from 54-92 years; averaging 76 years) and had little or no formal education (i.e. 5 no formal education; 9 primary schooling; 1 secondary school qualification; and none had postsecondary school qualification).<sup>13</sup> They were caring for several children, ranging from 1 to 8, and averaging 5 children. Their orphaned grandchildren ranged from 1.25 years to 17 years, and all who were of school-age were attending school.

### **3.6 DATA COLLECTION: PARTICIPATORY METHODS AND APPROACHES**

The key principle in the collection of empirical evidence in interpretive studies is to collect data from multiple sources using a spectrum of methods (Creswell, 2007; Flick et al., 2007) to “get better understanding of the subject matter at hand... make the world visible in a different way” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a: 10). Usually, various elements are incorporated in the methodology to make the research participatory. Ansell et al (2012: 169; emphasis in original) defines participatory research as that “concerned with producing knowledge *with*, rather than *about*, those who are the subjects of the research.” Thus, this study embraced this practice and was participatory. Specifically, multiple methods that incorporated participatory methods and approaches were used to engage various participants in the research communities of rural Malawi. As aforementioned, this helped to minimise the researcher-participants power imbalances and promote the participants’ knowledge creation (Boylorn, 2008; Åkerström & Brunnberg, 2012; Ansell et al., 2012; Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Also, participatory methods and approaches fitted well with an interpretivist framework. As recently noted by Cheney (2017: 60), participatory research methods “admittedly lend themselves better to interpretive research endeavours than positivist ones, hence children participation and anthropological or ethnographic research are compatible and can be mutually constitutive.” Subsequently, multiple data collection methods with various elements of participatory approaches were used as summarised below (**Table 3.1**) and described in the next sections. These research activities resulted in 72 hours of audio material, hundreds of pages of transcribed material, and 47 double-spaced typed pages of fieldnotes and reflective diaries.

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<sup>13</sup> See appendix 11 for further details of demographic characteristics.

**Table 3.1: Data collection methods**

Methods	Participants	Number of Participants	Gender Distribution	Average Age (Years)	Age Range / Age (Years)
Drawing-elicited interviews <sup>14</sup>	Preschool children	15*	8 male; 7 female	4.4	3-5
Focus group discussions, photo-elicited interviews, drawing-elicited interviews	Preteens	8	2 male; 6 female	8.9	6-12
Focus group discussions, stakeholder meeting, dissemination meeting	Teens	36	19 male; 17 female	14.4	13-17
In-depth interviews; stakeholder meeting, dissemination meeting	Grandfathers	15	-	76.0	54-92
In-depth interviews	Grandmothers	6	-	69.2	Ages: 54, 69, 78, 68, 70, 76
Focus group discussions, stakeholder meeting, dissemination meeting	Ordinary community members	35	16 male; 19 female	43.0	19-75
Key-informant interviews, stakeholder meeting, dissemination meeting	Representatives of community structures (CBOs, VDC, and CPC)	3	2 male; 2 female	-	Ages: 32, 48, 69
Key-informant interviews	Representatives of religious groups	4	All male	-	Ages: 29, 32, 43, 74
Key-informant interviews; stakeholder meeting, dissemination meeting	Professionals: 9 Teachers, 2 HSAs, <sup>15</sup> 2 staff from NGOs, and 1 Child Protection Officer	15	8 male; 4 female	34.0	21-46
Key-informant interviews; stakeholder meeting, dissemination meeting	Chiefs (local Leaders) from 5 villages in T/A Kuntumanji	5	4 male; 1 female	44.4	32-65
<b>NOTES:</b>					
<b>Methods</b>	<b>Sessions</b>		<b>Audio hours</b>		
<i>In-depth interviews</i>	22	19			
<i>Focus group discussions</i>	15	17			
<i>Key-informant interviews</i>	19	16			
<i>Photo-elicited interviews</i>	4	4			
<i>Drawing-elicited interviews</i>	2	3			
<i>Stakeholder meeting</i>	1	3			
<i>CAG meetings</i>	3	5			
<i>Dissemination meetings</i>	3	5			
<i>Field notes</i>	-	47 double-spaced typed pages			
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>72</b>	<b>Audio hours material</b>		

<sup>14</sup> Ten from single-grandparent households, and 5 from dual-grandparent households.

<sup>15</sup> Health Surveillance Assistants

### 3.6.1 Stakeholder Meeting

I conducted a stakeholder meeting at the outset of my fieldwork in Zomba, Southern Malawi. The purpose was to brief the local stakeholders about the study (e.g. purpose, ethics, participation, participant groups required), lobby for their support (e.g. to sensitise people about the research), and elect a Community Advisory Group (CAG). In total, 19 participants attended, comprising of local community and professionals working in the research communities. The participants included young people, grandparents, a chief, members of Child Protection Committee (CPC), Village Development Committee (VDC), and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), and representatives of religious groups. Below is a photo taken at the start of the stakeholder meeting (**Figure 3.4**).

**Figure 3.4:** Stakeholder meeting



**Photograph:** Author's own collection.

During the stakeholder meeting, a group of people was selected by the participants to form the CAG specifically to run for the duration of the research project. Members of this group represented various categories of people in the community, including both local people and professionals working in the study site. Over the course of the 8-month fieldwork, four meetings were conducted with the CAG. The CAG reviewed and endorsed data collection methods, monitored the research process (e.g. progress, adherence to culture), advised and guided me on various issues as the fieldwork unfolded, and provided logistical support for the community meeting during the dissemination of preliminary findings.

Overall, having the CAG proved instrumental to the success of the fieldwork in Malawi. The CAG provided a local link during fieldwork activities, and was consulted whenever direction was needed. This made the fieldwork activities run smoothly and in tandem with cultural expectations. Importantly, both the stakeholder meeting and the establishment of the CAG were first key steps in making the research more participatory and building rapport with the local community. Following the review and endorsement of data collection methods by the CAG, I started conducting interviews.

### **3.6.2 Interviews**

#### **3.6.2.1 In-depth semi-structured interviews**

In-depth interviews were used to collect empirical evidence from grandfathers and grandmothers. Firstly, pilot interviews were undertaken before the rest of the interviews. Sampson (2004: 385) notes that pilot interviewing is an under-reported and under-developed area in qualitative research, stating that “...very few examples can be found of researchers reporting the systematic use of pilots in qualitative and ethnographic work.” Yet the importance of piloting interviews cannot be understated because they help to test and refine data collection methods (Sampson, 2004). Recognising this importance, a grandfather, a grandmother, a child, a community member, and two primary school teachers were engaged in pilot interviews. The exercise was important as it helped to test and correct the interview guides to ensure the language was suitable (e.g. appropriate words/terms), before embarking on a larger data collection exercise. The pilot interviews also helped to prepare well for the remaining research activities (e.g. best ways to approach the interviews).

Following the pilot interviews and subsequent revisions to the interview question guides, in-depth interviews were conducted with grandfathers (aged 54-92 years) and grandmothers (aged 57-78 years). In-depth interviews were instrumental to collecting rich and extensive data from the grandparents. As noted by other researchers (deMarrais, 2004; Johnson & Rowlands, 2012; Witty et al., 2014), in-depth interviews allowed me to engage grandfathers and grandmothers in deep conversations and obtain personal thoughts/perspectives about their attitudes and subjective experiences about orphan care. This was possible because of the “depth of focus and the opportunity they offered for clarification and detailed

understanding” of the issues (Ritchie, 2003: 36-37). Ultimately, I was able to obtain rich descriptions of grandfathers’ caregiving activities of their orphaned grandchildren and make meaningful interpretations.

Further, during our discussions, an interview guide was used (see appendix 10), but the interview was flexible to allow collection of rich and extensive data. Also, to encourage the participant to express their thoughts, the interviews were dialogical – more of a social interaction of everyday life (Warren, 2012; Brinkmann, 2018). The scope was developed based on the participant’s responses as the conversation unfolded (Willis, 2006; Brinkman, 2018). While controlling the conversation to what was relevant and important for the study, I was also open to new information, pursued interesting leads, introduced new questions, and sought clarification and/or elaboration as our conversation progressed (Ritchie, 2003; Packer, 2011). Thus, the conversation was not a goal in itself, but rather generative, that is, a means of producing knowledge with the participants (Legard et al., 2003; Borer & Fontana, 2012). The interviews took place in the participant’s home on the veranda (**Figure 3.5**) or under a tree within the home. All the interviews were audio-recorded in order to capture the whole conversation and for easy retrieval during data analysis.

**Figure 3.5:** *Grandfather interview*



**Photograph:** *Author’s own collection.*

### 3.6.2.2 Key-informant interviews

Key-informant interviews were used to obtain views of key informants in the research communities, including representatives of CBOs, VDCs, and the CPCs, representatives of religious groups, professionals (teachers, HSAs, NGO staff, Child Protection Officer), and chiefs. They were conducted after several in-depth interviews with grandparents and before FGDs to utilise the initial emerging themes to inform them. The interviews took place in the offices, under a tree (**Figure 3.6**), and on the veranda of the participant's home or classroom. Key-informant interviews provided key information, for instance, about the lives of orphans such as schooling, social support issues, and the impact of modern technologies on the lives of children and young people.

**Figure 3.6:** *Completing a consent form with a teacher*



**Photograph:** *Author's own collection.*

### 3.6.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted after carefully examining the initial themes emerging from the interviews by listening to the audios, reviewing initial transcripts, fieldnotes, and reflective diaries. During this process, issues that were identified as suitable for group discussions were picked out for focus group discussions. For instance, grandparents were reticent to share negative aspects of their relationship with their grandchildren (e.g. conflicts). Subsequently, FGDs of 6 to 8 people were conducted with 34 children (9 aged 6-12 years, and 25 aged 13-17

years) and 32 adults (aged 19-75 years) who were believed to provide rich data about the topic (Krueger et al., 2001; Ritchie, 2003; Rabiee, 2004). The range of 6 to 8 participants per FGD was small enough to manage and large enough to gather diverse opinions about grandfathers.<sup>16</sup> All FGDs took place in school premises and at Shine Village Centre (**Figure 3.7**), except for one that took place at the chief's *bwalo* [a place used by the chief for community functions such as settling disputes].

**Figure 3.7:** A focus group discussion with young people



**Photograph:** Author's own collection.

Kamberelis et al (2018: 694) argue that, unlike in the past when FGDs were heavily scripted, FGDs have transformed into being more “dialogic events within which power relations between researchers and research participants are diminished and people are collectively interrogated [about] the conditions of their lives.” In resonance with current practices in research, and drawing from the interpretivist framework, the FGDs were made participatory. This involved posing a general question followed by probes to pursue interesting leads (Boateng, 2012; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Throughout our discussions, participants were encouraged to express their views (e.g. complementing and/or challenging each other). This

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<sup>16</sup> Many researchers support the ranges of 6 and 12 people per FGD as ideal (e.g. see Wong, 2008; Krueger & Casey, 2015).

resulted in lively discussions (e.g. jokes, teasing, debates) that led to the collection of rich data about daily routines and “taken-for-granted assumptions in everyday lives” (Lloyd-Evans, 2006: 154-155) of grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren.

In using FGDs, I encountered a number of challenges vis-à-vis the selection of suitable participants, establishing heterogeneity, management of group dynamics, and handling of sensitive/controversial topics. However, these challenges are not unique to this study. They have been previously raised by other researchers (e.g. Finch & Lewis, 2003; Lloyd-Evans, 2006; Flick, 2009). Thus, to facilitate effective FGDs, I borrowed from practices discussed by Flick (2009) and Flick and Lewis (2003), including: ensuring diversity in the sample; ensuring introductions to know each other and establish rapport; setting ground rules *with* and not *on* the participants; controlling the discussion constructively (e.g. addressing simultaneous conversations politely); giving every participant a chance to contribute (e.g. by nominating them); and entertaining diverse views, and challenging social norms (e.g. gendered social support) politely. As with the interviews, I also audio-recorded all FGDs, and jotted down the non-verbal interactions to ensure data accuracy and easy retrieval (Rabiee, 2004; Wong, 2008).

Thus, despite the challenges, FGDs were effective, and aided the collection of relevant and extensive data through this participatory method. Importantly, FGDs helped to crosscheck and complement information, and add some new information that did not emerge or emerged weakly during interviews. For instance, grandfathers were reticent to share negative experiences they experience living in matrilineal communities. This emerged strongly during FGDs, both with children and young people and adults.

#### **3.6.4 Visual Ethnographic Methods**

Visual/image elicitation was used to make the research more participatory (Prosser & Loxley, 2008; Prosser, 2011, 2013; Margolis & Zunjarwad, 2018) and aid the collection of data from children and young people. Specifically, drawings and photography were used, as described below.

### 3.6.4.1 Drawing-elicited interviews

Drawing-elicited interview is a data collection method in which the researcher asks the participants to draw aspects of their lives or topic of research interest, and then, talk about their drawings. Drawings are particularly suited to researching with children. For instance, Punch (2002: 331) states that the drawings are “rich visual illustrations which directly show how children see their world.” Thus, drawing is an example of a child-centred participatory method which recognizes them as creators and co-creators of knowledge (Barker & Weller, 2003; Einarsdóttir, 2007).

During FGDs, despite my efforts to reduce power imbalances between myself as a researcher and the participants, many of the primary school age children (6-12 years) were rarely active. This may be attributed to their low literacy and language skills (Barker & Weller, 2003). The children generally seemed shy, pressured to respond, and some were not able to articulate their thoughts. Consequently, I spent several unproductive minutes trying to encourage them to talk. Thus, it became clear that, to enhance their participation and collect useful data, there was need to change the way we were interacting. Subsequently, I decided to use drawings. Specifically, I gave 8 children drawing materials and asked them to produce drawings about their daily lives with their grandfathers and grandmothers. To ensure that children were the creators of knowledge, I did not tell them the specific things to draw. Thus, they had control over what to draw.

Drawing was also used for 15 preschool age children (3 to 5 years), comprising 10 from single-grandparent households, and 5 from dual-grandparent households. A trained caregiver from a CBCC at Shine Village Centre helped with engaging this the group.<sup>17</sup> The caregiver followed a similar procedure as the one for children aged 6 to 12 years described above. My role was to monitor and guide her through regular debriefings. I engaged the caregiver because the children could more easily talk to her than me (a stranger) due to their familiarity with her as they attend the same CBCCs that she works at.

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<sup>17</sup> All children (i.e. both preschool and primary school age) were provided with drawing equipment to take home and do the drawings.

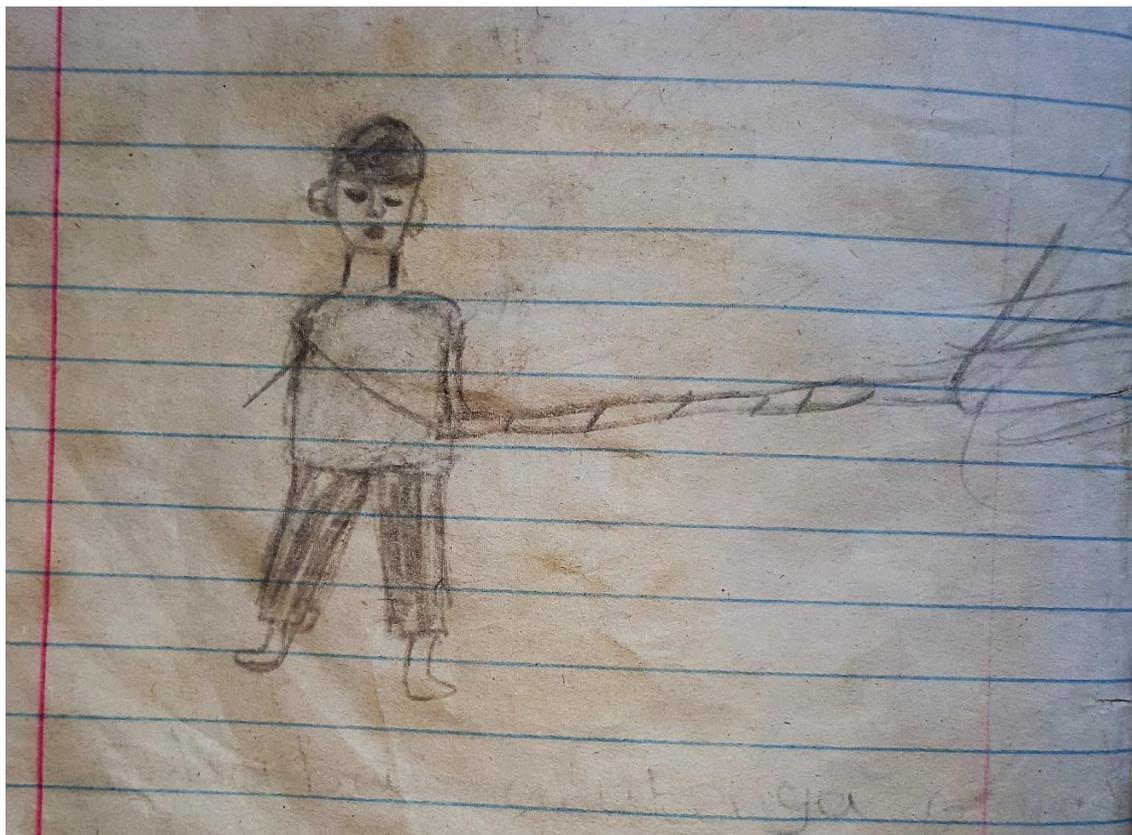
A key aspect of drawing and other visual methods (e.g. photography) as data collection when researching with children is maintaining the meaning the children intend for what they produce (Punch, 2002; van Blerk, 2006). Punch (2002: 331) stresses that care must be taken “not to misinterpret the children’s drawings and impose adult interpretations in analysis.” To ensure children’s meanings are retained during analysis and writing, children must be involved in the interpretation process of the visuals they produce (Punch, 2002; van Blerk, 2006). Thus, children in this study were engaged in audio-recorded drawing-elicited ‘chats’ to share stories behind their drawings.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, their drawings were used as entry points for exploring their views. These were then mapped into probes that facilitated pursuance of leads and further explanations. As Punch (2002) notes, because of their task-based nature, drawings helped to make the children creative as they had control over what to draw, the activity was fun, the drawings stimulated our discussion, and ultimately, it helped me develop and maintain rapport with the children. In total, these chats translated to over 2 hours of audio material.

Importantly, it became clear that without engaging the children in the interpretation of their drawings, error and misrepresentation of their drawings could have occurred. For instance, in the drawing below (**Figure 3.8**), prior to meeting Dimpho (9 years) to talk about her drawings, my interpretation of this particular drawing was that her grandfather was fetching firewood. Given Dimpho comes from a dual-grandparent household, and that the Malawian society considers this task as feminine (see chapter 6 and 8), I was curious and looked forward to meeting Dimpho to hear about the story behind her drawing. However, when I met with Dimpho, the story behind the drawing was different. Dimpho explained that the drawing represents her grandfather Osteen (54 years) fetching bamboo. Osteen makes fishing traps that he sells at the lake to buy his household’s needs. Clearly, without Dimpho’s explanation, my interpretation of her drawing was inaccurate. Thus, engaging the children in the interpretation process ensured that the meanings they attached to their drawings were not lost.

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<sup>18</sup> Although ‘interviews’ would be the best technical term, I prefer to call them ‘chats’ because the discussions were informal and more of a chat than an interview.

**Figure 3.8:** *Dimpho's grandfather fetching bamboo*



**Drawing:** *Dimpho, 9 years, granddaughter.*

#### **3.6.4.2 Photo-elicitation/photovoice interviews**

Due to the challenges encountered using FGDs (as stated earlier) and drawings with some of the children, photovoice was an obvious choice for collecting data from children who had challenges in articulating their thoughts/opinions/views. Also, some children were not interested in participating in the drawing exercise because they lacked artistic skills. To compensate for this and ensure collection of useful data, 14 primary school age children (5 boys, 9 girls; aged 6-12 years) were engaged in photography and photo-elicited/photovoice interviews. The children were from four grandparent-households (i.e. 3 dual-grandparent, and 1 single-grandparent households) that were already in the study. Procedurally, I explained the exercise to the children and their grandparents, trained them on how to use the camera, asked them to capture photos of their lives as they went about their daily routines, left the camera with them for at least two weeks, and visited them regularly to monitor the progress. Lastly, as with the drawings, and to retain children's meanings in the interpretation (van Blerk, 2006; Punch, 2002; Flick, 2009), I discussed the photos with the children.

Using photography contributed to another way of making the study more participatory (Samuels, 2004; Einarisdóttir, 2007; Epstein et al., 2006; Joanou, 2009). Thus, unlike the FGDs, photography provided an entry point to engage the children into priceless discussions and stimulated “deep and interesting talk” (Harper, 2002: 23). Photography also made the research process fun, as shown below (**Figure 3.9**), reduced power imbalances, and addressed challenges emanating from low literacy and shyness encountered during the FGDs because all the children had to do was to describe their photos to me. As they described their photos, the children reflected and talked about their emotions, feelings, thoughts, and insights (Purcell, 2009; Beebeejaun et al., 2014).

**Figure 3.9:** *A granddaughter dancing for her grandmother*



**Photograph:** Taken by Mzamo, 13 years, grandson.

Thus, photography proved important and useful in procuring the nuances of children’s lives with their grandparents. It was a tool through which I was able to see certain family processes and practices which I could not have personally observed.<sup>19</sup> For instance, many of my research visits to the participants’ homes occurred in the afternoon, hence I did not observe family processes such as meal times. As is in many rural households in Malawi, I assumed that, ordinarily, family

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<sup>19</sup> See also Punch, 2002 for similar observation.

members eat from one plate, usually along gender binaries. However, photos from one of the households showed each family member eating from his/her plate (**Figure 3.10**). This signified that the family was economically well-off and did not experience food shortages.<sup>20</sup> Thus, using this photo, I further interrogated the economic status of this family, and found that it was the most better off family of all the grandparent households in this study (see chapter 9).

**Figure 3.10:** Grandchildren eating their lunch



**Photograph:** Taken by Chiye, 14 years, grandson.

Overall, because the children had control of the research process photographing what they wanted (van Blerk, 2006), they were creators and co-creators of knowledge (Epstein et al., 2006; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Johnson, 2011). Thus, it was my conviction that their chosen visual images (e.g. a photo of grandfather cleaning *mtsuko* [water pot] – presented later in the thesis) would evoke powerful reactions (e.g. during dissemination meetings), and trigger debates about grandfathers' roles in orphan care that may challenge current social perceptions by offering alternative/additional discourses, hence raise social awareness, and facilitate advocacy and change.

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<sup>20</sup> Eating from one plate is usual in rural Malawi for cultural and livelihood purposes. Eating together brings people together, while also reducing the amount of *ndiwo* [relish] used per meal, which is the most common reason in contemporary Malawi due to livelihood challenges (see chapter 9).

### 3.6.5 Participant Observation

Observation is another common ethnographic data collection method in the social sciences. Many qualitative researchers using ethnography consider observation as integral to collecting rich data (Flick, 2009). For instance, Kawulich (2005: par 1, 2) comments that observation “has been a hallmark of both anthropological and sociological studies” for many years and is “considered a staple” in ethnography. Fetterman (2010: 39) agrees and states that observation is “crucial to effective fieldwork.” Thus, participant observation was integral to this ethnography, and allowed me to be an ‘observer-as-participant’ (Ritchie, 2003; Kawulich, 2005). Specifically, with the participants’ consent, I made informal observations of their households and lives as I visited them to conduct interviews as well as other research activities (e.g. monitoring of progress during drawing and photography exercises) and asked them questions where necessary. These observations offered the opportunities to gain more naturalistic insights about the participants’ lives (Ritchie, 2003; Kawulich, 2005). For instance, as I arrived in one of the participating households to check on the children’s progress with the photography exercise, I found May (70 years) and her grandson Miguel (13 years) removing chaff from maize (**Figure 3.11**), a task that many people interviewed considered feminine. Thus, I took a photo of May and Miguel and asked them to explain to me what was happening. Later, during the interview and photo-elicitation with May and Miguel, respectively, this photo became an entry point for discussing gender roles and social reaction to a grandson/boy helping his grandmother do a woman’s/feminine work/chore. Thus, observation enhanced my understanding of their lives.

**Figure 3.11:** A grandmother and her grandson removing chaff from the maize



**Photograph:** Author's own collection.

### **3.6.6 Ethnographic Fieldnotes and Reflective Journals**

Fieldnotes are considered by many researchers as a “standard activity in ethnography” (Peñaloza & Cayla, 2007: 279) and “the basis on which ethnographies are constructed” (Walford, 2009: 117). Thus, fieldnotes and reflective journals were integral to this study. Fieldnotes were written during observations and other research activities, and during reflections on the research as it unfolded. They captured personal reflections prior to, during, and after interacting with the participants, both positive (moments of joy) and negative experiences (‘bright days’, moments of despair’), as well as ambivalences as the research progressed. These later became an integral part of data analysis, interpretation, and reporting (Montgomery & Bailey, 2007; Walford, 2009). Further, I wrote reflective journals during data analysis as I was trying to make sense of the emerging themes. Overall, fieldnotes and reflective journals helped me engage in reflexive analysis (see section 3.8.1) and planning of subsequent actions and research activities, as well as overall effective management of the study.

### **3.6.7 Dissemination Meetings: Communicative Validation**

Researchers agree that dissemination of the study findings is an important aspect of good research practice because it provides the opportunity for the research participants and other stakeholders to react to the findings, for instance, affirming/confirming or challenging how their views have been represented by the researcher, a process technically called communicative validation (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lewis, 2003; Steinke, 2007). Dissemination is also crucial to gauge if there is need for more data to further interrogate and/or clarify certain issues that the initial data fail to address adequately (van Blerk, 2006). Further, dissemination is also vital in that it informs the research participants and the policymakers about possible actions they could take to improve people's lives in research communities (van Blerk & Ansell, 2007b). Drawing from this, it was inevitable for me to conduct dissemination meetings. Thus, before exiting the field, I conducted three dissemination meetings to share the preliminary findings of the study and invoke reaction, as well as make the study more participatory.

Specifically, I presented the preliminary findings to an academic audience at the University of Malawi through the Faculty of Social Sciences. Following the dissemination event, I met with the CAG to provide an opportunity to them to interrogate the preliminary findings before disseminating them to the larger group during the forthcoming community meeting. Following the CAG meeting, I conducted a dissemination meeting with the community with over 70 participants, including men, women, and children and young people. To involve the children "more directly in disseminating the findings" (van Blerk, 2006: 58), I engaged them in a role-play based on the key initial themes from the study. The children from the research communities (as opposed to outsiders) were better placed to "inform their [own] communities and peers..." (van Blerk, 2006: 58) of the findings of the study.

These three dissemination meetings proved instrumental in validating the findings and informing the remaining research activities, including data analysis and interpretation. Importantly, the dissemination meetings were also crucial for raising social awareness about the role of grandfathers in orphan care among not only the academic community, but importantly, the local community. Thus, further dissemination will be conducted through sharing the findings with policymakers in the government, NGOs, and other charities. The report of the findings will also be

sent to the National Council of Science and Technology (NCST) for further dissemination. I also plan to advocate for grandfathers and orphans through active participation in academic events, teaching, publishing, outreach programmes, research projects, and using the social media (e.g. through a blog).

Overall, the dissemination meetings, the interviews, FGDs, photography, and drawings resulted in not only extensive data, but importantly, provided an opportunity for the local residents to participate in this study as creators and co-creators of knowledge. This resulted in robust empirical evidence about grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi.

### **3.7 DATA MANAGEMENT, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION**

Data analysis and interpretation is an important part of any research and lies at the core of qualitative research (Flick, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a). Green et al (2007: 549) stress that rigorous analysis of data is "...critical to the generation of good evidence." Notably, there is no predefined protocol for how data is analysed in qualitative research, but analysis and interpretation is ongoing from data collection until the report is written (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018b; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori 2018). The decision about which approach is suitable depends on various factors, inter alia, the research aim, research questions, ontological stance, epistemological assumptions, methodology and methods, and the type of data, and the philosophical approaches (Spencer et al., 2003; Bryman, 2015; Moylan et al., 2015). The key principle during data analysis is the researcher's creativity to reproduce participants' accounts "woven into and through field experiences" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a: 22). These practices guided data analysis in this study.

Specifically, as mentioned earlier, data analysis for this interpretive study was approached with the principle of subjectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a), and was aided by intersectionality as an analytical tool. NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) was used to facilitate efficiency and effectiveness in data management and analysis. In addition, I also used Scribe software to transcribe the audio recording, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word software packages to aid easy data storage and retrieval (e.g. notes, transcripts), and Microsoft Excel to index the data and develop thematic charts (Ritchie et al., 2003)

during initial stages of data analysis. Below, I describe the data analysis and interpretation process in detail.

### **3.7.1 Transcription and Translation**

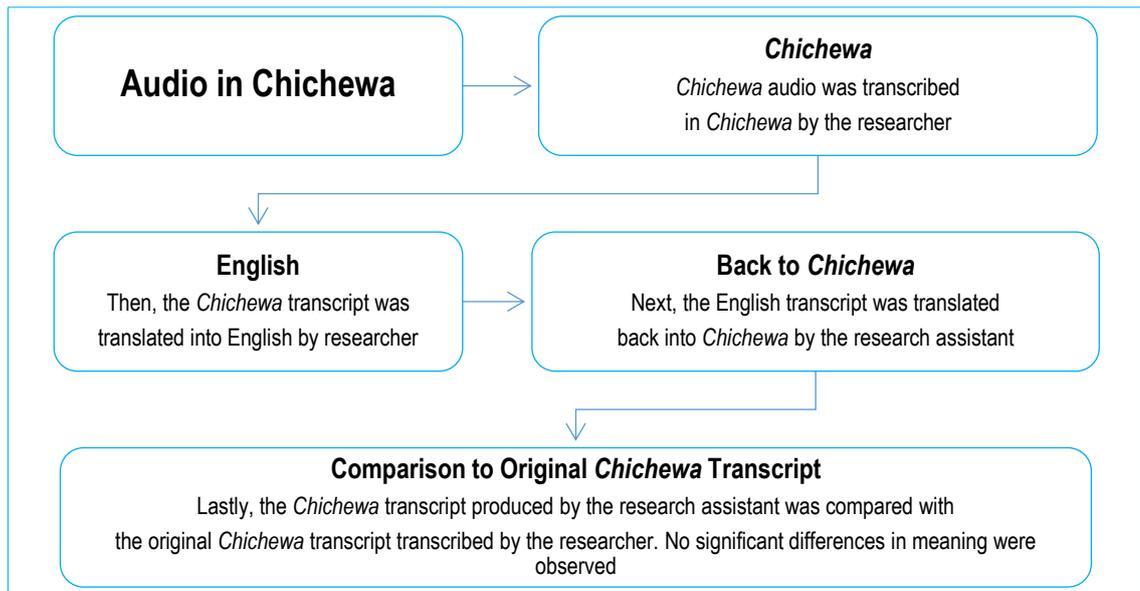
I conducted all research activities in *Chichewa*, a local language widely spoken in Southern Malawi, and other parts of the country. The research activities were digitally audio-recorded, then translated and transcribed verbatim into English soon after conducting the first interviews. The goal of transcribing the audio recordings was to capture the participants' voices and retain their representations rather than adhere to semiotics or sophisticated text analytics and transcription conventions such as those used in linguistic and conversation analytic studies (Flick, 2009; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2018).

Transcribing was simultaneous with translation into English of the transcripts. Flick (2009: 299) calls translation “a necessary step on the way to interpretation.” Thus, despite being a native *Chichewa* speaker, I took necessary steps to maintain high standards of the translation. Specifically, I employed two verification measures: 1) back-translation of interview transcripts; and 2) direct translation from *Chichewa* into English at the point of transcription.

#### **3.7.1.1 Back-translation (Chichewa → English → Chichewa)**

I transcribed an interview in *Chichewa* and translated the transcript into English. Next, a research assistant translated the English transcript back into *Chichewa*. Then, I compared his *Chichewa* transcript with my original *Chichewa* transcript. No significant differences emerged between our transcripts, except for the choice of words or terms – the meanings were similar. The process is summarised below (**Figure 3.12**).

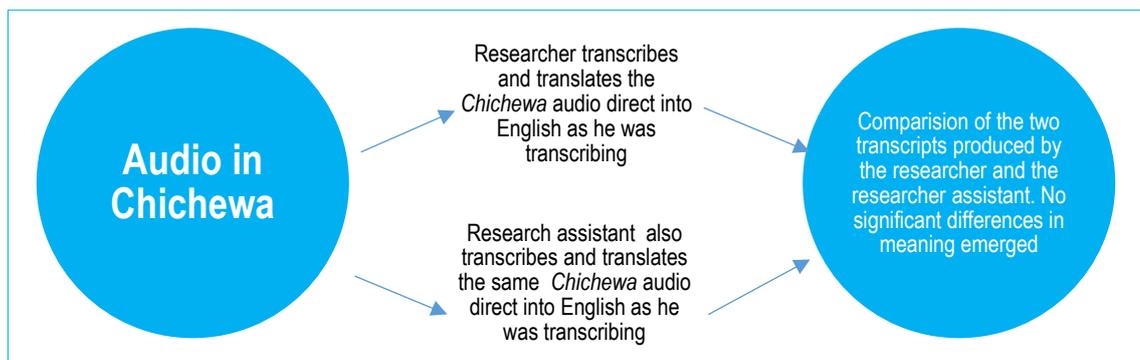
**Figure 3.12: Verification process 1 – Back-translation and comparison**



### 3.7.1.2 Direct transcription of Chichewa audios into English

Together with the research assistant, we each translated the same *Chichewa* audio directly into English as each was transcribing. Then, we compared the two English transcripts side-by-side. The results were similar as those described in the back-translation above. The process is illustrated below (Figure 3.13).

**Figure 3.13: Verification process 2 – Direct translation and comparison**



Overall, using the two verification processes described above provided a robust way of ensuring high quality of translation, and enhanced the credibility/trustworthiness of the findings. To further ensure participants' voices were captured accurately and avoid superimposing my views (Spencer et al., 2003), all the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. Because I conducted all the research activities, verbatim transcription helped me recollect my interactions with the participants. This provided nuanced understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren, which aided data analysis and interpretation.

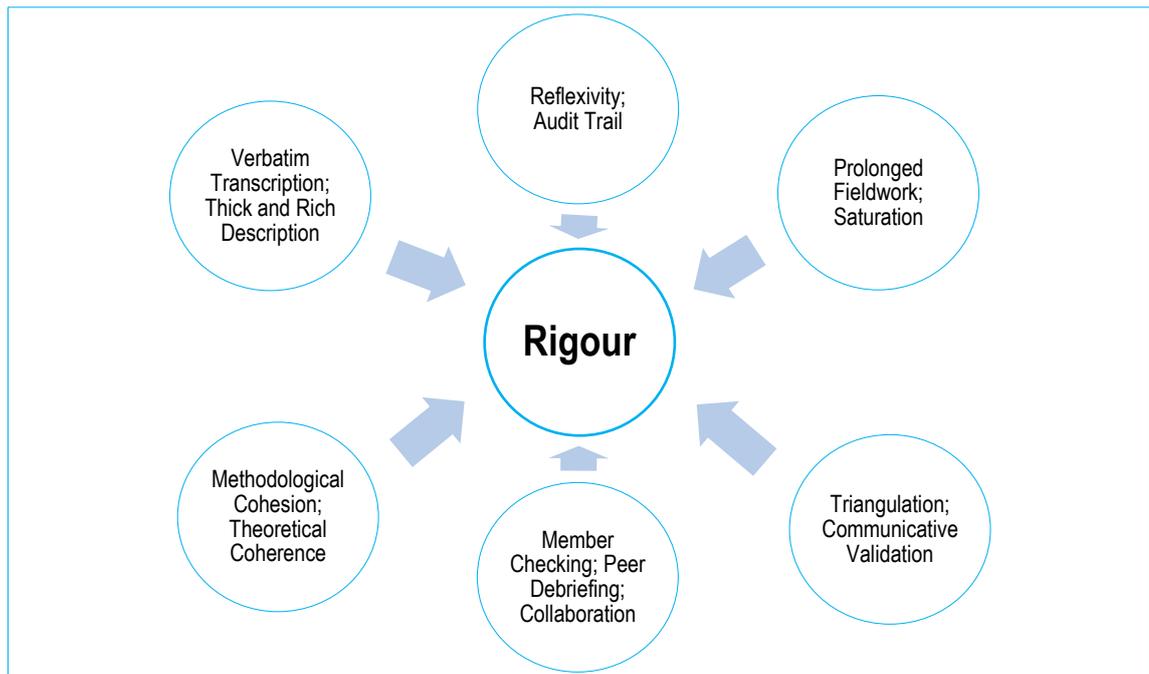
### **3.7.2 Coding, Categorization, and Generation of Themes**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Braun et al., 2015). This entailed examining the data, systematically searching, identifying, extracting, and organizing themes that were relevant to the description of the phenomenon (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012; Bryman, 2015). Primarily, and as aforementioned, the data analysis was inductive (data-driven), that is, generating codes, patterns, categories, and themes, as well as association and explanations after directly examining the data (Creswell, 2007). This involved reflecting on the research questions and purpose of the study, and examining the data by listening to the audio recordings several times to evoke recollections of my encounters with the participants (thus reliving the interviews), immersion and re-immersion in the data, and ultimately informing data analysis (Revsbæk & Tanggaard, 2015). Then, I read and re-read empirical material (i.e. transcripts, fieldnotes, reflective journals) repeatedly, paragraph by paragraph, sentence-by-sentence, and word-by-word, while also jotting down important observations emerging from the data (e.g. about themes, relationships, and other observations) for familiarisation. I also moved back-and-forth from data (e.g. fieldnotes, observations, transcripts) to field experiences, and coding the data appropriately (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018a; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2018). Overall, these steps facilitated rigorous data analysis (Ritchie et al., 2003b; Green et al., 2007; Schmidt, 2007; Bazeley, 2009).

### **3.8 STUDY RIGOUR/TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RESEARCHER'S POSITIONALITY**

Rigour is “the means of demonstrating the plausibility, credibility and integrity of the qualitative research process” (Ryan et al., 2007: 742; see also Flick, 2007a). Morse et al (2002: 14) emphasise that “without rigour, research is worthless, becomes fiction, and loses its utility.” Despite the popularity of the need for rigour in qualitative research, “the strategies for determining rigour cannot be applied *carte blanche* to any type of qualitative inquiry” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018b: 760). Nonetheless, implementing rigour involves engaging in “many targeted actions” (Morse, 2018: 814) throughout the research process for quality assurance, as exemplified below (**Figure 3.14**).

**Figure 3.14:** Examples of strategies for establishing/determining rigour



**Key Sources:** Creswell & Miller, 2000; Oliver et al., 2005; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Bailey, 2008; Morse, 2018.

Morse (2018: 796) warns that “the misuse of strategies to determine rigor makes our research perfectly reliable but trivial.” Thus, thoughtful decisions must be made vis-à-vis which strategies are appropriate for specific research needs, and how many strategies should be employed, depending on the complexity and size of the project, as well as the researcher’s skills (Morse, 2018). Drawing from this, I used various strategies of rigour, including: verbatim transcription of audio material; prolonged engagement with the participants; audit trail (e.g. monitoring fieldwork through observations, fieldnotes, reflective journals); communicative validation of data through dissemination meetings; saturation; reflexivity; and triangulation (Steinke, 2007; Tracy, 2010; Morse, 2018). Below, I discuss reflexivity and triangulation.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.8.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to active engagement in multiple, simultaneous, and specific measures to safeguard the credibility of the research process and enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Gilgun, 2010; Walby & Larsen, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018b). This involves the researcher’s ongoing scrutiny and interrogation of thoughts, decisions, and actions to gauge whether their “personal histories

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<sup>21</sup> The other strategies for ensuring rigour have already been covered.

saturate their inquiry” (Kacem & Chaitin, 2006: 214). Rolfe (2006: 215) calls reflexivity a process of “turning action back on itself” and “turning thought back on itself.” Thus, the importance of reflexivity in research cannot be understated. Subsequently, reflexivity is widely regarded as the “hallmark of excellent qualitative research...” (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002: 216), “the knower’s mirror” (Malterud, 2007: 484), and of “capital importance for the quality and rigor of qualitative approaches” (Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014: 352). Further, reflexivity is even more crucial when researching with children. Punch (2002: 323) stresses that “reflexivity should be a central part of the research process with children, where researchers critically reflect not only on their role and their assumptions, but also on the choice of methods and their application.” Denzin (1997: 223) argues that reflexivity in the research process “is not an option”, but rather integral. In short, reflexivity denotes good research practice (Ahmed et al., 2011; Berger, 2015). Thus, many scholars contend that reflexivity must be deliberately integrated into the research study (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Riach, 2009; Doyle, 2013).

Drawing from this, reflexivity was purposefully incorporated into this research study. Given the naturalistic nature of this interpretive study, I recognised that I could influence the participants, and vice versa. Both parties were not blank slates (*tabula rasa*). Rather, we brought our social-cultural positioning (e.g. gender, assumptions, values, beliefs) to the research process, hence we could have reciprocal influences on the research process (Underwood et al., 2010; Holloway & Biley, 2011; Medico & Santiago-Delefosse, 2014). If not carefully managed, this could have compromised data collection and analysis, and conclusions. To minimise this, I was informed by various strategies for reflexivity, including: using fieldnotes and reflexive journals/diaries to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation (Ortlipp, 2008; Naidu & Slied, 2011); flexibility and thorough attendance to issues/challenges that are counterproductive to the success of the research process (Ahmed et al., 2011); maintaining transparency through audit trail; and making my background explicit, and recognizing my positionality in the study (Haight et al., 2014; Berger 2015). Below, I discuss the last point because of its centrality to this study.

### **3.8.1.1 Positionalities: 'Insider' and 'outsider'**

In the research process, a researcher can be an 'insider', 'outsider', or a hybrid of the two, and these positionalities are fluid. Depending on his/her positionality, the researcher may see or overlook certain meanings embedded in the social world of the participants (Berger, 2015). In this study, I am both an 'insider' and an 'outsider', hence remain mindful of how these positionalities would impact my interaction with various research participants, the data I would collect, and the interpretations and conclusions I would make. As a native Malawian (born and raised in Malawi), an orphan (during my childhood) raised by both my maternal and paternal grandparents, in rural communities severely affected by HIV/AIDS and poverty, I share several commonalities with the research participants (e.g. culture, language, identity, livelihood challenges). Because of this, I have insider knowledge about some issues I was exploring (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Ahmed et al., 2011). This poses both opportunities and threats to the success of conducting a credible study.

In terms of the advantages, being an insider facilitated data collection. I had easier access to the participants because I was aware of culturally situated protocols regarding entrée into the field.<sup>22</sup> The development of rapport and trust was easier because I share the same language and culture with the participants. Participants were, in most cases, forthcoming with the information because of easy communication due to shared common life experiences. Being an insider also made me sensitive to the participants' social-cultural background, thus enabling the identification of situated reactions, subtle meanings, and other dynamics of verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g. body language, gestures) that an outsider could have overlooked (Ochieng, 2010; Ahmed et al., 2011; Haight et al., 2014). All this facilitated the success of the fieldwork.

At the same time, being an 'insider' threatened the ultimate goal of qualitative inquiry, namely, 'to represent the accounts/voice of the participants'. As an insider, I could have overlooked things because of familiarity. Without safeguarding the research process through reflexive analysis, my insider positionality could have

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, my study moved smoothly through the review process because the reviewers favourably considered my background – as a native Malawian familiar with the culture. This was also the case with the District Commissioner of Zomba, the Police, and the chiefs. It might have been a different case if I was not born and raised in Malawi.

negatively impacted the research process. For instance, I could have concealed or overlooked certain issues, imposed my own views based on my childhood experiences or otherwise, and misrepresent the participants' voices by taking their views for granted (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Berger, 2015).

Further, sharing common life experiences made some participants overlook some information because they thought it obvious for me – I was one of them. For instance, statements such as, “you know, Mr Mayeso, you’re a Malawian” were common during various research activities. Without reflexivity, I could have found myself at the ‘epicentre’ of the research process, and eclipsing the participants’ voices by, for instance, interrupting them and completing their statements, agreeing with them when they said, “you know, Mr Mayeso, you’re a Malawian” and not probing for more information, assuming things without seeking details, or asking them leading questions. This could have compromised the findings as it would have been my voice being presented rather than the participants’ voices.

However, using reflexivity, I was able to step back and reflect on the research process, and devise ways of addressing these threats. I rose above my childhood memories and experiences, was alert throughout the research process (Doyle, 2013; Berger, 2015), seeking the participants’ insights, and guarding myself against overlooking and/or imposing meanings on them. For instance, when a participant reserved some information by saying, “you know, Mr Mayeso, you’re a Malawian”, I acknowledged my identity, but politely asked them to ignore my ‘insider’ positionality and talk about their lives, that I wanted to hear their views and learn from them. This helped them to expound on their views and resulted in collecting rich data that would not have been possible without reflexivity. Also, during data collection, analysis, and interpretation, I acknowledged that participants sometimes (intentionally or unintentionally) “not only speak through words but also through silences” (Holloway & Biley, 2011: 972). Thus, employing reflexivity helped me to reflect on participant’s silences to gauge whether there were hidden messages or not, which also informed data analysis (discussed later in this chapter, and in chapter 11).

Although I was an insider, there were also circumstances where I was positioned as an outsider. I was not a resident of the research communities, my education and social status were different from the participants (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Ahmed

et al., 2011), there was generational gap with some of the participants (e.g. grandfathers, grandmothers, children). Thus, although being an ‘outsider’ helped me step back and look at the issues from the participants’ perspective (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010, Ahmed et al., 2011), but these differences could have impacted our interaction negatively (Riach, 2009; Underwood et al., 2010; Tarrant, 2014) had I not employed reflexivity. For instance, I needed to acknowledge that despite our similar life experiences, there were also parts that were different. Hence, I did not let my insider positionality obscure our differences.

Thus, to ensure our interaction was effective, I self-examined my initial interviews, and critically reflected upon them to ascertain how I would subsequently improve the things that did seem to work well. I also reflected on our differences (outlined above) prior to meeting specific groups of participants in order to adopt best practices and enhance our interaction. For instance, as described earlier, whenever I was interacting with children and young people, I changed the ‘adult’ or ‘formal’ language and used that which they commonly use in their social world. Also, I shared some of my childhood experiences and other stories about my home village with the participants to help them realise that despite our differences (e.g. in education and social status), we also mutually shared some aspects of life experiences. This helped to soften the mood, minimise the power imbalances, and facilitate effective data collection.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, through reflexivity, I was able to encourage the participants’ accounts rather than imposing my voice during our discussions. Suffice to say, in practice, implementing reflexivity was challenging (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002; Riach, 2009; Dyole, 2010). Fox and Allan (2014: 111) note that “reflexivity would appear to do its work by disturbing, disrupting and opening up new possibilities, so those embarking on a reflexive trip should be prepared for a bumpy ride.” During my fieldwork, being reflexive required skills, commitment, and conscious decisions throughout the research process to avoid obscuring the participants’ voices by excessively focusing on self-analysis instead of the participants (Doyle, 2013; Probst & Berenson, 2014). Despite these challenges, reflexivity was rewarding as it helped

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<sup>23</sup> I also used supervision for this process by sharing the initial transcripts with my supervisors (both of whom are not Malawians) to review and provide feedback. Their feedback was incorporated in the subsequent interviews.

me carry out a credible research. As Finlay (2002: 227) stresses, “for all the difficulties inherent in the task, to avoid reflexivity altogether is likely to compromise the research.”

### **3.8.2 Multiple Triangulation**

Triangulation was used as another strategy to enhance rigour. Triangulation entails the use of different, but complementary data collection techniques to examine the phenomenon from multiple and varied perspectives in order to provide in-depth nuanced understanding of it (Barker et al., 2002; Flick, 2007b; Walliman, 2011; Flick et al., 2012; Flick, 2018). Denzin (2012: 100) identifies four major types of triangulation, namely: 1) *data triangulation* – using multiple and different data sources (participant groups, places, institutions), sometimes at different times/dates and space/places to corroborate participants’ accounts; 2) *methodological triangulation* – using different, but complementary data collection methods to address limitation of the other; 3) *theoretical triangulation* – using multiple theoretical positions/perspectives to interrogate a phenomenon; and 4) *investigator triangulation* – engaging different researchers or interviewers to minimise biases emerging from the individual. This study used data and methodological triangulations to ensure gathering of well-rounded data.

Specifically, triangulation in this study involved using different participant groups in various research activities (as described earlier in this chapter). The use of various participant groups helped to crosscheck and corroborate information. For instance, information about grandfathers’ complaints about ‘children of today’ was checked with children and young people to get their views. The combination of multiple methods and approaches was instrumental in addressing limitations of the other (Farmer et al., 2006; Hammersley, 2008; Denzin, 2009; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). For instance, as aforementioned, FGDs were not as effective for preteens as photography and drawings were.

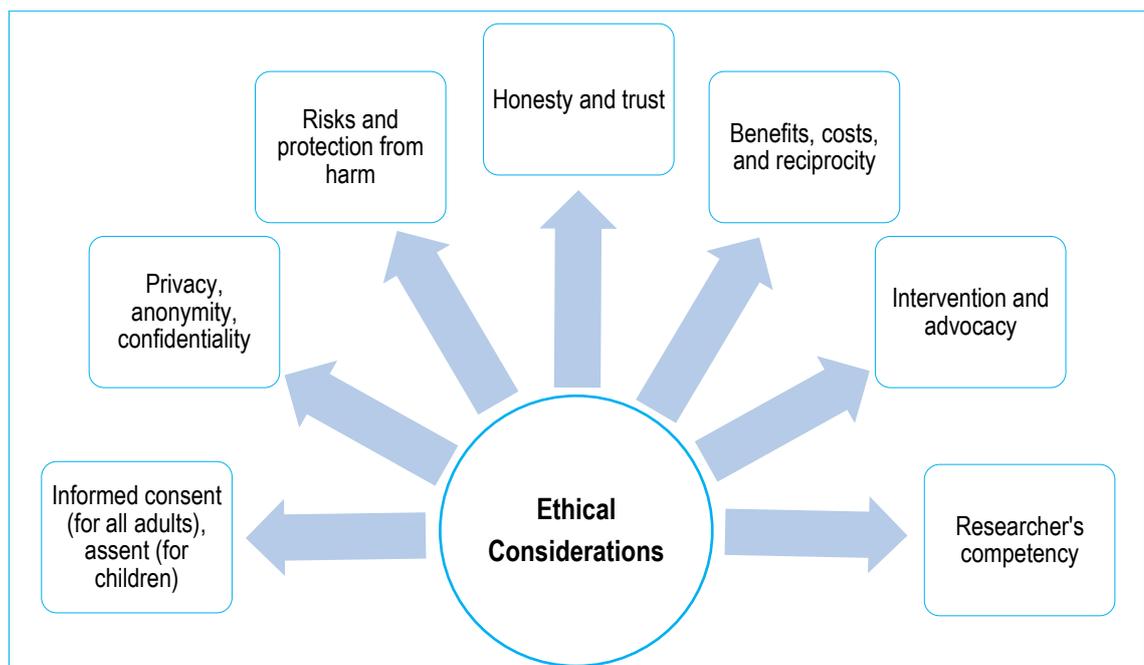
Also, certain data were hard to collect from some grandfathers during in-depth interviews (e.g. intergenerational conflict, kinship support) because grandfathers were reticent to talk about these issues, presumably because of fear of reprisal as these were matrilineal communities and they were living in their spouse’s place among her people. However, these data come out strongly during key-informant

interviews with professionals, and during FGDs with children and young people and adults such that I managed to compare common themes and/or contradictions/irregularities. Thus, using multiple participant groups and multiple methods aided the collection of useful data that provides a “broader, deeper, more comprehensive understanding” (Flick, 2018: 449) of grandfathers’ caregiving for orphaned grandchildren. Triangulation of data and methods added “rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth of the inquiry” (Denzin, 2012: 82). Thus, together with the other rigour strategies, triangulation aided nuanced understanding about grandfathers’ caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi.

### 3.9 ETHICAL CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS

Ethics are central to all research (Flewitt, 2005; Brydon, 2006; Bell, 2008; Sime, 2008; Skelton, 2008). In qualitative research, ethics are crucial because, innately, its naturalistic nature makes it “saturated with moral and ethical issues” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005: 157). In this study, ethics were also particularly important since the study involved children (Hart & Tyrer, 2006; Clacherty & Donald, 2007; Graham et al., 2013). Thus, specific measures and decisions were made throughout the study to adhere to ethical best practices in line with Graham et al (2013) and other researchers (e.g. see Miles & Huberman, 1994), as depicted below (**Figure 3.15**).

**Figure 3.15:** Ethical considerations during this study



Needless to say that, like any other research, this study was not immune to ethical challenges and dilemmas. As noted by Miles and Huberman (1994: 290), ethical choices in this study “involved trade-offs, balances, compromises among competing goods and threatening bads”, thus resulting in important challenges and dilemmas, as described below.

### **3.9.1 Expectations from the Participants: ‘Be Sure to Look Your Eyes Here’**

You’re conducting this study here in Kuntumanji. So, if this study bears fruits, be sure to look your eyes right here in Kuntumanji” (Eugenio, 49 years, grandfather – FGD).

The first challenge I encountered during this study was the participants’ expectations about monetary and/or other material benefit for their participation. Despite explicitly informing participants during recruitment that no material benefits would be forthcoming for their participation, the issue of payments resurfaced frequently. Many participants diverted the discussion into talking about their financial problems. The question, “are you not going to give me money or anything?” was common for all the participant groups except professionals.<sup>24</sup> For instance, during the stakeholder meeting and one of the FGDs, participants nearly walked out of the event, demanding that I give them money. When I explained that I had brought them refreshments and snacks, they argued that they would prefer having money because ‘refreshments and snacks would not buy them food to eat with their children back home’. They emphasised that having refreshments and snacks meant they were ‘enjoying’ while their children ‘suffered’ at home. These demands and requests reflect the dire poverty of the research participants and a wider ethical issue about the direct and immediate versus the indirect and long-term benefits of social science research in impoverished communities.

Besides personal expectations, there were also community expectations. During individual and group interactions, many people asked whether this study research would materialise or translate into a project or projects that would solve the pertinent problems in their communities, even problems that were not related to the study per se such as the need for construction of CBCCs, boreholes, and

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<sup>24</sup> None of the professionals asked me for money or anything, except lobbying for projects/programme for the communities. Many expressed gratitude that I had considered involving them in the study.

electricity. Others felt I was their bridge or link to government and NGOs, hence pleaded with me to take their problems to relevant authorities so that they can be resolved. These expectations were not surprising given the high levels of poverty in the research communities, and the turbulent national economy more generally. Thus, throughout the study, I reiterated my position that I did understand their situations, but I would not and could not give them money or other material resources due to the ethical restrictions set/imposed by the review boards both in Malawi and in the UK.<sup>25</sup> Thus, my internship with SRT Malawi was the only way at that time to give back to the community and assist those in poverty.<sup>26</sup> Below I provide some of the examples of the participants' views about their expectations of financial and/or material benefits (**Box 3.1**).

**Box 3.1: Examples of participants' expectations**

*Let me ask about money... when you do [research] like this, will I receive the money through postal or you will bring it here? (Esnart, 76 years, grandmother – Pilot Interview).*

*I struggle... Actually, when I saw you coming here, I said to myself, "today, I will definitely have matches" (Akonda, 92 years, grandfathers – In-depth interview).*

*Well, my question is that: have you visited us just to hear what is happening in the household? Or, is there something that you're thinking or planning to do? (Frank, 76 years, grandfather).*

*...this research that you're doing, what benefit does it have for us? (Nthanda, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*So, what does all this [study] mean to us? (Mandla, 37 years, male – Stakeholder meeting).*

*Well, I hope you will remember us and we will be like, "so these are the fruits of that man who visited us!" (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*I want to know, is there anything you could do to help communities, like here, in some ways through your research? (Stella, 42 years, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

*I know that this study is good because there's lots of problems in the community that grandfathers are facing. I am confident that you will hear a lot through this study. So, when you take these issues to them [government and NGOs], please emphasise that there are lots of problems in the village that grandfathers are encountering (Pemphero, 41 years, male – FGDs).*

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<sup>25</sup> This was based on personal communication. Both University of Hull in the UK, and the National Council Science and Technology in Malawi [NCST]) proscribed giving the research participants money and/or gifts for their participation in the study.

<sup>26</sup> I contributed to the research communities through my internship with SRT Malawi. For instance, I developed a monitoring and evaluation system for the NGO's projects, coached staff on writing technical reports for donors/funders, and attended the NGO's Board of Trustees' meetings both in Malawi and in the UK where I made recommendations for improving their projects. I also wrote and submitted an internship report that included an assessment of their projects and several recommendations, some of which have since been developed into projects or incorporated into the existing projects. Further, through my position as an academic at University of Malawi, I also plan to utilise my research knowledge and experiences to bring benefits to rural communities in Kuntumanji (the research communities), and Malawi more widely.

### 3.9.2 Studying with Tears? Emotional Cost of Researching Vulnerable Groups

Talking about the emotions during a research study is not universally accepted. Some scholars think that emotions must be kept “under control...” in research (Anderson & Smith, 2001: 7). Consequently, emotions are largely neglected and marginalised in much of existing social research (Crang, 2003; McLaughlin, 2003; Ansell & van Blerk, 2005; Watts, 2008). However, researchers within the discipline of emotional geographies and other social sciences have argued that a researcher cannot be detached from emotions during the research process, thus explicitly acknowledging their impact on the research is increasingly regarded as good research practice (Laurier & Parr 2000; Widdowfield, 2000; Bondi, 2005; Rager, 2005). Thus, in this thesis, I endeavour to explore the emotional cost incurred during this study by explicitly acknowledging and sharing how they impacted me as a researcher and as person. Although, emotions are experienced at every stage of research (Bennet, 2004), in my case, emotions were heightened during and after fieldwork as I was writing the findings of this study. Also, emotions during research can be positive and/or negative (Davidson & Milligan, 2004), but many of my emotions during this study were negative, hence, I focus on these.

I conducted my study in communities severely devastated by HIV/AIDS and chronic poverty. Visiting people and witnessing their suffering first-hand had an emotional toll on me that continued long after exiting the field. The year (2016) I collected the data was one of the worst droughts in the history Malawi. Due to insufficient rain during planting season, crops were very poor, and many households did not harvest adequate food, with some literally harvesting nothing. The prices of food and other commodities rose sharply. Thus, there were days when I visited some of participating households and found they had gone days without food. In other cases, it was clear that they were barely surviving. For instance, in the photo below (**Figure 3.16**), Otilia (15 years) holds *matemba* [small fish] in a plastic bag. Under normal circumstances, this amount of *matemba* could be used by a single person for one meal. However, during the photo-elicited interview with Otilia and her sister Orlando (13 years), they expressed that these *matemba* were for three people (themselves and their 80-year grandfather, David) for both lunch and supper. This signifies how desperate this family was.

**Figure 3.16:** A granddaughter holding matemba [small fish] for her family



**Photograph:** Taken by Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.

These situations were many, and created a dilemma. As a human being and as someone who holds high my Christian faith values (e.g. kindness, and concern for the less privileged), I felt a strong urge to help. Yet, I could not. As stated earlier, the two institutions that reviewed and approved this research study explicitly prohibited me (on the basis of 'ethics') from offering money and/or gifts to the participants because they argued that money and/or gifts could have persuaded the people to participate and/or influence views during discussions. This was also clearly communicated to me during discussions with my supervisors during the ethics application. Their advice was that I should refer such dire situations to NGOs and other bodies working in the research communities and/or district – something which I did. However, I observed that NGOs often take time to intervene because they are overwhelmed by such situations and have limited funding. Thus, there was no guarantee that they would intervene. Indeed, over the eight months I spent in the research communities, none of the NGOs approached did anything to assist any of the severe cases I reported.

This situation was dissatisfying to me and raised moral dilemmas. I wrestled with this dilemma many times. On one hand, helping the participants would mean breaching the ethical requirements set by the above institutions to which I had committed. This could have had severe repercussions on my PhD programme, and my future research activities in Malawi. On the other hand, ignoring the pertinent needs of the participants (e.g. food) was ironic: I needed their support through their participation in my study, which was central to completing my PhD, yet I never offered mine (e.g. giving them material support to offset their livelihood challenges). Essentially, it was like I was using them to meet personal gains. For instance, I would visit a participating household and find they had gone for days without food. Yet, at the end of our discussion, I did nothing to address their problem except encouraging them spiritually and praying for them afterwards. Worse still, I booked an interview to meet them again. When I visited them later, I brought them nothing to improve/mitigate their situation. Thus, it was like I was not concerned with their plight. This resulted in strong feelings of helplessness and guilt.

The tangle between ethical requirements and my faith and personal values was deeply troubling. Many times, I found myself hopeless – one of the encounters (Cristian's case described later in the thesis) broke me to tears, and I still think about it to this day. Given my privileged position (i.e. a lecturer at a prestigious university in the country, with elevated social status, pursuing studies in England), I can speculate that these situations may have negatively impacted the participants too because I failed to assist them even though I had the financial capacity (see DeLuca & Maddox, 2016 for similar views). This enraged me. Codes of ethical research conduct in some institutions, presumably developed by privileged people in institutions of power (e.g. University of Hull, and NCST in Malawi), prohibit researchers to offer money or material compensation (incentives) to participants to avoid undue influence on the research participants (Ripley, 2006; Ripley et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2013). This rendered me useless in situations that I had the financial/material capacity to intervene. This created a lot of questions in me, such as: was it 'ethical' to engage the participants in such dire situation, but not attend to their pressing needs such as food? Was it morally right to turn a blind eye to their suffering? 'Ethical' to who? Yet, as aforementioned, any 'unethical practices' as defined by the two institutions could have cost my PhD, and my future research activities in Malawi. Hence, there had to be emotional trade-offs.

Kleinman and Copp (1993: 8) note that emotions (whether good or bad) “usually spill over into the rest of our lives.” Similarly, recollections of a particular situations were vivid in my mind throughout this study. Despite growing up in similar challenging situations to those of the participants, I never got used to witnessing their suffering. I left the research communities without seeing their lives improved in any way, something that continues to trouble me emotionally. Questions about how the participants survived that year? Whether the orphans continued schooling? And, what reputation I left by not helping them despite them seeing me as a ‘rich person’ continued to linger in my mind as I analysed the data and wrote the thesis.<sup>27</sup>

Nonetheless, my faith, spiritual and emotional support from family and friends, and emotional support from my supervisors were instrumental in mitigating these emotional challenges. And, the dilemmas I encountered epitomise the need to interrogate some of the ethical requirements enforced by review boards (both local and international) to ascertain whether they align with the needs of specific groups, as well as whether breaching them (e.g. compensating participants in impoverished communities for their participation) would be harmful or good to the participants, while also not compromising the findings and professional conduct. Although there are no universally agreed guidelines, for instance, regarding compensating research participants (Graham et al., 2013), such consideration is worth research and policy attention. For instance, there is need to consider both short-term and long-term benefits of research to the participants.

### **3.9.3 Researching Sensitive Topics: Silences**

Researching in communities affected by HIV/AIDS, and talking about death posed important ethical challenges during this study. These topics are culturally sensitive in many rural communities in Malawi. People rarely discuss HIV/AIDS because of stigma associated with disclosure of HIV status or AIDS-related death. Even though some studies have suggested that disclosure of HIV status may result in positive outcomes (Paxton, 2002; Mfecane, 2011; Obermeyer et al., 2011), extensive

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<sup>27</sup> I plan to include these dilemmas in my report to NCST, aim to be on Chancellor College (University of Malawi) ethics committee in future to influence decisions regarding payment of research participants, particularly vulnerable groups such as those who participated in this study, as well as policy engagement on matters that affect the poor in rural Malawi.

research emerging from rural SSA generally shows that, in many cases, people hardly disclose such information except occasionally to close relatives (if at all) due to fear of social stigma (Niehaus, 2007; Mbonu et al., 2009; Gilbert & Walker, 2010; Lugallaa et al., 2012; Walker, 2017). In my research work in rural Malawi, there were silences around HIV/AIDS issues, particularly among grandparents and orphaned grandchildren. For instance, none of the grandparents and their orphaned grandchildren discussed the cause of death of the parents of their orphaned grandchildren.

Thus, talking about HIV/AIDS issues directly would have been in direct confrontation with social practices of hiding AIDS-related deaths and illnesses fuelled/reinforced by social stigma (discussed further in chapter 11). There were moments when I wanted to discuss with the participants about HIV/AIDS issues, but it was difficult to do so directly. For instance, I could not ask or challenge them directly to talking about what caused the death of the parents of the orphans unless they brought the issue into the discussion. Going against this could have been culturally inappropriate. For instance, during FGDs, it was clear that the participants did not want to talk about the specifics of HIV/AIDS issues such as HIV/AIDS-related illnesses and deaths. When they did, it was simply in passing, rather than deep and specific discussions despite probing. Consequently, stories of the orphaned grandchildren's deceased parents are silent in this study (as you will notice in the later chapters). Cheney (2017) has argued that silence is a form of communication rather than the absence of communication. Individual and/or socially produced silences are, thus, important data. Thus, this study acknowledges the silences surrounding HIV/AIDS as data, rather than the absence of data.

#### **3.9.4 Exiting the Field**

Another challenge I encountered, which also relates to the theme of emotions in research, was exiting the field. Literature regarding fieldwork highlights the ambivalences associated with leaving the participants (Kindon & Cupples, 2014; Caretta & Cheptum, 2017). There is no 'one-size-fits-all model' for exiting the field because it usually depends on the nature of the study and the relationships the researcher developed with the participants over the course of fieldwork. In my case, exiting the field involved arranging 'goodbye' meetings with the local leaders as well as staff from SRT Malawi who hosted my internship during the entire fieldwork

period. These final meetings created mixed emotions: On the one hand, saying 'goodbye' to the people was emotionally challenging. We had developed strong working relationship during the past eight months. At the same time, I had witnessed their suffering first-hand. Saying 'goodbye' was like I was ending our relationships, and abandoning them in the time of need even though they received no material support from me during the fieldwork. Thus, I had strong emotional feelings: I did not want to leave, I wanted to continue visiting them and seeing how their life was unfolding amidst the devastating livelihood challenges. On the other hand, I was feeling satisfied with how I had successfully executed the research activities and collected rich and extensive data. I was excited that data collection had finally came to the end, an accomplishment that signified a major milestone in my doctoral programme. I was looking forward to leaving Malawi and coming back to the UK to continue working on my research data. Thus, I had to be pragmatic as I would not have completed my studies while in Malawi. In the end, I had to say 'goodbye', anyway.

Despite the ethical challenges and dilemmas outlined above, I successfully completed my fieldwork and collected quality and extensive data. Importantly, despite my failure to address the participants' livelihood challenges/problems, the mutual relationship we had developed over the course my fieldwork seemed to have translated into memorable moments for both of us. It seemed the initial expectations for monetary and/or material gains had declined/reduced/dissipated. For instance, during our farewell events, many participants expressed gratitude to have been included in the study. Some wanted us to continue meeting and chatting. For instance, children and young people expressed that their participation in the study had given them something to do during the long school holidays rather than loitering around in the communities. Other participants appreciated my positive demeanour displayed during our meetings and wanted us to continue meeting. Some of their fond expressions are represented below (**Table 3.2**). Thus, data collection was successful despite the important challenge and dilemmas encountered.

**Table 3.2: Selected participants' remarks during last meetings**

<p><b>Children and young people's remarks during the last FGD</b></p>	<p><i>Let me ask... does it mean you won't come again? (Alick, 17 years, male).</i></p> <p><i>Most of the people here don't really welcome the news that we will not be meeting again! (Agness, 15 years, female).</i></p> <p><i>Sir, you know that the school holiday is very long, so we don't really know where to go after this study because we have nothing to do (Emmanuel, 17 years, male).</i></p> <p><i>Me, too, let me thank you for coming because these visits are what I miss so much. May God bless you (Chimwemwe, 15 years, male).</i></p>
<p><b>Grandfathers's Remarks Towards The End Of Our Discussions</b></p>	<p><i>My comment is that, I am very happy that you came here... that you remembered us... you thought of visiting us, grandfathers. That has really pleased me! (Praise, 74 years, grandfather).</i></p> <p><i>If you come again, I will welcome you with open arms and open heart. I will welcome you... you know we have established this relationship through our chatting today. So, I will welcome you wholeheartedly (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfathers).</i></p> <p><i>I don't have any question at all. I just want to say that we have bonded well! My friend, we have developed a good bond, so well! Well, that's it! The bonding (Akonda, 92 years, grandfather)</i></p> <p><i>Well, I am happy that you visited me. I don't have any question, no. I am happy for your visit and thank you. I didn't know that you could come visit me, no! God is great! (Chikondi, 72 years, grandfathers).</i></p>
<p><b>Closing Marks By Participants During An FGD</b></p>	<p><i>Before we pray, we would like to thank you Chief Chilambe for bringing this man here. We have chatted with him very nicely and freely (Chief Chilambe: okay), yeah. Also, he is a cheerful man (Chief Chilambe: okay) yeah, thank you very much (Zonidwe, 73 years, grandfathers), yeah (Chief Chilambe: Well, I am very happy too, because when you bring a visitor and people are happy and you part ways while everything is fine, it is a good thing because when you bring some people to the village and you meet the local people afterwards somewhere they complain to you like, "well, that man you brought here wasn't good" [Researcher &amp; Participants: laughing] and you as the leader, you're ashamed (Upile: no, this man is very cheerful) (Zondiwe: a lot) (Upile: you should visit us frequently, yeah, so that people have interest in these affairs) (Zondiwe: they should be active) (Upile: yes, they should be active, they should not be lagging behind).</i></p>

### 3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the methodology employed in this study. Specifically, the chapter has situated the study within an interpretive framework, and described how it informed the research design, and data collection methods and analysis. Specifically, the chapter has demonstrated that this qualitative study used multiple participatory methods and approaches suitable for various participant groups. This resulted in the collection of rich and extensive data that helped answer the research

questions set out in chapter 1, and advance our understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi.

In attending to issues of quality in qualitative research, the chapter demonstrated how rigour was established and maintained to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. This, however, does not imply the study was smooth. Thus, the chapter has outlined not only the ethical considerations, but importantly, the ethical challenges and dilemmas encountered during this study, and how they were navigated. Overall, the chapter illuminates the great effort and commitment taken during this study to ensure the data were collected, analysed, and interpreted in a professional manner that denotes a transparent and rigorous process at all stages of the research process.

Having laid out the methodological approach, the next chapters present the findings of this study, and later, its conclusions, implications and recommendations for social research, policy, and programmes in rural Malawi.

## **CHAPTER 4: CARERS OF ORPHANS IN RURAL SOUTHERN MALAWI**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As stated in chapters 1 and 2, research on grandfathers on issues surrounding orphan care in Malawi, and in SSA more generally, is extremely scant. This may be attributed to a focus on grandmothers due to associating care with feminine roles and responsibilities. From the existing grandparenting and orphan care research in this region, it is difficult to determine the existence of other carers of orphans besides grandmothers. Equally, it is difficult to determine what place grandfathers have in orphan care, and what constitutes their daily lives. Thus, using research with children and young people and adults in impoverished communities of rural Southern Malawi, the thesis explores these knowledge gaps. This chapter, however, engages with a theme that emerged from investigation of research question 1 about the carers of orphans in rural Southern Malawi to appreciate other carers of orphans besides grandmothers. Specifically, the chapter identifies multiple carers of orphans in the research communities, thus highlighting that grandmothers are not lone carers as much of the existing research and policy in SSA may (erroneously) suggest.

Analysis of intersectionality reveals that the willingness of the relatives to take in orphans and care for them is an outcome of the intersections of culture, poverty, and the number of orphans in need of care. Further, age and generation and a grandfather's physical health and/or illness intersect and affect his livelihood strategies, hence [in]ability to care for their orphaned grandchildren, which ultimately impacts the children's development such as schooling. This suggests that a nuanced understanding of the theme presented in this chapter can be obtained by considering all these factors and their intersections, hence intersectionality facilitates such a research endeavour. I explore these findings below.

### **4.2 CARERS OF ORPHANS IN RURAL SOUTHERN MALAWI**

The population of orphans in the research communities in rural Malawi is smaller than that of non-orphan children, but still significant. Parental and kinship care form the major caring systems for many of orphans in these communities. Within these caring systems, there are multiple carers of orphans, including the surviving parents, grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, aunts, and elder siblings. Thus, no single category of carers (e.g. grandmothers only) is entirely responsible for caring the

orphans. Besides the surviving parents and kin, a very small number of orphans are cared for by institutions. Below, I explore these multiple carers in detail, focusing on parental and kinship care.

#### **4.3 PARENTAL CARE: SURVIVING PARENTS AS CARERS OF ORPHANS**

Consistent with Ainsworth and Filmer (2006), single orphans in the research communities in rural Malawi are mostly likely to continue living with the surviving parent. The parent generally provides care for them, particularly when he/she is not incapacitated by chronic illness, disability, or other factors. The continuation of the surviving parent to look after his/her children reflects traditional childcare practices that have been followed over the past generations. For instance, some of the adult participants in the study who were orphans during their childhood expressed that, when they lost one of their parents, their surviving parent continued caring for them, as Petros (74 years, grandfather) described: “my orphanhood started as soon as I was born. I lost my father. So, I was raised by my mother until she also died.”

Single orphans whose mother has died are less likely to continue living with their father because, in line with the matrilineal marriage practices in the communities of Southern Malawi, the father moves back to his home/native village following the loss of his spouse/wife (see also Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006). The children ‘belong’ to their mother’s lineage, hence are usually left with the maternal relatives. The father may visit the children and support them. In some cases, the father may be allowed to take the children with him (Phiri, 1983; Mtika & Doctor, 2002; Kishindo, 2010b; Peters, 2010). However, cases where a father takes the children with him are extremely rare in the communities where this research was conducted because the children’s maternal relatives, and the society more generally, deem it as ‘*kubetsa*’ (i.e. ‘losing’ the children). The children are considered as wealth, hence, letting their father take them would be synonymous with a ‘loss’. Such a ‘loss’ may be conceived as an insult to matrilineal traditional practices and tantamount to a disrespect of the local culture of the Yao, Nyanja, and Lomwe ethnic groups predominant in the research communities. When the maternal relatives let the father take them, they would be ridiculed by the community for lacking wisdom. Thus, it remains a common practice in these study villages of Southern Malawi, at least, for orphans to remain with their maternal relatives rather than leave and go with their father. This

signifies how culture and decisions about primary guardianship intersect and influence pathways of orphan care regardless of a grandfather's wish and ability to care for his orphaned grandchildren. Specifically, a grandfather may not be given the guardianship of his orphaned grandchildren because the maternal relatives are sensitive to social scripts and reaction.

#### **4.4 KINSHIP CARE: GRANDPARENTS**

Besides single-orphans, there are also double orphans in the research communities, and they comprised the largest majority in the grandfather-headed households that participated in the research (i.e. 13 of the 15 grandfather-headed households). Usually, close relatives care for both single and orphans double who lack parental care, for instance, those whose surviving parent is incapacitated by terminal illness, or not present, or is financially incapable of supporting his/her children, or when maternal relatives did not allow the father to take the children with him. This kinship network of care includes grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and other adult relatives of the orphans. Within this orphan care system, grandmothers account for most carers, followed by grandfathers, and lastly siblings and/or the relatives.<sup>28</sup> Thus, many orphans stay with one or both of their grandparents, as described by some of the children:

I stay with my grandparent, my grandmother (Vitu, 14 years, male – FGD).

I am living with my grandfather and grandmother (Sangalatso, 10 years, male – FGD).

I live with my siblings Arina and Taya, and my grandfather and grandmother (Lupita, 14 years, female – FGD).

This replicates much of what has been reported in SSA, that grandparents are the most common carers of orphans (Ruiz-Casares, 2009; Littrell et al., 2012). For instance, studies in Southern Africa (e.g. Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and other regions of SSA (e.g. Kenya, Namibia, Uganda) indicate that grandparents care for over half of all orphans (Mudege & Ezeh, 2009; Munthree & Maharaj, 2010; Porter et al., 2015). Like previous studies in SSA (Schatz &

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<sup>28</sup> I did not find any data on actual numbers for Zomba District or T/A Kuntumanji. Hence, this is based on participants' accounts.

Ogunmefun, 2007; Ogunmefun et al., 2011; Schatz & Gilbert, 2014), and as stated previously, the proliferation of grandparents as common carers of orphans outnumbering any other categories of carers in my sample is attributed to the hollowing of the middle age demographic. High rates of HIV/AIDS-related morbidities and mortalities among adult men and women of reproductive age (as stated in chapters 1 and 2) such as uncles and aunts who could have assumed caring responsibilities of orphans leaves a gap, as summed up by one of the teachers:

Most of the times... let me say the truth that the ones who are caring for them [orphans] are grandparents. It is grandparents because most of the times, because of this problem of HIV/AIDS, the ones mostly dying are women and men who have not yet reached old age. So, it is grandparents who are taking a big role in caring for the orphans (Asante, 27 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).

Research participants singled out the AIDS epidemic as the primary contributor to the large numbers of grandparents assuming the caregiving of orphans. For instance, one of the grandparent households in this study was raising as many as 8 orphaned grandchildren. Similar accounts have been noted by Cheney (2017) in Uganda, stating an incidence where one of the grandmothers cared for 14 orphaned grandchildren after losing 4 of her 8 children to AIDS. However, a critical analysis of the data emerging from this study in rural Malawi reveals that the proliferation of non-voluntary grandparenting is a complex issue. Thus, no single factor may be sufficient to independently explain the phenomenon; rather it is the interplay and intersections of various factors that provide a holistic understanding. For instance, some of the surviving relatives of the orphans (e.g. uncles, aunts) are present in the same communities where the research was conducted, and the orphans are living or in other areas. However, they are not willing to take in the orphans, or to go and live with them in their deceased parents' home, let alone provide support (e.g. food, clothes, and school necessities) to the grandparents who are looking after the orphans (see chapter 9 for further discussion).

This echoes the narrative/discourse of the waning strength of kinship care reported in Malawi and other regions of SSA (Mthindi et al., 1998; Mtika, 2001; Foster, 2007; Arthur, 2015). Participants in the research communities in rural Malawi widely cited financial challenges as the major factor contributing to the lack of willingness by many relatives to care for the orphans. Many people in these communities have

extremely insecure livelihoods (living in deepening and perennial poverty), because they lack viable ways of generating income/support for their household's needs beyond the vagaries of subsistence farming. As such, the anticipated financial burden associated with meeting the additional needs of orphans in their day-to-day life (e.g. food) is quite daunting for their relatives. Thus, many relatives are compelled to refrain from playing any significant role in the care of orphans (**Box 4.1**) (discussed further in chapter 9). This demonstrates how poverty, insecure livelihoods, and anticipated burden of care intersect and influence kinship care and support in the research communities.

**Box 4.1: Adults' and children's views on kinship support**

*The work the relatives do is not good enough to generate adequate income to support their own biological children and my grandparent. It's so hard to do so to the extent that, actually, sometimes during weeding season when the maize is very scarce they [the children] actually depend on food from the grandparents. This simply means that they [the children] do lack certain needs for their everyday life and it's difficult to think about sending support to my grandmother (Alick, 17 years, male – FGD).*

*There aren't many people who say Agogo is caring children and let's support him/her, it's very few who support Agogo (Luntha, 14 years, male – FGD).*

*Some relatives don't think/care about their ageing parents. Supporting them depends on the kind of relatives (Adriana, 14 years, female, FGD).*

*Well, it's very few who can or are doing that [supporting grandparents]. Most of us we just say, "grandpa is looking after the orphans", and say, "well he will see what to do" because the one [relative] who is supposed to help is also poor and struggling, sometimes even worse than the grandfather... (Basilio, 45 years, male – FGD).*

*Nowadays things are not easy. It's difficult for a relative who has his/her own financial problems to adequately help, say the grandfather who is looking after orphans or whatsoever. It is difficult (Pemphero, 41 years, male – Stakeholder Meeting).*

*The reason they were not supporting Agogo was that the uncles and aunts are very poor too, so it was not possible to have adequate money to use in their families/households and then have some to give their mother [my grandmother] (Christopher, 14 years, male – FGD).*

Thus, besides the direct impact of the AIDS epidemic, and similar to what other researchers have observed in other parts of SSA (van Dijk, 2008; Mturi, 2012), poor economic conditions and resulting deep and acute poverty is another significant factor leading to a reluctance or withdrawal of many of relatives, such as uncles and aunts, from caring for orphans who are their own nieces and nephews. Because of this, many orphans end up seeking guardianship, care, and support from their grandparents, who are the main carers within kinship care systems. Subsequently, this leads to the widespread situation of grandparents as the sole/primary carers of orphaned children in the research communities, a social phenomenon that has also

been previously reported in other parts of the country and SSA (Ruiz-Casares, 2009; Littrell et al., 2012).

In addition, as noted in other regions of SSA (e.g. see Foster, 2002; Ruiz-Casares, 2009; Riley, 2013), the large numbers of grandparents becoming sole carers of orphans is also attributed to the diminishing kinship care by uncles and aunts that used to characterise traditional life and orphan care practices for past generations. The participants in this study explained that, in the past, it was a traditional practice for relatives to immediately take in orphans to shield them from isolation and destitution/suffering. Relatives would then channel various kinds of material and other support to grandparents or other guardians who were staying with the orphans. For instance, some of the adult participants who had been orphans during their childhood shared personal and memorable experiences about kinship support while they were living with their grandparents, such as remittances, clothes, farm labour and input, and food (e.g. maize).<sup>29</sup>

There was my aunt and an uncle who were supporting us... so, when they had money, they could send it. And, for me, he could send me clothes. They were sending us everything. Even when we run out of food, they could send us support and we could enjoy in our household (Warona, 38 years, female – FGD).

They had a relative who was staying in town and he was a driver. So, he could visit us on the vehicle and give my grandparents stuff/things/resources... he used to bring sugar, snacks, and he was giving them money/cash too. Also, when there was no food in the household, he could buy bags of maize and bring them (Lamona, 41 years, female – FGD).

The participants explained that such unity among wider kin and the extended family is fading and such traditional support systems and practices for raising orphans and supporting the vulnerable (e.g. grandparents) are becoming progressively less common in contemporary Malawi, and in some cases, non-existent. They stated that people seem to be abandoning longstanding traditional and cultural practices that used to govern the way of life not only within their immediate and the extended

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<sup>29</sup> Maize (*chimanga* in *Chichewa*) is the main staple food crop in Malawi (Saka et al., 2013; FAO, 2015). It takes up 54% of smallholder farmers' cultivated land, is cultivated by over 95% of smallholder farmers in the country, comprises 60% of consumed food, almost 90% of the total intake of cereals, and 54% of the total calorie intake per capita (FAO, 2015: 40; see also Minot, 2010; Mazunda & Droppleman, 2012; Kachulu, 2017). Because of its central importance in food security and life more generally, the phrase, "*chimanga ndi moyo*" [which literally means maize is life] is common parlance in social and economic circles and in day-to-day transactions and social time (FAO, 2015: 40).

families, but also within the wider community as a social entity. The participants further explained that while caring and supporting orphans was an essential aspect/element of their culture and a traditional way of 'respecting the dead' (i.e. the deceased parents of the orphans) in the past, such practices are now less common among kin in modern day Malawi. They stressed that while it was common for the relatives to support the weak/frail (e.g. grandparents) and the less fortunate in past generations, such practices hardly exist nowadays. For instance, it was reported as usual in the past to see relatives mobilising themselves and helping grandparents or other guardians of orphans with agricultural tasks in their fields (e.g. weeding, harvesting crops), but such kinship practices are waning and sometimes no longer followed in Malawi:

To say the truth, things were better in the past than it is '*these days*'... people could say "let's go and help Agogo [grandfather/grandmother]", "let's go and help Agogo harvesting", "let's go and help Agogo with ridging", but these days such things *don't happen*, such a culture is gone! (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

In the past, relatives were dependent on each other and supporting each other (Lungile: *a lot!*), and there was unity among them. They were also following traditions and culture very strictly. They were very respectful of the dead and funerals. That's how things *were* in the past (Ishan, 48 years, chief – CAG Meeting).

The presence of more grandparents and relatively small numbers of other relatives as carers of orphans today may also be attributed to other social factors such as migration. Other researchers have noted the interplay of migration and increased numbers of grandparents as carers of orphans in rural SSA (Adato et al., 2005; Mturi, 2012). Even though it was not expressed directly by participants interviewed in this study, it can be speculated that some of the relatives (e.g. uncles) who could have assumed the caring responsibility of the orphans may have migrated internally (e.g. to urban areas like cities) or externally (e.g. across the borders to places like South Africa) for economic gain. This leaves grandparents with the huge burden of caring for many of the orphans in these rural communities, sometimes with little or no support from the relatives who have migrated, as well as those who are around:

The relatives are not concerned with helping you the grandfather. *They leave everything to you!* ...they don't mind that we have given this person the responsibility to look after the children and let's support him... *the whole responsibility is shovelled on/at you* and [they] pull out and say, "that's it, you'll

see how to deal with it! We don't care, you'll see how you can take care of them", it's all on you (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

...in today's life, you who has taken in the orphan you just know that the whole responsibility of looking after the child will be mine, alone! (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Nevertheless, there are pockets of relatives who provide material support to grandparents who are looking after orphans. For instance, sometimes orphans stay with their grandparents, but their other relatives (e.g. uncles, aunts) may send various kinds of material support such as money, food (maize, *ndiwo* [relish]), clothes, and farm inputs (e.g. maize seeds, fertiliser). Grandparents who are caring for orphans and are receiving support from relatives find this supportive. They shared their appreciation and expressed that such support is quite instrumental because it relieves them from the lone [economic] burden of care. However, those who are privileged to receive such support are also frustrated because the support is often irregular, unpredictable, and unreliable:

Well I could say that they play a part, but mostly it depends on... like I already said that these issues follow whether they are closely related... Yeah, the aunts and uncles play a role, but their role is usually complementary/partial, like if they know that such such a thing is lacking in the house, and if the uncle has the means/thing, they come in to assist the children (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).

Thus, kin support depends on the economic status of the relatives, their kindness, preferences of what to send, and based on their 'timetable' rather than the actual needs of grandparents and the orphans and the time they need it. For instance, one of the oldest grandfathers in this study explained that he has no relatives supporting him for the orphans in his care. Thus, access to essential resources for everyday life (e.g. soap, matches) is only possible when his adult son visits him.<sup>30</sup> However, his son resides in a city over 80 kilometres away and he rarely visits or sends him money or other material support needed for daily life. As such, he is struggling to earn a living, and caring for his orphaned grandchildren is a daunting task:

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<sup>30</sup> While some things like food (e.g. maize) can be gotten from subsistence agricultural activities, some things (e.g. soap, matches) can only be bought/accessed with cash – they cannot be grown in the field or gathered from the bush or made by the people themselves.

Finding/having soap? It's a struggle. I find soap usually when my child who lives in [city] comes here, but now it's been long since he last came... I lack soap, matches (Akonda, 92 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

During the interview with Akonda, he told me that he had nothing in the household and my visit was 'a blessing' to him because, according to him, I would not leave him without giving him 'a little something'. Indeed, during our conversation Akonda blatantly asked me for money to buy matches and soap. This case illustrates the lack of support from relatives, the struggle grandparents undergo to care for their orphaned grandchildren, and the desperation that typifies their day-to-day lives due to deep poverty. With these paramount challenges, one would expect many grandparents to refuse to take in their orphaned grandchildren or to withdraw that care along the way. Yet, there was no grandparent in this study sample who had done that. They stated that they have a strong emotional connection/bond to their grandchildren and value them at any cost because they are 'their blood'. Thus, against all odds, grandparents are by far the most common carers of orphans in the research communities in rural Southern Malawi.

While evidence from the research conversations with the participants offers important insights about the central role of grandparents as common carers of orphans in their communities, such a blanket categorisation could not offer nuanced understanding about which grandparents (grandmothers versus grandfathers) were referred to. Thus, to specifically determine this and further ascertain the place of grandfathers in orphan care, the generic group of 'grandparents' was disaggregated by gender (i.e. grandmothers and grandfathers). Then, the research participants were asked to reflect upon the demographics of grandparents in their communities and state who, comparing grandmothers and grandfathers, are the most common carers for orphans. The findings are discussed below.

#### **4.4.1 Most Common Grandparents Caring for Orphans**

The findings reveal that grandmothers are not only the most common carers of orphans in the research communities, but also that their population outnumbers that of grandfathers significantly. Even though this was not measured statistically, in practice, it is observed that it was relatively difficult to find grandfathers, but not grandmothers, during the recruiting phase. For instance, unlike with grandmothers, several villages were visited to find and recruit grandfathers. In fact, the challenge

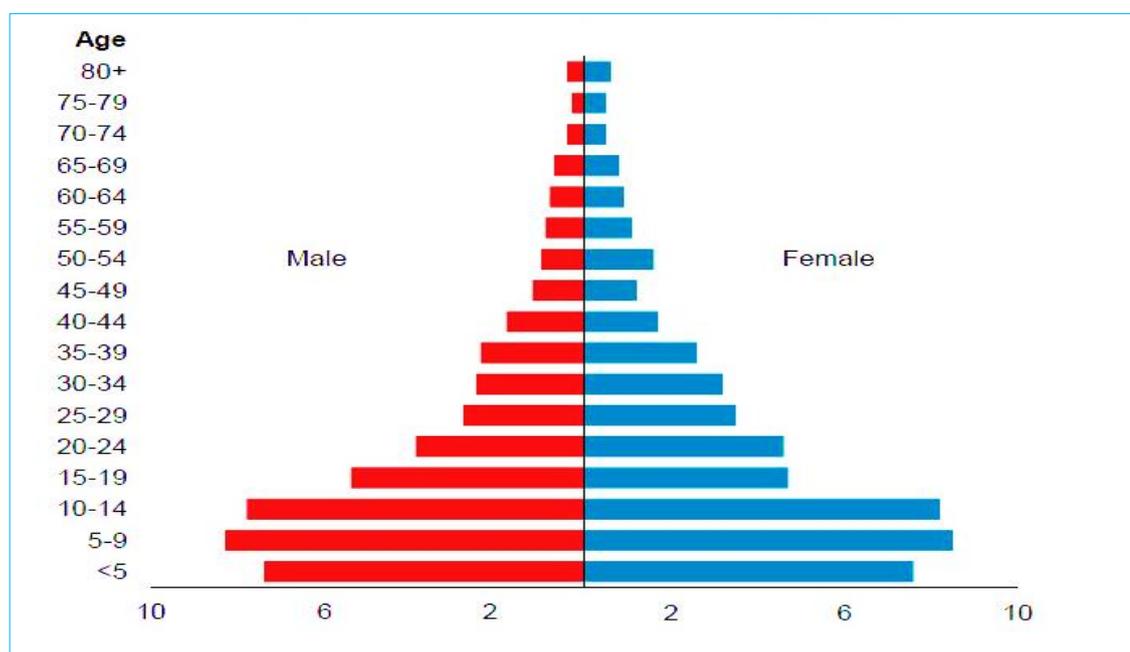
to find grandfathers was raised by participants in the stakeholder meeting conducted at the outset of data collection. When asked whether it would be possible to find enough grandfathers for the study from one or a few villages, the stakeholders made it clear that it was not possible because grandfathers were very few:

When it comes to grandfathers, I've noted that we don't have enough sample in this village [...]. So, obviously, we will have to go beyond this village to look in the other villages (Ishan, 48 years, male, local leader – Key-informant interview).

I should mention here that it is very uncommon in this community for orphans to be cared for by their grandfathers (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).

Moreover, single grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren are less common given this study site is a matrilineal society, hence widowed and/or divorced grandfathers may have moved back to their natal village. The presence of fewer grandfathers compared to grandmothers caring for grandchildren is not a surprising finding because it corresponds with several recent demographic trends reported by the Malawi Demographic and Health Surveys. These national surveys consistently show that the country's female population (52%) outnumbers that of male (48%), and this is also the case with those aged 50 years and above (**Figure 4.1**) (NSO & ICF Macro, 2005, 2011; NSO & ICF International, 2017).

**Figure 4.1:** Percentage distribution of the household population in Malawi



Source: NSO & ICF International, 2017

Subsequently, more women than men reach old age as men are disadvantaged by a shorter lifespan (life expectancy at birth is 57 years) than women (life expectancy at birth is 60 years) in Malawi (NSO & ICF International, 2017; WHO, 2017). Further, despite HIV prevalence rate being significantly higher among women (10.8%) than men (6.4%), overall mortality rates in the country are higher among men (e.g. 5.5 deaths per 1,000 population) than among women (4.8 deaths per 1,000 population) (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Hence, it is expected to find more grandmothers than grandfathers in the country, including communities visited during this study in rural Malawi.

A further explanation for the higher prevalence of grandmothers than grandfathers resident in the rural communities is that the study was conducted in predominantly matrilineal communities that follow *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage practices]. As such, some of the grandfathers would have gone back to their natal village, for instance, after a divorce or being widowed, hence the smaller population compared to that of grandmothers. Nonetheless, despite grandmothers being the most common carers of orphans, some grandfathers in the research villages are not only the carers of their orphaned grandchildren, but sometimes even the sole carers. These grandfathers usually assume this responsibility following the death of their orphaned grandchildren's parent(s), as 75-year old Takondwa explains: "...one of the grandchildren is a child to my deceased child. So, I took her when my child died... So, I took my grandchild to live with me."<sup>31</sup>

Further, in nearly every situation, grandfathers have little or no say in the deliberations and decisions that bestow them with the responsibility as the primary carer for their orphaned grandchildren. Similarly, the orphans are sent to live with their grandfathers often without their consultation and input in the decision.<sup>32</sup> As other previous studies have noted (e.g. Ruiz-Casares, 2009; Littrell et al., 2012), this suggests that some of the grandfathers assumed the role of caregiver for their orphaned grandchildren non-voluntarily, that is, because of circumstances and not

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<sup>31</sup> Participants were generally reticent to disclose the cause of death. However, it is possible that these deaths occurred due to AIDS.

<sup>32</sup> Traditionally, decisions to give orphans to their grandparents (in this case, their grandfather) are made by the elders of the clan after the funeral had taken place and may include the uncles and/or aunts of the orphans in the deliberations. Sometimes, both the grandfather and the orphans are not consulted or involved in the discussion.

by choice. This, however, must be interpreted with caution as it does not necessarily mean that grandfathers are 'forced' to take in their orphaned grandchildren. It is socially expected of grandparents to care for their orphaned grandchildren, particularly when other relatives refrain/refuse to do so. As stated earlier, grandparents, including grandfathers generally view their grandchildren as their 'blood' and a consolation for losing their children to death. As such, it is unthinkable for them to refuse the guardianship of their orphaned grandchildren regardless of the situation. In fact, some of them could have developed a close relationship with their grandchildren before they were orphaned.

Notably, many of the grandparents encountered during this study, however, are living in deep poverty and find the burden of caring for their orphaned grandchildren insurmountable. This is particularly due to the lack of a viable means for income generation and absence of reliable and tangible support from their wider relatives (discussed further in chapter 9). Nonetheless, evidence from this study suggests that some grandfathers are fond of their grandchildren. Regardless of their financial situation and other pragmatic obstacles that are tantamount to hindering their capacity to raise their orphaned grandchildren, many grandfathers feel a sense of responsibility and obligation to care for their orphaned grandchildren, hence do not let them live and suffer alone while they [the grandfathers] are still alive. Thus, they take in their orphaned grandchildren so that, if they are to suffer, they should suffer together, a notion similar to what de Klerk (2011: 140) describes as "suffering for grandchildren" and signifies personal sacrifices. One of the grandfathers in my study explains:

Well, what happened is that my child [daughter] died. When my child died, the children were suffering. So, I told myself that these children are my grandchildren and they shouldn't suffer while I am alive, I should take them, and, if we are to suffer, we should suffer together (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

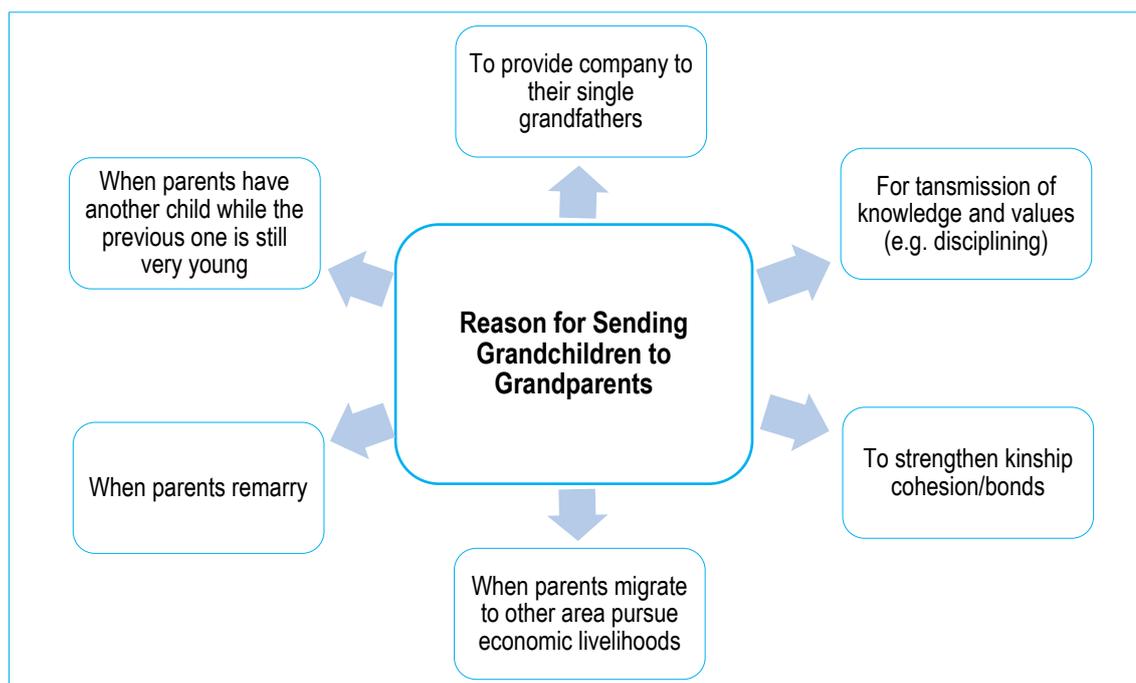
Further, the presence of grandfathers in the lives of their grandchildren does not always happen only when their grandchildren became orphans. Some of the grandfathers who participated in this study are looking not only after orphaned grandchildren, but extend their care to their non-orphaned grandchildren too. This is common where both orphaned and non-orphaned grandchildren are staying within the same proximity with their grandfathers – for example, living within the

vicinity of the grandfather's compound, though not necessarily within the same house. In such living arrangements, it is practically difficult for the grandfather to care for the orphaned grandchildren only and ignore the needs of their non-orphaned grandchildren. For instance, the grandfathers generally cannot and do not buy school materials for their orphaned grandchildren only while the other grandchildren are also lacking such necessities. Discriminating among their grandchildren would signal partiality regardless of the situation and would create disharmony between not only the grandchildren, but also between the grandfather and his grandchildren and other relatives. This, however, does not mean that some of the grandfathers provide care to their non-orphaned grandchildren to avoid kinship conflict and tensions. Rather, it is out of their love for all their grandchildren. This signifies the important place the grandfathers have in their grandchildren's lives – orphaned and non-orphaned, and, thus, demonstrates grandfathers' love, responsibility, and obligation for their orphaned grandchildren.

Furthermore, the grandparent-grandchildren close relationships are forged not because of their grandchildren's parental death. Like is reported in recent studies in other parts of SSA (Block, 2014; Hampshire et al., 2015), participants in this study explained that grandchildren are sent to live with their grandfathers not always because of care needs of the grandchildren, but in some cases to serve and help him with domestic chores, particularly feminine tasks (e.g. cooking, fetching water and firewood, washing clothes), as 74-year old Praise explains: "when my wife died, I decided that I cannot remarry, and my children asked me to stay here with them. They said, "here are your grandchildren, you can stay with them so that they cook for you."

**Figure 4.2** below outlines other reasons for sending grandchildren to grandparents. Importantly, under these living arrangements in dual-grandparent households, it is not the grandmother only who cares for their grandchild. The grandfather too takes part by providing the grandchild's needs such as food, clothing, and soap. This demonstrates that grandfathers within the broader kinship care play an important role in the lives of their orphaned and non-orphaned grandchildren.

**Figure 4.2:** Reason for sending grandchildren to grandparents



#### **4.4.2 Children Raised by Parents Versus Orphans Raised by Grandparents**

Given the likely differences between parents and grandparents vis-à-vis physical health and ability or capacity to care for children, it was inevitable to explore whether there are disparities between orphans raised by the surviving parent versus grandparents. The findings suggest that orphans raised by grandparents may be more vulnerable and at more risk compared to those living with the surviving parent. During discussions, it emerged clear that, unlike grandparents, parents are more likely to be in good physical health, hence able to engage in various livelihood activities to support their children's needs (e.g. food, soap, school necessities).

Thus, children living with grandparents, particularly in situations where the grandparents are struggling to engage in livelihood activities, may be at risk of negative developmental outcomes such as poor educational attainment. For instance, children living with grandparents in such situations (similarly as with parents and other guardians who are incapacitated, for instance, by illness) may be forced by circumstances to miss classes or drop out of school to look for income. Boys may steal from other people's fields, and girls may engage in transactional sex, or both may undertake *ganyu* to raise money, all because they are lacking adequate care from their grandparents, as widely expressed by the participants (**Box 4.2**). This signifies how age, generation, and a grandparent's physical health intersect and

limit grandparents' (e.g. grandfathers) livelihoods strategies/activities, which may ultimately impact their ability to adequately care for their orphaned grandchildren.

**Box 4.2: Adults' and children's views on grandchildren living with grandparents**

*...your parents are usually physically strong/healthy while Agogo [grandparent] is usually not physically strong/healthy. So, for Agogo, they may not be able to find something to do to ensure that you have food to eat. For him/her to find something to support the household, it's always hard... you end up suffering [...] Agogo is not physically strong while the parents they can find something to do to raise income and provide for the family because they have not reached the old age like Agogo [...] if you're staying with Agogo and you're suffering, it may affect school... (Alick, 17 years, male – FGD).*

*...she [the granddaughter] gets into sexual relationship so that she can generate money to buy her needs... to buy a skirt at Thobo [market]. Just as I have already mentioned that when they lack soap, or lotion because the grandparents cannot manage to buy them these things, the children use this means so that they can be buying some of these things on their own. I think it is because of poverty that is leading the children, particularly girls, to have this can of bad behaviour. A certain young boy has already started stealing maize from parent's garden (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Key-informant interview).*

*... sometimes the grandfather may lack soap, sometimes he lacks school fees for the children, sometimes he lacks clothing and school uniform for the children. Because of this, the child may engage in immoral behaviours like going out and engaging in transactional sex. Ultimately, the child fails to continue schooling (Tayanja, 40 years, female – FGD).*

*If in the home there's no food, boys may go into other people's fields to steal so that they can get some food. In case of girls, they start being promiscuous as a way of survival, just to make ends meet (Olwethu, 38 years, female, NGO staff - Key-informant interview).*

Further, evidence from this study also suggests that children with parents may undertake fewer household chores compared to those living with grandparents. This is so because the parents are physically well and undertake some of household chores. For instance, while the children are at school, the father may chop firewood and the mother may cook lunch. As the children arrive back home, they find the meal already prepared, so they can eat, rest, and then undertake the remaining few chores. Also, it is common for parents to undertake many household chores alongside their children. For instance, mothers fetch water, collect firewood, and go to *chigayo* [maize mill] alongside their daughters, and fathers cut trees and grass for thatching their houses alongside their sons. This relieves children from the burden of household chores, and they have more time for study at home, as well as for play with their peers. For instance, 15-year old Agness used to stay with her grandfather in a single-grandparent household, but had recently moved back to live with her mother, described the challenges of living with her grandfather, and her experiences were echoed by other children such as 13-year old Anastasia (**Box 4.3**).

**Box 4.3:** *Children's views about the volume of household chores when living with grandparents*

*Life was difficult when I was living with my grandfather. I was not happy. I was stressed/depressed, for instance, with taking care of everything in the home. When I knocked off at school, I was not able to read/study because I had to do many household chores. I was not even able to go and play with my friends. I was in the home full time. So, I saw it as a big challenge to me because one cannot pursue schooling without studying, I cannot just stay without reading, it's not possible [for me to do well]. So, I decided to move out and go back to my mother (Agness, 15 years, female – FGD).*

*It's hard to stay with Agogo [grandparents] because almost all the household chores are on you because Agogo may not be able to do them because he/she is old and frail. Whilst, when you're staying with your mother, she sometimes helps you so that you have time to study and play [...] you may not have a big burden... the chores may not be many because your parents may do most of them (Anastasia, 13 years, female – FGD).*

Evidently, many of the challenges children (e.g. orphans) raised by grandparents face are socio-economic (poverty-related) due to the grandparents' old age and inability to access and/or secure viable livelihoods. Despite this, there are also sociocultural advantages for children raised by grandparents, hence the suggestion that growing up with grandparents may have some benefits for orphans. For instance, some of the participants in this study stated that staying with grandparents may help the orphans becoming more mature and self-reliant (independent) sooner than orphans living with an able surviving parent. They stated that, by undertaking several roles and responsibilities, as well as numerous tasks in their daily life, orphaned grandchildren raised by grandparents benefit tremendously by the life skills that accompany these chores. Thus, orphaned grandchildren are likely to be more mature earlier than their counterparts raised by parents:

The difference is that when a child is staying with his/her grandparents, he/she is able to figure out that I need to do something that will help me to eat or have soap for bathing. In contrast, the child who is staying with his/her father always looks up to them for everything, saying that the father should provide. So, in terms of becoming independent, it is the child who grows up with the grandparents who becomes more independent as opposed to the one who is staying with his/her parents (Landirani, 25 years, male – FGD).

Thus, it would seem that there are gains and trade-offs for orphans raised by grandparents. Economically, they may face challenges that threaten other facets of their development (e.g. schooling). Socioculturally, they may gain essential skills for adulthood and transition to self-reliance earlier. Whether one outweighs the other did not emerge conclusively during discussions with the participants, but their concern for how poverty impacts children' development (e.g. educational outcomes)

was unequivocal. Importantly, despite these concerns, and paradoxically, what also emerged strongly during conversations with various participant groups is that grandparents (including grandfathers) are incontrovertibly the common carers of orphans in these communities. However, in circumstances where orphans are not looked after by parents, grandparents or other close relatives (e.g. uncles and aunts), orphans may (albeit infrequently) end up caring for each other in child-headed households/families, as explored below.

#### **4.5 KINSHIP CARE: ELDER SIBLINGS AS CARERS OF YOUNGER SIBLINGS**

Child-headed households/families (CHHs/CHF) are another possibility within the system of care for orphans in Southern Africa, including Malawi, and in other parts of SSA (Evans, 2012; Payne, 2012; van Dijk & van Driel, 2012). This was identified as emerging particularly commonly in the wake of HIV/AIDS and high death rates among adult men and women of reproductive age. Although I specifically did not visit any CHHs/CHF during this study, the research participants mentioned that CHHs/CHF were present in their communities. Sibling care is common particularly when the orphans have no parent or grandparents alive, and none of their relatives are willing to take them into their homes, or go to live with them in their deceased parents' home, or when the children are not willing to move from their home after parental death. In such cases, albeit rare in this study, and as reported in other literature for Malawi and elsewhere in SSA (Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Meintjes et al., 2009, 2010; NSO & ICF International, 2017), the orphans care for each other. Usually, the eldest sibling assumes the primary caregiving role of their younger siblings and exercise parental authority over them:

I have my other grandchildren who are looking after each other on their own. Their other grandparents died. The mother died, and she left a girl. The girl is now staying with the younger children... two of them... with her, then it is now three orphans. So, they care for each other (Nthanda, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

There are some orphans who are looking after each other. They live alone even though they have not yet reached an age where they are supposed to live on their own (Lulama, 31 years, female – FGD).

Elder siblings who are orphans also assume the parental role of primary carer when their guardian (e.g. their grandfather) is incapacitated by illness and/or old age. This has profound and lasting consequences on the present and future lives of these

orphans. For instance, Cristian (18 years), who was one of the young people in this study, dropped out of school at the age of 15 years to look after his younger siblings and his elderly and ailing grandfather. The case in the **Box 4.4** below narrates his acts of love for the welfare of his younger siblings and ailing grandfather.

**Box 4.4: The case of Cristian, a caregiving child**

**'I'LL GO BACK TO SCHOOL WHEN MY SIBLINGS COMPLETE THEIR SECONDARY SCHOOL'**

*Cristian dropped out of school at the age of 15 to look after his two younger siblings (11 and 12 years old at the time he dropped out of school). Cristian and his siblings were all orphans. Cristian tearfully narrated to me how he made that hard and sacrificial decision. He explained that all the current challenges started when his grandfather fell ill over three years ago, and he had been bed-ridden since then. Cristian recalled that before this, his grandfather was able to support him and his siblings with basic needs in their day-to-day life. However, soon after falling ill/sick, his grandfather no longer managed to work in the fields or do any other work to raise income and support the family due to poor health – illness had made it practically impossible for him to do even the seemingly simple tasks. This meant that Cristian and his siblings had to find ways to fend for themselves and their grandfather.*

*As the oldest of the children, Cristian had to step in and assume caring responsibility for his siblings and his grandfather. At first, he tried to juggle this role with attending school. However, over time, he realised that it was not working – finding basic needs was extremely difficult and they could find themselves going to bed without food, sometimes days without food. This meant they had to go to school on an empty stomach. This was not good for Cristian's grandfather's health too. Also, Cristian began missing classes frequently and his performance fell. After thinking aloud about the situation, Cristian made a hard decision: he dropped out of school. He was close to completing his secondary school, but circumstances in his family forced him to drop out of school. This was the only option he saw. Thus, his plan was to engage in casual labour such as ganyu and other income generating activities (IGAs) fulltime so as to support his ailing grandfather and provide for his sibling's needs such as food and school necessities like school fees, school uniform, and writing materials to keep them in school. He managed to do this, albeit with lots of struggle.*

*Cristian dropped out of school in Form 3, which is the penultimate class in secondary school education in Malawi. Pupils who successfully complete their secondary school (Form 4) sit for the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). Good scores at MSCE is a qualification to enter university/tertiary education. Given Cristian had just turned 18 years when I talked with him, but he had assumed the role of primary caregiver over 3 years earlier (i.e., while he was 15 years). This also means he would have completed secondary school by the time our interview took place if he had not dropped out of school.*

Cristian's case (above) is a powerful example of the extraordinary sacrifices that some elder siblings make to care for both their younger siblings and their grandparents. As noted elsewhere in Southern Africa (e.g. South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and other parts of SSA such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda (Robson, 2004a; Orkin et al., 2014; Watkins et al. 2014; Day & Evans, 2015; Skovdal & Evans, 2017), this illustrates how caring for family members may have direct or indirect adverse impacts on children and young people's schooling such as school disruption, erratic attendance, and poor performance, sometimes forcing them to drop out of school. Although caring for family members is part of socialisation, an expected family obligation, and part of growing up for children in many parts of SSA (Robson

& Ansell, 2000), the negative impact it has on them cannot be overlooked. Importantly, this case of Cristian epitomises how age and generation and a grandfather's poorer physical health and/or illness intersect and limit their ability to provide for their orphaned grandchildren, and how this ultimately impacts the children's development such as schooling.

This case of Cristian also illustrates the significant role grandfathers play in the lives of their orphaned grandchildren, and the possible ramifications in the absence of such a role. Also, the story could be interpreted as demonstrating how kinship care has crumbled/diminished in the extended family, thus echoing what was shared by other participants in the study about the waning of kinship support and care in modern day Malawi (discussed earlier, and further in chapter 9). According to Cristian, their relatives watch without interest and do not intervene while his family is going through all this suffering – something clearly at odds with grandfather's commitment in taking Cristian and his siblings. His story could also be presented as evidence of the erosion of kinship care for orphans in contemporary SSA (as noted earlier), a social phenomenon that has been widely documented in literature on orphan care in other parts of this region, including Malawi (Mtika, 2001; Aboderin, 2004a; Njororai & Njororai, 2013). For instance, Cheney (2017) provides accounts of relatives not stepping forward to care for orphans after losing their parents. Thus, the presence of grandfathers in the lives of their orphaned grandchildren should be recognised as crucial/significant because they form part of the few available carers of orphans such as in communities in rural Malawi that participated in this study. Sometimes grandfathers are the only remaining pillars of care for their orphaned grandchildren when middle younger generations have not taken up the responsibility.

It must also be noted that sibling care is not exclusive to CHHs/CHF's only. Siblings also care for each other in households where an adult is looking after them, such as those living with their grandfathers. Although participants in the research communities did not specifically talk about this, it is not uncommon for older orphans in rural Malawi to do *ganyu* and support their younger siblings directly or indirectly (discussed in chapter 10). For instance, some of the orphans interviewed shared that they do *ganyu* and buy household necessities such as food, which caters for their siblings and grandfathers.

#### 4.6 INSTITUTIONAL CARE AND SUPPORT

Besides elder siblings and other carers discussed above, a small proportion of orphans receive material support from the government and NGOs working in their communities through social support programmes. They may be provided with basic needs such as soap, salt, sugar, *ufa* [maize flour], cooking oil, and school necessities (e.g. exercise book and pens). Other NGOs working in the area (e.g. SRT Malawi, Creative Center for Community Mobilization [CRECCOM]) are offering school bursaries for some of the orphaned children, particularly girls. Some NGOs provide support to the elderly, as described by one of the staff from another NGO (i.e. The Hunger Project) working in the research communities:

One such NGO is CRECCOM, it targets orphaned girls. It provides bursaries. It starts sponsoring them from primary school, and when they get selected to secondary school, the organisation pays for their school fees until they complete their education. Some NGOs provide the humanitarian assistance to the elderly (Olwethu, 38 years, female, NGO staff - Key-informant interview).

However, support from NGOs is reported to be infrequent/irregular, minimal, and largely or entirely focuses on material resources and overlook other areas of needs such as emotional and psychosocial support. Moreover, staff from the government and NGOs are not always there for the orphans in their day-to-day life in the way grandfathers and other relatives are. Thus, support from the state and NGOs is not equated to traditional conceptions of 'carers/caregivers' which emphasise staying together with the orphans and supporting their welfare by providing for their daily needs.

Further, none of the participants mentioned institutional care like orphanages. An exercise of service mapping in these communities at the time of the data collection revealed that there was no residential orphanage in the area. However, SRT Malawi has been working in the area where the research was conducted, and is supporting a few children materially (e.g. through providing *ufa* [maize flour], soap, sugar) since 2010 with international financial support from SRT UK. Recently, SRT Malawi has embarked on a project on institutional care of orphans and vulnerable children, and has started constructing children's homes with a plan to house orphans with paid caregivers. One of the houses has just been completed and is housing 6 orphans. Thus, there could be institutionalised caregivers by the time of completing this thesis.

Across Southern Malawi, there are a number of institutions caring for orphans and other vulnerable children (e.g. street children) that are run by NGOs, FBOs, and other charities in cooperation with the government through the Department of Social Welfare. Still, their number would remain negligible compared to the number of orphans and the magnitude of need for their care. For instance, there are 104 institutions caring for 6,040 children in Malawi, and 4,288 (71%) of them are orphans (GoM, 2015). Thus, institutional care caters for only 0.43% of all orphans in Malawi. Moreover, the role of NGOs, FBOs, government, and other charities in the care of orphans is quite limited. For instance, programmes by SRT Malawi reach only a few children.

Thus, there were no institutionalised/non-kin caregivers of orphans in the research communities who were entrusted with a carer's/caregiver's role of looking after the orphans.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, there are other community structures meant to support orphans (e.g. through working in their fields, or linking them to NGOs) through CBOs, CBCCs, VDCs, and Area Development Committees (ADCs). Some of the orphans who are in primary school also benefit from the school feeding programmes which give children free porridge on school days. Further, there are other CBOs that offer some support to grandparents caring for orphaned grandchildren when it is available:

We have a section in the CBO that deals with issues concerning the elderly. So, grandparents feel free and come when they encounter a problem. They explain to us about their challenge, and if the problem is within our capacity, we help them. We advise them where necessary and encourage them emotionally in the process. If it happens that it is beyond our capacity, we refer it to the village headman for further assistance. With these two forums, it helps to solve some of their problems (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).

However, like is the case with support from the state and NGOs working in the research communities, support for orphans is quite limited. For instance, some of the community structures in the area operate efficiently during harvesting season (when food and money are relatively plentiful), but a few months later they hardly run any tangible programmes and projects that orphans could benefit from because

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<sup>33</sup> The policy of the Government of Malawi on orphan care promotes supporting the children in their communities and discourages institutional care even though such care exists (see GoM, 2003: *National Policy on Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2003*).

their resources have dwindled. Thus, many orphans may not be supported by institutions. Thus, grandfathers' role in caring for their orphaned grandchild within kinship system should not be overlooked.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter set out to address research question 1 outlined in chapter 1, namely: *Who are the carers of orphans in rural Southern Malawi?* A critical examination of the existing scholarship on care of orphaned grandchildren by grandparents in rural SSA reveals that it is largely dominated by research with and/or about grandmothers because, unlike grandfathers, grandmothers are socially viewed as carers of orphans. Subsequently, there is a tendency for researchers to intentionally or inadvertently portray grandmothers as solitary/lone carers of orphaned grandchildren in this region. Knowledge about the existence/presence of other carers of orphans is generally sketchy, or entirely absent from existing literature on grandparenting in SSA. However, evidence from the research conducted for this study offers valuable insights that reveal the existence of various other carers of orphans besides grandmothers, including their surviving parents, grandfathers, uncles, aunts, and elder siblings.

The findings further indicate that orphans raised by grandparents may be more vulnerable and at risk compared to those living with the surviving parent because grandparents are likely to have poorer health, hence less able to secure livelihoods. Orphaned grandchildren who lack support are more likely to engage in immoral behaviours such as stealing and transaction sex to meet their needs. This signifies how age and generation intersect and limit a grandparent's (e.g. a grandfather's) livelihoods strategies/activities and ability to care for orphan adequately care for their orphaned grandchildren, which ultimately impact the children's development. In addition, the findings also suggest that orphans living with grandparents are more likely to undertake more household chores than single orphans raised by their surviving parent. Consequently, orphans raised by grandparents may have less time for their study at home as they focus on undertaking a myriad of chores to ensure the household survival. This signifies how orphanhood in grandparents' households may intersect with the volume of household chores and impact orphan grandchildren's development such as their schooling.

Further, the study shows that grandfathers account for a smaller demographic population of grandparents in the research communities. Nevertheless, evidence demonstrates that being in a minority does not translate to not being carers of orphans, or being absent from or less significant in/to their orphaned grandchildren's lives. As this chapter attests, some grandfathers in the research communities are primary and sole carers of their orphaned grandchildren. Thus, they are pivotal in the daily affairs and welfare of their orphaned grandchildren (chapters 5 through 8) such that a withdrawal, or absence, or interruption of their caring role has significant repercussions on the lives of their orphaned grandchildren – Cristian's story in this chapter is a common example of this. Thus, ignoring or overlooking grandfathers' contributions in their orphaned grandchildren's lives is simply erroneous as this ideally overlooks the important contribution they make in orphan care. Such an oversight may also downplay the risks that the children may encounter in their lives in the absence of their grandfather's care and guardianship.

Furthermore, evidence from this study also shows that some of the grandfathers may become primary carers of their grandchildren under unforeseen and undesirable circumstances (e.g. after the death of their children). Some of them are not consulted on the decision to transfer the guardianship of their grandchildren to them. The study suggests that poverty and the overwhelming number of orphans may intersect and force many relatives to refrain from taking in and supporting orphans. Thus, the responsibility is naturally shifted to grandparents. And, because of social obligation (i.e. grandparents are socially not expected to refuse to take in and care for their orphaned grandchildren because they are their blood regardless), grandparents may be persuaded by circumstances to take in and care for their orphaned grandchildren despite the economic challenges they face due to their insecure livelihoods resulting from old age and frailty in a context where peasant agriculture is the main means of survival (discussed further in chapter 9). Yet, because of a focus on grandmothers, many accounts of grandparenting and orphan care in SSA habitually ignore grandfathers (e.g. see Cheney, 2017), rarely recognise them as primary carers in some circumstances as this study reveals, and their contribution is generally overlooked. This shows how cultural/normative views on gender shape the construction of carers of children (e.g. orphans) by the community.

The study further suggests that, in some cases, once a grandfather takes his orphaned grandchildren in, relatives may provide little or no support (discussed further in chapter 9), leading to grandfathers raising their orphaned grandchildren single-handedly. Often, the grandfathers live in deep and perennial poverty and with insufficient access to basic resources essential for supporting their orphaned grandchildren adequately. Yet, they do not abandon their orphaned grandchildren. They ensure that the children have someone to look up to. In some cases, they are the only hope their orphan grandchildren have (e.g. like Cristian and his siblings referred to earlier). Such effort of love and sacrifice need to be recognised within grandparenting research as an important aspect of grandfathers' contribution to orphan care. Thus, researchers investigating grandparenting and orphan care in communities in SSA could benefit more by cautiously and critically examining the presence or absence of grandfathers before proceeding to conclusively and exclusively labelling grandmothers (implicitly or explicitly) as the solitary/lone carers of orphaned grandchildren.

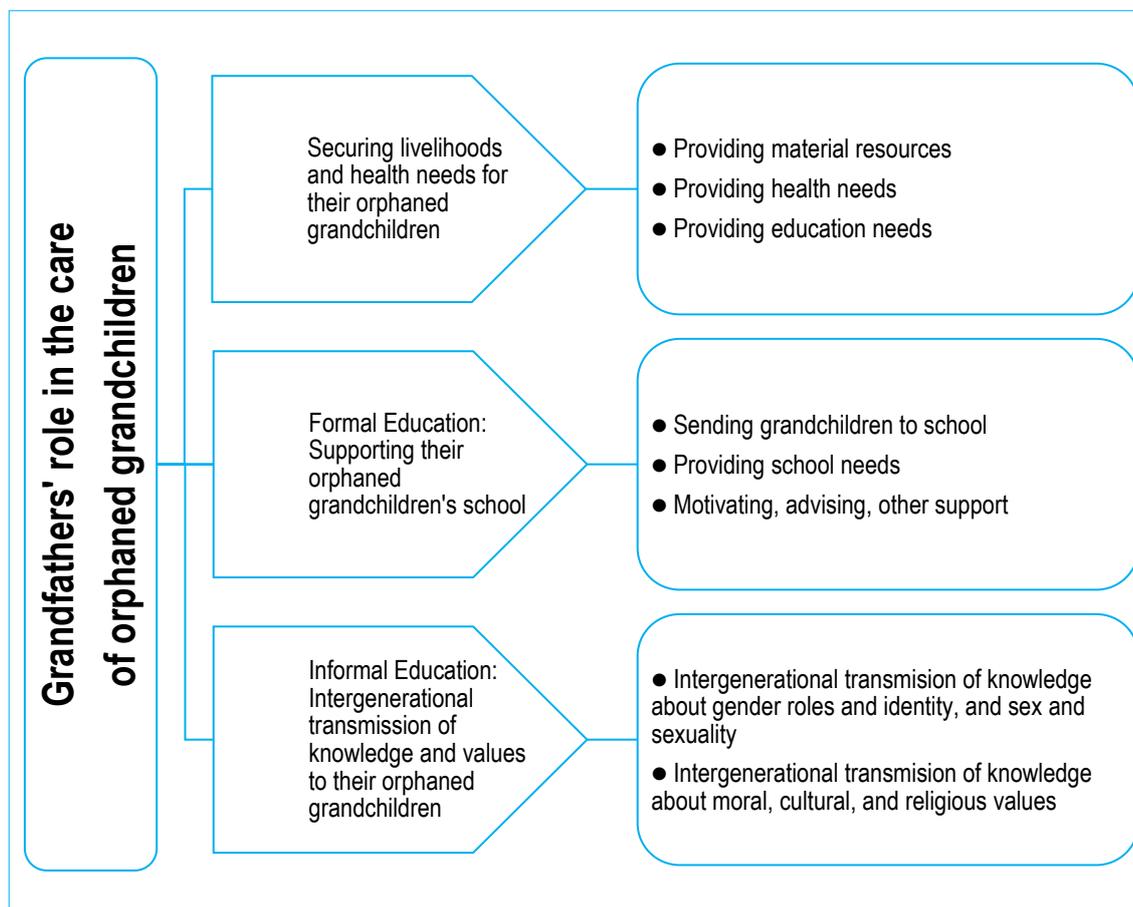
Having situated grandfathers as among the carers of orphans in the communities of rural Southern Malawi that participated in this study, the next chapters tease out the specific contribution of grandfathers to orphan care, and describe how this is influenced by various intersections at play in their daily routines in their social milieu.

## CHAPTER 5: GRANDFATHERS' ROLE IN SECURING LIVELIHOODS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Building on the previous chapter, this chapter and chapters 6 to 8 engage with the themes that emerged from investigation of research question 2 about the role of grandfathers in orphan care by unpacking their specific contribution, as depicted below (**Figure 5.1**). This chapter, however, focuses on exploring grandfathers' role in securing livelihoods for their orphaned grandchildren (i.e. providers). In particular, the chapter shows that grandfathers' role as providers encompasses providing for their orphaned grandchildren's material, health, education, and emotional and psychosocial needs. Except for the emotional and psychosocial needs, these roles reflect masculinities prevalent in their communities, and SSA more generally. The chapter demonstrates that a grandfather's undertaking of the provider role is largely influenced by the intersections of culture/gender, space, generation, age and physical health and/or illness, which may ultimately impact his orphaned grandchildren's wellbeing and development such as their formal education. The sections that follow expound on these findings.

*Figure 5.1: Grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren*



## 5.2 SECURING LIVELIHOODS

All grandfathers who participated in this research are providers in their households, except for the two who were bedridden at the time of data collection. Grandfathers identify essential resources within and outside their neighbourhoods and communities and provide for the daily needs in their household, including those of orphaned grandchildren living with them. Securing livelihoods emerged as the top most role of grandfathers that was ubiquitously cited by various participant groups (across genders and ages) in the research communities. Specifically, grandfathers' role as providers can be recognised as covering two major responsibilities, namely: 1) providing for their orphaned grandchildren's daily material needs; and 2) providing for their orphaned grandchildren's health needs, as widely described below by the participants (**Box 5.1**), and discuss next:

### **Box 5.1:** *Examples of views about grandfathers as providers*

*When I cultivate crops, and after harvest, I support them [grandchildren]. The way I help them is that I sell a bag of rice and buy them clothes, soap, [school] uniforms (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*He [grandpa] buys us food, buns... buns, clothes, shoes (Yankho, male, 6 years – Photo-Elicited Interview).*

*A grandfather usually thinks about what's going on in the household, he focuses on generating income, ensuring that there is food, adequate food to eat together with the children (Chimwemwe, 15 years, male – FGD).*

*A grandfather plays a role in terms of providing school necessities and clothes which the children wear, as well as the food they eat in day-to-day life (Anastasia, 13 years, female – FGD).*

*Households that live with grandfathers regard them as having the responsibility of being the head of the family. So, the responsibility for sourcing every resource that is needed to run the household rests on the shoulders of the grandfather [...] Apart from providing food, there is also clothes. Also, at school, on the part of education, providing fees. Even providing a good house [shelter] is also another responsibility of the grandfather (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

### 5.2.1 Providing for Grandchildren's Material Needs in Daily Life

A grandfather's typical day in the research communities is characterised by engaging in various livelihood activities, predominantly *ganyu*, other economic activities, and subsistence farming to support the welfare and survival of their households, including the wellbeing of their orphaned grandchildren (discussed in detail in chapter 9). For instance, 15-year old Otilia explained that her grandfather David (80 years) cultivates sweet potatoes during the growing season (**Figure 5.2**).

**Figure 5.2:** A grandfather planting sweet potatoes during the rainy season



**Photograph:** Taken by Otilia, 15 years, granddaughter.

Grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren use the produce and income from these livelihood activities to buy household resources, including orphaned grandchildren's daily needs such as food, clothing, soap, body lotion, school necessities, matches, paraffin, and other essential resources. For instance, during the photo-elicited interview, Otilia shared that they use the sweet potatoes for food (e.g. for breakfast before they leave to school, take some to eat at school as a snack, and sometimes as lunch and/or supper when they run out of *ndiwo* [relish] and/or *ufa* [maize flour] for cooking *nsima*). They also use the sweet potatoes for selling in order to finance their needs such as soap and school necessities (e.g. pens, pencils, exercise books).<sup>34</sup>

Among the essential/daily resources, food emerged as the most important need of people in the research communities. During research activities, various research participants (including children, young people, and adults) almost always

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<sup>34</sup> *Nsima* is a bland-tasting thick porridge dish made from maize flour and water. It is the staple food in Malawi.

mentioned food as the top most need in one's life, including for children. Thus, the provision of food is at the epicentre of caring roles and responsibilities of carers of orphans and non-orphans. Subsequently, grandfathers' daily livelihood activities are predominantly typified by their effort to provide food and other essential resources for their orphaned grandchildren. Given many households in rural Malawian are food insecure (see chapter 9), grandfathers' role in this respect is important.

Further, many people in these rural communities are living in deep poverty, a situation not exclusive to grandfather-headed households only, but rather reflecting the general economic profile for the masses in rural Malawi – many rural Malawian households depend on subsistence farming (chapter 9) and live close to or below the poverty line (as established in chapter 3). Although some of the grandfathers and other households receive social support through welfare safety nets (e.g. SCT, FISP, Public Works Programme), the support is irregular and inadequate (chapter 9). At the same time, they lack modern agricultural inputs such as improved seeds and chemical fertilisers, and use basic manual farm equipment, all of which result in less efficiency and inadequate harvest that lasts only a few months of the year. Thus, despite engaging in various livelihood activities, food insecurity is generally common in grandfather-headed households and many other families in the research communities.

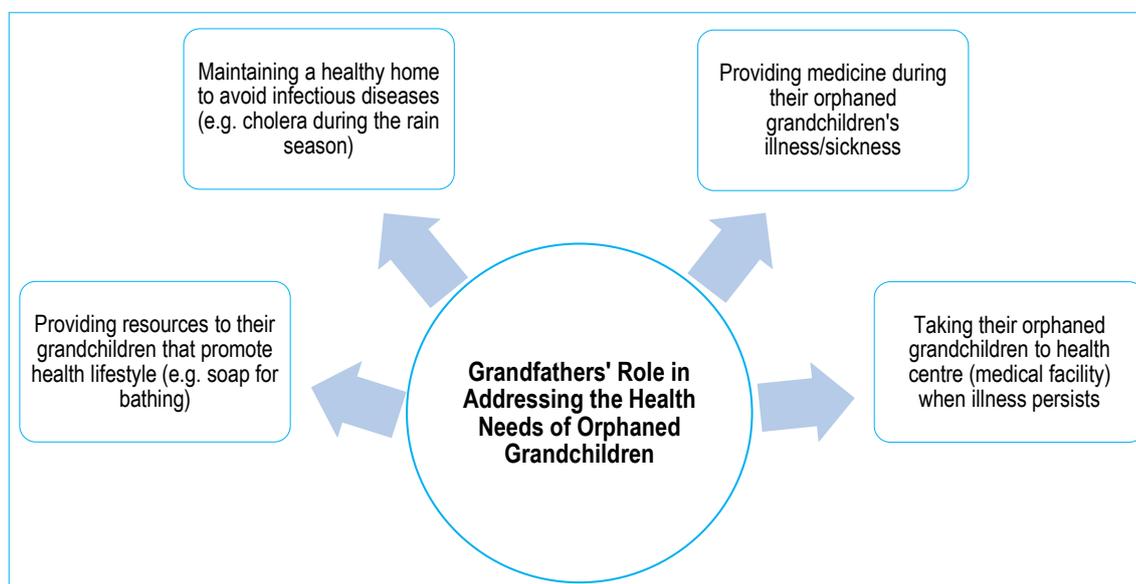
The problem of food insecurity is exacerbated during the annual lean/hungry period, usually between November and February (Whiteside, 2000; Bryceson, 2006; Devereux, 2009; NSO, 2014), a season when household grain reserves are usually exhausted and the new crops are not yet matured for harvest (see chapter 9 for further discussion). Having adequate food in the household throughout the year is, thus, key to not only functioning, but also survival of the grandfather-headed households and other households in the research communities. Importantly, household food [in]security is crucial to grandfathers' and their orphaned grandchildren's health (e.g. nutrition) and development. Many people interviewed in this study emphasised this. They explained that a lack of food and other essential resources in daily life may lead to negative developmental outcomes in orphaned grandchildren's lives, particularly for girls, such as school dropout and early marriages, early childbearing, and the possible resulting illiteracy.

This mirrors what other studies have reported on the adverse impacts of household food insecurity, and poverty more generally, on children. For instance, in their study on youth marriages in Southern Malawi, Ansell et al (2017) report that some children (including orphans) in rural Malawi are persuaded by circumstances to marry as a solution to poverty and hunger. This suggests that grandfathers' provider role (i.e. providing food and other needs in their households) is crucial for the welfare of family members, including their orphaned grandchildren's, including their overall development, hence cannot be overlooked. Importantly, the resources grandfathers provide for their orphaned grandchildren (e.g. food, soap) are fundamental to meeting their orphaned grandchildren's health and wellbeing, as explored below.

### 5.2.2 Meeting Health Needs of Orphaned Grandchildren

Besides providing essential resources key to their orphaned grandchildren's health such as those outlined above, grandfathers also play other roles in their quest/effort to addressing their orphaned grandchildren's everyday health needs. Generally, this comprises four major roles, as depicted below (**Figure 5.3**).

**Figure 5.3:** Grandfathers' role in the health of their orphaned grandchildren



Grandfathers interviewed in this research in rural Malawi stated that they make efforts to provide resources that promote their grandchildren's daily healthy living. When able, they buy their orphaned grandchildren body lotion and soap to use for bathing, washing their clothes, and cleaning utensils. Grandfathers also provide

their orphaned grandchildren with blankets in the cold season, and mosquito nets to prevent malaria, particularly during the rainy season, and shoes to protect their feet from cuts, parasites, and infection. Further, they buy them clothes so that they change when they bath to live healthily. One of grandfathers describes his role in these aspects:

... doing *ganyu*, and then when I generate some money, I buy them the soap I was talking about... Sometimes when I generate a little money and see that this child needs clothes, I go and buy them clothes and give them... (Nthanda, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Having these basic resources is a challenge for many households in rural Malawi. For instance, some children have just a few clothes which they have to wear for several days before the clothes are washed. Cases of lice are not uncommon in rural Malawi, though things have improved over the past few decades. Cases of children not able to attend school because they lack shoes, clothes, and school uniform are quite common. Thus, being able to provide these basic resources is an important contribution grandfathers make in their orphaned grandchildren's lives, hence cannot be overlooked.

In addition to providing resources that promote daily healthy living, grandfathers also encourage their orphaned grandchildren to observe and maintain hygienic practices in and around the home. For instance, commonly, they encourage their grandchildren to keep the home and surrounding premises clean by sweeping inside the house, the kitchen (usually detached from the main house), and around the compound early in the morning before the children leave for school. In **Figure 5.4**, 75-year old Takondwa, a grandfather caring for five grandchildren, captures his two grandchildren sweeping around the compound during the morning prior to getting ready for school.

**Figure 5.4:** Grandchildren cleaning around the home early in the morning



**Photograph:** Taken by Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather.

Besides providing resources for maintaining a healthy life and encouraging adherence to hygienic practices in the home and its surrounding, grandfathers are also concerned with the health of their grandchildren with respect to responding to any illness. This is important given that incidences of illnesses such as malaria, dysentery and diarrhoea are common in rural Malawi, particularly during the rainy season. For instance, malaria is the leading cause of child mortality in the country (NSO & ICF International, 2017), and responsible for two-thirds (66.8%) of child and adult mortalities in Zomba District, and is the leading cause of morbidities (ZDA, 2009). Thus, grandfathers reported taking deliberate effort to address their grandchildren's illnesses as soon as possible, as emphasised by Chikondi (grandfather, 72 years) during our discussion: "when he/she falls sick, you must take an initiative to address the illness." Subsequently, when their grandchildren fall sick, grandfathers buy them medicine and ensure that the child is taking the medication. For instance, during drawing exercise and subsequent drawing-elicited discussions, the children stated that their grandfathers (both in single- and dual-grandparent households) buy them medicine when they fall sick, ensure they are taking medicine, and monitor their condition. In **Figure 5.5**, 13-year old Miguel

depicts his grandmother and grandfather taking care of him during one of the episodes when he had a fever.<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 5.5:** Grandparents caring for a bedridden grandson



**Drawing:** Miguel, 13 years, grandson.

When their grandchild's illness/sickness persists or in an event that it appears to be a serious illness or an emergence, grandfathers take their orphaned grandchild to the health centre for further medical attention. Grandfathers explained that they use their bicycle or hire *kabaza* [bicycle taxis] to ensure they get their ill/sick grandchild to the health centre the soonest. Other grandfathers in single-grandparent households may become guardians of their bedridden grandchildren at the health centre if there are no other relatives to take this responsibility. The participants explained:

... and sometimes when they [the children] fall ill/sick I use the money and take them to a private health facility to access quicker services. I hire a bicycle so that the patient is transported to the health facility as soon as possible (Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

I remember one time when I went to the health centre at Khombwani, I found a man... a grandfather who was a guardian for his bedridden grandchildren. We could cook together in the health centre's kitchen, *yeah*. I come back in the ward, he's there, he was cooking and fetching water and so forth (Stella, 42 years, female, teacher – Key-informant interview).

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<sup>35</sup> Inpatients admitted in medical facilities in Malawi need to be attended by a relative in the role of patient guardian because of the lack of nurses to provide food, bathing, and other basic needs/care of the patient.

Children who participated in this study expressed their appreciation of their grandfathers' efforts to take them to the health centre for medical attention whenever they fall ill. Below, 13-year old Orlando portrays one of the incidents when she fell ill and her grandfather David (80 years) took her to the health centre on his bicycle to seek further medical attention (**Figure 5.6**).

**Figure 5.6:** Orlando's grandfather taking her to a health centre on a bicycle



**Drawing:** Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.

Clearly, grandfathers are key players in the health needs and wellbeing of their grandchildren. Their role in this context should not be underestimated, especially when considering the general socio-economic outlook of Malawi. Malawi is one of the countries in SSA with high incidences of diseases/illnesses due to lack of capacity to address public health challenges (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Incidences of diseases/illness are particularly high among the rural population, owing to acute poverty, perennial food insecurity, poor sanitation, and lack of access to improved health services. For instance, rural communities in the country consistently register higher rates of malaria, malnutrition, cholera outbreaks, and other health problems than urban areas (NSO & ICF International, 2017). As such, ensuring the health needs of children are met is one of the important elements typifying the daily life of parents and guardians as they strive to keep their children and wards healthy.

Ensuring the health needs of children are met is particularly crucial for orphans in communities affected by HIV/AIDS. Although studies specifically addressing this issue are lacking in the Malawian context, evidence from other regions of SSA (e.g. Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) suggests that orphans are likely to have poorer health and developmental outcomes (e.g. emotional, psychological, and psychosocial problems) compared to non-orphans (e.g. see Doku, 2012; Delva et al., 2009; Nyamukapa et al., 2010; Okawa et al., 2011; Puffer et al., 2012; Boyes et al., 2013; Doku & Minnis, 2016). This is attributed to the fact that some of them may have cared for their ill parents and witnessed their death, some may experience social stigma associated with their parent's AIDS-related death, and others may lack proper care and social support during parental illness and post parental death (Atwine et al., 2005; Cluver et al., 2008; Cluver & Orkin, 2009; Scot, 2013). Ultimately, this may also have negative impact on children's schooling (Bhargava, 2005). Thus, grandfathers' role in promoting the health of orphaned grandchildren through the various ways outlined above is vital for their health and wellbeing.

Notably, a grandfather's provider role is influenced by the intersection of normative views about gender, space, and livelihoods. Below, I explore this in detail by mapping out grandfather's typical day in comparison of that of the grandmother as it plays out within their social-cultural context.

### **5.2.3 The Intersections of Normative Views, Gender, and Space in Grandfathers' Livelihood Strategies**

Grandfathers' role as providers for their orphaned grandchildren in this study reflects the primary markers of masculinities normatively constituted in the broader rural Malawian culture and society (see Chimombo et al., 2000; Mawaya & Kalindekafe, 2010; Mkandawire, 2012). A man who can work hard and feed his families as well as provide other essential resources (e.g. soap,) is viewed as 'man enough' – locally termed as *uchamuna*, *uphongo* or *akamuna* [manliness] (Kapulula, 2015). In contrast, a man who does not fulfil this masculine role of a provider because of laziness and/or incompetence is often subjected to social mockery and insults, and described as a failure and 'not man enough' by their families and the society (Kapulula, 2015), something that Joseph (2013) has also observed in Botswana. Consequently, men in the research communities visited during this study

strive to ensure they fulfil their masculine role as providers in their households, and this is integrated/reflected in their everyday life. This suggests that normative views about gender may influence grandfathers' provider role.

Notably, gendered caregiving emerged as less apparent in the single-grandparent households which participated in this research. However, it is incontrovertibly displayed in the livelihood strategies of grandparents in the dual-grandparent households. In such households, grandfathers and grandmothers undertake different caring roles and responsibilities for their orphaned grandchildren that are typically socially and culturally defined roles for men and women in the wider Malawian society (see also Chimombo et al., 2000; Mawaya & Kalindekafe, 2010; Kapulula, 2015). For instance, both the grandfather and the grandmother may direct their efforts towards the household cash economy, but they may differ in the specific economic activities they engage in to support the daily welfare of their orphaned grandchildren, as captured by old (Asante, 27 years, male, teacher – Key informant interview):

“our culture is the one that creates differences such that a grandmother could be creating traditional clay pots, which is culturally female-oriented task, like our culture portrays. The grandfather too could be selling *mipini* [wooden hoe-handles], yeah, and other things that are culturally male-oriented.”

Similar views were shared across other participant groups in the study. For instance, during our discussions, grandchildren from dual-grandparent households explained that their grandmother contributes to household income by engaging in feminine livelihood strategies, including activities such as moulding and selling *miphika* [clay pots] to generate income. For instance, in **Figure 5.7**, 14-year old Apatsa portrays her grandmother Cynthia (54 years) making clay pots. During the photo-elicited interview, Apatsa shared that the money her grandmother makes from the clay pots is used to buy food, clothes, soap, school necessities, and other essential household resources.

**Figure 5.7:** Apatsa's grandmother drying clay pots on the sun after moulding



**Photograph:** Taken by Apatsa, 14 years, granddaughter.

On other hand, Apatsa's grandfather Osteen (54 years) generates income by engaging in masculine livelihood activities such making *miyono* [fishing traps]. He either sells *miyono* [fishing traps] or goes to a nearby lake to fish and sell the catch to generate income and buy household essential needs such as those outlined above. Below is a drawing produced by Apatsa's brother Santie (13 years) portraying his grandfather making *miyono* [fishing traps] (**Figure 5.8**). During the drawing-elicited interview with Santie and his sibling sisters Apatsa, Phindile (13 years), and Milika (6 years), they explained that their grandfather and grandmother have distinctive roles, and these roles reflect gendered expectations for men and women in their community.

**Figure 5.8:** A grandfather weaving fishing baskets



**Drawing:** Santie, 13 years, granddaughter.

This difference in the routes grandmothers and grandfathers take in securing household income epitomises how masculinities and femininities are generally embedded in the tapestry of prescriptive gendered roles in the rural Malawian society. This is not only in relation to economic pursuits, but also in livelihoods in general. Typical days of men and women in the general population are generally distinct (see also Chimombo et al., 2000; Mawaya & Kalindekafe, 2010; Kapulula, 2015), and this is replicated for grandfathers and grandmothers interviewed in this study. Specifically, a grandmother's 'typical day' in the research communities is characterised by her undertaking feminine roles and responsibilities (sometimes alongside her orphaned grandchildren) within the vicinity of her home, including agricultural tasks and reproductive tasks, as described by 78-years old Nandi (grandmother): "I look for [forage] *ndiwo* [relish] and cook. I go and fetch water. I clean the house." Lucky (33 years, male, teacher) agrees: "When it comes to the grandmother, her responsibility is to prepare food. If it is available, she may cook and give it to the children. If the children are very young, then she washes their clothes. During FGDs and interviews with grandchildren, the unique gender-oriented roles of their grandmother emerged strongly. For instance, Fiona (11 years) explained that her grandmother is concerned with domestic chores such as cooking (**Figure 5.9**), fetching water and firewood, and cleaning the house.

**Figure 5.9:** A grandmother cooking *nsima* for her family's lunch



**Photograph:** Taken by Fiona, 11 years, granddaughter.

Subsequently, a grandmother spends much of her time with orphaned grandchildren in the home and significantly less time beyond the home arena and surrounding neighbourhoods. For chores that are necessary to be undertaken outside their home, grandmothers usually delegate them to their grandchildren. For instance, a grandmother may be baking *zigumu* [local bread] within their home compounds, but she usually sends grandchildren to sell the bread at the market or by the roadside. Notably, grandmothers usually delegate their chores to their granddaughters and/or younger boys/grandsons. Older boys/grandsons are culturally considered too old to, for instance, collect water, or firewood because these are considered feminine tasks. This highlights how cultural/normative views about gender intersect with age and influence division of household labour in the grandparent-headed household, and in the rural Malawian society more generally.

Of course, grandmothers go out of their homes. For instance, they go to social and economic events in their communities such as going to places of worship (e.g. church, mosque), weddings, initiations ceremonies, Village Bank meetings, and visiting relatives and friends within and outside their communities.<sup>36</sup> However, such activities are occasional because the bulk of their daily activities are usually performed within the spaces of their home and/or in the neighbourhoods. Also, the tasks grandmothers perform outside their home usually fall within the culturally-defined feminine roles and responsibilities related to caring of orphaned grandchildren. For instance, they go to boreholes or wells to fetch water, to the bush to gather firewood, to the *chigayo* [maize-mill] to process *ufa* [maize flour], to the river to wash clothes for their spouse and grandchildren, and to the fields or the bush to forage plants for *ndiwo* [relish]). **Figure 5.10** is an example of Miguel's (13 years) representation of one of the chores/tasks that his grandmother May (70 years) and his sister Fiona (11 years) conducts in daily life when she is outside of the home. This also demonstrates the contribution of children in productive and reproductive work as discussed later in the thesis (see chapter 10).

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<sup>36</sup> A Village Bank is a formal microfinance scheme for rural Malawians where they borrow small amounts of money, invest in small businesses, and pay low interest rates. It is usually run by the local community with technical support from government and/or NGOs.

**Figure 5.10:** A grandmother fetching water with her granddaughter



**Photograph:** Taken by Miguel, 13 years, grandson.

A 'typical day' of a grandfather is different from that of a grandmother described above. In their daily effort to care for orphaned grandchildren, grandfathers use their skills and invest their energy and time in masculine roles and responsibilities and livelihood strategies that reflect the gender ideology of the rural Malawian society. Notably, they usually perform many of these masculine roles and responsibilities outside of the home sphere:

The grandmother is mostly at home while the grandfather is somewhere *kuthamangathamanga*, looking for resources, and when he brings things he gives the grandmother, and if she is physically well to cook, the grandmother supports the children like cooking for them (Pemphero, 41 years, male – FGD).<sup>37</sup>

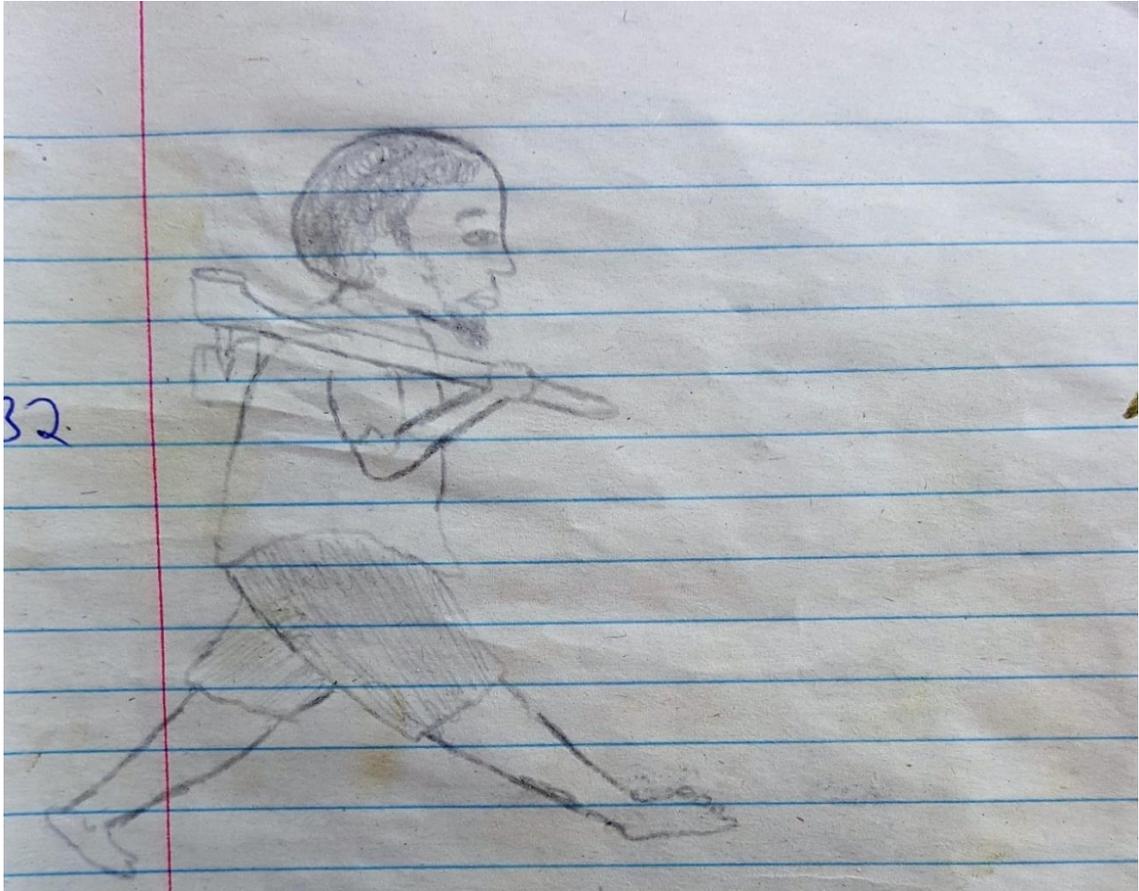
Subsequently, grandfathers spend much of their time outside the home, working in the fields and/or pursuing external economic ventures. For instance, they go out of their homes early in the morning to work in the fields, as portrayed by Orlando (13

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<sup>37</sup> *Kuthamangathamanga* literally means 'running here and there'. It denotes being proactive in looking for and securing resources to support the needs of the family/household.

years) below (**Figure 5.11**). They come back home later in the day or during the evening. Sometimes they come back home for lunch and leave the home again to go out again.

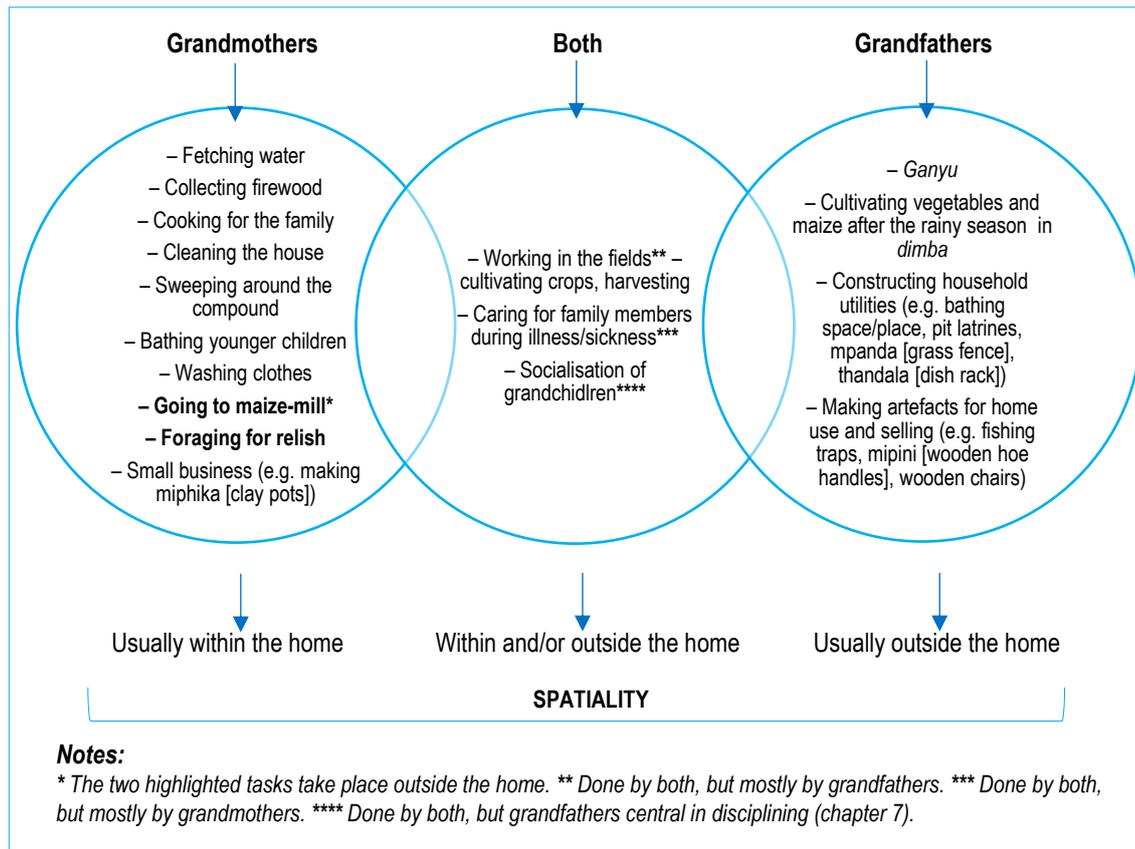
**Figure 5.11:** *A grandfather going out to work in the fields*



**Drawing:** *Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.*

Evidently, unlike grandmothers, grandfathers spend less time with their orphaned grandchildren in the home. Thus, inevitably, social expectations on gender roles for men and women in rural Malawi create different spaces of care for grandfathers and grandmothers as they look after their orphaned grandchildren. This signifies the intersection of cultural/normative views about gender and space in grandmothers' and grandfathers' caregiving of their orphaned grandchildren in the research communities. **Figure 5.12** summarises some of the major daily tasks/responsibilities that grandmothers and grandfathers interviewed in this study/research undertake, and highlights the spatial differences within which these tasks are undertaken.

**Figure 5.12: Gendered roles for grandparents in the research communities**



The roles and tasks of grandfathers and grandmothers in this study (outlined above) resonate with predominant gender division of labour in rural Malawi and the gendered spaces men and women occupy in daily life in their caregiving roles. For instance, in their multidistrict and cross-region study in rural Malawi, Chimombo et al (2000: 52-53) found clear gendered division of labour in the households they sampled such that

adult women were more involved in food preparation, cleaning, processing, hauling water and firewood and caring for the children, the sick and aged. Male members of the households were on the other hand more likely to be doing such activities as cutting firewood, cultivating going to the market and other social activities.

Similar gendered divisions of labour were later observed in another study in three rural sites in Mwanza, Southern Malawi by Mawaya and Kalindekafe (2010). The researchers found that, although some roles were similar for both men and women, many were different. Men's roles and responsibilities included "house construction, land cultivation and charcoal making" while women focused on "drawing water, fetching firewood, fishing and domestic tasks such as cooking, washing, cleaning, and taking care of children", but both engaged in "cultivation, grass cutting, and tree

planting” (Mawaya & Kalindekafe, 2010: 103). Subsequently, men and women occupied different livelihood spaces such that women were generally occupying and performing domestic work within the home vicinity, while men spent much of their time away from the home looking for money (Mawaya & Kalindekafe, 2010). Similar findings have also been reported in other parts of SSA (e.g. Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia) regarding masculinities and men’s role in the family/household (e.g. see Silberschmidt, 2004; Montgomery et al., 2006; Shefer et al., 2008; Joseph, 2013; Mugisha et al., 2015; Evans, 2017). Thus, the findings of my research in rural Malawi are not dissimilar to what others have found in the country and in the region. This highlights the centrality of cultural/normative views about gender in men’s and women’s (including grandfathers and grandmothers) roles in the Malawian society, and in other parts of SSA more generally.

Notably, even though grandfathers’ livelihood ventures in the research communities are usually mapped outside their homes, they are not necessarily *lesser* or *absent* players in the daily lives of their orphaned grandchildren. The roles and tasks grandfathers perform both within and outside the vicinities of their homes are not insignificant. As stated previously, their daily ventures are usually directed towards securing income, food, and other essential resources vital for the welfare of their households, including the wellbeing of their orphaned grandchildren. For instance, during the time they are out of the home, grandfathers are usually either working in the fields (**Figure 5.13**) or *dimba* [usually a vegetable irrigated plot] to cultivate vegetables and other commercial and subsistence crops, or they are pursuing economic opportunities such as *ganyu* or fishing to generate income and support their orphaned grandchildren and other household member.

**Figure 5.13:** David working in the home field



**Photograph:** Taken by Otilia, 15 years, granddaughter.

The crops grandfathers harvest and the income they generate from various economic activities are ultimately used for providing the needs of their households (e.g. food, clothes), including for their orphaned grandchildren. For instance, the following is a drawing-elicited conversation between 5-year-old Chinsinsi and his preschool teacher Patuma, clearly demonstrating the little one's grasp of his grandfather's central role in this respect (**Box 5.2**).

**Box 5.2:** Chinsinsi's conversation with a caregiver about his grandfather

**Patuma:** Chinsinsi, I see a drawing in your exercise book that you have produced, right?

**Chinsinsi:** yes (Patuma: Who is this person that you've drawn?) grandpa (Patuma: Where is he?) he's at the dimba (Patuma: What is it that he's doing at the dimba?) he's watering onions (Patuma: he's watering onions?) mmm (Patuma: What do you use these onions for?) he sells them (Patuma: he sells them?) yes (Patuma: When he sells the onions, what does he use the money he generates for, in your household, in daily life?) he buys food, mmm, and clothes (Patuma: He buys food for the household?) mmm (Patuma: Like what food?) maize (Patuma: what else?) ndiwo [relish] (Patuma: Ndiwo?) mmm.

Further, when grandfathers are in the home during the day, they spend much of their time either relaxing or performing tasks/chores related to their masculine role as providers. For instance, they engage in weaving *madengu* [storage basket] and *malichero* [winnowing trays], making *mipini* [wooden hoe-handles], carpentry (**Figure 5.14**), and other tasks driven towards income generation to support their

families. Lupita (14 years, female), who produced the drawing below, explained that when her grandfather sells the chairs and things he makes, he uses the money to support economic needs of their household such as buying food, clothes, and school necessities. This substantiates the point that the tasks grandfathers undertake outside and/or within the home are integral to their orphaned grandchildren's wellbeing and development, hence their role should not be overlooked.

**Figure 5.14:** *A grandfather making a chair for selling*



**Drawing:** *Lupita, 14 years, granddaughter.*

Suffice to note that while boundaries surrounding gender roles are quite distinctive in dual-grandparent households in rural Malawi, they seem less apparent or non-existent in some single-grandparent households. For instance, grandfathers in single-grandparent households may perform both feminine and masculine roles, albeit out of necessity. This is particularly common when their granddaughters are not old enough to perform feminine tasks, thus signifying the intersection of generation and age and gender. Grandfathers in single-grandparent households also perform feminine chores because they do not have a choice. For instance, grandfathers cook and teach their granddaughters how to cook:

He [grandpa] cooks for us, *nsima*. And, if *ndiwo* is available, sometimes we found that he has already cooked *nsima* as we come back from school... sometimes he wakes up early in the morning to cook porridge for us. He also teaches us how to cook *nsima* [thick maize porridge] and *ndiwo*... (Orlando, female, 13 years – FGD).

Sometimes it is possible for the very same grandfather to do those [feminine] chores since there's no grandmother. That means the grandfather wakes up and cook, feeds the children, looking for food for them so that they go to school, and when they come back, he does the same (Stella, 42 years, female, teacher – Key-informant interview).

In **Figure 5.15**, 13-year old Orlando portrays her grandfather David (80 years) cleaning a *mtsuko* [large water pot], which is usually a feminine task. During the photo-elicited interview, Orlando explained that her grandfather cleans their *mtsuko* because they fear that they [her and her sister] may break the heavy large drinking water pot because they are still too young to be able to lift it up.

**Figure 5.15:** David cleaning the *mtsuko* on his granddaughters' behalf



**Photograph:** Taken by Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.

Also, as previously illustrated in **Figure 5.12**, despite the differences in gender roles and responsibilities, grandmothers and grandfathers sometimes perform similar chores as they care for their orphaned grandchildren. For instance, it is not uncommon for both a grandmother and a grandfather to go to work in their shared fields together and with/alongside their grandchildren to cultivate subsistence and commercial crops, as portrayed below (**Figure 5.16**) by Vitu (14 years, male). When

such things happen, though, the grandmother and her granddaughters usually leave earlier and return home to undertake domestic chores (e.g. fetching water, cooking lunch). Meanwhile, the grandfather and his grandsons remain in the fields and continue working for several hours, thus highlighting the influence of culture on gender roles, as women are expected to cook for men.

**Figure 5.16:** Grandparents and their granddaughter working in dimba



**Drawing:** Vitu, 14 years, grandson.

Notably, adherence to 'normal' socially expected gender division of labour may be altered or reconfigured during some circumstances. Under such situations, grandfathers may be compelled to step in and undertake feminine roles and responsibilities in order to accomplish whatever is needed at that time. For instance, some grandfathers in dual-grandparent households perform feminine chores when the grandmother is away, or when she falls ill/sick, or if their granddaughters are not yet old enough to perform such tasks, or when they are away (e.g. when they are at school):

The grandmother may fall ill/sick, so, the grandfather may actually do those feminine tasks (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

When it comes to fetching water and bringing it here, I can do that when she [the grandmother] is ill/sick (Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

In **Figure 5.17**, 13-year old Miguel portrays his grandfather Takondwa (75 years) wrapping *mpango* [headtie] on his sister Fiona (11 years) before they left for madras (Islamic school). Muslim girls are strictly expected to cover their heads when attending madras at the mosque. Culturally, it is women (and not men) who are expected to fix a headtie on girls, as well as teach them how to do it for themselves as they get older. Thus, during the photo-elicited interview, I asked Miguel what had influenced his grandfather Takondwa to perform this feminine responsibility. Miguel explained that, on this occasion, his grandmother May (70 years) was out of the home. When I followed up with Miguel's grandfather Takondwa, he told me that the grandmother was away, and he would not let his granddaughter Fiona attend madras without covering her head. Thus, it was necessary for him to step in for the grandmother:

Their grandma was not around, so if I don't step in things won't be fine. So, if their grandma is not around I should step in and help the children with what their grandma would have done if she was around. So, I am helping. I step in so that the things are done (Takondwa, grandfather, 75 years – photo-elicited interview).

**Figure 5.17:** Takondwa wrapping headtie on his granddaughter Fiona



**Photograph:** Taken by Miguel, 13 years, grandson.

Similarly, under unfavourable circumstances, grandmothers in dual-grandparent households may undertake roles and responsibilities that are deemed as masculine by people in their communities. For instance, they may increasingly engage in income generation and/or become primary providers when grandfathers fail to meet essential household needs or are incapacitated by illness. An example is that of Cynthia and Osteen's family referred to earlier in this section. The family used to depend on fishing business that Osteen (the grandfather) was running at Lake Chilwa, but three years prior to my data collection, Osteen's fishing business faced an insurmountable setback.<sup>38</sup> His business capital was lost when his fishing equipment was burnt during an accidental fire. Osteen had not yet recovered economically and psychologically.<sup>39</sup> His family had been struggling to meet essential needs ever since the tragedy, as he had not yet found something to do to have a regular flow of income. Although Cynthia (the grandmother) started making *miphika* [clay pots] to provide for the family before the tragedy (i.e. during her husband's fishing trips because the family could run out food and other essential resources), their economic situation worsened after the fire. Cynthia expressed frustration at failing to meet their orphaned grandchildren's needs because her husband is no longer able to fulfil his provider role as he used to before the fire accident:

That time [before the fire], whenever he had money, he could provide support, but ever since the tragedy, things have gone bad [...] at first the money was usually found there at the lake where he [Osteen] used to be. But, now he is that kind of a person who even does not have any means of generating money [...] back then, he was able to support the family, but now it's just that money is no longer close to him, he lacks money [...] a man is the one who looks for money [...] all the fishing equipment got burnt [...] Now we are just barely surviving (Cynthia, grandmother, 54 years – In-depth interview).

While this family's story provides clear evidence of women's participation in economic activities, some as primary providers, it also typifies the rigidity of gender roles in this family and how women's transition to a primary provider after unforeseeable circumstances is not welcomed by both the grandmother and the

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<sup>38</sup> Lake Chilwa is located a few miles from the research communities.

<sup>39</sup> During the interview with Osteen, he kept referring to this tragedy. It was clear he was psychologically affected and had not yet recovered. This was fuelled by the fact that he had failed to find alternatives to generate income and provide for his family.

grandfather. According to Cynthia, her economic contribution before the fire was complementary to Osteen's provider role, rather than as one of her traditional obligations and priorities. Her central role had been to take care of the home, undertake/perform domestic chores (e.g. cooking, cleaning, fetching water, and collecting firewood), and provide emotional and personal care of family members such as bathing and feeding younger children. Notably, despite taking on her husband's role as provider, Cynthia continued to undertake all other responsibilities she has had before the tragedy struck her family. Thus, she felt being pushed to undertake a role that was supposed to be fulfilled by a man (i.e. her husband Osteen).

Cynthia's views of clear gender roles and her discomfort to undertake additional roles, roles that she considered 'men's work', are also replicated in the wider society in the research communities. In these communities, women are not expected to provide for their family unless men are incapacitated by illness or other situations/circumstances. This signifies the salience of gendered division of labour in the wider community in the research areas. Indeed, just like a grandmother is not expected to be a [primary] provider, a grandfather is generally not expected to perform feminine roles such as carrying water home, cooking, and fetching firewood. A departure from these social codes/prescriptions on gender roles is discomforting for people in the communities:

[...] if water is needed in the household, it will be difficult for the grandfather to carry a pail on his head. Even if it is cooking, it is mostly women doing such tasks. Mostly, if the grandmother is still energetic, she draws water and cooks for the family [...] most of the household chores are done by her. It is nothing strange to other people when they see a grandmother drawing water. Even cooking, it is not strange. But, if the grandfather cooks, it is problematic in the eyes of our culture here... (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).

Thus, grandfathers' role as a provider fits into the broader narrative of what people in their communities expect of them as men. Notably, it replicates the broader narrative of masculinities in other parts of Malawi. For instance, in their studies on other topical issues in Malawi, Braathen and Kvam (2008), Mawaya and Kalindekaffe (2010), Kululanga et al (2011), and Kapulula (2015) have made similar claims about men's social position as providers. This also mirrors the role of men in much of the SSA region, a social phenomenon popularly referred 'provider masculinity' (Hunter, 2006; Bhana & Nkani 2014). However, as shown in this chapter, some women are

also complementary and/or primary providers in their households (e.g. Cynthia's story analysed earlier). Nonetheless, there is strong evidence suggesting that, despite socio-economic transformations (e.g. women joining the labour force and increasingly becoming primary providers), traditional/conservative gender roles persist in many households in Malawi as is in many other households in SSA, particularly in rural communities, where the society expects men to be the linchpin of resource provision in their households/families. For instance, researchers in Malawi, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and other parts of SSA have made similar observations (Warner et al., 1997; Opong, 2006; Kapulula, 2015; Schatz & Selley, 2017), thus reflecting the deeply entrenched social constructions of men (masculinities) in this part of the world.

Masculinities are not universal (i.e. they differ/vary both within and across societies), and they are in constant state of flux, influenced by social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances (Lawrence & Longhurst, 2003; Walker, 2005; Moller, 2006). However, men's traditional role as head of the family and providers remains the most salient feature defining normative masculinities in rural African communities (Hunter, 2006; Madhavan et al., 2008; Joseph, 2013; Bhana & Nkani 2014). For instance, Shefer et al (2008: 162) note that in South Africa "there is clear recognition of the pervasiveness of traditional gender roles, which involves women being focused on the family and domestic reproduction and men fulfilling the traditional role of 'breadwinner'." Similarly, Montgomery et al (2006: 2415) states that "economic contribution is clearly recognized as the primary form of male involvement in the household" in South Africa. Similarly, Silberschmidt (2004: 237) observes that, in Kenya and Tanzania, "the ideology of men as breadwinners is forcefully alive." Recently, Evans (2017: 12) has commented that, in Zambia, "men are widely perceived and revered as providers."

Thus, besides the rural Malawian society, the grandfathers' provider role in my study also reflects the broader masculinities in SSA. For instance, de Klerk (2011) highlights the provision of school fees and material needs as well as medical care as key responsibilities of grandfathers who are raising orphaned grandchildren in Tanzania. Similarly, like grandmothers in rural Malawi (as discussed in this section), in many parts of SSA, particularly rural communities, the society expects women to undertake domestic work and emotional and personal care for family members

(Strebel et al., 2006; Schatz & Seeley, 2015). For instance, a recent study in rural and semi-urban communities in Uganda documents about older women being concerned with “providing health, personal and physical care, whereas men are more likely to report providing financial assistance” and that “women are more likely to take part in care that connects to social reproduction and illness, whereas men perform roles that connect to their traditional role of being ‘breadwinners’” (Mugisha et al., 2015: 162). Similarly, Schatz and Seeley (2015:1192) report that, in East and Southern Africa, “men are expected to be financial providers and women providers of emotional labour and physical caregiving.” Indeed, only 3 of the 15 grandfathers interviewed in my research identified or alluded to emotional and psychosocial care as part of their role (discussed below).<sup>40</sup> Thus, despite important socio-economic transformations, clear and socially defined roles for men and women are universal in daily life and livelihoods across much of Africa.

### **5.3 EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE**

Consistent with dominant notions of African masculinities, emotional and psychological care of children emerged as a lesser theme during discussions with grandfathers interviewed in this study. This mirrors a plethora of literature on men in other regions of SSA and other parts of the world that characterise them as less invested in emotional and hands-on care of family members such as children (Roy, 2008; van den Berg et al., 2013; Makusha & Richter, 2016). This demonstrates how normative notions of masculinities and gender intersect and influence a grandfather’s caregiving for orphaned grandchildren. Specifically, it shows that, as men, grandfathers may be less invested in emotional and psychosocial care than grandmothers (women).

Nonetheless, some of the grandfathers interviewed in this study clearly understand the importance of providing emotional support, particularly in the context of their grandchildren’s orphanhood. They provide enabling environments in the home for personal development and emotional and psychosocial support. They also endeavour to create a conducive home environment that does not leave their

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<sup>40</sup> This, however, must be interpreted with caution as the absence of their views on this theme may not necessarily mean they did not perform such caring roles.

orphaned grandchildren distressed. For instance, they provide love (e.g. by not showing favouritism if they are also looking after non-orphaned grandchildren), empathy (e.g. when their orphaned grandchildren have a bad day at school or with their peers), endeavour to forge positive relationships with their orphaned grandchildren (e.g. respecting them), and encourage positive relationship between and among their orphaned grandchildren (e.g. by intervening and resolving sibling conflicts with impartiality). Some stated that they ensure they do not abuse or mistreat their orphaned grandchildren in any way (e.g. using harsh punishment for wrongdoing), as this would affect the children emotionally and psychologically.<sup>41</sup>

Grandfathers' efforts to promote emotional and psychosocial health of their orphaned grandchildren is important particularly within the context that some orphans are seen as highly emotionally fragile, and when punished for misbehaviour, they tend to interpret it as mistreatment or abuse. The research participants expressed the view that orphans tend to associate the punishment with their orphanhood rather than owning their mistake, hence conclude that they are being punished simply because they do not have parents (discussed further in chapter 7). Further, as the lack of basic needs would emotionally and psychologically impact upon their orphaned grandchildren, the grandfathers also emphasised that they endeavour to provide for their orphaned grandchildren's basic needs to make them happy:

'Caring for a child' is taking care of him/her. It is ensuring that you don't mistreat him/her [...] if a parent/guardian has no food, no money, those problems will affect the children too, and the children will lack care and they will not be happy [...] when they go and are coming back home they should be happy that we are going home, they should not be afraid that, "we are going home and we will be in trouble as soon as we step our foot in the home, maybe they will beat us or flog us." No! That should not happen (Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

The lack of strong evidence from the research participants in this study vis-à-vis orphaned grandchildren's emotional and psychological care raises important concerns. However, it may not necessarily mean that grandfathers do not provide

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<sup>41</sup> Corporal punishments are common in Malawi, and some punishments may have emotional impacts on the child (discussed in chapter 7).

emotional and psychological care for orphaned grandchildren or that they are less concerned with their emotional needs. It is possible that participants overlooked talking about this aspect of care during the research because of a focus on other important facets of daily care such as provision of food. Moreover, grandfathers and the other research participants in this study were not specifically asked to talk about emotional issues. Rather, they were asked to explain grandfathers' role in their orphaned grandchildren's lives. Thus, the paucity of evidence for grandfathers providing emotional and psychosocial care to their orphaned grandchildren must be interpreted with caution.

#### **5.4 THE PARADOX OF GRANDFATHERS AS CARERS OF ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN**

Evidence from this study presented thus far and in the next chapters suggests that grandfathers are not mere contributors to orphan care, but rather important carers. This emerged strongly during group discussions surrounding household provisions. Many people interviewed expressed views that although grandfathers are not culturally/commonly associated with the care of orphans, their role as providers is indisputable. Discussions around this issue generally revolved around comparing the capacity of grandfathers versus grandmothers in engaging in livelihood activities needed for the survival of their households, particularly income generation. Many people emphasised that, as distinct from grandfathers, many grandmothers do not on their own have viable financial means or the capacity to adequately provide for the needs of their orphaned grandchildren, a phenomenon more visible in single-grandparent households:

The grandfather has various ways of generating income, like searching for and doing *ganyu* by working in other people's fields, whereas the grandmother cannot manage to do all of these things... it is difficult to have necessities when children are being looked after by a grandmother alone... And, usually it is not possible on her own to properly care for the children and provide necessities like providing food, clothing because she doesn't have viable means to generate income (Mapula, 20 years, female – FGD).

When asked what is it that limits grandmothers to be on the same par with grandfathers when it comes to income generation and household resource provision, research participants provided several reasons. Many of the IGAs and opportunities available in the village are manual, demanding lots of energy as well as strength, and usually require masculine skills. Apparently, grandmothers may not only lack the

skills-sets required for income generation such as those usually used by grandfathers, but also lack the physical health (i.e. energy) most of these IGAs require. For instance, on the skills, research participants stated that a grandfather is likely to have manual/physical skills such as making *mipini* [wooden hoe-handles], fishing, making brooms, and weaving baskets. In contrast, a grandmother is likely to lack such masculine skills. Thus, even in situations where opportunities for income generation are available in their communities, many grandmothers may not pursue them because either they do not have the necessary skills to execute the work, or they lack physical strength required, or both. The participants stated that even though both grandmothers and grandfathers have poor physical health, many grandmothers are in poorer physical health than grandfathers. Thus, many grandmothers may lack the physical ability to generate income as grandfathers do.

In discussing their views around these gender differences, *ganyu* was the most vivid and frequently cited example among the research participants. They mentioned that while it was normal and more likely for a grandfather to go out and do *ganyu*, it is comparatively difficult for a grandmother. Many of the kinds of *ganyu* available in their neighbourhood and surrounding communities are high energy-demanding, for instance, digging pit latrines, and working in the fields (e.g. tilling land, making ridges). According to the participants, a grandmother is likely to be physically weak sooner than a grandfather because of the impact of multiple childbirth earlier in her lifetime. Hence, she may not be able to perform high energy-demanding manual work such as those performed by grandfathers. They stressed that if a grandmother is persuaded by circumstances to engage in such high energy-demanding work, she is likely to be less productive, hence ends up generating insufficient income to adequately support her orphaned grandchildren. Thus, a grandmother in dual-grandparent household usually waits for the income generated by the grandfather to support the needs of the family members, including for their orphaned grandchildren:

Thus, the research participants in this study felt that grandmothers' role and ability to care for orphaned grandchildren largely depends on the provisions of the grandfather. They stated that without the grandfather providing the household resources, it is almost impossible for the grandmother to execute her daily material caring responsibilities. They stressed that a grandfather provides the essential

financial resources in the household, and, in turn, the grandmother uses these resources to care for the grandchildren. For instance, they reasoned that without the grandfather providing money, a grandmother cannot buy soap for the grandchildren to bath, or cook for them because there will be no food in the household, as described below (**Box 5.3**):<sup>42</sup>

**Box 5.3: Views about grandfathers' centrality in resource provision**

*The grandfather is the one who goes out to do ganyu, get food and bring it in the household. So, if the grandmother is able to care for the children, it's because the grandfather is giving her the resources, which she in turn uses to care for the children (Alick, 17 years, male – FGD).*

*... for a grandmother to be able care for the child it means the grandfather has to take a role too of providing the resources to the grandmother. In that way, the grandmother can be able to look after the children. If I, the grandfather, doesn't provide the resources or money to the grandmother, she cannot ably care for the children. She may try, but she can't do it properly or adequately, she can't provide adequate care and the child will miss good things in their life (Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*The grandfather buys sugar. I tell him that we have children that are going to school, but there is no food at the household. So, he releases money to buy the food. On my own I cannot manage to take care of the children, it's impossible. He is the one who is responsible for ensuring the children go school, eat, bath, and wash. All these come from the grandfather. When you tell him, he releases money to buy all these things. I just cook, but the grandfather buys everything. My job is just cooking, and when there is no relish I tell him, or when something is lacking, I tell him that there is no soap, and the grandfather releases the money [...] When the grandfather does not have the money, we just stay, when he finds some, we all eat [...] Sometimes the children do not have clothes, so, the grandfather buys them clothes [...] When people they say that taking care of children is done by grandmothers, the reason is that the grandmothers are the ones that cook for the children. However, most of the grandchildren's needs are provided by the grandfather (May, 70 years, grandmother – In-depth interview).*

To obtain a nuanced understanding of the centrality of the grandfathers' role as providers, participants were asked to explain what happens in single-grandparent households where a grandmother is raising orphaned grandchildren alone. Again, their responses centred on the differences between grandfathers and grandmothers in securing a viable household cash economy to make resources available in the household. The participants stated that they consider grandfathers as the main carers because in the absence of their role as providers of daily household resources, caring of orphaned grandchildren is negatively interfered. The research participants described such a household as likely to experience 'lots of suffering' because it is likely to lack essential resources in daily life:

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<sup>42</sup> Many grandmothers did not directly address this issue, hence only a few quotations from them. However, it was often shared by the rest of the participants. It is possible that grandmothers did not want to talk about this because it implies a weakness in them.

It is usually difficult for the grandmother to get resources to support the children [...] If there is no grandfather to help her, the household may end up living in a dire situation... [...] So, in the household where there's a grandmother alone with children, there is always a lack of essential resources (Dumisani, 41 years, male – FGD).

Thus, in the absence of household resources such as those that grandfathers normally provide for their households, the grandmother's role to care for the children becomes significantly difficult and the grandchildren may suffer. This is particularly common when a grandmother is raising younger orphaned grandchildren who cannot engage in meaningful livelihood activities on their own. Consequently, orphans who are staying with grandmothers alone (as opposed to grandfathers alone or in dual-grandparent households) may be at a higher risk of encountering various socio-economic challenges due to inadequate care. These challenges may have a negative impact on their life presently and in future. For instance, because of the challenges some grandmothers meet in securing viable household cash economy, orphaned grandchildren growing up with their grandmothers alone are more likely to lack essential/daily needs/resources (e.g. food and school necessities), may drop out of school and get into early marriages compared to those raised by grandfathers alone. This is particularly common if the grandmother is not able to generate adequate income, does not receive economic support from relatives or social welfare programmes, and is raising younger orphaned grandchildren who have not reached an age of effectively and efficiently engaging in livelihoods to support their household and/or themselves. This signifies how gender, physical health of the grandmother, and age of orphaned grandchildren intersect and impact the children's wellbeing and development (e.g. outlined above). Below are examples of what participants said regarding the vulnerability of children raised by their grandmother alone (**Box 5.4**).

#### **Box 5.4: Participants' views on children raised by a grandmother alone**

*When children are being looked after by a grandmother alone, it is difficult to have necessities. If the grandchildren are orphans, it becomes difficult for them to continue with their education and their future is ended because they lack someone to support them because the grandmother has no money, for instance, to register the children at school... like providing food, clothing because she doesn't have any viable means to generate income (Mapula, 20 years, female – FGD).*

*In the absence of a grandfather there are lots of problems... the children will not have a bright future. Their future will be cut off because of lacking various things. For instance, if it is girl, she wants soap and body lotion/oil to be available all the time as well as good clothes to put on. So, all of that becomes difficult to access in her family, but she sees other children who have their fathers and mothers doing well. What she does eventually is to think that "let me use my own means to have these things". So, it's happening that a very small girl but she has gone to a man and is starting a marriage, all because she is thinking in her mind that one day he may do something for her because the grandmother has failed to do something for her. They're spending two days without eating or one day without eating and for a child, that's a painful experience (Chifuniro, 28 years, male – FGD).*

*It is not true that she [the grandmother] can find a means to find money to give it to the child to buy exercise books, it's not possible. The child will grow up suffering. He/she may not even attend school. Why is that? Well, it's because the grandmother cannot manage to go and do ganyu, working in other people's field to find soap so that the child goes to school. Consequently, the child ends up marrying or getting married (Tisetso: it's happening, you find the child failing to attend school because the household is lacking money). So, that kind of a grandmother cannot manage to find money to buy the necessities in the household. So, the child may fail school or end up being impregnated or contracting diseases (Ntheto, 55 years, male – FGD).*

*Children who are staying with the grandmother live like they are living alone. In most cases, they must find resources on their own because, unlike a grandfather, it is difficult for their grandmother to source soap for every child. If the grandmother is caring for the children, the children look after themselves through doing ganyu unlike the case where they live with their grandfather around. When they are living with a grandfather around, the children have a high chance of attending school and are rest assured that once they come back home they are likely to find food. It's a different story when they are staying with their grandmother alone because when they are in class, they think about home, that once they knock off, they are likely not to find food on the table. This affects their performance. Once they reach home they just rush to do ganyu. For instance, if they were living with both of their grandparents, but the grandfather dies, the welfare of the children changes completely. If the children were putting on clean clothes, they now fail to access soap. [...] Many things change. Even their diet goes down. So many things show that things have changed. They even start selling household property to survive (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

Although research participants widely expressed the view that grandmothers are likely to fail to economically sustain their households and adequately support children, such blanket generalisations must be understood with caution. It is likely that such general views are influenced by the salience of gendered roles (masculine versus feminine) dominant in the rural Malawian society – men (and not women) are expected to be providers (as discussed earlier). While grandfathers are viewed as the economic engines of their households (because of dominant constructions of masculinities), grandmothers are not docile. Grandmothers have agency in their contribution to the household cash economy. For instance, the case of Cynthia discussed earlier is a classic example of grandmothers' important contribution to household cash economy, including in times of adversity.

Moreover, while grandmothers may lack masculine skills necessary for pursuing many of the economic opportunities in their communities, some possess feminine skills that they utilise to engage in livelihood activities and substantially contribute to household cash economy, which caters for their orphaned grandchildren's needs. For instance, a grandmother may not know what grandfathers usually do such as making *mipini* [wooden hoe-handles] or weaving baskets, or engaging in high energy-demanding *ganyu*, but she may know how to mould *miphika* [clay pots] and/or make *mbaula* [charcoal burners] that she sells for money to buy household needs. For instance, in **Figure 5.18**, 14-year old Apatsa portrays *mbaula* made by her grandmother Cynthia (54 years), ready for firing before taking them to the market for sale. During a photo-elicited interview, Apatsa explained that, usually, her grandfather goes away for seasonal fishing trips at Lake Chilwa that sometimes last more than three months. During this time, the family may run out of money, thus to survive, her family relies on the sales from *miphika* and *mbaula* that her grandmother moulds. This shows the crucial contribution grandmothers make to their household cash economy through engaging in IGAs. Nonetheless, Apatsa and her siblings described their grandfather as the provider, thus signifying not only the important role grandfathers play in their orphaned grandchildren's lives and view of the family, but also cultural notions of masculinities.

**Figure 5.18:** Charcoal burners made by Apatsa's grandmother



**Photograph:** Taken by Apatsa, 14 years, granddaughter.

## 5.5 DO THE ROLES THAT GRANDFATHERS UNDERTAKE CONSTITUTE 'CARE'?

Reflecting on current research available in the wider literature on grandparenting in SSA (as outlined in chapters 1 and 2), and comparing with the evidence from the investigations of grandfathers' role in orphan care presented in this chapter and the next three chapters, it raises questions as to whether what grandfathers do for their orphaned grandchildren constitute care in the eyes of the people interviewed in this study. To understand this, the participants were asked to describe what 'caring for children' or 'caring for a child' meant to them. Below are some of the examples of their descriptions of care (**Box 5.5**).

### **Box 5.5:** *Descriptions of 'care' by adults and children in rural Malawi*

*It ['caring for children'] means providing clothing, food, and teaching the children moral behaviour... I think that is what it means... Also, providing soap, school bags, books, writing pens (Chimwemwe, 15 years, male – FGD).*

*'Caring for children'. Children... well, you 'care' for children by feeding them, clothing them, looking after them properly, yeah (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*Providing good housing, sending them to school. They must to eat, bath, and attend school (Ntheto, 55 years, grandfathers – FGD).*

*First, food, the child must have adequate food. Secondly, buying them clothes so that when they go to socialise with their friends they should not envy their peers' clothes. Also, sending him/her to school, all those things (Peace, 37 years, female – FGD).*

*...making available everything that a child may require to survive. This includes food, the child has to be given food, good shelter (Researcher: mmm), also properly dressing them, sending them to school, and bringing them up in a religious uprightness (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).*

*When I say 'I am caring for the children'... it's just easy to say 'I am caring for the children', but it is a very huge responsibility because I am supposed to take a role in everything about the child's welfare and be able to see how the child is growing. For instance, has the child eaten today? Does the child have enough clothes? Have I taken the child to the health centre when they fell ill/sick? How is the child's body looking? There is a lot of important things that's needed to be done! So, you as the parent or guardian of the child you have the responsibility of making sure that you're taking good care of the child... (Ishan, 48 years, male, local leader – Key-informant interview).*

*I think when we say 'caring for children', it means feeding them well. Also, the children have to have good clothing, are sent to school, and they should have good behaviour (Stella, 42 years, female, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

*According to me, when I say caring for children, it means looking after their needs (Researcher: mmm) their daily needs (Researcher: mmm, okay, so these needs, caring for them like doing for them what?) Lusungu: firstly, good health; (Researcher: mmm) that they should be grow up healthy, also on the part of their education (Researcher: mmm) also morally, (Researcher: mmm) and many others (Researcher: mmm) that help to promote the welfare of a human being (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

Reflecting on these descriptions of care by various participant groups in the research communities in rural Malawi, it is evident that they are clearly similar to the roles grandfathers undertake in the lives of their orphaned grandchildren presented in this chapter and subsequent chapters. In summary, their descriptions of care capture themes of provision of material resources (e.g. food, clothing), and health needs (e.g. buying medicine, seeking medical attention at the medical facility such as health centres), and emotional and psychosocial care, sending children to school and supporting their educational needs (e.g. school uniform, pocket money, school fees, writing materials), and transmission of knowledge and values (e.g. moral and religious values), all of which fall within grandfathers' roles as presented in this chapter and subsequent chapters. Paradoxically, though, during discussions with the participants, it seemed they hardly recognise grandfathers as carers of orphaned grandchildren because they associate care with women and feminine roles and tasks, as well as spending time with the children, as described below (**Box 5.6**):

**Box 5.6: Gendered notions of care**

*We are used to the tradition that it is the grandmother who 'cares for the children' ...culturally, we think it is only the grandmother who can take care of the children... (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).*

*The reason grandmothers are mentioned frequently as carers of grandchildren, it's because a woman is the one who cooks, making sure that the children have eaten, fetching water so that the children take a bath, making sure their clothes are clean whereas a man you just provide the soap (Grivazio, 52 years, grandfathers – FGD).*

*People say that the grandmother is the one who is 'caring for the children' because the children spend more time with her. You, the grandfather, you go out and when you come back home you find them with their grandmother. So, people know more about the grandmother as one caring for the children... So, the grandmother is said to be 'caring the children' because she is the one who spends more time with the children... (Frank, grandfather, 76 years – In-depth interview).*

*When it comes to 'caring for children', it is a woman's duty [...] many people think that when it comes to someone caring for orphans, then it must be grandmothers (Montfort, 46 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

*Most of the times what we know is that the role of caring children is rested in the woman [...] maybe people just established intuitively that the people who take the role of caring for these grandchildren are grandmothers (Ufulu, 43 years, male, teacher – Stakeholder Meeting).*

*The grandfather usually goes out to look for household resources. So, everything in the household falls on the grandmother's shoulders. The grandfather, when he returns home, he just finds the issues already sorted out... Usually, a grandmother stays at home and looks after children whereas the grandfather just spends less time with the children (Kenwood, 17 years, male – In-depth interview).*

During discussions with the participants, it emerged that, because of associating care with women and feminine roles and tasks, the lack of recognition for grandfathers' roles in orphan care is widespread even though what grandfathers do constitute care according to the research participants' own understanding of care. For instance, during my first contact with 48-year old Ishan (a chief in one of the research communities), he asked, "Mr Mayeso, why do you want to talk to grandfathers about care of orphans when care of children is a woman's responsibility." His understanding was, if I want to talk about care of orphans, then I should talk to women and not men, in this case, to grandmothers and not grandfathers. Having explained that I wanted to understand what role grandfathers play in the lives of their orphaned grandchildren, Ishan curiously agreed to let me engage participants in his area of jurisdiction. He pondered with scepticism, "Mr Mayeso, I want to hear what you find. Your work is quite interesting!" Similar views emerged strongly during a stakeholder meeting at the outset of my fieldwork, the three meetings with the CAG, which Ishan attended, and during dissemination meetings. The participants stated that this study was unique, and 'talking to grandfathers as carers of orphaned grandchildren' was something they had not heard before, or experienced, let alone considered. Below is an excerpt of what I captured in my field diary after the stakeholder meeting (**Box 5.7**):

**Box 5.7: Fieldnotes on participants' initial reactions to the study aims**

*Ishan welcomed the study, but with scepticism and curiosity. He says it is a 'strange study because it is about grandfathers 'caring' orphans. Where on earth would I talk about men caring! Ishan says he participated in numerous social initiatives both within his village and at the Social Welfare Office and other places, but he has never heard anything about research on the lives of grandfathers who are 'caring for orphans.' He says all he hears is about grandmothers. This was warm-hearting to me: this study may be an eye-opener. Importantly, it may add important insights to our knowledge and understand about grandfathers' caregiving – it echoes what I had read in literature and the justification for my study. The fact that the participants expressed that they usually talk about grandmothers and not grandfathers when they address issues concerning 'caring' of orphans is interesting. They seem amused that I had thought of investigating grandfathers. This is so motivating as participants seem to be excited and cynical to hear what I will find. This may help me to easily mobilise people to the community meeting at the end of data collection when I want to disseminate the findings. I can't wait for that moment! (Fieldnotes, Entry 02, Tuesday, January 19, 2016).*

As stated previously, this highlights how grandfathers [men] who find themselves in roles not associated with notions of masculinities in their communities end up not being recognised for their role in orphan care even though what they do in their orphaned grandchildren's lives constitute care as per local people's own

descriptions. It also signifies how cultural/normative views about gender construct not only notions of care, but importantly, who between a grandmother and a grandfather gets recognised as a carer of orphans regardless of what contribution each make. This may explain why research, policies, and programmes on grandparenting and orphan care in Malawi and other countries in SSA tend to focus on grandmothers. Thus, the findings of this study challenge such gendered conceptions of care and this side-lining of grandfathers in research.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter set out to address research question 2 about the role of grandfathers in orphan care in the participating communities in rural Malawi. A novel finding presented in this chapter is that despite being largely absent in the scholarship on grandparenting in SSA (as discussed in chapters 1 and 2), grandfathers are pivotal in the daily lives and welfare of their orphaned grandchildren as providers, a role that locates them at the epicentre of forms of caring. In particular, they provide the material and health needs of their orphaned grandchildren, but seem to provide lesser emotional needs of their orphaned grandchildren. This generally reflects masculinities and a continuation of their role as men. Notably, these roles of grandfathers usually locate them outside of the home, even in households where the grandfather is the lone head of the family and there is no grandmother. Even though grandfathers may sometimes perform these roles alongside their grandchildren, particularly their grandsons, evidence presented in this chapter suggests that grandfather may spend lesser time (than grandmothers) with their grandchildren.

On the other hand, grandmothers usually perform feminine tasks, many of which take place in the home and within the neighbourhood, sometimes alongside their grandchildren, particularly granddaughters. Subsequently, grandmothers may spend more time (than grandfathers) with their grandchildren. Thus, the findings suggest that despite their central role in the lives of their orphaned grandchildren, grandfathers largely remain invisible because people locally associate care with women and feminine roles and tasks, as well as spending time with children and providing emotional and hands-on support.

The roles of grandfathers and grandmothers mirror hegemonic gender roles (i.e. masculinities and femininities) in the research communities in Zomba, Southern

Malawi, which may also reflect gender roles in SSA more generally (e.g. see Moller, 2006; Makusha et al., 2013b; Ratele, 2014). Importantly, the findings suggest that although many of grandfathers' tasks are performed outside the home, and that therefore they may spend less time with their orphaned grandchildren, it does not necessarily mean they contribute less to their orphaned grandchildren's lives. This suggests that there is need for researchers and policymakers to not only critically examine the presence or absence of other carers of orphans besides grandmothers (e.g. grandfathers), but importantly, explore and ascertain what specific role they are playing in the lives of orphans, and how important it is for children's development.

Further, evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates how the intersection of various factors affect grandfathers' caregiving of orphaned grandchildren, as well as the outcomes. Specifically, the findings suggest that the intersection of gender norms, space, generation, age and physical health and/or illness influence a grandfather's undertaking of the provider role, which may ultimately impact his orphaned grandchildren's wellbeing and development such as their formal education. This suggests that a holistic understanding of grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren may require a consideration of various intersections playing out in their daily lives because none of these factors and intersections may be sufficient to explain this independently. Rather, it is their interplay and intersections that enhance our understanding of grandfathers' role in securing livelihoods for their orphaned grandchildren.

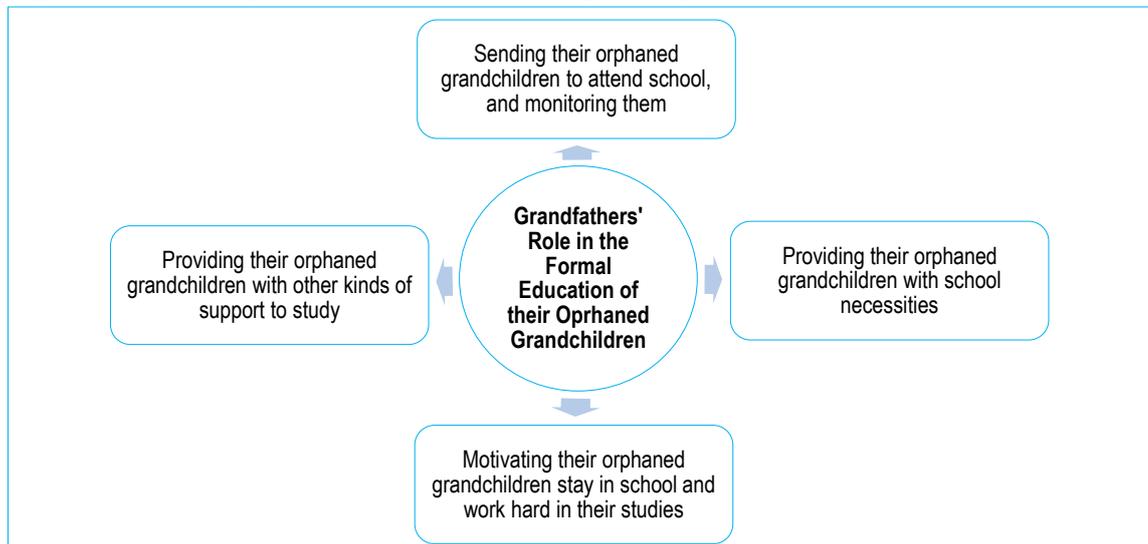
Besides providing for the material and health needs of their orphaned grandchildren, grandfathers also contribute significantly to their formal education – a role closely related to that of provider, but discussed separately in this thesis. Thus, the next chapter explores this aspect of grandfathers' caregiving role to further elucidate their epicentredness in the daily lives of their orphaned grandchildren.

## CHAPTER 6: GRANDFATHERS' ROLE IN THEIR GRANDCHILDREN'S FORMAL EDUCATION

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter extends the discussion on the contribution of grandfathers in their orphaned grandchildren's lives in rural Southern Malawi. Thus, it addresses research question 2 about the grandfathers' role in orphan care. Specifically, the chapter explores a closely related role to that of provider, namely supporting the formal education of their orphaned grandchildren. It demonstrates that despite many grandfathers having low formal educational attainment themselves, they strongly believe in the importance of educating their orphaned grandchildren. This is exemplified through their commitment to their orphaned grandchildren's education that can be conflated into four key themes presented below (**Figure 6.1**). The chapter further shows that intersectionality enhances our understanding of this role of grandfathers through studying the interaction and intersections of poverty, cultural/normative views about gender, and future prospects as factors that influence the grandfathers' role in supporting their orphaned grandchildren's formal education. The next sections expound on these findings.

**Figure 6.1:** Grandfathers' roles in educating their grandchildren



### 6.2 SENDING GRANDCHILDREN TO SCHOOL AND MONITORING THEM

As stated chapter 3 (see also appendix 11), many grandfathers interviewed in this study have low [formal] educational attainment. However, they strongly believe in the importance of education. As such, they send their grandchildren to school with the hope of creating a better future for them. During our discussions, grandfathers

explained that sometimes their grandchildren are reluctant to attend school, hence they ensure that they are not absconding from classes. Thus, they use various strategies to persuade them to attend classes such as forcing and/or punishing them, for instance, by withholding food if they refuse to go to school (**Box 6.1**).

**Box 6.1: Views about grandfathers on persuading their grandchildren to attend school**

*...I have to 'force' them. I tell them that, "if you don't go to school today, you won't eat nsima" (Frank, grandfather, 76 years – In-depth interview).*

*They [grandpa and grandma] 'force' me to go to school. Sometimes it happens that I don't want to go to school, so, they force me to go to school. It happens that on that particular day I don't feel like going to school, they tell me that, "if you don't go to school you won't have food to eat". So, because of being afraid to miss food, I tell myself that, "should I stay without eating nsima at lunch? It's better I go to school" (Vitu, 14 years, male – FGD).*

*When I skip school, they scold me, and they [grandpa and grandma] tell me that I won't have nsima [food] that day [...] I may have missed classes and wandering around in the community, so they tell me that, "you won't eat nsima" (Sangalatso, 10 years, male – FGD).*

Further, grandfathers who are literate may monitor their grandchildren's school progress, for instance, by regularly checking their books. However, only one grandfather, Praise (74 years), a retiree with a secondary school qualification reported doing this for his two granddaughters Landina and Latrice who are in primary and secondary schools, respectively. The rest of the grandfathers who participated in the research had either low or no education, hence lacked literacy skills essential for helping their grandchildren with schoolwork. Chimombo et al (2000) made similar observations among parents in Mangochi (Southern Malawi), Dedza, Mchinji, Kasungu (Central Malawi), and Nkhata-Bay (Northern Malawi), stating that high levels of illiteracy among rural Malawians limits parents' and guardians' ability to create conducive environments in the home that facilitate children's book-based learning during after school hours.

Interestingly, though, my research work in Zomba shows that grandfathers who are not literate still monitor their grandchildren's school work by other means rather than those that require literacy skills. For instance, 75-year old Takondwa, who had only primary school education, explained that he ensures his grandchildren do their homework the same day they are given it at school, soon after lunch, before they go out to play. He stated that he does this so that his grandchildren do not rush through their homework on the morning of the school day.

The narratives provided during discussion with the participants in this study suggest that without grandfathers' commitment and persistence (e.g. using punishments when their orphaned grandchildren abscond classes), some of the children would have been skipping classes and perhaps wander about in the community and eventually drop out of school. Thus, grandfathers' role of sending their orphaned grandchildren to school is an important one. Notably, their efforts align with various education initiatives by the government and its development partners in the country (e.g. NGOs such as Save the Children, UNICEF, World Vision, Youth Net and Counselling [YONECO], CRECCOM) that encourage parents and guardians to send children to school.<sup>43</sup> This also highlights how grandfathers' value of the importance of education and anticipated outcomes for their orphaned grandchildren's schooling intersect and influence their caregiving (e.g. punishing them for skipping school).

As stated in chapter 3, all orphaned grandchildren of school-age being cared for by grandfathers in this study were attending school. This seems to contradict other discourses in Malawi and other regions of SSA that have reported that orphanhood and vulnerability is associated with vulnerability and poor educational outcomes such as poor school attendance, low attainment, and early drop out, particularly for girls (e.g. see Case et al. 2004; Ainsworth & Filmer, 2006; Robson & Sylvester, 2007; Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010). For instance, Sharma's (2006) study in Malawi reports about declining school enrolment among orphans compared to non-orphans, particularly as the grade level rises. However, in my study in rural Malawi, while all the orphans (except one household) could be described as vulnerable, they still attended school. This resonates with other studies in SSA (including Malawi) which have reported little or no association between and among orphanhood, vulnerability, and poor school and educational outcomes (e.g. Case et al., 2004; Kidman et al., 2012). For instance, Bennell (2005) reports no significant differences in absenteeism between orphans and non-orphans in primary schools in Malawi and other countries in SSA.

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<sup>43</sup> YONECO and CRECCOM are local NGOs located in Zomba city, not far from the research communities, working with children and young people in the district.

This suggests that orphan's schooling and education outcomes in rural Malawi such as the communities visited during my study may be an interplay of various intersections of complex factors such as economic circumstances, readiness and willingness to attend school, and their parents' and guardian's (e.g. grandfathers) effort and commitment in persuading the children to attend school. This mirrors what others have reported for orphans in the general population in SSA (e.g. Case et al., 2004; Kürzinger et al., 2008; Hampshire et al., 2015). Further, it is also possible that efforts by grandfathers to send their orphaned grandchildren to school, ensuring they were not skipping classes, and providing material support (discussed below), as well as the increased campaigns by government, NGOs, FBOs, and other charities in the district on the benefit of formal education could be some of the factors responsible for why all orphans in this study in rural Malawi were in school.

### **6.3 PROVIDING GRANDCHILDREN WITH SCHOOL NECESSITIES**

As stated previously, it was identified that grandfathers in the research communities visited during this study engage in various livelihood activities to obtain/secure essential resources for their grandchildren's education. For instance, they farm, do *ganyu*, and pursue other economic activities such as making and/or weaving items (e.g. *mipini* [wooden hoe-handles], baskets) for selling. Grandfathers use the proceeds from these livelihood activities to provide their grandchildren with school necessities, pocket money, and mandatory fees:<sup>44</sup>

Grandpa buys us school necessities like exercise books and pens (Orlando, female, 13 years – photo-elicited interview).

...if there's 2 tambala [money], I say, "here, use it to buy something to eat at school." That school uniform [pointing to his granddaughter's school uniform], when that one wears out, they will be sent back from school... uniform should always be available. There's lots of things to think about when it comes to the life of a child. The child too puts forward her demands, "I want this grandpa, I want that, I don't have shoes, it's worn out." (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

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<sup>44</sup> Although all public primary schools in Malawi are free to attend, children are required to pay other mandatory fees (e.g. for examinations fees, and for developments in the school) and parents and guardians are responsible for non-tuition school expenses such as school uniform, shoes, bags, and writing materials such as exercise books and pens).

Importantly, participants in this study were quick to identify food as central to the children's health, and hence also fundamental to educational outcomes. They mentioned that grandfathers are key to providing food to support their grandchildren. Further, they stated that absence of food in the household may negatively affect children's health (e.g. resulting in malnutrition) and schooling (e.g. skipping classes due to hunger, poor concentration in class when hungry). Like their counterparts in the general population, orphaned grandchildren in households that are food insecure may miss classes to do *ganyu* to find food and other essential resources. This is common during the annual hungry season, which lasts a few months prior to the harvest season, normally from November and ends in about February (Bryceson, 2006; Devereux, 2009; NSO, 2014) – see chapter 9 for further discussion. During this annual hungry season, household food stores (e.g. maize stored in granary) have been depleted while the new crops are not yet ready for harvest, and the prices of food (e.g. maize) and other commodities soar exorbitantly. Thus, the hungry months mark the annual climax of food insecurity for many rural households in Malawi (Kerr, 2005; Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006; NSO, 2014). Some of the grandchildren interviewed in this study shared that their grandfathers asked them to miss school to seek and do *ganyu* to obtain food (e.g. maize, *ndiwo* [relish]) for that day and/or a few subsequent days (**Box 6.2**).

**Box 6.2: Adults' and children's views on the importance of food in children's education**

*If they don't have food to eat, they cannot attend school. So, I try my best that I do something to ensure that they have food and are attending school (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*What is most needed is food, because when you go to school hungry and... because at school they provide porridge, but if they don't provide that day, you become depressed because you're attending school while hungry (Mzati, 14 years, male – FGD).*

*...the grandfather plays a big part in his grandchildren's education, particularly, by ensuring that they receive food [...] and many other things... In most cases, he takes a bigger part of providing food, because if the child does not receive adequate food, it may affect their health. Consequently, their performance at school declines. Thus, the grandfather ensures that food is one of the priority needs as he looks after his grandchildren (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

This suggests that without their grandfathers adequately supporting them, orphaned grandchildren may be impacted negatively, for instance, in their education. This shows the centrality of grandfathers' role in their grandchildren, and demonstrates how a grandfathers' commitment and ability to provide food (food

security), as well as poverty, intersect and influence their grandchildren's lives (e.g. health and educational outcomes).

The interplay and intersection of poverty and food [in]security and subsequent outcomes reported in this study resonate with the government's discourse on the issue. For instance, the Government of Malawi has consistently acknowledged that poverty and food insecurity in many rural Malawian households are some of the major factors leading to low school enrolment and poor retention (GoM, 2004, 2012a, 2014b). Other previous studies in the country have also recognised this phenomenon (e.g. see Davison & Kanyuka 1990; Chimombo et al., 2000; Maluwa-Banda, 2003). For instance, drawing from their study in rural Zomba, Davison and Kanyuka (1992: 465) state that hunger may "affect students' ability to concentrate and leading to lethargy and disinterest." Similarly, Mkandawire et al (2013) note that, generally, children's participation in *ganyu* in Northern Malawi interferes with schooling because sometimes children engaged in *ganyu* during school hours.

Elsewhere in SSA, there is substantial evidence indicating negative impacts of children's participation in paid work such as casual labour on their schooling (Guarcello et al., 2006; Edmonds, 2009; Putnick & Bornstein, 2015). For instance, Laird (2002) notes that nearly 1 in 3 (30%) and about 2 in 5 (21%) of rural Ghanaian girls and boys aged 7 to 16 years had compromised their education to undertake various economic activities to support their household cash economy. Gibbons et al (2005; see also Gibbons et al., 2006 study in Ethiopia for similar observations) study in 18 sub-Saharan countries (including Malawi) found that the probability that a child will not attend school in 10 of the 18 countries surveyed increased on average by 9% for children who engaged in paid work such as casual labour. Casual labour had also a negative impact on overall children's school attendance, grade repetition and dropping out (Gibbons, 2005). This suggests that in some circumstances, children's participation in casual labour (e.g. *ganyu*) may have negative impacts on schooling.

However, this must be interpreted with caution as the evidence on this issue remains conflicting and inconclusive. For instance, Sociologist Michael Bourdillon's research on children's work in Zimbabwe is a classic example of the benefits of children's participation in paid work for their own access to school and development (Bourdillon, 2000, 2011; Bourdillon et al., 2010). Thus, children's participation in

paid work (e.g. *ganyu*) and schooling may co-exist, and may not always be detrimental to children's health and education outcomes. For instance, rather than paid work always resulting in boredom, and subsequently less time to study and do homework, and reduced concentration during lessons as other have asserted (Laird, 2012; Orkin, 2012; Putnick & Bornstein, 2015), some children may combine paid and unpaid work with play, thus enhancing their personal and interpersonal development.

Although the participants in my study in rural Malawi did not specifically mention this, children in many parts of the country are fond of combining work and play. For instance, as boys herd cattle (including for *ganyu* or temporary paid work during school holidays), they engage in playing games such as *chibisalilano* [hide-and-seek] or *chipako* [tag/tig or touch-and-go]. Girls may combine *ganyu* such as fetching water or collecting firewood for better-off families or individuals while singing or teaching each other songs or quizzing each other about school work (e.g., mental arithmetic), or they may be playing *phada* [hopscotch] while selling foodstuffs (sugarcane, *mandasi* [doughnuts], *zigumu* [local bread]) for *ganyu* along the road. This suggests that the binary view of the impact of children's work on their development is problematic and quite simplistic because it does not represent the reality of livelihoods in this region. The impact of children's paid work on their development may be neither dichotomous (i.e., as either good or detrimental) nor homogeneous/universal. There may be both benefits and trade-offs, and this may vary across situations and cultures.

Nonetheless, the evidence from my study in rural Malawi, as well as that from other studies in Malawi, other regions of SSA, and other parts of the world cannot be overlooked. This suggests that grandfathers' role in providing food and other essential resources for their orphaned grandchildren contributes greatly to their orphaned grandchildren's health and educational outcomes. Moreover, given that a parent's/guardian's poverty and illiteracy are strongly linked to decreased interest in educating a child (Maluwa-Banda, 2003; GoM, 2004), it is quite a reassuring and positive finding that grandfathers in my study are committed to educating their orphaned grandchildren despite their lack of education and the many poverty-related challenges they experience in daily life.

#### 6.4 MOTIVATION, ADVICE, AND OTHER SUPPORT

It was found that, in various ways, grandfathers who participated in this study motivate their grandchildren regarding education. They use verbal praise and gifts. For instance, when their grandchildren pass examinations, grandfathers may slaughter a chicken for the treat of eating meat and celebrate with them. Grandfathers also use local role models (e.g. ward councillors, teachers, Child Protection Officers, HSAs, members of parliament) to encourage their grandchildren to do well with their education. Further, they warn their grandchildren against behaviours that can compromise their education and future such as premarital sex, *chamba* [hemp] smoking, alcohol consumption, and absconding from classes, as described below:

Grandpa tells us that we should not abscond school. He says that we will regret... that we will regret in future if we abscond school (Sangalatso, male, 10 years – FGD).

If the grandfather attended education, he tries that the children should do likewise. If he failed, but has seen others becoming successful because of education, he tries to push the children to be like those role models (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).

In addition, other grandfathers in rural Malawi sometimes escort their grandchildren to school to ensure their safety. This is particularly important during the rainy season because, then, rivers are often swollen and in spate, and incidents of children being swept away by the river are not uncommon. Also, during this period of the year, the maize fields are green and thick, and the uncultivated bushes and graveyards are densely vegetated, making the paths to and from the school extremely risky for girls and younger children to walk alone (see also Porter et al., 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011a, 2011b; Morojele & Muthukrishna, 2016).<sup>45</sup> Thus, it was observed that young grandchildren in single-grandparent households may miss classes if there is no adult to escort them to and from school. Such cases, though, are not common because most children walk to school with their older siblings, cousins and other relatives and/or friends to ensure safety, and very few children are

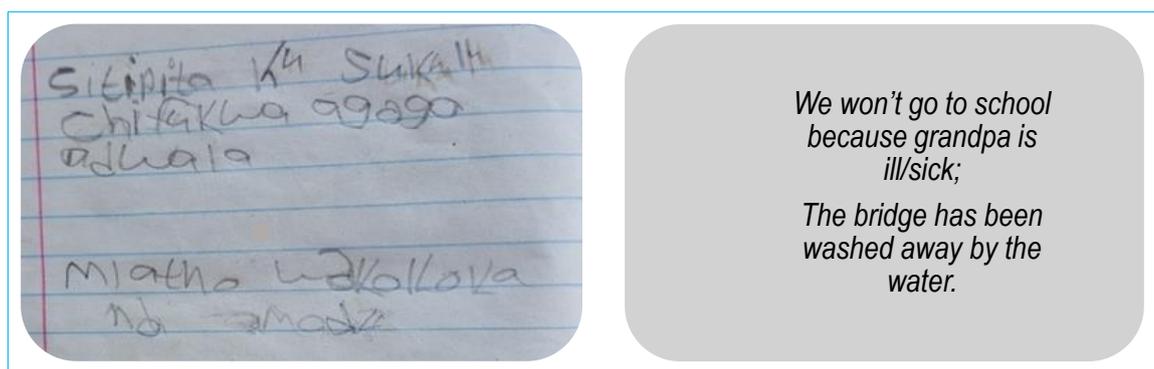
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<sup>45</sup> Although it was not directly reported in this study, cases of girls being raped on their way to school or other activities are not uncommon. In other areas of rural Malawi there are also cases of dogs and wild animals attacking children on their way to and from school, and girls being raped during the rainy season because the maize fields, the grass in the bush is high and the forests are thick, and the vegetation of the graveyards are dense.

accompanied by parents and adults. Similar observations have been previously reported by Porter et al cited above in their multicountry studies in Malawi, Ghana, and South Africa.

Nevertheless, there are isolated cases where children may not have anyone to escort them to school, particularly in situations where they have less connections with their relatives or are staying away from them, and/or when older friends have left for school earlier than the younger ones. For instance, David (80 years) sometimes escorts his two granddaughters (13-year old Orlando, and 15-year old Ottilia) to school during the rainy season when the rivers/streams are in spate. During an interview, David shared that, since his wife died three years ago, he has had a sour relationship with her relatives, and they have been telling him to go back to his natal village, but he refused. This had put a strain not only between him and them, but also between his granddaughters and their relatives. Thus, when David is ill, the relatives are not concerned with escorting his granddaughters to school. Consequently, the granddaughters have to go with their friends. If their friends leave earlier, his granddaughters have no option but to miss classes that day. Below, Orlando describes in her diary one of such episodes of skipping classes when her grandfather fell ill and they had no one to escort them to school to ensure they cross the river/stream safely (**Figure 6.2**).

**Figure 6.2:** Orlando's diary about failure to attend school due to her grandfather's illness



**Source:** Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.

Overall, like their role in providing material and health needs of their orphaned grandchildren, grandfathers' role in their orphaned grandchildren's formal education epitomises their provider role. However, despite their efforts and commitment to support their orphaned grandchildren's formal education, evidence suggests that many grandfathers interviewed in this study struggle to meet their

goals. Generally, many of them struggle to meet the daily needs of their households due to deep and perennial poverty, poor physical health, and lack of regular and adequate support from kin, non-kin, and other welfare safety nets (see chapter 9). Some grandfather-headed households barely survive from day to day. Others go a day or more without food, a situation not uncommon in many other rural households in the country, particularly during the lean/hungry season. For instance, during a surprise visit to 80-year-old David in January 2016, I found him preparing cassava (**Figure 6.3**) as lunch for his two granddaughters referred to earlier. The family had not eaten supper the previous evening, and in the morning, the children left for school without breakfast. This persuaded David to go into his field and harvest unripe cassava to boil and give them on arrival from school, as a result resort. David explained that he had no idea how they would survive the next few days.

**Figure 6.3:** *David preparing cassava for lunch for his grandchildren*



**Source:** *Author's own collection.*

Thus, poverty poses serious challenges for grandfathers to provide for their grandchildren's school necessities and other daily needs. Also, given the interplay of the intersections of poverty, food insecurity, and negative health and educational outcomes in children (as demonstrated earlier), it raises important questions

regarding the situation of orphaned grandchildren raised by needy grandfathers in rural Malawi. Notably, the situation worsens when a grandfather is raising several grandchildren and they have reached secondary school. Post-primary school education is expensive for many ordinary rural Malawian families to afford because even the government secondary schools at local community level charge fees. Thus, sometimes a grandfather may not be able to afford to fund all his grandchildren to go to school, hence they must decide which one to sponsor.

Notably, many grandfathers in such financial situations prefer sponsoring grandsons over granddaughters despite living in predominantly matrilineal communities. Although there have been recent changes regarding cultural practices in Malawi, including changes in matrilineal marriage practices (see Davison, 1993; Reniers, 2003; Kapulula, 2015), matrilineal cultures usually favour girls over boys (discussed below). As such, generational and intergenerational social and economic investments and wealth exchanges (e.g. land, money, livestock) and other capital investment (e.g. education) usually flow through matrilineage, that is from grandmothers to mothers to granddaughters or maternal relatives/lineage. Thus, in such matrilineal societies, girls are supposedly the centre of focus in such transfer of resources and capital investments more than are boys because boys are expected to practice *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage] when they grow up, hence not be around to support their relatives (Phiri, 1983; Mtika & Doctor, 2002; Peters, 1997, 2010). Subsequently, it is viewed by many as unwise to invest in boys. Thus, given the communities visited in this study are predominantly matrilineal communities, ordinarily, maternal relatives (e.g. uncles) would disapprove a grandfather's decision to favour grandsons over granddaughters. However, there was no such objection from maternal relatives of the orphans the grandfathers were raising. In fact, the practice of prioritising boys over girls is widespread in the research communities such that other parents and guardians in similar circumstances make the same decisions. This contradicts what would customarily be expected of a matrilineal society/culture. This also reflects a wider practice in predominantly patriarchal society that values boys and men than women and girls.

This paradox suggests that either there could be some flexibilities in these research communities, and/or conservative matrilineal practices may be fading, and/or at least not orthodoxly followed by some families. Other researchers have suggested

that the conservative matrilineal practices are being eroded in contemporary Malawi, partly due to the promotion/advances of patriarchy (i.e. the practice of according women/females with a secondary status in the society) (see Phiri, 1983; Peters, 1997; Reniers, 2003). Thus, scholars assert that there are now increased incidences of *chitengwa* [virilocal marriage practices: living at the husband's place among his relatives] in parts of Malawi and a decline in *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage], and changes in matrilineal practices such as marriage and inheritance practices (e.g. see Kaler, 2001; Hansen et al., 2005; Kachapila, 2006). For instance, Kapulula (2015: 55) asserts that men practising matrilocal marriages “are increasingly able to exercise control in relation to their wives and children and to experience a sense of belonging in their wives’ villages”, arguing that “in the past, married men had limited access to networks of support and solidarity in the villages of their wives.”

The findings of my study in Zomba District, however, do not entirely support these trends in social changes reported by other scholars. While there was evidence of *chitengwa*, it appeared that the practice is not common for many people in the research communities. Like with the case stated earlier regarding not allowing the father to take his children and live with them in his natal village when his spouse dies, many participants in this study stated that allowing *chitengwa* is some sort of *kubetsa* [a loss] because the wife is less likely to support her relatives back in her home village. These being predominantly matrilineal communities, it would be possible that many people have conservative/conformist marriage practices.

Nonetheless, if the changes observed above by other scholars are indeed becoming common practices in other matrilineal cultures, it may partly explain why grandfathers in this study are exercising considerably more power and freedom over who gets to go to school (grandsons versus granddaughters) than would normally be expected in a matrilineal context. Their preference for educating their grandsons over granddaughters could also be as a result of patriarchy predominant in the broader Malawian society that places more values on boys than girls, as stated earlier.<sup>46</sup> This shows the intersection of poverty, cultural/normative views about

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<sup>46</sup> The male bias in educating children also contradicts the country's education policy and its associated legal and policy instruments (e.g. see GoM, 2005, 2008; 2012a, 2012b, 2014b, 2014c, 2016a, 2016b; see also Kadzamira & Chibwana,

gender, and future prospects in influencing a grandfather's decisions about who between his grandsons and granddaughters gets supported in his/her education.

Informed by the education policy in Malawi (e.g. see GoM, 2016a), regional and international conventions on children's rights (e.g. the UNCRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the paradox in matriliney in the research villages as evidenced by the departure from conservative/orthodox to flexible matrilineal practices, the study interrogated the causes of this social phenomenon. What emerged is that this is driven by people's attitudes towards the anticipated gains of investing in the education of girls versus that of boys – a kind of cost-benefit analysis. The research participants mentioned that boys are more likely than girls to complete school, hence more likely to have a better occupation and support their parents/guardians and relatives in future. During our discussions, the research participants explained that investing their hard-earned resources in education of girls is unwise because, unlike boys, many girls in their communities do not complete school due to the high incidences of teenage pregnancies.<sup>47</sup> They also stressed that when a girl becomes pregnant, she drops out of school immediately due to shame. After delivery, few girls return to school because of stigma and/or lack of their parents'/guardians' support because they think that the girl will be impregnated again, a concern that has also been recently reported in the neighbouring Zambia (see Evans, 2017). Her boyfriend, however, is likely to proceed with his education despite becoming a father.

Further, patriarchy and the resulting social inequalities in rural Malawi may contribute to gendered expectations about what parents and guardians think boys and girls can achieve, and negative stereotypes against girls more generally, regardless of the influence of nature and nurture. There is a general perception among people who participated in this research that a girl has little/less capacity to go far with education and achieve greater things in life such as a rewarding career.

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2000; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; Chisamya et al., 2011; Kendall & Kaunda, 2015), as well as regional and international conventions such as the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (see UN General Assembly, 1989; OAU, 1990; see also Burr, 2004; UNESCO, 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Girls' mobility in rural Malawi and other parts of SSA is highly surveilled by parents and guardians because of the high incidence of teenage pregnancies (Porter et al., 2011a, 2011b; see also Davison & Kanyuka, 1992; Grant, 2012; Mkandawire, 2012)

Many participants argued that whether a girl is educated or not, she will sooner or later get married, stay at home, and be provided for by her husband. Thus, they believe that investing in girl's education is a waste of resources, hence, a primary school education (usually Standard 8 as optimal) that enables her read, write, and do basic arithmetic is enough (see also Davison & Kanyuka, 1992; Chimombo et al 2000 for similar observations in other parts of rural Malawi). For them, a boy needs to be supported so that he can provide for his family in future without struggle.

Furthermore, the research participants stated that, culturally, a husband is a provider, and regardless of matrilineal practices, he has more authority over household assets (e.g. finances) than a wife. Thus, it is easier for a husband than a wife to support his relatives financially in times of need, a finding similar to what Chimombo et al (2000) found in their multidistrict study in Dedza, Mangochi, Mchinji, Kasungu and Nkhata-Bay. Again, this demonstrates the influence of patriarchy on people attitudes towards girls and women. Hence, people prefer educating a boy because of the anticipated financial support/gain. This may explain why grandfathers interviewed in my study in Zomba favoured their grandsons over granddaughters. Some of the participants' views epitomising negative stereotypes against girls are captured below (**Box 6.3**).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> These views highlight not only patriarchy, but also masculinities and hegemonic social views of men as primary providers for their families/households.

### **Box 6.3: Common reason for prioritising boys over girls when educating children**

*There is a mindset that if a girl has reached a certain grade, she can drop out of school and get married (Bernie, 56 years, grandfather – FGD).*

*We don't believe that a girl can go far with education; a boy can. Here in the village, we normally think that a girl should just get married provided she has learned how to read and write [...] So, if the grandfather is to help one of them, it is usually the boy who is the priority (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather – FGD).*

*Here in the community and as Yaos, most people prioritise educating boys because they say, "for a girl, even if she does get an education, she will still be married and be supported by her husband, while for a boy, if he doesn't get an education, things will turn bad for him in future because he will not have a poor livelihood, and if he marries it means they will have lots of struggle to survive, and they will miss everything in their household" [...]. In this community, finding a girl who is doing school in the higher levels is something very rare because most people think that, "even if I don't send a girl to school, she will get married in future and be supported by her husband" (Mapula, 20 years, female – FGD).*

*The issue here is that the moment the girl gets married, all the control of everything in the household rests in the husband. So, even if the man goes to live at/in chikamwini [his wife's place] he still looks at his relatives back in his native village and supports them [...] That's why here in our community we focus more on educating boys than girls. A woman cannot not have control over a man (Basilio, 45 years, male – FGD).*

*The boy should continue schooling, because, even if he is not careful when he goes out, he can never come back home pregnant, no! (Bernie, 56 years, grandfather – FGD).*

*It's the boy who is supported. Well, as for the girl, she just goes there [at school] to be impregnated (Yesania, 75 years, grandmother – FGD).*

*The stereotyping of girls is so because these days, eeeeeeeeh , girls are engaged in unceremonious lifestyles while still very young such that when they see someone putting on nice clothes they say, "me, too, I want those clothes", and they engage in transactional sex. Because of such things, you see that the boys are the ones who are more supported on education than girls because the parents say, "if this one completes school, he will help me in future" (Luntha, 14 years, male – FGD).*

Like other previous studies in Malawi (Davison & Kanyuka, 1990, 1992; Chimombo et al., 2000; Kendall & Kaunda, 2015), there were isolated cases where research participants expressed positive attitudes towards education of girls, and stated that both girls and boys should be supported equally and neither of them should be prioritised over the other. This was more common among professionals and the children than grandfathers and other research participants.<sup>49</sup> Still, there were also pockets of grandfathers and other research participants who shared these attitudes towards parity in supporting children's education. They argued that prioritising grandsons over granddaughters is also problematic because it demonstrates favouritism and lack of love for the girls – a thing that parents and guardians must refrain from at all cost. They stated that the choice regarding who should be

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<sup>49</sup> Understandably, the professionals' understanding of the importance of educating girls as well as their identity as agents of the government and NGOs in promoting child rights and parity in the education of boys and girls in the country may account for their positive attitudes towards education of girls.

supported must be divorced from [preconceived] social [mis]conceptions about girls' [in]ability and [in]capacity to complete education, and not be based on gender, but rather on the child's moral character, commitment to his or her studies, and performance at school:

Well, it is true that we prioritise boys over girls, but I think you need to help the child who shows interest and determination in completing school. It can happen that the boy is the one who is not determined such that you the grandfather you easily see that, though he's schooling his results are not really promising. At the same time, you the grandfather may see that the results from the girl are good. So, based on who is producing better results you can decide on who to support (Basilio, 45 years, male – FGD).

Such views, however, must be interpreted with caution as their expression does not necessarily mean the research participants practically do it. For instance, Chimombo et al (2000: 73) note that positive attitudes towards gender parity in educating children do not always translate to action because “most parents did not practice what they preached.” Thus, even though in my study cases of girls dropping out of school because their parents and/or guardians were facing financial difficulties and had prioritised educating boys were not reported, it is hard to conclude that positive views expressed by some of the parents and guardians interviewed are translated into practice/action. The predominant narrative across many participant groups was that of preferential attitudes towards boys' education over that girls in circumstances where parents and guardians do not have the financial capacity to support both.

Importantly, these negative social attitudes may affect girls (including granddaughters raised by grandfathers) in their pursuit of education. Several studies in rural Malawi have reported that patriarchal notions of men's superiority over women and the position of women in society as mother and wife in the home (which occur in the home and are replicated in the wider community/society, and the education/school systems in the country) create and proliferate stereotypes against girls such as viewing them as having less value compared to boys (Davison & Kanyuka, 1990, 1992; GoM, 2014b).<sup>50</sup> Girls are predominantly viewed as less

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<sup>50</sup> The studies by Davison and Kanyuka (1990, 1992) covered some of the communities where I collected the data for my study.

educable, less able, and as having low overall academic achievement and career aspirations compared to boys, with their role in the society being equated to that of future wives and mothers, a role that does not necessarily require advanced formal schooling (Chimombo et al., 2000; GoM, 2012a). For instance, in their study in rural communities of Zomba District, Davison and Kanyuka (1992: 459) stated that parents, particularly fathers, felt that “it is more important to educate boys because they are more likely to return the educational investment and are better able to concentrate on their studies.” Recently, Chisamya et al (2011: 7) commented that among some people in many rural communities of Malawi, girls were discriminated in their pursuit for education prospects because of people’s perceptions that “schooling was not useful” for the girls’ future role of mothers and wives, and that education “might even be antithetical to these roles.” They further assert that discrimination against girls is a pervasive social problem in the country, such that discrimination

touched girls at home, when decisions were made about whether and how to invest in their education; on their way to school, when decisions were made about how at risk they were in their walk to school; in the schoolyard and classrooms, as teachers and peers interacted with each other and made decisions about resource distribution; and as they left school and interacted with gender inequitable labour markets, family hierarchies, social services, and laws (Chisamya et al., 2011: 7).

Also, because of the little or no importance some parents and guardians place on the education of girls (compared to that of boys), girls’ schooling is often disrupted (e.g. late arrival at school, absenteeism, lack of time to study, exhaustion) because they are asked to undertake a bulk of household chores (Chimombo et al., 2000; Chisamya, 2011; GoM, 2012a). Although such cases were not specifically reported by the participants in this study, these hegemonic views are likely to permeate the grandfather-headed households visited during this study. For instance, it is likely that a grandfather would disrupt a granddaughter from going to school or from doing home study, rather than a grandson, to undertake household chores (e.g. going to *chigayo* [maize mill]) to conform to the predominant social views because a diversion from this (e.g. disrupting his grandson’s school when there are granddaughters in his household) would expose/subject him to social disapproval.

Furthermore, as aforementioned, discriminatory attitudes towards girls’ education are also proliferated by the school system. School systems create environments that

are not conducive for girls to learn. Although all the six teachers interviewed in this study expressed favourable views towards girls' education, previous studies in rural schools of Malawi have indicated the existence of male bias among teachers (see Kadzamira & Chibwana, 2000; Chisamya, 2011; GoM, 2012a). Girls are generally viewed by their teachers as less capable in all academic aspects compared to boys. For instance, girls are perceived as less intelligent, less hardworking, and less motivated than boys (Davison & Kanyuka, 1990, 1992; Chimombo, 2000; Chisamya et al., 2011). Consequently, during lessons, teachers are likely to engage boys more than they do with girls, owing to the stereotypes they hold against girls (Davison & Kanyuka, 1990, 1992; Kadzamira & Chibwana, 2000). For instance, in their study in one of the rural primary schools in Malawi, Chimombo et al (2010) observed in one of the incidences, that nomination for answering questions were gender-biased such that 70% of the questions were answered by boys. This is likely to affect educational outcomes. Due to subsequent poor academic performance, parents and guardians may consider girls risky to invest their finances into, thus prefer educating boys.

In addition, like with the case in the home (discussed further in chapter 10), girls are likely to engage in more chores in school during school hours (e.g. hauling water, sweeping and mopping classrooms) than boys (e.g. constructing toilets, hoeing in the teachers' gardens), many of which are done on almost every school day on top of the bulk of chores they already do in their homes (Chimombo et al., 2000; Kadzamira & Chibwana, 2000).<sup>51</sup> Moreover, girls are also more likely to be punished by teachers, often for trivial offences (Chimombo et al., 2000). All this may have a negative impact on their schooling as they may be exhausted and demotivated (Maluwa-Banda, 2003; GoM, 2004). Yet, when they perform poorly at school, their parents, guardians, and teachers are quick to label them as failures and less academically capable/able to compete with boys, and only good for marriage (GoM, 2012a). As soon as girls reach puberty (and some before this age), teachers and other people in their communities view them as mere sexual object, rather than

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<sup>51</sup> I personally witnessed this first-hand during my primary school education in three districts in rural Malawi (Chiradzulu, Mwanza, and Thyolo). Girls undertook the bulk of chores in the school. It was not uncommon to see girls in the senior classes (Standard 7 and 8) being commanded to do various chores (e.g. mopping the staff room, cleaning toilets) while boys were in class learning or during breaks, or after classes when boys were heading back home. The girls would then arrive home to find several household chores waiting for them while boys would undertake few and go out to play. However, in the rural milieu, these practices are rarely seen as problematic.

children who can be assisted to develop and achieve their aspirations in life (e.g. becoming professionals such as nurses, doctors, teachers, lawyers).

This mindset echoes the notion of preparing girls for marriage and adulthood widespread in the rural Malawian society (Davison & Kanyuka, 1990, 1992; Chimombo, 2000; Chisamya et al., 2011), including the communities researched in this study. Unfortunately, due to the widespread prevalence of male bias in the home, community, and school, girls have less power to challenge such systemic and hegemonic male-bias perceptions as their actions may garner little or no support from their parents and guardians, the community members, and teachers in their schools due to the negative stereotypes against them (Chisamya et al., 2011). Also, pervasive male-biases have important repercussions for girls in Malawi because “male bias, on the part of parents, has more influence on who goes to school than on who drops” (Davison & Kanyuka, 1992: 459) which may contribute to more school dropout among girls than boys (GoM, 2012a, 2014b).<sup>52</sup>

The negative social attitudes towards girls' education and male bias are also not exclusive to the Malawian context. Studies in other parts of SSA (e.g. Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Togo, Uganda, and Zambia) have reported similar negative social attitudes towards educating girls. The researchers have attributed this social phenomenon to patriarchy and the resulting social attitudes about the ‘culturally-appropriate’ place of women [and girls] in the society as wives, mothers, and homemakers (Mirembe & Davies, 2001; Tuwor & Sossou, 2008). For instance, Buchmann (2000) notes that Kenyan parents are likely to invest more in boys and less in girls when they have limited resources to support both (e.g. when they have many sons to provide for), because they believe that there are more returns in educating boys than girls. Similarly, Laird (2002: 898) observes that pervasive cultural attitudes regarding the role and activities of women in the society have a negative impact on the education of girls, such that “among most communities in Ghana, girls' education is considered much less important than that of boys', for it is she who is destined to marry, take on domestic responsibilities and care of dependents.” Recently, some of the parents

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<sup>52</sup> Although this was not directly mentioned in my study in rural Malawi, a previous study in other rural parts of Zomba found that negative parental attitudes towards the education of girls and teachers' gender stereotypes against girls correlated with increased school dropout among girls (see Davison & Kanyuka, 1992).

in Evans' study (2017: 13) in neighbouring Zambia commented that educating girls is "a waste money" because girls are likely to become pregnant and drop out of school.

This demonstrates how pervasive gender ideologies and stereotypes against girl-child education in other regions of rural SSA are, and how limited gender equitable views are among many parents and guardians of children regarding gender parity in decision for educating children. Importantly, this also shows that, in much of SSA, poverty and gender norms intersect and influence parents' and guardian's decisions and choice when educating children. Thus, it is not entirely surprising that grandfathers and other participants interviewed in this study favour educating boys rather than girls, despite the research communities being predominantly matrilineal, and the numerous policy and programming initiatives aimed at addressing such discriminatory social attitudes. Nonetheless, given that none of the orphaned granddaughters in this study dropped out of school, it signifies the important contribution grandfathers are making in their orphaned grandchildren's formal education despite the prevailing negative social attitudes towards girls' education in their communities.

## **6.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter set out to engage research question 2 on the theme of grandfathers' role in orphan care in rural Southern Malawi. Overall, evidence presented in this chapter continues to demonstrate the central place grandfathers occupy in their orphaned grandchildren's lives vis-à-vis formal education. Although many grandfathers interviewed in this research have little or no education, they recognise the importance of educating their orphaned grandchildren. Thus, they contribute greatly to their education through: 1) sending them to school; 2) providing them with school needs; and 3) motivating, advising, and supporting them in other ways. Despite their strong commitment, many grandfathers find it challenging to fulfil this role because of poverty. Consequently, sometimes it is practically impossible to educate all their orphaned grandchildren even though they have the desire to do so. Thus, they have to choose who to prioritise between their granddaughters and grandsons.

Contrary to what would be expected of a matrilineal society, the findings of this study suggest that grandfathers may choose to prioritise educating boys over girls. While this contradicts orthodox/conservative practices in matrilineal cultures, it is a widespread social practice for many parents and guardians in the research communities, a situation similar to other rural communities in Malawi, as well as in other parts of SSA more generally. It seems that patriarchy and the resulting pervasive social attitudes towards education of girls create and exacerbate stereotypes against girls' education in all spheres of the society, including the home, the school system, and the public sphere. All this creates an environment that is not conducive for learning for girls, thus creating a vicious circle where girls continue to be less valued compared to boys. Nonetheless, this study underscores the fact that grandfathers greatly contribute to their grandchildren's education. This is particularly true with those that have less financial challenges. Moreover, as demonstrated earlier in the chapter, not all grandfathers favour educating their grandsons at the expense of their granddaughters.

In terms of the analysis of intersectionality, the findings suggest that a grandfather's decision about who (between their grandsons and granddaughters) to educate is a result of the interplay and intersections of multiple factors, including poverty, gender norms, and future prospects. Specifically, in the absence of poverty, a grandfather's gender-biased support for education dissipates. When poverty sets in, the culture about value of boys over girls influences a grandfather's decision to support his grandsons over granddaughters. This is also based on future prospects. Thus, poverty, gender norms, and future prospects factors are mutually constitutive in grandfathers' decision-making concerning educating their orphaned grandchildren. Taken together, these factors provide a richer understanding of grandfathers' gender-biased support for their orphaned grandchildren's education, particularly when financially incapable to support both.

Besides contributing to their orphaned grandchildren's formal education, as well as being a provider, grandfathers also contribute to their orphaned grandchildren's lives through informal education (i.e. through intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values), as explored in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 7: GRANDFATHERS AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF MORAL, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS VALUES**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

It is common for older generations to take a particular effort to transmit their values to the younger generations. This is evident among grandfathers who participated in this research. Thus, this chapter explores intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values to respond to the research question 2 about the theme of grandfathers' role in orphan care in rural Southern Malawi. Specifically, the chapter shows that grandfathers are among the network of people instrumental in socialising their orphaned children in moral, cultural, and religious knowledge and values (informal education).<sup>53</sup> Evidently, as with their roles discussed in the two preceding chapters, a grandfather's roles in this respect is influenced by the interplay and intersections of cultural norms about gender, age, and livelihood needs. Thus, no single factor or category of social difference is sufficient to independently explain grandfathers' intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values as part of caregiving for their orphaned grandchildren. The subsequent sections expound on these findings.

### **7.2 SOCIALISATION OF CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY**

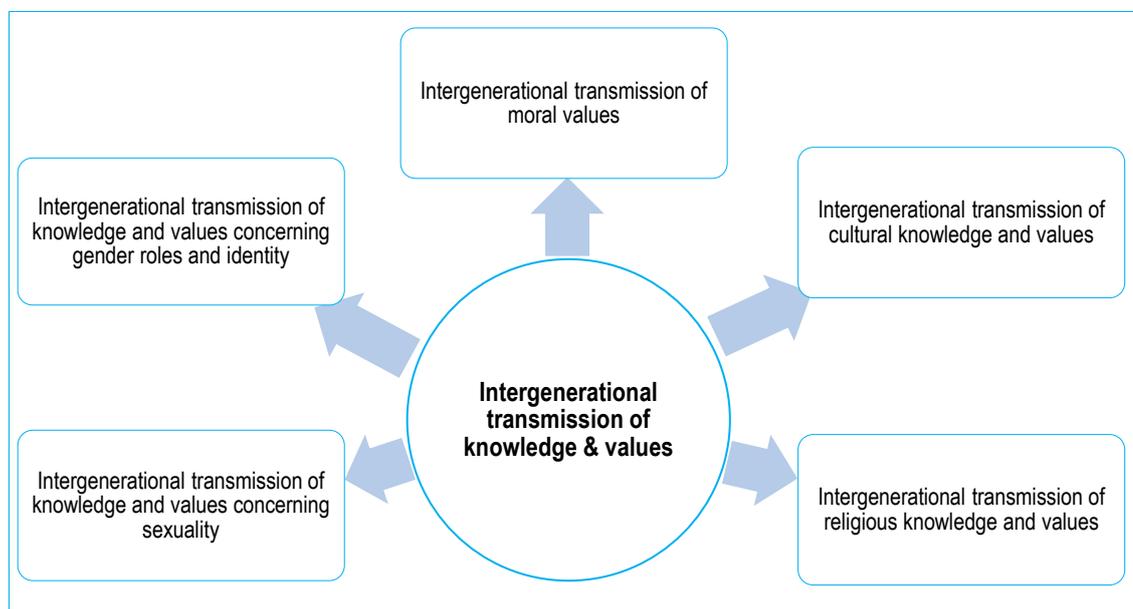
Writing over half a century ago, Freeman and Showel (1953: 97) noted that the family is "perhaps the most influential agent in the socialisation of the individual." Koteswaraiah (2015: 121) recently agreed and noted that, "in home, the child gains his first knowledge of the world and the people in it... he develops the ability to live with his family first and later to function as a member of a school or other social group." Thus, the family is the miniature of society – the initial arena where a child is socialised into the life of the larger society. Subsequently, families are expected to, among other things, "...transmit cultural and moral values" (Sowmya, 2013: 247). Within the family context, parents, siblings, and guardians are the main agents of socialisation (Whiteman et al., 2003; Mkandawire, 2012). Parents and guardians are

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<sup>53</sup> In this thesis, socialisation is defined as "the lifelong process of inheriting and disseminating norms, customs and ideologies, providing an individual with the skills and habits necessary for participating within his or her own society" (Sowmya, 2013: 247). For further detailed discussion on what socialisation comprises, where it takes place, and who are they key agents, refer to the following resources: Brand et al., 2010; Mkandawire, 2012; Monaghan, 2012; Wentzel, 2014; Bukowski et al., 2015; Dunn, 2015; Maccoby, 2015; Prot et al., 2015; Patterson et al., 2015.

particularly obliged to provide a social and moral compass for children “to conform to societal standards” (Brand et al., 2010: 87). Similarly, as guardians of their orphaned grandchildren, grandfathers in the research communities of rural Southern Malawi are key players in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values (informal education) through socialisation, as per rural Malawian society. Similar to what Monaghan (2012) states, grandfathers in rural Malawi usually interweave intergenerational transmission of values and knowledge to their orphaned grandchildren into the texture of their daily life, covering five major areas depicted below (**Figure 7.1**).

**Figure 7.1:** Representation of socialisation of grandchildren by grandfathers

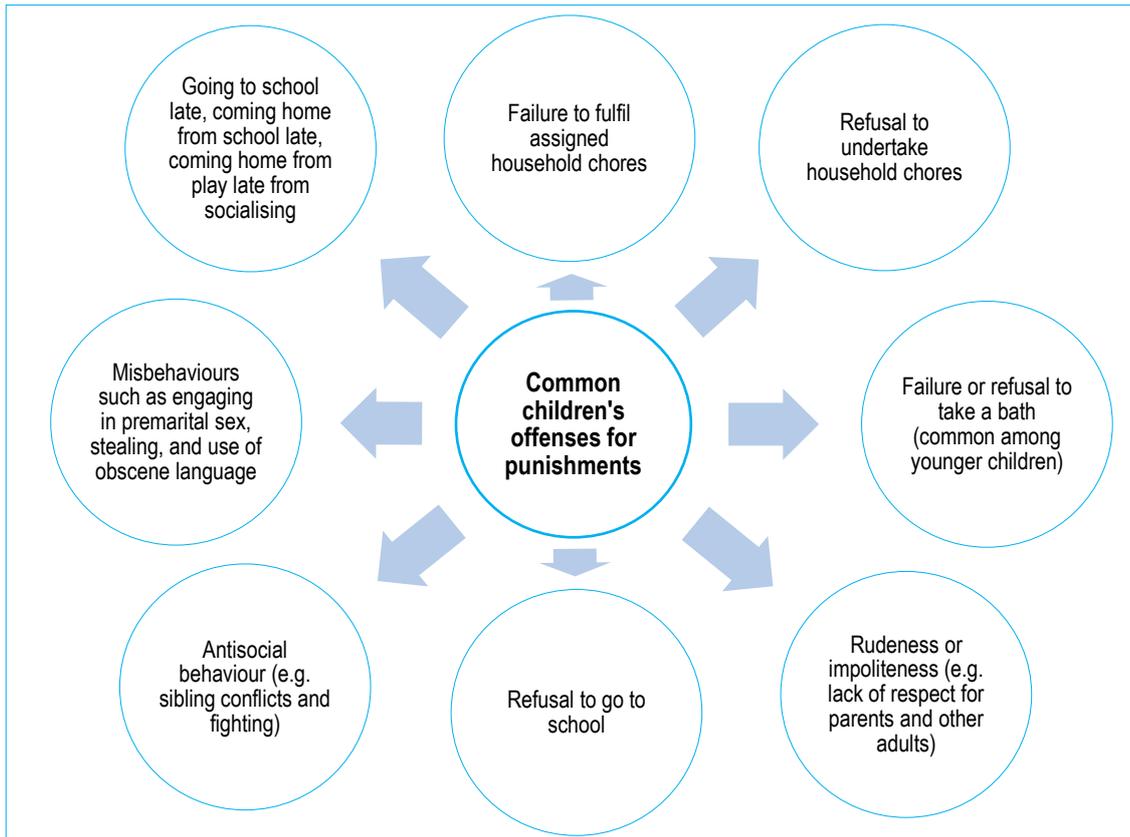


### 7.3 INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF MORAL VALUES

UNICEF (2010, 2014b: 94) states that moral socialisation is integral to childrearing in all cultures. Whyte et al (2008, p. 9) state that “one of the recurring aspects of generational concerns in Africa is the intertwining of kinship morality and contentions about the past and the present.” This is true with grandfathers, parents, and other guardians of children in rural Malawi. The inculcation of moral values in the lives of their orphaned grandchildren typifies the daily efforts of grandfathers in the research communities. There is a general perception among grandfathers and other research participants that ‘children of today’ are more indisciplined than previous generations. Many grandfathers and other participants interviewed in this study expressed that it is imperative to socialise children into appropriate

behaviours by using various forms/kinds of punishments as per the offences committed. Thus, grandfathers are moral authority figures for their orphaned grandchildren. Some of the common reasons given for punishing their orphaned grandchildren and their counterparts are presented below (**Figure 7.2**). These punishments are similar to what Breen et al (2015) report in their study in South Africa, thus suggesting similarities across some countries in Southern Africa.

**Figure 7.2:** Common reasons given for punishing children in the research communities



Drawing from their own childhoods, grandfathers employ three broad disciplining methods of socialisation to deal with their orphaned grandchildren's misbehaviour, namely: 1) non-physical punishments; 2) corporal/physical punishments; and 3) seeking external intervention.<sup>54</sup> Usually, grandfathers use these methods

<sup>54</sup> UNICEF (2010, 2017b) categorises these non-physical punishment as 'non-violent punishment', and the physical punishments as 'violent punishments'. However, the terms physical/corporal punishments and non-physical punishment are the ones widely used in scholarship on children's disciplining. According to UNICEF (2017b:20), physical punishment include shaking, hitting or slapping a child on the hand/arm/leg, hitting on the bottom or elsewhere on the body with a hard object, spanking or hitting on the bottom with a bare hand, hitting or slapping on the face, head or ears, and hitting or beating hard and repeatedly. Severe physical punishment includes hitting or slapping a child on the face, head or ears, and hitting or beating a child hard and repeatedly. Psychological aggression/punishment include shouting, yelling or screaming at a child, as well as calling a child offensive names such as 'dumb' or 'lazy'. Violent discipline refers to any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression.

progressively, consecutively or simultaneously. In many cases, the first step is to employ non-physical disciplining methods. For instance, they use advice/teaching/counselling (e.g. via *nthano* [folktales]) and reasoning to explain why what their grandchild has done is wrong, and teach them moral values such as obedience, respect for the elders, and peaceful resolution of sibling conflict:

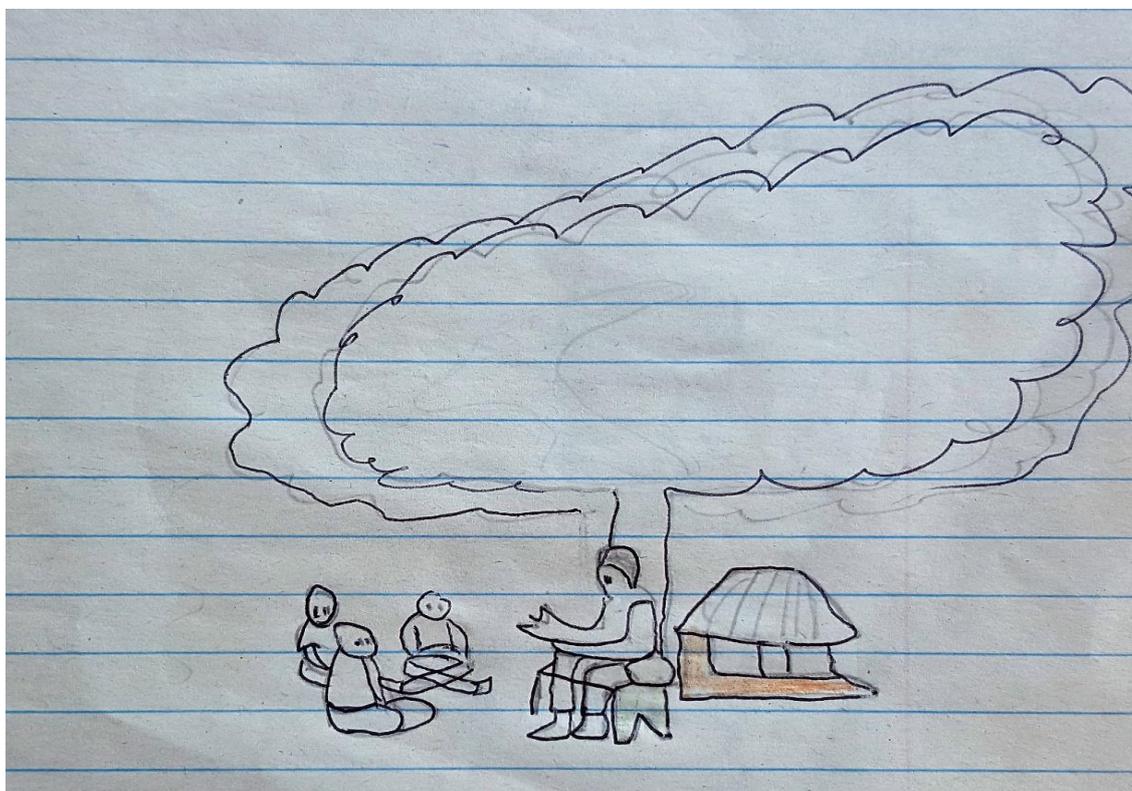
I [strive to] stop them from doing bad things [...] so that they are in the right path (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

...I tell them that, “for you to be a good person, you need to respect people, you need to respect the elders” (Zolani, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

There are some *nthano* that are about moral behaviours.... about the good things that we should follow... also about things we should not follow (Vitu, 14 years, male – FGD).

In **Figure 7.3**, 13-year old Miguel portrays his grandfather Takondwa (75 years) advising him and his siblings about moral behaviours. During the chat/interview about this drawing, Miguel shared that it represents one of the episodes when his grandfather, Takondwa (75 years) sits down with him and his siblings and advises them about socially accepted behaviours.

**Figure 7.3:** Miguel’s drawing depicts his grandfather advising him and Fiona



**Drawing:** Miguel, 13 years, grandson.

Besides advice and reasoning, grandfathers also use nonphysical (psychological) punishments to discipline their grandchildren. These include scolding, shouting, intimidating, cursing, name-calling and use of derogatory words (e.g. *Salabada*,<sup>55</sup> dog, goat, monkey, fool, dumb), asking or commanding the child to do a certain chore (e.g. fetch water, sweep around the home), chasing the child away from the home, rewarding good behaviour, emotional manipulation (e.g. not speaking to the child), and manipulating or withdrawing privileges and rights for bad behaviour (e.g. denying their grandchildren basic needs such as food, soap, clothes) (**Box 7.1**).<sup>56</sup>

**Box 7.1:** *Examples of punishments children are subjected to*

*The small punishments that help them to become obedient is like telling them like, “you said I should buy you such such a thing, I’ll not buy you that. I’m disappointed at what you’ve done. But, if you become obedient, I’ll buy that thing you wanted”, and the child becomes obedient because they know that, if I do a bad thing, he won’t buy me the things I need (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*They say, “between eating and working, it is working that started. So, if you work, then you will eat.” So, when early in the morning you go to work in the field, it means that you will have food to eat at lunch (Alick, 17 years, male – FGD).*

*When the children, for example, are told to go to the garden, if they don’t, then they are going to be denied food (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

Further, grandfathers interviewed in this study also use physical/corporal punishment to inculcate moral values in their orphaned grandchildren.<sup>57</sup> Consistent with Smith (2008) and Xing et al (2011), grandfathers stated that they use this disciplinary approach particularly when their orphaned grandchild seems not to take heed of non-physical punishments. For instance, grandfathers use corporal punishment if for several times they tell their grandchildren not to come home after sunset and the children ignore the instruction. Some of the common physical punishments grandfathers use for moral socialisation include shaking or shoving the child, spanking, smacking or slapping with bare hands, whipping or hitting with bare hands or an object (e.g. a stick/cane), pinching or twisting ears, and pulling or

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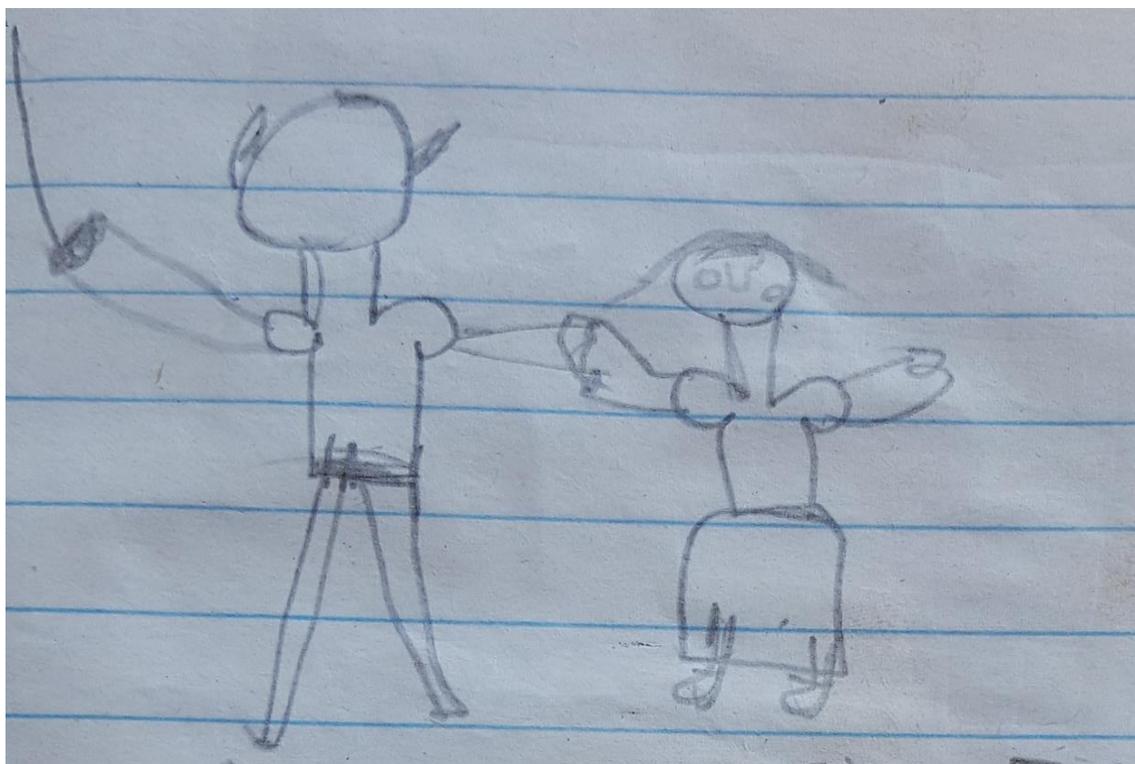
<sup>55</sup> The name *Salabada* means someone who does not pay attention of or take heed of disciplining.

<sup>56</sup> UNICEF call all these methods of disciplining ‘violent psychological discipline’ (see UNICEF, 2014b, 2017b).

<sup>57</sup> This thesis uses Murray Straus’ widely used definition of corporal punishment as, “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child’s behaviour” (Straus, 2000: 1110; see also Straus, 1994). UNICEF defines corporal punishment as “any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light” (UNICEF, 2014b: 94).

twisting lips. In the drawing below, 13-year old Orlando depicts her grandfather David hitting her with a stick for disobedience (**Figure 7.4**).

**Figure 7.4:** Orlando's portrayal of her grandfather spanking her

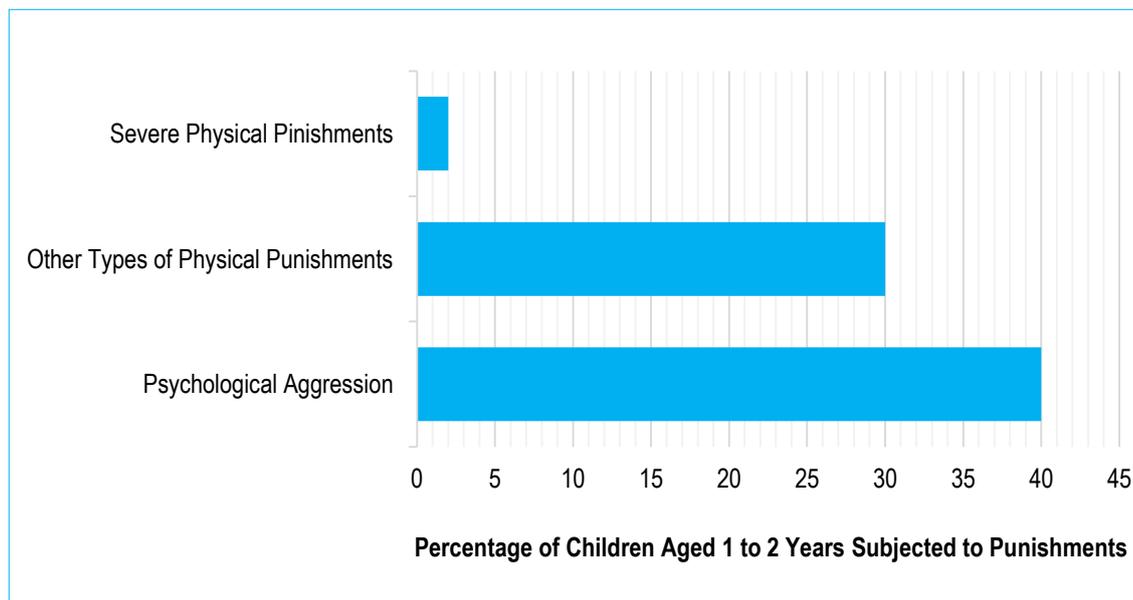


**Drawing:** Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.

The non-physical and corporal punishments used by grandfathers (and parents and other guardians) in this research reflect common parenting practices in SSA and other parts of the world, both the Global North and the Global South (UNICEF, 2010; Lansford et al., 2012; El.Makzoum, 2015). These punishments are viewed as necessary means of moral socialisation of children (Twum-Danso, 2010b, 2013; UNICEF, 2010, 2017b). for instance, corporal punishment is “socially condoned and widely perceived as a needed form of discipline” UNICEF (2010: vii), embedded in “wider philosophies of socialization” (Montgomery, 2009: 161), a children-rearing practice “pervasive around the world” (Zolotor & Puzia, 2010: 229) and prevalent “in almost all cultures” (Bartholdson, 2001: 5). For instance, Breen et al (2015: 132) observe in South Africa that “at a societal level, cultural norms approving violence, legality of corporal punishment in homes and schools and cultural beliefs about the necessity and effectiveness of physical punishment, can contribute to corporal punishment use.” Similarly, Hecker et al (2014) found that 95% of the children in Tanzania were subjected to at least one corporal punishment by their parents or caregivers during their lifetime.

Recently, multisite studies by UNICEF in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States found similar methods of moral socialisation. Over 3 in 5 (63%) of parents used physical punishment, and 67% used psychological aggression as disciplining methods (UNICEF, 2010, UNICEF, 2014b, 2017b). According to UNICEF (2017b), these kinds of disciplining methods are also common in Malawi, even for children as young as 1 to 2 years. For instance, although few children aged 1 to 2 years are not usually subjected to severe physical punishments, many are nonetheless subjected to psychological aggression and other types of physical punishments (**Figure 7.5**) (UNICEF, 2017b).

**Figure 7.5:** *Disciplining methods in Malawi*



**Source:** UNICEF, 2017b.

Thus, even though the degree of use for both types and level of acceptance for corporal punishments may vary widely across cultures, these punishments are extremely common across many societies globally (Gagné et al., 2007; UNICEF, 2014b; Fréchette & Romana, 2017). This suggests that the findings of this study conducted in rural Malawi are not unique; they reflect what is common in many parts of the world despite both corporal punishments and violent psychological discipline being considered a violation of children's rights by child-centred international bodies (UNICEF, 2014b).

Evidence from this study also shows that in situations where a grandfather has tried his best to discipline his grandchildren using non-physical and physical

punishments such as the ones outlined above, but failed, he may seek external support by referring the grandchild to other people to discipline them or asking for their intervention. Usually, these people include their orphaned grandchildren's surviving parent (for single orphans), or relatives (e.g. the child's uncle, aunt), elders of their extended family, elders in the community, teachers, religious leaders, and local leaders such as the chief, the police, or juvenile reformatory centres:<sup>58</sup>

...if you seem not to obey them and take heed of disciplining, they call elders to sit down with you and advise you... these elders are from your extended family, for instance, your parents' brothers or sisters (Khumbo, 13 years, male – FGD).

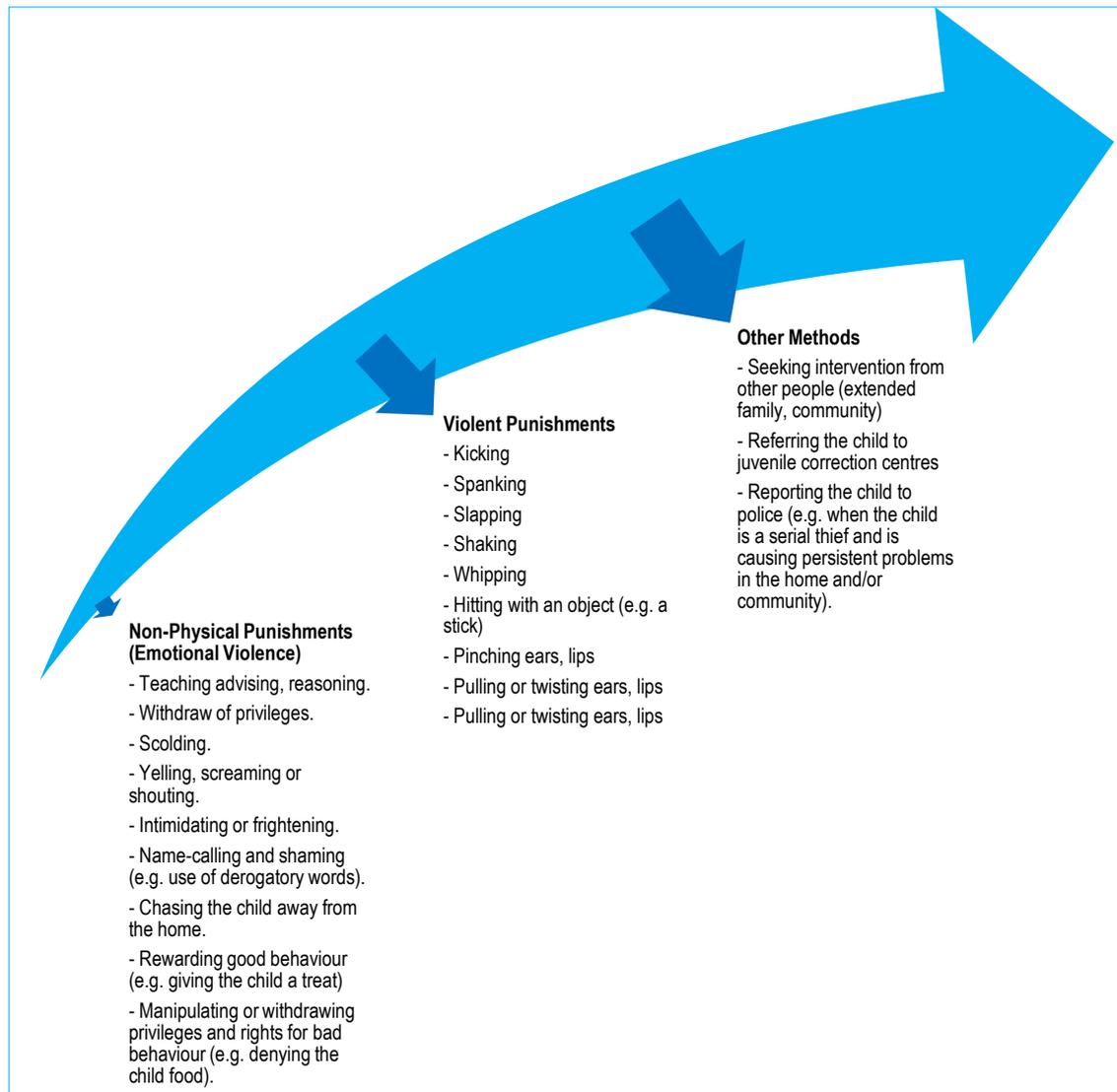
If the child does not take heed of discipline, the grandfathers may ask other people to help, like the chief. They scare the child that they will hand him/her over to the Police and he/she slowly changes his/her behaviour in a positive way (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).

In **Figure 7.6** below, I summarise the common disciplining methods compiled during the research activities that grandfathers, parents, and other guardians of children in this study use for moral socialisation in order of degree of severity. Other studies in SSA and other parts of the world have commented on similar ranges of disciplining, stating that there is usually a progression from non-physical (mild) to physical (harsher) disciplining based on the child's response to initial methods (see Sheehan & Watson, 2008; Twum-Danso, 2010b; Xing et al., 2011). However, the path depicted below is not rigid. Different grandfathers may use different paths in disciplining their orphaned grandchildren, and they may constantly change the kinds of punishments, for instance, using non-violent methods, followed by consulting other people to intervene, thus skipping the physical methods. Also, as stated earlier, they may use an array of these methods simultaneously. Thus, the representation provided below is not exhaustive or a blueprint for what happens in other parts of rural Malawi and/or elsewhere in Africa. Later (section 7.3.2), the chapter discusses people's attitudes towards these views versus the notion of child rights advocated by government, local and international NGOs, and other charities.

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<sup>58</sup> There is a government-run juvenile reformatory centre in Zomba called Makwapala. It caters for other surrounding districts as well such as Machinga, Balaka, and Mangochi. This centre is infamous among children and parents, hence parents use it as a threat to scare their indisciplined children that they will take them there if their indiscipline continues.

**Figure 7.6:** Progression of disciplining methods used by grandfathers in rural Malawi



**Sources:** In-depth interviews, key-informant interviews, FGDs, photo-elicited interviews, drawing-elicited interviews, stakeholder meetings, and dissemination meetings conducted during this study.

Overall, these punishments generally reflect what other studies around the world have reported on methods parents and guardians use to socialise children into moral behaviour (UNICEF, 2010, 2014b, 2017b; Lansford et al., 2012). For instance, Gershoff et al (2010) document similar methods of dealing with children’s misbehaviour in six countries in Africa, Europe, and Asia (i.e. Kenya, China, India, Italy, Philippines, and Thailand). Specifically, they identify teaching the child about good behaviour, taking away privileges, use of corporal punishments, yelling, scolding, threatening, shaming, and promising a treat or privilege, withdrawing love for misbehaviour, expressing disappointment, giving a time-out (naughty chair or naughty step), and getting the child to apologise as some of the common methods parents and guardians use to disciplining children (Gershoff et al., 2010). Twum-Danso (2010b) reports similar findings in Ghana.

There are also cases where grandfathers may have tried to discipline their grandchildren using all means such as those described in this section, but failed. Thus, they give up on the child, withdraw disciplining, and let their orphaned grandchild face the consequences of their indiscipline,<sup>59</sup> a practice also common for other parents and guardians of children in the research communities:

...the children/youth of today! Oh no! You struggle and struggle disciplining them and then you withdraw and say, “if I continue with this, nothing will happen!” (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

When the parents see that you are still not changing your bad behaviour, they just withdraw and let you do what you want. They say, “leave him, he will regret in future” (Mzati, 14 years, male – FGD).

Nevertheless, some of the research participants still believe that grandfathers, parents and other guardians should never give up no matter the challenges they face with the children’s uptake of disciplining. They stated that withdrawing discipline indicates that, as a parent or guardian, you do not truly love the child. Otherwise, if you truly love the child, you would not let him/her go astray no matter how stubborn the child is. Thus, as a parent or guardian of a child, one needs to persist and not waver in disciplining the children:

Parents can never give up! Parents cannot give up! They are trying everything possible. Because, when a child has done something wrong out there, people say, “that’s Zondiwe’s child, look what he/she is doing”, and it gives a bad picture/reputation for the whole family of Zondiwe because it may appear as if the child was deliberately sent or allowed to engage in such immoral behaviours. So, as a parent, you still try to discipline the child [...] Parents have not given up on their children (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather – FGD).

Thus, many grandfathers (as with parents and other guardians) endeavour to discipline their children regardless of the children’s uptake of disciplining.

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<sup>59</sup> In my observation, usually, this was not total or permanent withdrawal. A grandfather could overlook an offence today because he is not a mood to confront the child, but reprimand the child when they commit it again tomorrow. It was also common for certain offences to be overlooked, but not others. For instance, a grandfather would not confront his grandson for coming back home late, but if the child steals money in the house, the grandfather might be angry and confront his grandson as soon as he discovers that the money is missing and suspects his grandson. This suggests that these findings must be interpreted with caution.

### **7.3.1 The Intersections of Gender, Culture, and Child Disciplining**

Evidence from this study shows that gender norms and age intersect and influence moral socialisation of children. In listening to the views of the participants in the research communities of rural Southern Malawi, age and gender have emerged as the recurring themes in discussions on intergenerational transmission of moral values more generally, and socialisation of children and disciplinary methods and approaches specifically. In terms of age, there is a common view that younger children present less challenges compared to older children because younger children are viewed as more receptive to disciplining than are older children. Thus, with regards to withdrawing disciplining, it is more likely to occur for older children (particularly teenagers) than younger children. This suggests that grandparents are more likely to use psychological methods (than physical punishments) for older grandchildren (as with other children in the research communities) who present serious challenges, or leave them unpunished because of perceived views that they will not take heed of disciplining, or the children will likely respond violently such as beating them. This highlights how age and generation intersect with the anticipated children's reaction to disciplining and influence a grandfather's disciplining method. These findings support two studies by UNICEF (2010, 2017b) which have reported that older children are likely to be subjected to less physical punishments (particularly severe corporal punishments) than younger children, and those between 5 and 9 years are likely to be more subjected to punishments compared to all age groups.

In terms of gender, there is a common social view among the people who participated in this study that men are more influential, and women are less effective in disciplining children. Many view/consider grandfathers as having a greater moral authority over their orphaned grandchildren compared to grandmothers. Because of this, people view grandfathers' disciplining as more effective than that of the grandmother in curbing children's indiscipline. During our discussions, the participants attributed this difference to stereotypical masculinities and femininities (i.e. men being emotionally detached from children and being tough on them; and women being emotionally attached to children and being soft on them). They explained that a grandmother spends much of her time with the grandchildren in the home, hence her grandchildren get used to her and develop strong emotional/affectionate bonds. This makes it difficult for a grandmother to discipline

her grandchildren using strict methods such as corporal punishment. When a child is disobedient, she threatens them, but usually does not translate the threats into action. As such, the children take her threats lightly. In contrast, a grandfather may spend much of his time out of the home, hence developing weaker emotional bond with the children. He normally sees through his threats, hence the children fear him and his words are taken seriously. Thus, the moral authority of grandfathers may be more powerful than that of grandmothers when disciplining their orphaned grandchildren. Subsequently, many feel that the responsibility to steer orphaned grandchildren from bad behaviours into the 'right' path largely rests on the shoulders of the grandfather rather than the grandmother:

The grandmother is more sympathetic to the children whereas a grandfather speaks bluntly as he sees the things [...] The children fear you the grandfather, they do fear you a lot! And, if you the grandfather says, "don't do that!" [expressing it forcefully], they fear, but when their grandmother says, "don't do that!" [expressing it softly] the child responds like, "what? Why not?" and, it's all because she spends more time with them and they get used to her (Frank, grandfather, 76 years – In-depth interview).

Thus, some of the participants in this research stated that grandmothers (like many other women in their communities) are likely to lead grandchildren into more indiscipline because of their tendency to be soft (less strict/lenient), more sympathetic, and withholding punishments when a child has done something wrong. They stressed that, because of the grandmother's lenience, the grandchildren may become more and more indiscipline. For instance, they may not undertake household chores, go out as they please, and may engage in bad behaviours such as smoking *chamba* [hemp] and premarital sex, as well as challenging her authority. This is particularly difficult when a grandmother has older grandsons (particularly those in teens) in the household, thus signifying the intersection of gender and generation/age in influencing a grandmother's ability to effectively discipline her grandchildren. Consequently, grandchildren who are raised by grandmothers in single-grandparent households are likely to be more indisciplined than their counterparts raised by the grandfather in single-grandparent households, or by both grandparents. Below are some of the views shared by the research participants during our discussions (**Box 7.2**).

### **Box 7.2: Children's behaviour towards grandparents' disciplining**

*A child fears the grandfather's voice. In most cases, children undermine their grandmother, yeah, this leniency leads children to grow up unruly (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).*

*The child doesn't fear the grandmother... For instance, he/she can just come back from school, throw his/her books and off he/she goes out as he/she pleases without fearing the grandmother. But, he/she cannot do the same with his/her grandfather, yeah, because he/she knows that if I will not be at home by 6 o'clock in the evening, he will ask me like, "where were you? and maybe also being whipped" (Chifuniro, 28 years, male – FGD).*

*The grandfather is the one who disciplines the children or I should say 'frightens the children'. A grandmother... a boy like that one [pointing to his 15-year old grandson] cannot not fear her, but when she says [to a disobedient child], "I'll wait for your grandfather to come and tell him what you're doing", once the grandfather arrives and the grandmother says, "he's here!", the child is scared. The children of today are arrogant, and if you're not careful and you leave them to live with women alone, they cannot grow with manners... The women are soft on the children, so they children undermine them. The children cannot dare to undermine me. They know they cannot dare! (Nthanda, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*...even when the grandchildren fail to take cattle to the bush for feeding and later to the river for drinking, the grandmother may have been at home the whole day telling them, but they don't listen. However, as soon as the grandfather comes back home and shouts at them), the very same minute the grandchildren will go, showing that they fear. Perhaps a girl may listen to her but not a boy because a boy is usually arrogant (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*When you talk to the boys, they behave like you're not talking to them at all! A girl is better, she sometimes listen to you, yes, she listens, but the boys iiiiiiiiiiih [expressing disappointment] (Yesania, 75 years, grandmother – FGD).*

Interestingly, when asked to compare grandparents and parents regarding disciplining, many participants who participated in this study expressed the view that, while grandfathers are more influential than grandmothers (as discussed above), both are generally less influential compared to parents. Compared with their parents, children undermine their grandparents. The participants attributed this to the fear grandparents have regarding hurting their orphaned grandchildren emotionally and in the process reminding them about their deceased parents. There is also social concern on the part of grandparents because they fear that if they punish their orphaned grandchildren strictly, people would say that they are abusing/mistreating the children because the children are orphans:

*Agogo is very soft on the child when advising or disciplining him/her because he/she fears that if he/she is strict on the child, people or the child would say that Agogo is mistreating or abusing him/her. In contrast, the child who grows up with his/her parents, the parents advise and discipline him/her in any way they want or need to because it's their biological child (Mimi, 35 years, female – FGD).*

The idea that grandfathers have more moral authority over grandchildren compared to grandmothers has its roots from patriarchal attitudes and social conceptions of masculinities in the communities that participated in this study, which also mirrors much of Africa (see Morrell, 2001; Ferrari, 2002; Dawes et al., 2004). A man is supposed to be feared/revered, his punishment must be firm, and his presence in the household as a moral authority must not be questioned, challenged, or undermined. Clearly, men occupy a different status from that of women, are revered, and children are socialised to uphold such social views. Subsequently, men exercise greater authority and take all measures to ensure they are revered. This is also replicated in how they socialise children. Thus, the intersection of gender of the grandparent and age of the grandchild are crucial in influencing a grandfather's disciplining methods.

The findings on gender and child disciplining in this study seem to contradict other studies. For instance, studies on parental use of corporal punishments in SSA and other parts of the world have found that women are more likely than men to employ corporal punishments when disciplining children (see Dawes et al., 2004; UNICEF, 2014b; Engulu & Harris, 2017). Dietz (2000) suggests that this gender difference holds when focusing on ordinary corporal punishments, but diminishes when severe corporal punishments are factored into the analysis. Dietz (2000: 1539) argues that "it is possible that the argument that the reason women appear to be more violent with their children than men may merely be an artefact of the disproportionate amount of time that mothers spend with their children." However, the evidence is inconsistent and inconclusive, with some studies finding gender differences in use of punishments, others not, and yet others finding similar disciplinary practices enforced by men and women (see Petts & Kysar-Moon, 2012; Engulu & Harris, 2017; UNICEF, 2014b). Evidence from this study indicates that, despite both men and women expressing favourable views and justification for using corporal punishments, they emphasised that men are more likely to use force and harsh punishments than women. Contrary to suggestions that women are more likely to use corporal punishment compared to men (cited above), it was reported that grandfathers/men, and not grandmothers/women, had more moral authority over their orphaned grandchildren and were more likely to use corporal punishment.

Also, despite the fact that grandmothers/women spend more time with children in the home (as discussed in earlier chapter), this did not translate to executing more punishments on their orphaned grandchildren according to my research participants, as other studies have suggested (Dietz, 2000; Dawes et al., 2004; UNICEF, 2014b; Engulu & Harris, 2017). Instead, grandmothers were said to develop strong bonds with their grandchildren and were soft on them, as mentioned earlier in this section. Generally, there was a social view that grandfathers (like other men in these research communities) are indispensable moral figures with firm disciplinary methods, and eager to use corporal punishment without hesitation. For instance, consider the following views shared regarding the social position of men as moral authority figures in their families/households:

Well, a man is a man! He always shows aggressiveness, ready to scold. So, the child may not dare to disobey the man, but when it's the grandmother the child says, "what can you do to me, Agogo?" (Loyiso, 37 years, male – FGD).

When she [a mother] says, "you won't eat" [expressing it softly], you are arrogant and still challenge her and undermine her. But when your father says, "you won't eat" [expressing it categorically], it simply means you won't eat *nsima* [food] (Mandla, 15 years, male – FGD).

Similar social views to those expressed by the participants in this research have been documented elsewhere in Southern Africa. In this region and in much of Africa, men are culturally and generally expected to be firm disciplinarians in their households/families and their intolerance to and harsh punishments for indiscipline usually embodies them as respected figures in their households/families (Spjeldnaes et al., 2011; van den Berg et al., 2013). For instance, Mturi et al (2005) note in South Africa that, in contrast to women (who are considered to have less influence on disciplining children), men are feared/revered because they do not withhold stiff punishments when a child misbehaves (Mturi et al., 2005: 57). They stated that:

...females do not have much influence when it comes to disciplining children. Thus, some children from such families do not listen so they are badly influenced and get into trouble... the father's presence in the home has a lot of meaning since he is the one who lays down the rules that govern family members. If the father figure is not there, then a child loses the sense of obligation to follow rules.

Further, some studies in SSA and other parts of the world have also documented about gender differences, stating that boys are more likely to be subjected to severe punishments than girls in both the home and in school (Hunter et al., 2000; UNICEF, 2010; Portela & Pells, 2015). However, there was no evidence of gender differences concerning severity of punishments in this study. What was found, though, is that, although some of the participants stated that both boys and girls have their unique challenges when raising them, many grandfathers complained that girls are more difficult to discipline than boys, particularly when they reach puberty. At this stage of life, many girls consider themselves ‘adults’, hence they become more sexually active, often falling pregnant and dropping out of school:<sup>60</sup>

The girls are more challenging to raise because when they reach puberty, they think that they’re now ‘adults’, so, they say, “I am an adult, and I will do what I want” (Lulama, 31 years, female – FGD).

Right now, what is happening in our community is that once they reach puberty, they regard themselves as ‘adults’ such that even counselling them to wait [noise from the children] for their time, it is not helping matters (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).

Thus, there is heightened anxiety and frustrations among grandfathers and parents in the research communities when girls reach puberty. This suggests that girls are more likely to be subjected to punishment compared to boys because of the view that many grandfathers and parents in the research communities expressed whereby they would rarely overlook punishment when a child has done something wrong. This signifies how gender and generation/age intersect and influence not only people’s attitudes towards disciplining children at puberty, but importantly, the effectiveness of disciplining along gender binaries.

The anxiety among parents and guardians interviewed in this study who are raising girls at puberty has also been widely reported in Malawi (e.g. see Davison & Kanyuka, 1992; Chimombo et al., 2000; Maluwa-Banda, 2003; Grant, 2012; GoM, 2014b;

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<sup>60</sup> This epitomises the ambivalences embedded in the socialisation of children in rural Malawi. Parents and guardians (e.g. grandparents) send children to initiation camps to learn cultural norms (including, as stated earlier, sex and sexuality,) and become ‘adults’. Upon returning from initiation camps, children are often considered ‘adults’ by their parents, grandparents, guardians, and the community at large because they were taught ‘adult’ material during their time in the camps. They consider themselves ‘adults’ too, and engage in sexual activities, sometimes, to prove to their peers and others that they are adults. Ironically, their sexual activities are often interpreted as immoral behaviours by the very same parents and guardians who sent them to initiation camps, as well as other people in the community.

Kendall & Kaunda, 2015). During our discussions, grandfathers in the research communities complained that at puberty, girls, as they put it, “*amang’ambitsa pakamwa*”<sup>61</sup> [make you tear your mouth apart] because they are constantly and consistently engaging in bad behaviours such as socialising with boys and coming back home late at night. Ironically, the girls are said to engage in sexual activities (sometimes transactional sex) with boys and men, yet the concern is for girls because of the foreseen consequences such as pregnancy. Their views are widely shared even by children. The children attributed peer pressure and girls’ desire for various material things that their parents and guardians fail to provide as the contributing factor to their increased engagement in sexual activities (**Box 7.3**).

**Box 7.3:** *Adults’ and children’s views regarding the difficulty of disciplining girls*

*Girls ‘amakung’ambitsa pakamwa’ [make you tear your mouth apart] because they hardly heed advice, particularly when they reach puberty because they hardly refrain from sexual activities [...] as I already said, a boy is better than a girl, he’s not troublesome as a girl does (Zolani, 72 years, grandfathers – In-depth interview).*

*... at school, a girl admires lots of things [...] Eventually, she starts engaging in bad behaviours, engaging in sexual relationships with men or boys so that she can have the things she lacks... the clothes which her friends are putting on and the things that they bring to school... she admires those things [...] and the grandparents do not have a chance to discipline and advise her because she never listens to them (Agness, 15 years, female – FGD).*

*Girls are difficult to raise because when a girl is young, she is obedient because she may not have any feelings to have sexual relationships with boys, but when she reaches a certain age when, like Agness has explained, she befriends other girls who may have experience in having sexual relationships with boys. So, as she spends time with her friends it becomes hard for her not to have a sexual relationship with a boy while she sees her friends being given money by their lovers. She may join this club. Eventually, she may not listen to her grandparent. Also, if she was helping them with some household chores, it may not continue because she is busy with the boys (Alick, 17 years, male – FGD).*

Suffice to say that views considering boys as less difficult to raise are not universally shared in the research communities. The views of other research participants skew towards boys as more challenging to raise. Such views are usually based on the perception that boys are naughty, arrogant, like to challenge authority, and hardly take advice (i.e. stubborn) when they reach puberty and start engaging in bad

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<sup>61</sup> This is a metaphor often used to mean that someone is making you talkative or talk a lot and repetitive of the same advice or disciplining because he/she is repeating/committing the same mistakes and not heed of disciplining over and over again.

behaviours such as *chamba* [hemp] smoking, beer drinking, and stealing from the home and other people's property:

Well, the girl is more obedient than the boy. Let's say that both are growing together, and they have reached adolescence, the boy is difficult to handle to such an extent that he may sometimes attack you the grandfather. In contrast, the girl, when you talk to her she listens and if she does some crazy stuff, she would do, but not much. With the boys aaaaaaaah [expressing frustration], no! (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather – FGD).

This suggests that there is generally no gender binary when it comes to adults' and children's views regarding who between girls and boys is difficult to raise. Both the girls and boys present unique challenges, particularly when they reach puberty. During heated discussions, it was clear that there was no single discourse on the issue, and participants' views did not follow any gender pattern (i.e. female favouring or being against girls, or males favouring or being against boys), as Estella (49 years) eloquently summed it up during FGD: "the girls are difficult to advise and discipline, so too are boys.... I struggle to discipline both."

Another interesting finding of this study regarding intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values is the paradox occurring in conservative matrilineal culture. Although grandfathers (as is with other men in their communities) are expected to lead in inculcating moral values in their orphaned grandchildren, evidence suggests that, in some circumstances, such power is limited. This is particularly common in situations where a grandfather (whether in a single-grandparent or dual-grandparent household) is living with his orphaned grandchildren near or within the same compound with the children's maternal relatives. In such scenarios, a grandfather may discipline his orphaned grandchildren, but usually has boundaries because the children's maternal relatives live nearby, and may accuse him of mistreating 'their' children. As aforementioned, grandfathers are viewed as not belonging in these matrilineal communities because they are not consanguineous to the rest of their orphaned grandchildren's maternal extended family. Thus, much authority for disciplining children as well as other affairs that concern them rests in the uncles of their orphaned grandchildren because they are '*mwini mbumba*' (owners of the matrilineage, including the children).

Grandfathers in such conservative matrilineal societies are considered as ‘*obwera*’ [visitor or stranger] and not ‘*mwini mbumba*’. Any kind of discipline grandfathers undertake must pass the scrutiny of their orphaned grandchildren’s uncles (regardless of its benefit) who endorse it as appropriate or not, in form or quality and quantity. Thus, although it was not universally shared (i.e. there were heated debates and differing views on the issue), and others stated that it depends on the character of the *mbumba* [matrilineage], many research participants expressed the view that grandfathers have more authority in disciplining their orphaned grandchildren if they are practicing *chitengwa* [virilocal marriage] compared to *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage]. Moreover, maternal relatives of orphaned grandchildren are wary that, in the process of disciplining the children, the grandfather may introduce and inculcate a different culture (his culture) rather than adhere to theirs (**Box 7.4**).

**Box 7.4: Challenges grandfathers face in matrilineal cultures**

*If the grandfather goes and stays at chikamwini [uxorilocality] with grandchildren, he is not respected. This is so because people undermine him, and they say, “he doesn’t belong here”. His authority is undermined because he doesn’t belong there [...] the authority rests in his grandchildren’s uncles. So, when he advises and disciplines his orphaned grandchildren, they don’t listen to him (Peace, 37, female - FGD).*

*It is a tricky situation, at chikamwini [uxorilocal marriage] the grandfather may want to raise the grandchildren according to his culture, but the problem is that the grandchildren belong to his wife’s people, the uncles. So, it appears like the grandfather is intruding into the affairs that belong to the mbumba [matrilineage] and somehow as if he is trying to bring chaos in the family... his wife’s relatives have the perception that, “the grandfather is bringing chaos by teaching the children about his cultural values rather than ours and we are being demeaned by this” (Lundi, 41 years, male – FGD).*

During conversations with grandfathers interviewed in this study, it was clear that many find these restrictions unfavourable as in some cases, their orphaned grandchildren may misbehave knowing their grandfather has limited power/authority over their disciplining. In fact, some of the participants said that some grandfathers are abused by their orphaned grandchildren. For instance, during conflicts/disputes, the grandfathers may be chased away by his orphaned grandchildren if the children do not like their grandfather’s disciplining and feel that he is overstepping his rightful boundaries of authority over them. As such, there are some situations where the grandfather feels undermined, frustrated, disempowered, and desperate:

When you, the grandson, observe that your grandfather is scolding you frequently, you just tell him that, “this is not your place/land/home, don’t you know where you came from?” [Researcher: laughing], and when the grandfather sees that his grandchild has spoken to me rudely, he feels sad and depressed (Mzati, 14 years, male – FGD).

When the grandfather refuses to be controlled by his orphaned grandchildren, considering that these grandchildren are children from his children, disagreements erupt, they tell you like, “well, Agogo, then you have to go back to your natal village” (Ishan, 48 years, chief [local traditional leader] – FGD).

This creates a dilemma on the part of grandfathers. On the one hand, as per masculinities in Malawi (as is with men elsewhere in much of Africa), they (as opposed to grandmothers) are expected by the society to lead in disciplining children and be firm disciplinarians. Their laxity or absence from this role is deemed detrimental to moral socialisation of their orphaned grandchildren. Yet, the same society creates and exacerbates cultural boundaries that categorically limit their authority over their orphaned grandchildren. Nonetheless, none of the grandfathers interviewed in this study expressed that the sociocultural context of matrilineality makes them step aside and let their orphaned grandchildren slide into an abyss of indiscipline; they risk everything in their quest to instil socially accepted behaviours in their orphaned grandchildren.

Considering the gravity of the punishments orphaned grandchildren and their counterparts in the general population in the research communities are subjected to, the social normalisation of these punishments, and reflecting on recent policy direction on child disciplining in Malawi influenced by children’s rights international conventions and discourses, I sought the views of the research participants regarding their appropriateness for the moral socialisation of children. Their responses show that there is great controversy surrounding this issue, as explored below.

### **7.3.2 Views about Harsh Punishments: Correction or Child Abuse?**

UNICEF (2010: xv) recognises that child disciplining is “an integral part of child rearing in all cultures” because it instils socially acceptable behaviours. There is, however, continued debate about/on whether certain methods of disciplining such as corporal punishment are beneficial or harmful to child development (Feinstein & Mwachombela, 2010; Maguire-Jack et al., 2012; D’Souza et al., 2016). In some cultures and religions (e.g. Christianity and Islam), there exist beliefs that corporal

punishment is necessary form of discipline and good for the child's own benefit (UNICEF, 2010, 2017b; Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013, 2016). However, it is evident that some of the punishments grandfathers, parents, and other guardians interviewed in this study give children (e.g. corporal punishments) would be considered child abuse, for instance, within the framework of the UNCRC (UN General Assembly, 1989) and other local policy instruments such as the Malawi Child Care, Protection and Justice Act 2010 (Malawi Government, 2010; GoM, 2014d). For instance, the United Nations categorically views many forms of these punishments as a violation of children's rights. According to UNICEF (2014b: 109), the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment Number 8 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that:<sup>62</sup>

'All forms of physical or mental violence' does not leave room for any level of legalized violence against children. Corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment are forms of violence and the State must take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to eliminate them.

Following widespread adoption of the UNCRC, pressure for the elimination of physical punishment has mounted and some countries in SSA (e.g. Kenya, Togo, and South Sudan) have fully prohibited the use of corporal/physical punishments, particularly in the school (Twum-Danso, 2012b; Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2017). However, as of 2017, only 60 countries in the world had outlawed all forms of corporal punishments against children in school (Fréchette & Romano, 2017; UNICEF, 2017b).<sup>63</sup> This leaves millions of children across the world not legally protected.

The use of harsh punishment for disciplining children contradicts government policy and child rights campaigns promoted in many parts of Malawi, including the communities where this study was conducted. The policy and its associated interventions advocate for the elimination of harmful punishments in homes and

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<sup>62</sup> The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body of 18 independent experts monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by its State parties.

<sup>63</sup> For the list of the countries, see UNICEF (2017b). Half of all school-age children (6 to 17) are living in countries that have not yet fully prohibited corporal punishment at school, thus leaving 732 million children without legal protection and at risk of being subjected to corporal punishment (UNICEF, 2017b).

schools.<sup>64</sup> Drawing from the international convention on children's rights (UN General Assembly, 1989), the Government of Malawi and its local and international development partners (e.g. NGOs, child rights activists) have intensified efforts (through policies, frameworks, and instruments) towards advocacy for the prohibition of the use of corporal/physical punishment in schools and homes (Malawi Government, 2010; GoM, 2014d). However, although corporal punishment is illegal in the penal system and public institutions (e.g. government schools) of Malawi as per the Constitution, and is proscribed in government schools, it is still lawful in private schools and in homes (GoM, 2014d; Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2017). This makes it hard to achieve substantial progress in ending corporal punishments in Malawi. For many grandfathers, parents, and guardians in the research communities, they do not find physical punishments inappropriate nor a form of child abuse. They widely consider them as 'correction' and part of the moral socialisation process:

When you flog them and then another day you flog them again, then they stop being disobedient, that's the end of their bad behaviour (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

If the child is disobedient, [...] you *must* beat them, take a stick and beat them and when they feel the pain, it means they'll stop doing the bad things or being disobedient [...] fearing that if I do it again, they'll beat and hurt me. So, the child grows with morals... (Estella, 49 years, female, – FGD).

Further, evidence from this research also suggests that when punishing/disciplining children, the concern for grandfathers, parents, and other guardians is largely for the physical harm rather than the emotional and psychological impacts these punishments may have on children. Even with physical punishment, people seem to be concerned only when it is excessive and results in physical injury.<sup>65</sup> During discussion with grandfathers, they emphasised that the corporal punishment they

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<sup>64</sup> Although I did not specifically explore the use of punishments in schools, accounts by teachers and other professionals triangulated across different communities indicated that the practice is less common in schools. This may be attributed to the government's law and policy proscribing the use of corporal punishment in government schools. Malawi is among the 127 countries in the world that have enacted such a law. Thus, the government, NGOs, and other stakeholders have intensified efforts to eradicate corporal punishment in schools. For countries that legally permit corporal punishment as of 2016 in schools, see Gershoff (2017).

<sup>65</sup> There is a common saying in rural Malawian society that, 'if the child does not bleed, you have not harmed him/her', indicating that at some level, physical punishment is condoned by the society if it is viewed that it has not physically injured the child.

use for disciplining their orphaned grandchildren is not severe, but at the same time, they shout at the child strongly. It emerged clear that there is concern for grandfathers, parents, and guardians to be restrained and avoid injuring the child physically or even killing them because of fear of being arrested and imprisoned. For instance, 80-year old David restrains himself from using corporal punishment on his two granddaughters (13 and 15 years) because he is wary of injuring or killing the child and going to prison. During my discussion with David, he shared a recent story in which another person in his community had killed a child and was serving a life sentence in prison. David explained his worry about using corporal punishment, and how he takes specific steps to avoid it (though he occasionally uses it). His concerns are shared by other participants:

Well the punishment is not severe... it's just like a little bit, like you're removing dusting from him/her] (Researcher: with a stick?) yes, but not beating him/her too, just gently like this [demonstrating] and shout at him/her like, "hey, why are you doing?", but don't hit him/her hard, no! (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

If the orphan is very mischievous, it is wrong for you to beat him/her daily because one day you may end up killing him/her for not heeding discipline [...] (Cristobal, 32 years, male – FGD).

The concern among grandfathers, parents, and other guardians for the child's physical injury during disciplining resonates with that of others in much of SSA and elsewhere in the world (Bartholdson, 2001; Twum-Danso, 2010b; Fréchette & Romano, 2017; UNICEF, 2017b). For instance, Archambault (2009) writes that while physical punishment is a norm in Kenya, parents and guardians strive to ensure that they exert pain on the child (e.g. by using a thin leather strap), but not to the extent of injuring the child. Twum-Danso's study in Ghana (2010) reports similar changes in attitude and use of physical punishments after parents injured their child to the point of requiring medical attention. Smith (2008) notes that even though it is common for parents and guardians in Afghanistan to use corporal punishments (e.g. beating), they are wary of injuring the child and incurring medical expenses or killing the child, hence they take measures to ensure that the punishments are not excessive. Despite these concerns, and as stated earlier, corporal punishments remain common across many societies around the world, including Malawi.

In this study in rural Malawi, it was found that although grandfathers avoid excessive punishment out of concern for injuring or killing their orphaned grandchild, they seem to be less concerned for the emotional and psychological harm the punishments have on the child. In fact, emotional and psychosocial care was rarely mentioned when participants in the research communities described care (as established in chapter 5). Yet, like other studies in Southern Africa, such as in South Africa and Tanzania (Hecker et al., 2014; Breen et al., 2015), it was observed that some of these emotional punishments may have negative emotional and psychological impacts on the children. For instance, some of the children interviewed in this research expressed feeling depressed after being scolded, as 13-year old Khumbo stated during an FGD: “Sometimes they don’t speak good things to us, they speak things that I never expected to hear in my life and I become depressed.” This suggests that although parents and guardians seem to overlook the emotional and psychological impact of non-physical punishments, the children who are subjected to them suffer anyway. Importantly, the emotional and psychological impact of harsh punishments may be more adverse on orphans as they are likely to interpret it as being abused/mistreated due to their orphanhood. Many of the participants I talked to expressed that it is more difficult to raise orphans than other children because orphans are usually emotionally and psychologically fragile, hence tend to associate punishment with their orphanhood (i.e. that they are being punished because they do not have parents) (**Box 7.5**).

**Box 7.5: Participants’ views about challenges of disciplining orphans**

*An orphan is a difficult child to look after. Because, if you try to discipline him/her, and he/she feels pain, he/she says, “you’re doing this because my mother died,” yeah, “it’s because my father died” [...], “you’re beating me because I am an orphan,” “I wish I could follow my mother to the grave.” And, you tell him/her like, “well, no, you don’t follow your dead mother walking to the grave yard” (Nandi, 78 years, grandmother – In-depth interview).*

*Some orphans are ‘aneni’ [whiners]. When I say ‘aneni’ I mean exactly that. On everything you discipline him/her for, they remember the death of their parents. You find that even a very small issue, they cry (Cristobal, 32 years, male – FGD).*

*When the grandparent disciplines them, the thought is that, “they are doing this to me because I’m an orphan, I don’t have parents” (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).*

These views signify that people’s perceptions about orphanhood may intersect with disciplining methods for parents and guardians in these research communities. Notably, while these narratives paint a picture of an orphan as emotionally vulnerable, there are also situations where the orphans are indeed mistreated by

their guardians. Other researchers in Southern and West Africa have noted that children are likely to be subjected to harsh punishments more generally by primary caregivers who are not their biological parents (van Dijk, 2008; Breen et al., 2015). In this study in rural Malawi, even though this practice of mistreatment of orphans was not commonly reported, some of the participants stated that such tendencies do exist in their communities:

Some people raise orphans by mistreating them simply because they are orphans. Beating them. When the children have done something wrong, they beat them severely in a way they wouldn't do with their biological children, such things are happening (Zolani, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

When your parents die, you may stay with your relatives, but they don't give the kind of love that your mother was giving you [...]. They mistreat you by giving loads of chores while their biological children are given fewer chores. On school, they encourage their biological children while you are doing the chores in the household. When it comes to working in the fields, it's you, and you find that things are not going well at school, that's what happens (Luntha, 14 years, male – FGD).

Further, sometimes these punishments may yield unintended consequences. For instance, some of the punishments may drive children into risky behaviours that expose them to HIV and other sexually-transmitted infections. For instance, during FGDs, some of the boys expressed that when they are denied food or chased away from home, they resort to 'doing bad things' such as going into other people's sugarcane fields and stealing. Girls shared that they develop secret transactional sexual relationships with boys/men in their community, or engage in commercial sex (sometimes unprotected) in the surrounding trading centres to source money for food. For instance, during FGD, 13-year old Anastasia stated that: "These punishments are bad because when they chase you away from the home you have nowhere to go [...] so you start doing bad things... like having sex to have money to buy food."

Thus, some of these punishments are quite harmful and less beneficial to children. Despite controversy among legal scholars, psychologists, and sociologists on the impact of corporal punishment, and regardless of cross-cultural differences, there is widespread recent evidence emerging from all across the world (both in the Global North and Global South) that corporal punishments (whether in the home or school or both) are not only ineffective, but also have present and future deleterious health

and developmental outcomes on children. These include, inter alia, physical injury, antisocial behaviour, aggressive behaviour, suicidal behaviour, anxiety, depression, declining self-esteem, conduct problems and hyperactivity (Turner & Muller, 2004; Gershoff, 2017; Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). For instance, UNICEF (2017b: 24) states that children aged 3 to 5 years old who experience physical punishment are “less likely to reach some social-emotional development milestones” and more likely to have emotional and antisocial behaviours such as such as kicking, biting or hitting other children or adults, and being distracted easily. Thus, “even when there is no intention to hurt the child, the use of violence to control or correct behaviour has negative consequences that range from immediate impacts to long-term harm” (UNICEF, 2017b: 21).

Despite this, grandfathers interviewed in this study justified their use of physical punishments. They reasoned that these punishments are appropriate for addressing the growing indiscipline among ‘children of today’. Thus, they view the harsh punishments as necessary and normative methods of raising their grandchildren. This generally reflects the widely social acceptance and normalisation of corporal punishment not only in rural Malawi, but also elsewhere in the country as well as in other parts of SSA and around the world (see Lansford et al., 2010, 2012; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013, 2016; UNICEF, 2017b). for instance, in this research in rural Malawi, grandfathers stated that it is not only them that use harsh punishments for curtailing children’s indiscipline, stating that even parents use similar methods due to the growing misbehaviour of ‘children of today’. This indicates that cultural norms and generation may intersect and influence disciplining methods employed by grandfathers, parents, and other guardians of children in these research communities. This could also be interpreted as a sign of nostalgia among the older generation regarding ‘children of today’, as expressed by one of grandfathers:

Such things [physical punishments] cannot be ruled out because children do anger you and without being patient, you just realise you have lashed him/her, yeah. Some children do lack understanding, even if you discipline them gently you reach a point that... even their own biological mother shouts at them and even beating her own child because these children sometimes are arrogant and don’t take heed of advice/discipline, particularly these years. Most of these children are not like the way it used to be in the past, no! The children of this generation and that of the past generation are very different (David, 80 years, grandfathers – In-depth interview).

There is also a strong social discourse indicating that views advocating corporal punishments have their roots in religion. Evidence suggests that religious people are more likely to use and condone corporal punishment (Gershoff, 2010; Deater-Deckard et al., 2003; Twum-Danso, 2016; Engulu & Harris, 2017). For instance, like in some Western societies, it is common for parents and guardians of children in Malawi to invoke the popular adage ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’ in justifying the use of physical punishment.<sup>66</sup> Although it was not specifically stated in this study, it is possible that religion may have contributed to the widespread acceptance of the use of harsh punishments in disciplining children, given many Malawians are religious people (as stated in chapter 2). In my own experience, I have heard people sometimes using the above Bible verse or their equivalents to justify the use of harsh punishments on their children. Thus, we surmise that children in rural Malawi and other regions of SSA are socialised to view these punishments as normal due to their widespread use and social acceptance.

Indeed, some of the children interviewed in this research shared similar thoughts to those expressed by adults. They stated that despite dreading them, they do not necessarily view these punishments as abuse or cruelty, but rather as moral socialisation designed for their own good. Despite heated discussions, there was a general consensus among children and young people about the inevitability of punishments such that they did not hate their parents and guardians for subjecting them to these punishments:

The punishments are good because when they punish me, their intention is that I should get a lesson so that I do not repeat the same bad thing (Anastasia, 13 years, female – FGD).

It’s a good thing to be punished [...] when I come back home late at night and they tell me that I won’t eat *nsima* [food], the following day I’ll not go out again; I’ll stay at home (Agness, 15 years, female – FGD).

These views from the children show their acceptance of these socially sanctioned punishments, possibly due to early and continued exposure to them. The children may normalise and internalised the adult views because they, too, will be adults

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<sup>66</sup> Interpreted from the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament of the Bible – e.g. He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (Proverbs 13:24, King James Bible); Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die (Proverbs 23:13, King James Bible).

soon enough and probably continue using similar disciplining methods. Thus, it is not surprising that they shared similar thoughts to those expressed by adults.

The acceptance, normalisation, and internalisation of harsh punishments among children and young people in this research study in rural Malawi strongly mirror the findings of other studies in SSA and other regions of the world. For instance, in a two-centre (rural and urban) study in Ghana on children's perceptions of physical punishment, Twum-Danso (2010b) reports that nearly 77% disagreed with making physical punishment within the home/family illegal, and 66% regarded it as important for their moral socialisation. Later, Twum-Danso Imoh (2013: 478) noted that children in Ghana see physical correction as "part of their training to become members of their societies." Recently, multinational studies by UNICEF have reported that although there are variations in cultural views regarding corporal punishment, children in some countries view them as useful for their own moral socialisation (UNICEF, 2014b, 2017b). This suggests that the findings of this research in rural Malawi are not out of the ordinary.

Nonetheless, there is also evidence from this study suggesting that some children do not like being punished whatever the offence. For instance, during an FGD, 13-year old Miguel categorically stated: "we don't like them [the punishments]." What was noted is that, in worst case scenario where a punishment is impending, and they ought to choose their fate, many children are generally selective to what kind of punishments they feel appropriate, a finding also similar to Twum-Danso's (2010) study among children in Ghana. Many children interviewed in this study in rural Malawi clearly dread physical punishments and prefer other types of non-physical disciplinary methods such as scolding, and others want not to be punished at all:

They should scold or shout at us, but they should not beat us (Orlando, 13 years, female – In-depth interview).

When I have done something wrong, sometimes they tell me to go and fetch water, and sometimes they beat me. I don't like it. They should just leave me alone (Sangalatso, male, 10 years – FGD).

From the existing literature, it appears corporal punishment is not limited to the home. Evidence suggests that its use in the home and in schools is consistent with childcare practices in many other regions of Africa and across the world (UNICEF, 2010, 2017b; Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012; El.Makzoum, 2015; Gershoff &

Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). For instance, UNICEF reports that as many as 80% of children (i.e. 1.76 billion) around the world are subjected to corporal punishments (UNICEF, 2014b), and 75% (around 1.1 billion) of caregivers around the world believe physical punishment is a necessary form of moral socialisation of children (UNICEF, 2017b). This shows the pervasiveness of harsh punishments as disciplining method for a child's wrongdoing. Thus, it is not surprising that similar social practices are widespread in the communities that participated in this study in rural Southern Malawi.

Nonetheless, although some children, grandfathers, and parents and other guardians in my study see these punishments as appropriate disciplining methods, none of the professionals (e.g. Child Protection Officers, HSAs, and teachers) interviewed condoned the practice. They categorically labelled these punishments as child abuse, as stated by 43-year old Ufulu (male, teacher) during CAG Validation Meeting: "The punishments that you have mentioned, that grandfathers use, like denying a child food, pinching their ears, I see them as abuse." The views of the professionals such as those expressed earlier by children who dread harsh punishments suggest the intersection of generation and children's rights campaigns in influencing attitudes among some people in the research communities. Importantly, views expressed by the professionals (e.g. teachers) who participated in this study differ from the general discourse in the previous studies in other regions of SSA that have indicated that corporal punishment is widespread in schools. For instance, Archambault (2009: 282) states that corporal punishment is widespread in Kenya such that most parents and teachers consider corporal punishment to be "one of the most effective ways to instil the discipline necessary for children to grow and learn well if properly employed." Recently, UNICEF (2017b) reported that 38% of children in schools in Ethiopia were subjected to corporal punishment. Thus, these contradictions warrant further research, particularly that which covers several countries in SSA to establish the factors leading to these inconsistencies.

Besides professionals (e.g. teacher), other grandfathers, too, prefer advising and other types of punishments (e.g. withdrawing privileges) to using harsh disciplining such as corporal punishments because they feel that it constitutes child abuse. Similar views are also held by most of the people working in community structures

(e.g. CBOs, CPCs, CBCCs), which is not surprising given they work hand-in-hand with the government and NGOs in campaigns against corporal punishments:

... beating/whipping/lashing a child is child abuse. What you have to do is to advise the child that, “don’t do this, rather do this and that” (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

We [CBO members] always tell them [parents and guardians] during community meetings that taking a rod to whip a child is an abuse. It is better to counsel the child (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).

Moreover, there seems to be challenges in changing people’s attitudes on the issue because, in many cases, they do not match with the efforts by the government and its local and international development partners who are promoting children’s rights (e.g. YONECO, Save the Children, UNICEF). Participants who participated in this study are critical of these interventions, and view them as a form of ‘modern colonialism’. During heated discussions, they expressed their disapproval of these interventions, stating that they are based on Western models of childhood that are different from the local culture. For instance, they expressed views that such child rights campaigns/interventions are according children excessive rights and freedoms, hence giving them permission to engage in behaviours that are unacceptable in the local culture (e.g. immodest dressing, smoking), all on the pretext of freedom and rights, which was corroborated by some of the children:

Some children are smoking *chamba* [hemp], and when their parents confront and reprimand them, they say, “leave me alone! It’s my freedom and right” (Adriana, 14 years, female, FGD).

The thighs are exposed in public, the breasts are exposed in public, everything is exposed in public! And, if you dare to confront them about it, they say, “you want to deny me my rights?” (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather – FGD).

Nowadays, the children have lots of freedom... that’s the reason I see for their indiscipline. This freedom is what is making the children rude (Stella, female, teacher, 42 years – Key-informant interview).

Thus, there is a general perception among grandfathers and other interviewed participants in rural Malawi that Western-based interventions which promote children’s rights are interfering with their efforts to socialise their children ‘properly’ as per local childrearing practices. For instance, they mentioned that even though they consider corporal punishment as a normative socialisation method, sometimes

they refrain from using it because of fear that their children will report them to child-focused NGOs such as YONECO and eventually bring them into conflict with the authorities (e.g. police):<sup>67</sup>

Some of the children listen to the radio and they hear that children have rights [...] If you try to discipline them, they take the issue further and you end up in trouble even though the child is yours because they say, “*a child has rights*” [...] parents are failing to discipline their children because of these organisations. Organisations are ‘polluting’ our culture (Lundi, 41 years, male – FGD).

This has created feelings of frustration, disempowerment, nostalgia for an imagined past, and moral panic among some grandfathers, parents, and other guardians in the research communities. During discussions, their hostility towards children’s rights interventions was evident, thus highlighting the local people’s attitudes towards Western values and children’s rights campaign and views of children’s indiscipline. The research participants expressed that they feel their culture (e.g. use of harsh punishments for disciplining children) is being infiltrated, eroded, and replaced by a new culture – a Western culture (e.g. elimination of corporal punishments):

Our culture is diminishing before our eyes. It’s like a river washing away your clothes down the stream, in a swirl, and you just stand watching helplessly, shouting, “oh, my gosh! My clothes are being washed away!” (Chifuniro, 28 years, male – FGD).

What I mean is that *swagger* is copied from technology and the children are disregarding our culture (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).<sup>68</sup>

The tussle between campaigns for children’s rights and local views has also been well-documented in research in other parts of SSA (Mturi et al., 2005; Twum-Danso Imoh & Ame, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Several studies in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania have reported that harsh physical and psychological punishments are viewed as the norm in schools and homes, and local people express resentment towards children’s rights interventions because they deem them as Western-oriented and an encroachment into the local culture (Frankenberg et al.,

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<sup>67</sup> YONECO has a national child helpline call centre (toll-free) for reporting child abuse incidences. It investigates child abuse reports, and takes appropriate measures such as engaging the police and the courts to persecute offenders.

<sup>68</sup> Swagger is term commonly used by the youths in Malawi to refer to a kind of self-centred lifestyle that is concerned with being stylish (e.g. dressing) at the expense of other important things, as well as being boastful and bragging.

2010; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2011; Manful & Manful, 2014; Portela & Pells, 2015). For instance, Archambault (2009: 299) comments that parents and teachers in Kenya “are wary of certain aspects of the children's rights discourse” and that “providing young people, who are still not mature members of society, with entitlements, is seen as challenging adults' perceptions of childhood and notions of children's growth as well as their authority over their children.” Mturi et al (2005: 46) write about intergenerational conflict triggered by the mismatch between older generation's view of rights and that of younger generation in South Africa, stating that, “apparently children do not listen and they have no respect towards adults because they say they have rights and think that they can do anything they like.” Twum-Danso (2010b) highlights social resistance to children's rights campaigns in Ghana that are advocating the elimination of corporal punishments in both the home and the school, as well as to law prohibiting parents and guardians against using corporal punishment. She writes that local people are taking that stance “because of a fear that their children will turn into ‘Western children’ or ‘white children’ if such laws were introduced into society” (Twum-Danso, 2010b: 55), thus echoing the label of ‘modern colonialism’ stated by the participants in my study in rural Malawi. Similarly, in her critique of the importation/universalisation of childrearing practices from the Global North, Monaghan (2012: 57) interrogates whether it “constitutes ‘intervention’ or ‘interference’ in the world's childrearing practices.” Thus, the use of harsh disciplining methods such as corporal punishment in moral socialisation of children remains widespread and controversial in this region and across the world.

Of course, in the Global North, the adage ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’ was a common *modus operandi* in parenting, used by some parents and guardians to justify harsh methods of disciplining children, and changes in attitudes and law have only shifted relatively recently within the past generation or so (see Österman et al., 2014; Forbes, 2017; Gershoff et al., 2017; Lansford et al., 2017). This may be attributed to widespread campaigns against corporal punishment and progress in enacting laws illegalising the practice, as stated earlier. However, the progress has been slow. Only about 10% of the global child population are legally protected by law from all forms of corporal punishment both in the home and school, as many governments around the world (including Malawi) prohibit corporal punishments in schools, but not in homes (UNICEF, 2014b, 2017b; Lansford et al., 2016; Fréchette

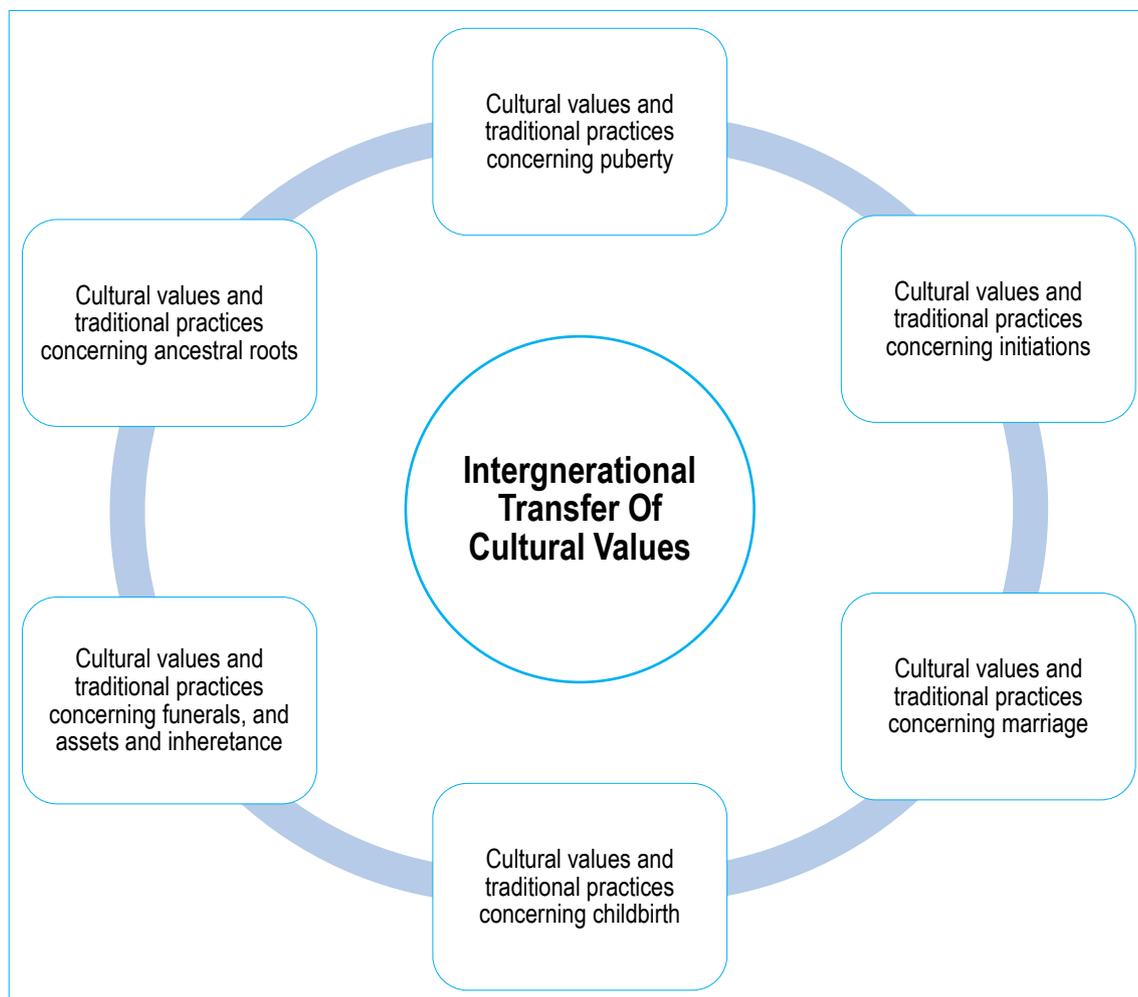
& Romano, 2017). Thus, many children, like orphaned grandchildren interviewed in this research in rural Malawi, are likely to be subjected to harsh disciplinary approaches.

Besides moral socialisation, grandfathers who participated in this study are also key players in the transmission of cultural values to their orphaned grandchildren, as explored next.

#### 7.4 INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF CULTURE

In much of Africa is common for older generations to take a particular effort to transmit their values to the younger generations. For instance, parents endeavour to transmit their cultural values to their children, and grandparent to their grandchildren. Similarly, grandfathers interviewed in this research stated that they endeavour to teach their grandchildren cultural values and other customs/traditions such as those presented below (**Figure 7.7**).

**Figure 7.7:** Examples of intergenerational cultural transfers in the research communities



Although different ethnic groups in Southern Malawi (e.g. Lomwe, Nyanja/Mang'anja, Yao, Sena) share some commonalities in their traditions, there are also important differences. For instance, the Yao follow patrilineal system of marriage while the Lomwe follow matrilineal.<sup>69</sup> Subsequently, although there are flexibility and some changes to these two systems of marriage (as discussed earlier), among the Yao, when a man marries, he is expected to live in his native village. In contrast, among the Lomwe, a man follows his wife and lives among her people. Thus, grandfathers in the research communities usually follow the trajectory of the predominant cultural script in socialising their orphaned grandchildren on various matters such as those outlined above (**Figure 7.7**). For instance, during interview, 21-year old Lusungu (male teacher) stated that “a grandfather tries his best that, if he has the culture of a Yao, then his grandchildren should also emulate that culture.” Further, grandfathers also encourage their orphaned grandchildren to attend cultural events in their communities (e.g. traditional dances) as a way of influencing them to follow cultural/traditional values. For instance, in **Figure 7.8**, 14-year old Lupita depicts people dancing *mg'anda* [a traditional dance] during one of the days she attended the event in her community.

**Figure 7.8:** People dancing *mg'anda*



**Drawing:** Lupita, 14 years, granddaughter.

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<sup>69</sup> There are transformations such that it is not uncommon for ethnic groups with different cultural practices (e.g. matrilineal versus patrilineal marriages practices) to interlace (see Phiri, 1983). In these research communities, some of the Yao are practicing matriliney (e.g. husband moving to his wife's place), probably due to the influences of the Lomwe and Nyanja/Mang'anja.

Like with the transmission of moral values, grandfathers may use *nthano* [folktales] as a vessel for conveying key messages about cultural values. Although some of the *nthano* grandfathers transmit to their grandchildren are for entertainment, the bulk of them serve to advise and educate them on various issues concerning their culture and other aspects of their lives, as outlined above in **Figure 7.7** (see also appendix 12 for an example of a brief *nthano* shared by one of the children in this study). Notably, grandfathers expect their grandchildren to preserve the *nthano* by memorising and teaching their friends as well as the next generation:

He [grandpa] uses *nthano* to teach us about our culture and about our ethnic group (Sangalatso, boy, 10 years – FGD).

[...] *nthano* are intended to teach us about our traditional practices [...] So, we listen attentively so that in future, we too, may sit down with our grandchildren and tell them these *nthano* (Mapula, 20 years, female – FGD).

... *nthano* is meant to advise about culture or good behaviour. Some *nthano* are just for fun... (Eugenio, 49 years, grandfather – FGD).

Although *nthano* are important vessels for socialising children in moral and cultural values, it was noted that the practice seems to be fading in contemporary rural Malawi. For instance, the research stated that, while it was common in the past for a family to gather around a fireplace or sit on the veranda or open ground in the evening and share *nthano*, such cultural/family practices are waning

In the past, we could stay like this while listening to *nthano* and the children were learning these *nthano* [...]. Such a family time is no longer common... (Rudolf, grandfather, 83 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

In the past, if you were visited by the grandparent, you were under pressure to care for them, but today, they are left in the homes only to meet in the evening. Even in the evening the children do not have time for them, they only rush for bed time. Can the children of today gather around their grandparent to listen to *nthano*? No! (Olwethu, 38 years, female, NGO staff - Key-informant interview).

When I explored factors contributing to the declining family moments of *nthano*, the research participants widely attribute the trend to children and young people's pursuit for modernity due to Western influences (especially modern ICTs). They stated that 'children of today' regard spending time at home with their grandfathers and sharing *nthano* as old-fashioned and a waste of time because they view their grandparents' wisdom as irrelevant to the modern society (see also Ingstad, 2004;

van der Geest 2004 for similar observations in Botswana and Ghana, respectively). They prefer listening to the radio (sometime alone in their *gowelo/mphala* [a residence for unmarried adolescents]), playing with mobile phones, and socialising at the video halls at the nearby trading centres:

They think they are wasting their time for nothing if they spend time at home with *Agogo*. All they mind about is watching videos (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather – FGD).

We [children] say, “well, that’s old fashioned! Me, sitting down and spending time with grandpa? [...] it’s old-fashioned!” We are hardly at home, we are always going out to socialise with our friends (JJ, 16 years, boy – FGD).

Nowadays, it’s very difficult a teenage boy around thirteen or fourteen to narrate a folktale. The reason is that they do not have time to stay around the elderly. They only have time for moving about (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).

Children’s attraction to video halls is creating moral panic among adults in the research communities, with many expressing that videos are turning children towards more indiscipline. During discussions, many people expressed concern that the fading of *nthano* and children’s tendency to sneak to video halls signifies the erosion of the local culture and replacement with Western values.<sup>70</sup> This is creating loneliness among some grandfathers because grandchildren spend much of their evening time socialising and watching videos at the video halls, and come back home late (e.g. 10pm) when their grandfather is already asleep:

I am usually *left alone here* at home. His friends come here and pick him and off they go to the trading centre to watch videos (Chikondi, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

This tendency by children to rush to video halls and ignore family values like *nthano* time is destroying our culture (Otulo, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

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<sup>70</sup> These include a wide range of both local and foreign videos covering violent, non-violent, pornography, gospel – local TV Series (e.g. Tikuferanji), Western (Hollywood), Nigerian (Nollywood), Indian (Bollywood/ Pollywood), Chinese Kung Fu films, and international football (particularly English Premier, African Cup of Nations, and World Cup).

### 7.4.1 A Clash of Cultures?

Whyte et al (2008) state that “generational relations imply a specific historical experience and differing positions regarding the past and the present” (p. 9). Whyte et al (2008, p. 8) further state that:

When historical generations or particular age grades compare the past and the present they often do so in terms of the way children, parents, and grandparents relate with one another. In these discussions, discourses of complaint and neglect are common, mostly but not only voiced by the older generation. In certain cases, the past is not only remembered as a better time; it is also seen as a source of tradition highly relevant to the present.

Similarly, evidence emerging from this study suggests conflicts and ambivalences arising from modernity. Participants in the research communities acknowledged several benefits of modernisation. For instance, they mentioned technology as one of the most important transformations arising from modernity that is changing the lives of people, especially technologies such as mobile phones, radio, and electricity. They explained that technologies such as the mobile phone ease communication with relatives about important matters in their families.<sup>71</sup> During family events such as weddings, initiations, and funerals, they reach their relatives living elsewhere easily by mobile phone. Women also mentioned that in the past (before the availability of electricity) they were pounding/grinding maize in *mtondo* [a wooden mortar] and taking long hours to produce *ufa* [maize flour] for *nsima*. With the availability of electricity, they now take the maize to *chigayo* [maize-mill] if they have the money to pay, and if there is no electricity/power blackout, *ufa* is quickly produced, and they go back home and continue undertaking other household chores.

Despite these positive attitudes towards modernity more generally, and technology in particular, many adults (e.g. parents, guardians, local leaders) in the research communities widely complained that influences of modernity are alien to the local culture and proliferating bad behaviours among children (see de Klerk, 2011 for similar sentiments in neighbouring Tanzania). They expressed that children are learning behaviours that are contrary to the local culture through videos, internet, and mobile phones. For instance, they cited that children are rude – e.g. they stand

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<sup>71</sup> Despite the high levels of poverty, ownership of mobile phones is common in Malawi, even among poor Malawians in rural areas.

when talking to parents or other adults, because, apparently, they copy this from the videos. Culturally, when talking to parents or other adults or giving them things (e.g. water to drink), boys and girls in Malawi are expected to squat and kneel, respectively. However, many grandfathers, parents, other guardians, and other research participants expressed dismay that such customs/traditions are waning, with many children speaking to their parents while standing and sometimes answering them back when being reprimanded. Further, they also stated that children are experimenting with sex at young age due to early exposure to sexually explicit video material (as discussed earlier), are copying immodest dressing from the videos (e.g. miniskirts, tight clothes, loosely-belted low hanging trousers), and have 'strange' social habits (e.g. spending time alone on the phone). This demonstrates the intersections of culture and generation in shaping adults' and young people's everyday lives, such as their attitudes towards modernity.

Some children and young people interviewed generally agreed with the concerns or sentiments raised by parents, grandparents, and other guardians. While acknowledging that things are changing, and they are now adapting to 'new things' and 'new lifestyles', they expressed reservations about some of these 'new things' and 'new lifestyles', stating that some are not good and are contrary to the local culture. A case in point was that of dressing. Some of the children and young people explained that, nowadays, children and young people are moving away from traditional ways of dressing (which is viewed as modest) and increasingly dressing immodestly due to the influence of modernisation (i.e. the things they watch in videos). This was widely supported by girls than boys, thus suggesting gender differences among children and young people (**Box 7.6**).

**Box 7.6:** *Children's views about the influence of modernisation on dressing*

*People in the past dressed modestly by wearing long dresses and skirts, but these days, children/youth are fond of wearing short skirts/dresses to the extent of exposing their thighs to the public [laughs], which is not a good thing. It is better to dress long skirts/dresses as your parents want you to (Zinzi, 16 years, female – FGD).*

*A girl like myself, I cannot put on leggings and pass-by where my father is sitting with that kind of outfit, it's not a good thing. The best and appropriate way to dress is like the way I have dressed... my skirt [long skirt], because... [laughs] I cannot put on leggings when my mother doesn't like it, because that means I am disobeying her. When a girl puts on a miniskirt and exposes her thighs to the public it implies that you are living an immoral life, maybe you are a prostitute. So, you have to dress modestly (Agness, 15 years, female – FGD).*

However, it was noted that, given a choice, many children and young people interviewed in this study would prefer following modernity (e.g. dressing styles they watch in video) to the traditional way of life as demanded by their parents and guardians. Indeed, many children and young people I talked to had loosely belted trousers, miniskirts, tight clothes, loosely-cut and/or bare-back clothes, shaved their heads in styles that resembled Western celebrities, some were calling each other with nicknames of Western celebrities such as 50 Cent. Thus, many children and young people may not always share the views raised by adults that these lifestyles represent moral decay. For children and young people, what they copy from videos represents a 'modern' life, a life that is suitable for 'a youth of today' and admired by their peers.

Thus, peer pressure seemed the most important factor influencing children and young people's views. For instance, many explained that they disregard how their parents want them to dress and follow the dressing styles they watch in videos because they want to fit into the 'culture' of their peers in their neighbourhood, community, and at school. This demonstrates how culture (traditional versus modernity) and generation intersect and influence the lives of adults and young people in these communities. Below, I provide a sample of the conflicting views by children and young people versus parents and other adults in the research communities to highlight the controversy brought about by modernity in contemporary rural Malawi (**Box 7.7**).

**Box 7.7: Adults' and children's views on the impact of technologies on their lives**

Adults' Views	Children and Young People's Views
<p>[...] at the video halls, they show pornography [...] Videos are bringing lots of bad things [...] In the phones there lots of things like WhatsApp and so forth, things that are bringing a strange lifestyle, a strange life such that they are spending lots of time chatting with the phone, sometimes from morning until evening and you ask yourself like, "what is it that he/she is doing on the phone?" (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather – FGD).</p>	<p>...the way life is these days, if you dress following traditional dressing, you are not doing yourself good, because you compare yourself and your peers, and you notice that what you are wearing is not on, it's better you follow how your peers are dressing (Christopher, 14 years, male – FGD).</p>
<p>Our culture is fading and a new culture is permeating ours, one that is not good at all. For me and other elders, we see that these videos are bringing bad things. The children are seeing the nudity of their mothers in the videos. And, a child who watches the nudity of their mother in the video cannot respect their mother when they come home [...] So, the children of today do not respect their parents, it's all because of these videos (Rudolf, grandfather, 83 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).</p>	<p>Your parents tell you to put on a long skirt and nsalu [wrapping cloth], but your friends, as we have already said, that 'children of today', they start laughing at you, saying, "look at her, she's dressing like a granny, she is wearing a long skirt and also nsalu." So, your peers may laugh at you and this may make you to feel like, "the way they are mocking me, should I continue wearing this kind of outfit? Let me try to change" (Anastasia, 13 years, female – FGD).</p>
<p>Children these days when they watch something in the video they copy such things [...] In the past boys didn't know sagging trousers because there were no videos [...] The girls too, same thing, they just dress very short skirts [...] with a slit that goes as far as 'I don't know!' All these are wrong, but they copy them from videos (Marrinetta, 49 years, female – FGD).</p>	<p>...the parents actually say that we [the boys] should be wearing a decent trouser, as opposed to casual wear like jeans, and not kuyoyola [sagging], that we should put it as up as on the waist. However, with how dressing fashionably has taken our country Malawi, it is hard to dress decent clothes. So, as a youth, if you dress a decent trouser and put it right on your waist, it will be a strange thing for your peers to see you dressing like that, and they may mock [...] it is important to follow what parents want, but for us the youth, and what we want, it's hard to follow [...] it is difficult for us to go back to traditional things (Alick, 17 years, male – FGD).</p>
<p>These children are mainly corrupted by the movies/videos they watch. They go there [at the video hall] soon after knocking off from school. They watch material that is not right. So, once they reach home, they don't respect the people they live with. It is proving to be a challenge. They are rude [...] The videos are bringing bad behaviours in children because sometimes they are exposed to explicit material not suitable for their age. So, this contributes to their unruly behaviour. They don't listen to their guardians, they're uncooperative (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).</p>	

Notably, other children and young people who participated in this study are striving to strike a balance between traditional ways of life and modernity. During our discussions, it was unequivocal that while some children and young people viewed this issue of tradition versus modernity as binary (i.e. either they support one or the other), others clearly struggled to choose one over the other. They cited the good and bad of both tradition and modernity. Thus, they proposed a hybrid of the two where only the things they view as good in tradition are maintained while also adapting to the good things presented by modernity. Notably, many of the things they say they like adapting to within the framework of the modern life are in direct contrast to tradition, for instance, dressing (as shown above). This mismatch

between the expectations of parents and guardians versus those of children and young people is a common source of intergenerational conflict as the two generations tussle over what is appropriate. On the one hand, the grandparents (as with many parents, and other guardians such as uncles and aunts) feel undermined when their grandchildren do not follow their instructions, advice and counsel. On the other hand, children feel their rights are violated when they are told to do certain things, as one adult participant eloquently stated:

There are conflicts like on dressing, I can give an example of dressing tight clothes, like in my case I cannot permit a child to dress tight skirt. Yet, you try to advise them, they are rude. It is some of these issues that lead to conflicts between the grandparent... the grandparent concludes that the children are being rude and undermining, and to the child, he/she thinks that his or her rights are being violated (Olwethu, 38 years, female, NGO staff – Key-informant interview).

Interestingly, for children who do not want to disappoint their parents and guardians, or fear punishment or reprisals, they choose to live a double life. For instance, they dress in the clothes of their choice and cover them with another that their parents or guardians want them to wear while they are at home or in the presence of their parents and/guardians. However, as soon as they go out of the home, they remove the clothes and remain with the clothes of their choice. When coming back home, they cover the clothes of their choice again. Other girls put on their preferred clothes (e.g. miniskirts) and cover them with *nsalu/chitenje* [wrapping cloth] while at home, but as soon as they are out, they remove the *nsalu* and remain wearing the clothes of their choice.<sup>72</sup> Further, other girls and boys put on what parents want them to, but carry/hide another pair in the bag. As soon as they are out, they remove those clothes their parents want them to put on and dress the ones they hid in the bag, as described by one of the young people:

When it comes to culture, we may wish to follow what our parents are telling or advising us, but then what happens is that you see your friends going to disco or somewhere to watch or play football and you know it yourself how people are supposed to dress when going to play or watch football. So, to follow what the parents want, a naughty/wayward child may take the clothes

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<sup>72</sup> *Nsalu* usually covers girls/women from the waist to the ankle. Thus, it is normally used to ensure that girls/women do not expose their thighs and sometimes even their calves in public. Conservative parents and guardians demand that their daughters put on *nsalu* both at home and in public except when going to school when school uniform should be worn.

and put them in another bag and then put on the kind of clothes that his/her parents want him/her to dress. Once he/she reaches the place where the football is being played, he/she will find a place to change and put on the clothes that the parents disapproved. When going back home, he/she will change again and put on the clothes he/she wore earlier when he/she was leaving the home (Emmanuel, 17 years, male – FGD).<sup>73</sup>

This highlights how children and young people have developed innovative ways to outwit the surveillance by parents and guardians to not only please them and address intergenerational conflict, but also fit into popular youth culture in contemporary rural Malawi. Nonetheless, it emerged clear during this study that children's lure to modernity and Western lifestyles (e.g. dressing styles they copy/imitate from the videos they watch) is a common source of intergenerational conflict. As grandfathers are striving to preserve their culture, grandchildren are embracing a new culture, thus epitomising the intersection of culture and generation. Nevertheless, grandfathers interviewed in this research shared that despite these important challenges, they do not give up on their grandchildren; they continue teaching them about their cultural values as conceived by the older generation.

#### **7.4.2 Are Intergenerational Conflicts New?**

The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren in Africa has been described as one that is filled with emotional closeness, compassion, and reciprocal rewards (Young & Ansell, 2003; Alber, 2004; Geissler & Prince 2004). For instance, grandparents and grandchildren in Malawi (as elsewhere in Africa) jokingly/playfully refer to each other as 'husband' and 'wife' as an expression of affection, and their interaction often defy the hierarchical age-based relations characterizing parent-child relations (Mphande, 2004; see also Ruel, 2002; Alber, 2004; Geissler & Prince 2004; Whyte et al, 2004; de Klerk, 2011; van der Geest, 2004). This romanticised depiction of grandparent-grandchild relations in Africa seems to ignore the existence of tensions. However, as shown above, intergenerational relationships in Malawi, and SSA more generally (as is elsewhere), are characterized by not only solidarity (e.g. reciprocal care – see chapter 10), but also tensions and conflicts, as well as ambivalences (Whyte et al, 2008). This has

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<sup>73</sup> This kind of resistance by children to adult authority is universal, and signifies children's agency to defy adult control.

been the case in Malawi and societies across the world from time immemorial. For instance, consider the striking resemblance of the following quotations from the ancient Greek Philosopher Socrates versus Schapera's (1940) work published more than half a century ago about the Botswana society versus views of children and young people in a recent multicountry study in Malawi, Ghana, and South Africa by Porter et al (2015) that investigated how mobile phones are [de]constructing intergenerational relationships in contemporary SSA (**Table 7.1**).

**Table 7.1: Intergenerational conflict across generations in time**

Socrates, 4BC, Ancient Greek	Schapera (1940: 265-266) cited in Whyte et al (2008: 10)	A 19-year-old female South African in Porter et al (2015: 44) study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for their elders and love chatter in place of exercise; they no longer rise when elders enter the room; they contradict their parents, chatter before company; gobble up their food and tyrannise their teachers."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nowadays, in fact, complaints about the behaviour of the children have become very common. It is said that they are cheeky and ill mannered, showing little respect for their parents and still less for other elderly people; ... they have no morals in matters of sex, and their promiscuity is ruining the tribe, and filling it with bastards; they have lost all discipline and think only of their own pleasure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I told her that she must stop comparing our time with their time. Our generation is completely different to theirs. I told her that our generation revolves around technology."</li> </ul>

Thus, in SSA (as elsewhere), the intergenerational gap is considered the catalyst for many intergenerational tensions and conflicts. Like my findings in rural Malawi (as presented earlier), other scholars have noted that there is a constant comparison between the historical past and the present, and these culminate into mismatches of an ideal world, paradoxes and ambivalences, and different expectations between older and younger generations (Ingstad, 2004; Mphande, 2004; Oduaran & Oduaran, 2004). As the older generation strives to uphold and preserve the utopian past, the younger generation views the old life as unappealing and unfitting to the contemporary world, thus tensions and conflicts occur (Aboderin, 2004b; Geissler & Prince 2004). Further, there is also the "objectification and valuation of tradition, as practices, knowledge, and beliefs from the past that take on significance in contrast with those of the present" (Whyte et al., 2008: 10. Sometimes, the complaints from the older generations typify notions of the seemingly eroding gerontocracy, and a way of ensuring their needs are met by the other generation(s), as captured by Whyte et al (2008: 10):

It seems to us that elders' expressions of dissatisfaction should be seen as a struggle over respect and reputation; their complaints reveal what is at stake in the so-called generation conflict. The rivalry between young and old is expressed in the older people's insistence that they lived honourable and admirable lives in a morally superior era. This assertion is a way of countering the experience of being marginalised today, through the workings of historical forces or personal neglect and mistreatment from their children and grandchildren. Several anthropologists have argued that this 'complaint discourse' is effective; it enables older people in various African societies to ensure respect and support from the younger generation.

Whether the "golden age" (Ingstad, 2004: 65) really existed is questionable. Evidence from the Global North indicates that tensions and conflicts have existed for millennia, something which may also be the case in parts of Africa. Thus, intergenerational tensions and conflicts are not new in SSA (as elsewhere). However, the impact of contextual factors brought about by globalization cannot be ignored. For instance, Western influences, urbanization and rapid rural-to-urban youth migration, and widespread adoption of new technologies are challenging, influencing, and changing the landscape of family life such as kin networks and intergenerational relationships (Aboderin, 2004a, 2004b; Whyte et al., 2008; Porter et al., 2012, 2015). Although some of these are not new in SSA (e.g. migration), they still present important contemporary challenges to family life (e.g. intergenerational relationships) in modern-day Africa, thus cannot be disregarded.

Globalization is not a new phenomenon (Dicken, 2011) and its impact on society remains controversial (Berry, 2008; Berggren & Nilsson, 2015). For some, it is associated with advancements in trade, capital flows, and investments, and technology and information flow, and overall development (Berggren & Nilsson, 2015; Pieterse, 2015). For others, globalization is regarded as a threat to, inter alia, "domestic cultures, social cohesion and stable economies" (Berggren & Nilsson, 2015: 371). For instance, some have argued that it creates economic power imbalances (e.g. unequal playing field for global trade) between the Global North and Global South (Pieterse, 2015) and perpetuates poverty through neoliberal (capitalist) economic policies (e.g. those of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) that may not be in tandem with local needs. Thus, globalization has social, economic, cultural, and political implications for families, particularly in the developing countries, including Malawi. Intergenerational conflict arising from modernity (e.g. infiltration of technologies such as videos and mobile phones) is one

of the important impacts experienced in rural Malawi such as the communities visited during this study. Nonetheless, as Twum-Danso (2010a: 352-353) notes, intergenerational conflicts in much of Africa (including Malawi) “do not necessarily cause rupture and tension between generations.”

In addition to transmitting moral, and cultural values, grandfathers in rural Malawi teach their grandchildren religious values, as discussed below.<sup>74</sup>

## **7.5 INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF RELIGION**

Religious parents and guardians in many societies across the world endeavour to pass on their religious values (e.g. knowledge and attitudes) to their children to create generational and intergenerational spiritual/religious capital (Khawaja et al., 2016; Patacchini & Zenou, 2016; Min et al., 2017). As stated in chapter 3, almost everyone in Malawi (99.5%) has a religious affiliation (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Subsequently, religion forms the basis of life for most Malawians. Similarly, all the grandfathers interviewed in this study have a religious affiliation. Subsequently, they endeavour to transmit their religious values to their grandchildren. They do this in multiple ways, including being role models to them, praying together with them in the home, taking them to places of worship (church and mosque), and encouraging them to commit themselves to religious matters. For instance, Takondwa (75 years) said that during the week he encourages his grandchildren to attend madras (Islamic school) to learn the Koran, and takes them to Friday prayers. Other research participants concurred and highlighted that many grandfathers teach their orphaned grandchildren issues regarding religion:

Since we are such devoted Muslims, we [the grandfather and the grandmother] encourage the children to go to Madras after they come from school to learn, and they come back home in the evening (May, 70 years, grandmother – In-depth interview).

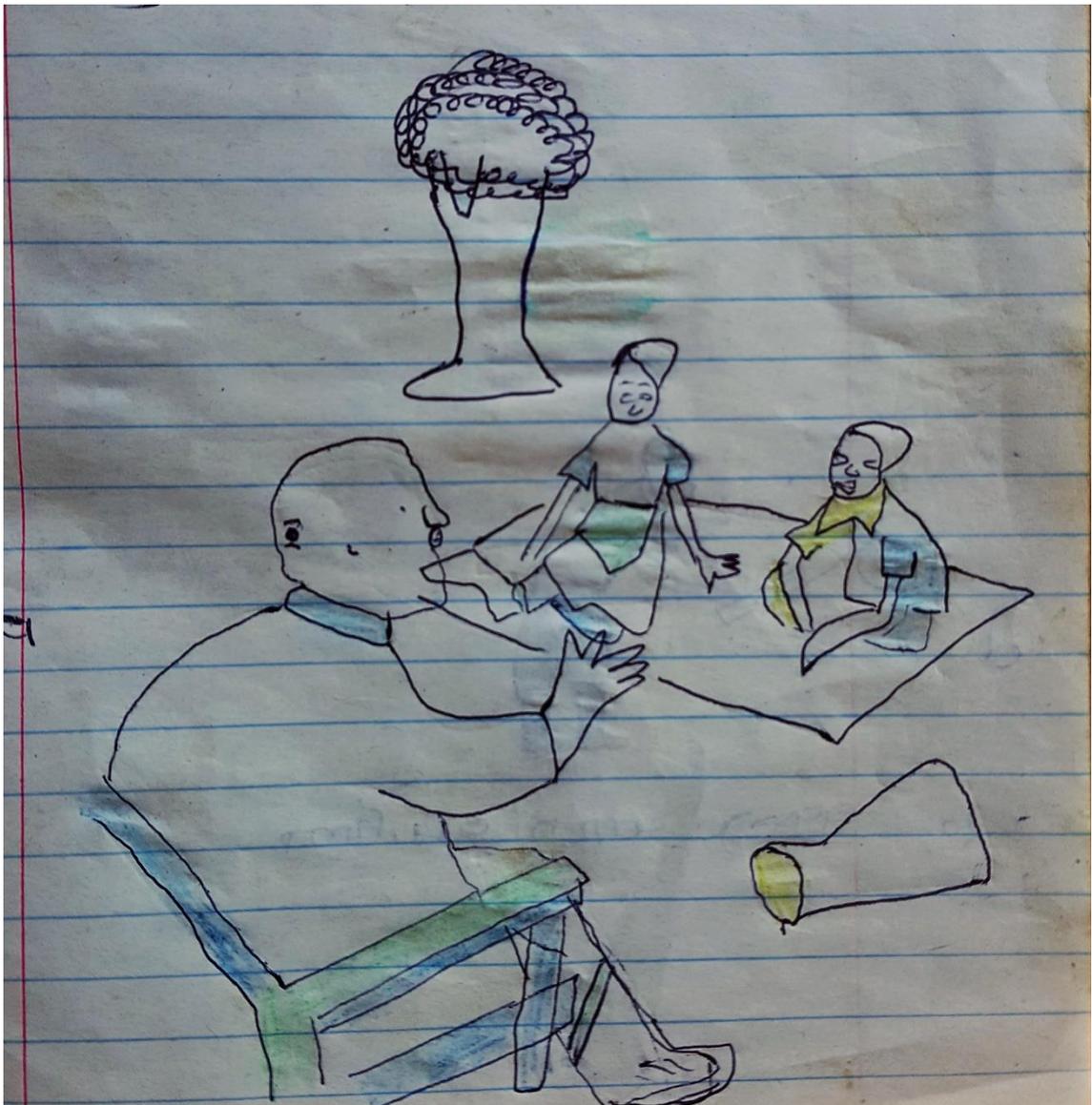
Religion is taught to children by the grandfather. So, some grandparents call their grandchildren together and sit down with them and talk to them about the Word of God (Lamona, 41 years, female – FGD).

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<sup>74</sup> This emerged as a lesser theme, hence less data and a shorter section. Given most Malawians practice religion, it is possible that the participants overlooked sharing about generational and intergenerational transmission of religion.

In **Figure 7.9**, 13-year old Miguel depicts his grandfather Takondwa (75 years) teaching him and his sister, Fiona (11 years) about religion (Islam). During the interview about this drawing, Miguel and Fiona shared that Takondwa spends time with them, usually in the evening or afternoon, after lunch, to teach them verses from the Koran.

**Figure 7.9:** A grandfather teaching his grandchildren about religion



**Drawing:** Miguel, 13 years, grandson.

Thus, the role of grandfathers in the research communities in socialising their orphaned grandchildren also includes religious socialisation.

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

Like chapters 5 and 6, this chapter set out to engage research question 2 on the theme of grandfathers' role in orphan care in rural Southern Malawi. Using a preponderance of evidence from talking with various research participants in the research communities in rural Southern Malawi, the chapter demonstrates that grandfathers (both in single-grandparent and dual-grandparent households) are central to the intergenerational transmission of values and knowledge through socialisation of their orphaned grandchildren. Given the importance of socialisation in shaping children into what is expected in the society as well as helping them to become self-reliant in future (James, 2013; Wentzel, 2014; Smetana et al., 2015), the role of grandfathers as agents of socialisation should not be overlooked.

The chapter also shows that, in socialising their grandchildren in moral values, grandfathers use various methods, including physical/corporal and emotional punishments. They seem less concerned about the emotional and psychological impact of some of their disciplining methods. However, some of the evidence emerging from the study, particularly from children, suggests that some of the punishments may have emotional and psychological impact on children. Further, some of the disciplinary methods grandfathers employ when disciplining their grandchildren are quite controversial in light of government policy on the elimination of corporal punishment in school and homes, as well as international conventions such as the UNCRC. However, this study reveals that these punishments are common not only among grandfathers, but also among parents and other guardians in the research communities, and are accepted by some children as part of their moral socialisation. This also mirrors the situation in other parts of SSA and the Global South more generally, and in the Global North, thus highlighting their widespread use in many societies across the world.

The chapter also demonstrates that there are important intersections that influence intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values. Specifically, in their pursuit to socialise their orphaned grandchildren, grandfathers navigate complex intersections of cultural norms about gender, generation, and social transformations. None of these intersections (gender alone, or generation alone) is sufficient to independently explain a grandfather's transmission of knowledge and values to his orphaned grandchildren. Thus, intersectionality provides a better

framework and analytical tool to aid our understanding of the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in the research communities in rural Malawi.

Besides intergenerational transmission of moral, cultural, and religious knowledge and values as presented in this chapter, grandfathers also play an important role in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values concerning sex and sexuality, and gender. Thus, the next chapter explores this role of grandfathers to further provide evidence that grandfathers may contribute significantly to orphan care than is currently assumed/acknowledged in research, policy, and programmes on grandparenting and orphan care in SSA.

## **CHAPTER 8: GRANDFATHERS AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF SEXUAL EDUCATION AND GENDER ROLES**

### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

Extending from the previous chapter, this chapter engages with research question 2 about the theme of grandfathers' contribution to orphan care in rural Southern Malawi. Specifically, it explores grandfathers' role in intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values concerning sex and sexuality (sexual education) and gender through socialisation. The chapter shows that a grandfather's roles in this respect is influenced by the interplay and intersections of cultural norms about gender, poverty, livelihood needs, and age. Thus, no single factor or category of social difference (e.g. gender alone, or poverty alone) is sufficient to independently explain this grandfathers' role. The sections that follow expound on these findings.

### **8.2 INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF VALUES CONCERNING HETERONORMATIVE SEXUALITY**

Although other researchers have commented that parents and guardians in African societies rarely discuss sexuality with children (Delius & Glaser, 2002; Wilbraham, 2008; Chappell, 2016), socialisation of orphaned grandchildren in issues concerning heteronormative sexuality emerged as one of the key roles of grandfathers who participated in this study. Specifically, grandfathers are agents of socialisation for grandchildren on cultural learning and expectations on issues concerning heteronormative sexuality (i.e. sexual relations between people of opposite sexes). They stated that this is particularly crucial in contemporary rural Malawi because of children's early exposure to pornography and increased sex experimentation. Thus, they socialise their grandchildren about biological and bodily changes (particularly during puberty), the dangers and consequences of premarital sex, and the benefits of abstinence from sexual activities. For instance, they warn their grandchildren about the eventual risks of premarital sex such as teenage and unwanted pregnancy, and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections:

I tell them that, "slow down on having sexual relationships with boys, slow down. These days the world is too dangerous." That's what I teach them (Zolani, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

These are common concerns for many parents and guardians in rural Malawi as well the government and its development partners (e.g. local and international NGOs

such as YONECO, Save the Children, UNICEF) particularly for girls (Maluwa-Banda, 2003; Grant, 2012; GoM, 2014b; Kendall & Kaunda, 2015). Thus, grandfathers interviewed in this study stated that they set and enforce surveillance and monitoring to safeguard their grandchildren from premarital sexual activities (e.g. restricting them to be at home before sunset).

Notably, social and cultural expectations in their communities, as well as their grandchildren's gender are important factors that intersect and influence a grandfather's socialisation of their orphaned grandchildren in heteronormative sexuality. There are notable differences in how they socialise their granddaughters versus their grandsons. Specifically, there are explicit cultural boundaries safeguarding the nature and extent of what grandfathers can socialise their granddaughters on issues concerning sexuality. The participants in the research communities explained that they expect grandfathers and granddaughters to discuss sexuality, but it must be done broadly and selectively such that sensitive issues are left out:

In many cases, you [the grandfather] finds it difficult to advise your granddaughters explicitly... [...] It is difficult, really, because you have to select what to say to her such that you cannot cross a certain line [...] you tell yourself that, "this is the boundary" (Eugenio, 49 years, grandfather – FGD).

I do not feel comfortable to talk with my granddaughters about certain important things in her life like puberty and body changes (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Key-informant interview).

A grandfather cannot be open to you, a girl, on issues of sexuality... (Anastasia, 13 years, female – FGD).

Consequently, when the grandfather, or the granddaughter, or both disregard or breach this cultural norm, it is considered a taboo and often construed by the relatives and the wider community as a sign of the existence of inappropriate sexual feelings between the grandfather and his granddaughter.<sup>75</sup> Interestingly, though, the research participants stated that when it comes to socialisation concerning sex and sexuality, culture is restrictive on grandfather-granddaughter dyad, but loose

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<sup>75</sup> This resonates with what Geissler and Prince (2004: 98) found among the Luo in Kenya, stating that, unlike grandmother, grandfathers "can (imagine to) sire children up to their death and should therefore not be physically close to their grandchildren."

on grandmother-grandson dyad. This is because, unlike the grandfather-granddaughter dyad, sexual relationships are least expected to occur/develop between grandmothers and their grandsons. Subsequently, people are less suspicious of the grandmother-grandson socialisation on issues concerning sexuality, as 28-year old Chifuniro (male) explained during FGD: “she [grandmother, 75 years] can advise a grandson pretty much on/about everything. That is very possible. But, if a grandfather advises her [woman, 31 years] in certain areas, she will be suspicious of him.”

Nevertheless, there still exist cultural boundaries safeguarding socialisation on issues concerning sexuality among some grandmothers and grandsons. For instance, during our discussions, Khumbo (13 years, male) and Christopher (14 years) shared that they find it hard to discuss body changes (e.g. nocturnal emissions) with their grandmothers because of gender differences. It was noted that when such situations occur in dual-grandparent households, they create gender matching whereby grandfathers and grandmothers socialise grandsons and granddaughters, respectively, on issues concerning heteronormative sexuality (**Box 8.1**).

**Box 8.1:** *Gender-matching in dual-grandparent households in rural Malawi*

*Well, there is special advice for a girl because a woman and a man are different. So, if they want to advise the girl about certain issues concerning sexuality, they take her and talk to her privately. So, it is not possible to sit down with both the boys and the girls and advise them together. The girl goes to the grandmother and she talks with her privately. Similarly, the boy goes to the grandfather and he talks with him privately (Tisetso, 52 years, grandmother – FGD).*

*When it comes to issues concerning sexuality, the grandfather looks after the boys while the grandmother looks after the girls. There is general belief that once a girl reach puberty, a grandfather should not explain to her about what is expected of her. Those issues are dealt with by the grandmother. This is how things are done (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).*

Consequently, cultural boundaries on grandfathers and granddaughters on socialisation regarding sexual matters may create feelings of ‘ignorance’ on sexual issues among some granddaughters in single-grandparent households. For instance, some of the girls interviewed expressed that they feel ignorant on some sexual issues because they cannot ask their grandfather about them. Such granddaughters may seek and receive information on issues concerning sexuality from peers. Also, some grandfathers may utilise family and social capital to ensure their granddaughters receive necessary socialisation concerning heteronormative

sexuality. For instance, some of grandfathers mentioned that they send their granddaughters to adult female relatives (e.g. aunts) or non-kin, or initiation camps prior to or during pubescence for socialisation concerning heteronormative sexuality:

If the grandfather is caring for granddaughters and grandsons, what happens is that you, the grandfather, advise the boys in any way without limitations. You touch on any aspect of their life. For the girls, you find an elderly woman or other people to sit down with her and talk to her, so that the women should tackle the areas where you the grandfather can't talk about (Eugenio, 49 years, grandfather – FGD).

What is noticeable though is the emergence of 'new alternatives' to these local arrangements. It appears that modernisation and the accompanying new technologies in rural Malawi (e.g. videos, mobile phones, and internet) are offering alternative sources of information and socialisation on issues concerning sexuality for children and young people. For instance, some of the children in the research communities mentioned watching pornography in video halls and on the internet through their phones as a source of information about sex and sexuality.

The research participants also stated that although initiation camps were the leading source of information on issues concerning sexuality among some ethnic groups in the research communities (e.g. circumcision among the Yao) and religious groups (e.g. Muslims), their role is now less influential.<sup>76</sup> For instance, there is now free and voluntary circumcision for boys (after consent from parents/guardians) and men in public hospitals and health centres across the country. For the children, they stated that due to the harsh reputation of initiation camps (e.g. use of razorblades or sharp knives without anaesthesia during circumcision, forcing children to bath in cold water in the rivers early in the morning, denying children meals, and floggings – see also Vincent, 2008), they find these modern sources of socialisation concerning sex and sexuality less traumatic, hence preferable.

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<sup>76</sup> Initiation camps are one of the primary sources of socialisation of children regarding sex and sexuality (e.g. conjugal rights, menstruation), predominant among the Yao, Lomwe, Mang'anja, Nyanja, Ngoni, and other ethnic groups in Malawi. Some initiation camps involve circumcision of boys and genital mutilation of girls. Children as young as 6 years are sent to these camps to learn about sex and sexuality. However, not all families and cultures, and religions send their children to initiation camps.

However, many grandfathers, parents, and other guardians interviewed in this research expressed disapproval for voluntary circumcision championed by government, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Apparently, these sources of circumcision are eroding cultural norms. They stated that circumcision is a private matter that should not be advertised in public as government and NGOs are doing in their campaigns. Importantly, they emphasised that, while health centres and hospitals offer the best services for physical circumcision, they lack a focus on other aspects of sex and sexuality that are taught in initiation camps that prepare children for adulthood as husbands and wives, and father and mother. As such, they find circumcision in health centres and hospitals incomplete. Moreover, the chiefs, elders, and other people who run initiation camps also gain some benefit from patronage.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the introduction of voluntary circumcision for boys (after consent from parents/guardians) and men in public hospitals and health centres is viewed as a threat to not only the local cultural institutions, but also income generation for the chiefs and elders.

Besides technologies (e.g. videos), children in the research communities and elsewhere in Malawi are also accessing knowledge on sex and sexuality through the education systems (e.g. through subjects such as Biology, and Life skills). While this is not new in Malawi, the school curriculum has been revised recently such that teaching on topics of sexuality (e.g. topics on puberty, body changes, pregnancy, and reproduction) now starts in early/junior primary school levels (i.e. Standard 3 – usually 9-year olds) as opposed to senior levels (i.e. Standard 5 – usually 11-year olds) as it was in the old curriculum. Although the new school curriculum is less explicit compared to the pornography children are exposed to from other sources such as videos, both of these ‘new sources’ of information for children’s knowledge on sexuality are creating anxiety among adults in the participating communities. During our discussions, grandfathers, chiefs, parents, and other guardians stated that they are concerned because exposing children to material not suitable for their age provides premature teaching to children on issues concerning sexuality. They stated that this signifies moral decay because of Western interferences in the local

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<sup>77</sup> Parents and guardians who send their children to initiation camps pay a fee and contribute livestock (usually a chicken per child) and other gifts. Thus, the dawn of voluntary circumcision in government hospital and health centres has reduced number of children sent to initiation camps, hence the contributions.

institutions of socialisation on issues concerning sexuality. One of the chiefs summed up the concern as follows:

[...] the books that have been introduced in schools are sexually explicit [...] The children read these illicit materials way ahead of their proper age. Such kind of education is not suitable for young children... (Ishan, 48 years, chief – FGD).<sup>78</sup>

Despite these important challenges, it was observed that grandfathers in research communities still occupy an important place in their orphaned grandchildren's socialisation concerning heteronormative sexuality. Notably, not all children have money for paying entrance fees to watch videos. Also, not all aspects of socialisation concerning sex and sexuality are addressed in the videos the children watch and/or the school books. Further, some children are also forbidden by parents and/or guardians from going to video halls. Thus, grandfathers' role in this respect remains important despite the challenges.

Besides socialising their orphaned grandchildren in heteronormative sexuality, grandfathers also endeavour to teach their orphaned grandchildren gender roles and identity with reference to rural Malawian culture, as explored below.

### **8.3 INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF LIVELIHOOD SKILLS AND GENDER ROLES**

Grandfathers who participated in this research are among the network of people instrumental in socialising children into livelihood skills and gender. Their contribution in this regard serves two purposes, namely: 1) to transmit livelihood skills/strategies (i.e. productive and reproductive work) to secure the household's daily needs; and 2) to transmit gender for sociocultural purposes to meet social expectations in their communities. In both cases, grandfathers' socialisation of their orphaned grandchildren is influenced by the intersections of poverty, livelihood needs, age, and gender norms.

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<sup>78</sup> Views about the education systems teaching children sexual material that is not appropriate for their age are not limited to rural Malawi or Malawi generally. There are unresolved debates around the world about the benefit versus harmful impact of sexual education, as well as the appropriate content for specific age groups, with variations across cultures and countries (e.g. see Rigsby, 2006; Kirby et al., 2007; Steib, 2007; Ahmed et al., 2009).

### 8.3.1 Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Values of Livelihood Strategies

Much of SSA is underdeveloped (Ghura & Grennes, 1993; Calderón & Servén, 2008). Consequently, much of the daily productive and reproductive work, particularly in rural areas, is undertaken manually, is labour intensive, and is time consuming. Thus, a household's survival in much of this region largely depends on the contribution of family members to daily livelihoods activities (Abebe & Skovdal, 2010; Laird, 2002; Mugisha et al., 2015). For instance, Twum-Danso (2009b: 425) notes that, in Ghana, "without the collective action of all family members in labour the multitude of poor families risk destitution..." Subsequently, rural children at least work alongside other family members to meet daily livelihood needs. This is also reflected in children's socialisation.

Similarly, grandfathers who participated in this study are committed to socialising their orphaned grandchildren in productive and reproductive work to meet daily livelihood needs of life in rural Malawi.<sup>79</sup> The bulk of livelihood activities in grandfather-headed households (as in the general population) visited during this research revolves around farming and other economic activities (e.g. *ganyu*, small businesses). As such, performing and fulfilling daily livelihood-related roles and responsibilities is vital for the functioning and survival of many grandfather-headed households (as in the general population). However, it is almost impossible for a grandfather to undertake all the daily work of household tasks single-handedly. Thus, grandfathers socialise their grandchildren in various tasks to augment their efforts of meeting the everyday household's livelihood needs. This demonstrates how poverty and livelihood needs intersect and influence grandfathers' socialisation of orphaned grandchildren in the participating communities.

Like non-orphans, orphaned grandchildren in the research communities are introduced to productive and reproductive work at a young age (usually under five years) to contribute to the daily household's livelihood needs. They are expected to participate in the household's domestic chores, acquire life skills (e.g. erecting *thandala* [dishrack]), and undertake agricultural and other economic activities (e.g.

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<sup>79</sup> See chapter 10 for further discussion on children's productive and reproductive work.

*ganyu*, small businesses) (see chapter 10). For instance, they are sent to run errands within the neighbourhood (borrow or give back household utensils) and/or help with small tasks in the home (e.g. being sent to get salt inside the house, giving water to adults to drink) appropriate and suitable for their age.

The photo below (**Figure 8.1**) was taken by 75-year old Takondwa and it portrays his youngest grandson Yankho (6 years) helping his older siblings, Miguel (13 years) and Fiona (11 years), putting maize in the bag to transfer it into the house due to impending rains. When I spoke to Takondwa, he explained that this is one of the chores Yankho is socialised in to equip him with knowledge of understanding the importance of proper food storage. Although Yankho is expected to participate in this household chore, he is still exempted from undertaking heavy household chores such as carrying heavy loads of water and firewood until he becomes older. Thus, the kind and volume of work the children undertake are changed as they master their chores and transition from younger to older age. Subsequently, older orphaned grandchildren are assigned more difficult and laboursome chores and generally spend several hours performing them everyday, while the younger orphaned grandchildren undertake easier and fewer tasks and spend lesser time doing chores.

**Figure 8.1:** *Yankho, Fiona, and Miguel transferring maize into the house*



**Photograph:** Taken by Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather.

Socialisation of grandchildren into productive and reproductive work at a young age mirrors common childrearing practices in rural Malawi, and in the country more generally, whereby children as young as 3 years old participate in daily chores in their household (Gladstone et al., 2010; Mawaya & Kalindekafe, 2010; Kapulula, 2015; NSO Malawi & ILO, 2017). For instance, Kambalmetore et al (2000) note similar childcare practices in rural Lilongwe, stating that children 4 to 5 years old are expected by their parents and guardians to, inter alia, run errands and carry messages, carry water on their head (suitable amount for their age), and wash dishes. This is also consistent with childrearing practices in general population in other parts of rural SSA such as in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania, Nigeria and, Zambia, (e.g. see Robson, 2004a; Guarcello et al., 2005; Allais, 2009; Edmonds, 2009; Bourdillon et al., 2010; Heissler & Porter, 2010; Laird, 2015; Phiri, 2016). For instance, in rural Ethiopia and Kenya, children as young as 5 years tend goats, and from 7 years, boys herd cattle and goats (Archambault, 2009; Orkin, 2012). During the dry season, they walk long distances for 2 hours or more, looking for pasture for cattle, and many work an average of over 5 hours in a day (Orkin, 2012).

Likewise, Laird (2002) observes that, among rural Ghanaians, children are initiated into household chores as soon as they can understand simple instruction to carry out small tasks within the household and in the neighbourhood. Later, Laird (2012: 99) explains that, in Ghana and other parts of SSA, “children from a young age are expected to start making a contribution to the domestic and economic life of the household”, and this shapes how they utilise their time, skills, and engage in labour and other responsibilities suitable for their age. Porter et al (2010c) agree and state that children in rural Eastern Cape in South Africa start to contribute significantly to the household chores from the age of 6 years. Schildkrout (2002: 355) notes that among the Hausa in northern Nigeria, children as young as 7 years old “are expected to be able to do things on their own, assume responsibility, and carry out tasks independently.” Kielland and Tovo (2006: 57) observe that “most African children start to work at an early age [and that] by the time they are 3 or 4 years old, their contribution in the household is needed and expected, however small it may be.”

Thus, parents and guardians endeavour to socialise their children/wards in myriad chores in their household for smooth family functioning and to meet livelihood

needs. Therefore, because of this socio-economic and sociocultural context, children's work in SSA is part of parenting and normal life and children's upbringing/socialisation (Ansell, 2010; Hilson, 2010; Skovdal & Andreouli, 2011; Maconachie & Hilson, 2016). As such, it is not surprising that socialisation of grandchildren in productive and reproductive work emerged as one of the key themes in this research.

### **8.3.2 Intergenerational Transmission of Gender**

Similar to parents and other guardians in their communities, grandfathers who participated in this study are concerned with what will become of their orphaned grandchildren regarding the roles they will play in the future in their households as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and as men and women in the wider community. The social identity of 'a real man' or 'a real woman' in their communities is defined by one's competency in undertaking culturally-defined gender roles for men and women. Echoing what other researchers have observed in other rural parts of Malawi (Chimombo et al., 2000; Kambalmetore et al., 2000), a family's dignity/reputation in the communities visited during this study can be 'tainted' if one is not socialised 'properly' within the social scripts of what is appropriate for males/men and females/women. Thus, as grandfathers socialise their orphaned grandchildren in productive and reproductive work to meet household's livelihood needs, they align this with what is scripted in the social codes of their communities as appropriate for boys and girls.

Notably, although some roles and responsibilities have limited sociocultural boundaries and implications (e.g. regarding who should perform them – male versus female), much of grandfathers' socialisation of their orphaned grandsons and granddaughters in productive and reproductive work in the research communities follows distinctive gender trajectories (i.e. masculine and feminine roles, respectively). Thus, gender norms influence how grandfathers socialise their orphaned grandchildren in productive and reproductive work. **Table 8.1** provides examples of typical gendered productive and reproductive work orphaned grandchildren undertake that were compiled during various activities in this research study.

**Table 8.1: Gendered roles for children in this study**

Work for Boys	Work for Girls	Work for Both Boys and Girls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erecting and repairing home facilities/utilities such as grass fence surrounding the house, dishrack, kraal, bathing place/area, and maize silos/granary.</li> <li>• Thatching roofs.</li> <li>• Cutting/chopping firewood</li> <li>• Cutting grass.</li> <li>• Tending/herding livestock in the pastureland, and/or looking for livestock fodder.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooking</li> <li>• Cleaning dishes</li> <li>• Cleaning inside the house</li> <li>• Fetching water</li> <li>• Collecting firewood</li> <li>• Childcare – taking care of the younger children / siblings (e.g. feeding, bathing them, playing with children, childminding)</li> <li>• Caring for family members during illness/sickness</li> <li>• Doing <i>Ganyu</i></li> <li>• Mudding houses</li> <li>• Washing clothes</li> <li>• Taking maize to the <i>chigayo</i> [maize-mill] for grinding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in the fields (e.g. harvesting crops) and vegetable gardens.</li> <li>• Sweeping around the home compound.</li> <li>• Post-harvest food processing tasks (e.g. shelling maize, groundnuts).</li> <li>• Chopping firewood*</li> <li>• Gathering firewood**</li> <li>• Taking maize to the <i>chigayo</i> [maize-mill] for grinding***</li> <li>• Selling commodities – for boys, usually younger ones</li> <li>• Running errands (e.g. to the shops for purchases).</li> <li>• Doing <i>ganyu</i></li> </ul>

**Notes:** \* Typically done by boys.  
 \*\* These are typically done by girls, but some boys may fetch firewood.  
 \*\*\* Girls normally carry on the head; boys usually use bicycle and wheelbarrows.

Further, because of gendered social expectations among the participating families in this research, grandfathers in single-grandparent families/households may experience challenges to socialise their granddaughters/girls in livelihood skills and strategies because such role is for women (e.g. a grandmother). This worsens if there is no relative nearby to help with the granddaughters'/girls' socialisation in feminine tasks. Similarly, such a grandfather may also find it difficult to undertake feminine tasks (e.g. fetching water, cooking) when his granddaughters are at school. Thus, if he needs something or feels hungry, he may wait for his granddaughters to come back from school and cook for him because he is concerned that if he cooks, people will mock/ridicule him for undertaking 'women's chores/work', as summed below by one of the grandfathers:

Let's take for example that the girl in the household has gone to school. For the grandfather to go out and get some fire away from the compound. He is likely to feel uncomfortable to do that. He is likely to stay hungry, waiting for the children to knock off from school so that he can to send them on such errands. He feels that he cannot to do such feminine tasks because of feeling that people will be laughing at him. They will be saying that he should not be fetching fire. Even when there is no water at home, for him to get a jerry can to go and draw water, he finds it hard, much like he is stepping out of boundaries unto other people's territory, that is, into tasks that are performed/undertaken by females (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).

Another important finding emerging from orphaned grandchildren's gendered productive and reproductive work as outlined in **Table 8.1** is that granddaughters, particularly the older ones, carry the burden of the bulk of the chores and spend more time working in the home. This can be attributed to cultural norms about gender matching (discussed later in this section). As stated in chapter 5, grandmothers spend much of their day in the home carrying out feminine tasks while grandfathers go outside the home to look for economic opportunities (e.g. *ganyu*) to support their households. Because of this, granddaughters spend much time with their grandmothers performing numerous feminine chores, usually within the home and neighbourhood. Grandsons, however, may accompany their grandfather to his ventures outside the home (e.g. to undertake *ganyu*), but usually have few chores to complete and subsequently more study and social time.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, in many cases, girls particularly the older ones, bear the brunt of many of the household chores compared to boys, such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water, and collecting firewood, while their brothers are out with their grandfather or socialising in the neighbourhood. Even when boys are around the home, it is unlikely for them to undertake the chores the girls usually perform because they consider these chores as feminine. Older boys may perform such roles only/usually when there is no female household member, thus signifying how cultural norms about gender and age intersect and influence socialisation of orphaned grandchildren and the undertaking of productive and reproductive work in these households. Subsequently, for many grandfathers, parents, and other guardians, who participated in this study, raising girls is advantageous in this regard (**Box 8.2**).

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<sup>80</sup> This is particularly more prevalent in households that follow conservative gender roles where boys are not obliged to undertake feminine chores. See also Alber (2004) for similar findings in Benin (West Africa).

**Box 8.2: The advantages of raising girls over boys**

*The difference is that these girls know that there's no water in the household and they go and fetch the water. They know that there's no firewood in the house and they what, they go and fetch firewood. Yeah, "it's now getting dark, let's prepare food", and they prepare food. But for a boy he cannot what, he cannot do such things [...] With the lack of income we usually experience these days, the girls go in the field and fetch some masamba a maungu/nkhwani [pumpkin leaves], they fetch those vegetables and are like, "should we just sleep on empty stomach? No! Let's do something." And then they cook them and then they cook nsima and we eat. But for a boy child, it is really different (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

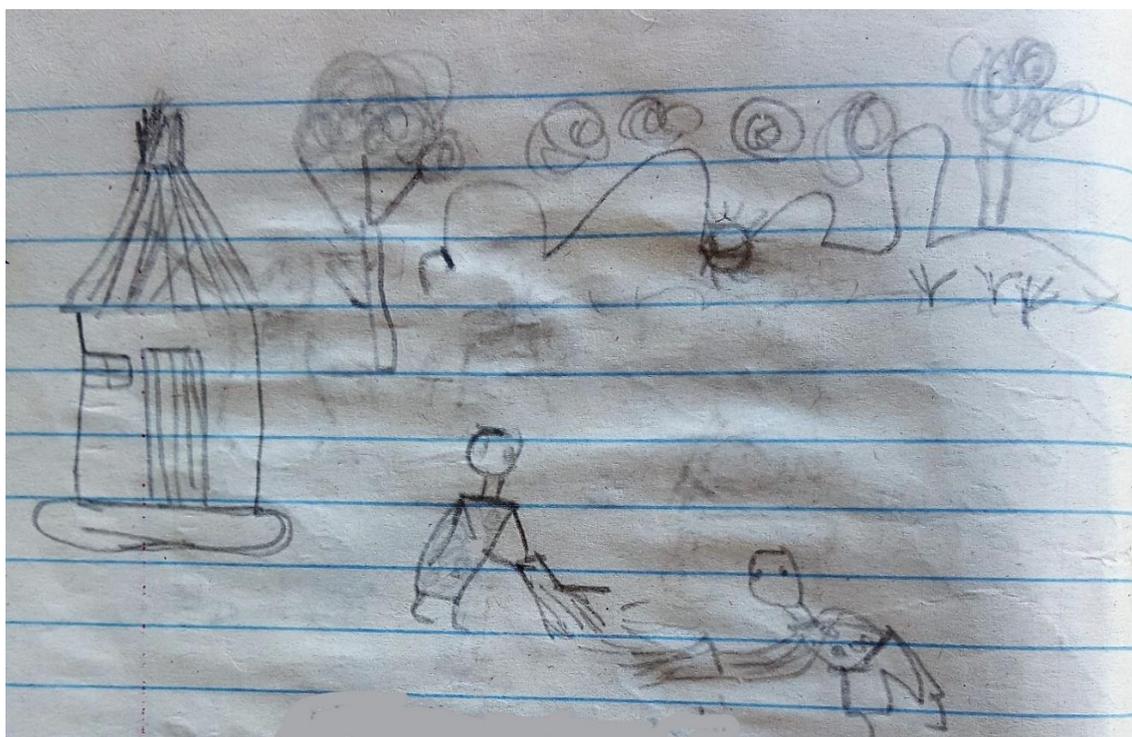
*Girls too have an advantage. Boys usually go and spend lots of time out of the home as they please while a girl may always be around the home, fetch water, cook, clean dishes, clean inside the house and surrounding the home. She does everything in the home, yet a boy is away socialising with his friends. So, girls, too, have their advantage (Warona, 38 years, female – FGD).*

Although this difference in volume and time of household chores undertaken by granddaughters versus grandsons was not statistically measured in this study, it reflects the general trends in the Malawian society where girls are expected to spend more time in the home, performing numerous chores compared to those undertaken by boys (Davison & Kanyuka 1990; Chimombo et al., 2000; Kadzamira & Chibwana, 2000; NSO Malawi & ILO, 2017). For both granddaughters and grandsons, however, and as hinted above regarding culture, gendered socialisation and subsequent gendered division of household chores generally reflect gendered roles and identities in the research communities that are imparted both in the household and in the wider community and society.

Also, as noted in other regions of SSA such as in Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (e.g. see Robson, 2004a, Guarcello et al., 2006; Edmonds, 2009), the socialisation of orphaned grandchildren into gender roles in this research is more apparent in older children (usually aged 8 years and above) than their counterparts because small children can cross gender binaries/boundaries more easily than older children (especially approaching puberty and after puberty) who are approaching adulthood and expected to conform to social gender norms. This suggests that the intersection of gender norms and age in influencing what chores grandchildren undertake is lesser prevalent in young children as compared to older children. Nonetheless, these intersections offer a nuanced understanding of the division of labour between and among grandsons and granddaughters in the research communities.

Evidence emerging from this study also suggests that social norms regarding gendered divisions of labour may be transgressed in exceptional cases, for instance, when a grandfather is raising grandsons only, or granddaughters only, as well as when a grandfather does not strictly adhere to social norms.<sup>81</sup> Also, as can be noted from **Table 8.1** presented earlier, some of the household chores orphaned grandsons and granddaughters are expected to undertake may overlap. For instance, both boys and girls sweep around the home compound, sometimes together (**Figure 8.2**), because this chore is not strictly considered masculine or feminine.

**Figure 8.2:** Orlando's drawing of a boy and a girl sweeping the house



**Drawing:** Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.

However, it emerged strongly that, in many cases, the bulk of household chores are undertaken based on orphaned grandchildren's gender (male/masculine versus female/feminine) as is reflected in the wider rural Malawian society. Grandfathers and other research participants in this study stressed that grandsons are less likely

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<sup>81</sup> There was no household among the grandparent-headed households I visited that had grandsons only. However, it is not uncommon to see boys or men undertake feminine tasks such as cooking in households where no girls or women are present, or the workload is too much. In my own childhood growing up in rural Malawi with my maternal grandparents, there were no gender distinctions in household chores. There was only one girl and four boys, and we [the boys] helped my grandmother and my female cousin with what the community viewed as women's work. When we first arrived to live with my grandparents, we used to receive insults from our peers and the community in general, but this gradually stopped as people became used to us.

to undertake tasks that are considered feminine or women's work by people in their communities such as cooking, cleaning dishes, caring for younger siblings. Like other boys in the wider community, grandsons are wary of how the people in their community would react seeing them performing 'women's work'. Similarly, girls hardly ever perform chores considered masculine. Again, this signifies how cultural norms about gender and age intersect and influence children's productive and reproductive work in these participating communities.

The gendered division of labour in the communities researched in rural Malawi, and subsequent gendered socialisation of orphaned grandchildren and other children in these communities replicate what has also been previously reported in other parts of rural Malawi (Kambalantore et al., 2000; Mawaya & Kalindekaffe, 2010; Mkandawire, 2012; Kapulula, 2015; NSO Malawi & ILO, 2017). For instance, Chimombo et al (2000) study in Southern, Central, and Northern Malawi (i.e. Mangochi, Mchinji, Kasungu and Nkhata-bay) reports clear roles for boys and girls that adhered to socially expected and accepted gender roles for men/boys and women/girls, with the differences being quite striking (Chimombo et al., 2000). Subsequently, the majority of socially defined feminine tasks such as fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, cleaning dishes, caring for younger siblings and ill/sick family members, and carrying maize to the *chigayo* [maize-mill] to process *ufa* [maize flour] were girls' responsibilities (Chimombo et al., 2000). Boys, on the other hand, focused on socially defined masculine chores/tasks such as fishing, thatching roofs, erecting home facilities/utilities (e.g. dishrack, bathing place), digging pit latrines, tending/herding livestock, livestock (e.g. cattle, goats), doing *ganyu* (Chimombo et al., 2000).

In the research conducted for this study in Zomba, it emerged clear that a swapping of gender roles in dual-grandparent households in the research communities of rural Southern Malawi may be a source of social concern and ridicule, particularly for boys, thus signifying conservative attitudes towards gender roles in these research communities and elsewhere in the country. For instance, although children generally spend more of their time with their grandmothers than with grandfathers, grandsons are not expected to be absorbed in feminine chores (e.g. cooking). When they do, they may be considered 'silly', a lesser man, and be subjected to mockery by their peers and the wider community, as one of the participants describes:

Our culture is that a boy shouldn't be near women and busy spending lots of time with them [...] the perception is that the women would turn you [the boy] into a sissy. You'll be a silly person if you grow up with a life of a woman [...] A grandfather is busy with a boy, teaching him various male-oriented tasks that he'd later use when he becomes 'a man' (Cristobal, 32 years, male – FGD).

Thus, a departure from normative gender roles among the people in the research communities is interpreted as a dilution of culture.<sup>82</sup> Similar social views have been noted in rural Lilongwe (Central Malawi) and Mwanza (Southern Malawi) districts (Kambalantore et al., 2000; Mawaya & Kalindekaffe, 2010). For instance, in their study in Mwanza, Mawaya and Kalindekaffe (2010: 105) report that women and men who did not adhere to hegemonic gender roles were insulted by other community members because such practices were viewed as a travesty to culture, a “failure to adhere to cultural and traditional rules.” Intriguingly, though, there was one dual-grandparent household among the grandparents who participated in my study where such normative gendered socialisation of grandchildren in domestic work seemed less adhered to. Grandsons in this household undertake feminine chores such as fetching water (**Figure 8.3**). Although the boy (Miguel, 13 years) is not carrying the water on his head as it is typically done by women in Malawi, the fact that he fetches water (even though in a wheelbarrow) while there is a grandmother (May, 70 years) and a sister (Fiona, 11 years) in his household (who also fetch water) deviates from normative social expectations.<sup>83</sup> However, this is an isolated case, hence must be interpreted with caution because grandparents in this particular household had spent over a decade working for a white family in Zimbabwe. It is possible that this experience exposed them to alternative worldviews in the socialisation of children, hence influenced their socialising philosophy.

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<sup>82</sup> Feminist campaigners in Malawi have tended to focus on encouraging men to undertake what is viewed as women's work (e.g. cooking) and socialise boys into this lifestyle. However, little has been done on the other way round (e.g. encouraging women to undertake men's work) except in parity in employment circles. As such, some men view these feminist views as Westernised and an attack to local culture. Because of this, many, particularly in rural Malawi are antagonistic to these feminist views. The same is translated into socialisation of children.

<sup>83</sup> When boys and/or men fetch water, they usually use mechanised transport (**Figure 8.3** above) rather than carrying it on their head as women usually do (see also Robson et al., 2013), thus suggesting that they are still conscious of social reaction.

**Figure 8.3:** Miguel, using a wheelbarrow to fetch water



**Photograph:** Taken by Chiye, 14 years, grandson.

Thus, despite other research in rural Malawi that found boys doing feminine chores like fetching water (see Robson et al., 2013), there is widespread evidence from grandfathers and other participants who participated in this study that supports the point that social scripts concerning gender roles are strictly followed when grandfathers are socialising their orphaned grandchildren. Of the 20 grandparent-headed households in this study, only the household described above seemed flexible on this issue, and many seemed quite conservative on how they socialise their grandchildren in domestic work. They endeavour to fend off social mockery and preserve their family's reputation by strictly following normative social codes about what is appropriate for a 'real man' and/or 'real woman' in their communities. These normative gender roles are woven into the fabric of everyday routines of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. For instance, **Figure 8.4**, 15-year old Ottilia is performing an example of what she identified as her typical chores in daily life.

**Figure 8.4:** *Ottilia, preparing lunch for her family*



**Photograph:** Taken by Orlando, 13 years, granddaughter.

Conservative views regarding the roles of men and women in the rural Malawian society generally reflect social-cultural views about masculinities and femininities embedded in much of SSA (Mudege & Ezeh, 2009; Morrell & Jewkes, 2011; Makusha & Richter, 2016). For instance, Mawaya and Kalindekafu (2010) found that over 70% of the respondents in their study in Southern Malawi identified culture as the agent of existing gender roles and social relations in their communities, a finding consistent with an earlier study in rural Lilongwe, and another recent study in rural Mchinji, both in Central Malawi (Kambalame et al., 2000; Kapulula, 2015).

Elsewhere in SSA, Slegh et al (2013) highlight how men participating in a women's economic empowerment programme by CARE Rwanda in rural communities of the country hid from their community members when they were carrying out 'women's work' such as sweeping outside the house.<sup>84</sup> Similar views were noted over a decade

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<sup>84</sup> The programme aimed at changing men's attitudes and behaviours related to gender-based violence by questioning gender norms and power dynamics in rural Rwandan communities through engaging men as partners of women beneficiaries of the micro-credit initiative. Some of the key messages in the programme were to encourage men to undertake 'women's work' in their households.

ago in South Africa by Montgomery et al (2006) in their study on men's involvement in the family. The researchers state that men who cooked in their households were viewed by society at large as doing a 'woman's work'. This underscores the point that although changes have begun and 'alternative masculinities' are emerging with some men doing household chores previously viewed as 'women's work' (e.g. emotional care of family members and participation), there still exist views on conservative gender roles in much of Africa both in public spaces (e.g. school) and at home (see Silberschmidt, 2001; Ansell, 2002; Morrell et al., 2012; Hadebe, 2013; Everitt-Penhale & Ratele, 2015).<sup>85</sup>

Due to these strict sociocultural expectations of normative gender roles in the communities that participated in this study (as is elsewhere in the country and in other regions of SSA), gender matching emerges in the socialisation of orphaned grandchildren in dual-grandparent households. Granddaughters and grandsons in these households are primarily socialised in feminine and masculine roles, respectively, and by their grandmother and grandfather, respectively, as described below:

The grandmother is concerned with the girls, and the grandfather is concerned with the boys (Thandi, 57 years, grandmother – In-depth interview).

Grandmothers focus on the girls, like urging them to draw water.... While the grandfather focusses on the boys. A grandfather cannot call girls and ask them to cut grass in the bush. So, we do share sides [...] I still show little attention to the females, but the most attention is given to the boys (Ishan, 48 years, chief – FGD).

Due to these sociocultural expectations of normative gender divisions of labour and subsequent gendered socialisation and gender matching, there are common perceptions among some people in the research communities that grandchildren raised by a single grandparent may generally lack competency in some gender roles. For instance, the research participants stated that granddaughters raised by grandfathers may lack competency in how to pound/crush groundnuts in *mtondo* [wooden mortar] and sieve it in *lichero* [winnowing basket] to add in *ndiwo* [relish]

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<sup>85</sup> 'Alternative masculinities' are masculinities constructed in opposition to hegemonic masculinities (Morrell & Jewkes, 2011: 2). Hegemonic masculinities are "dominant forms of masculinity (such as physical toughness) but which are maintained through opposition to, and marginalisation of, alternative masculinities" (Mann et al., 2016).

such as *nkhwani* [pumpkin leaves] because their grandfather may not teach them these feminine skills due lack of practical knowledge. Similarly, grandsons raised by a grandmother alone may not master masculine roles and responsibilities due to the absence of a grandfather in their household, as described by one the young people:

If the child is growing up with a grandmother alone and is male, he does not learn/know male-oriented tasks. For instance, things like erecting a traditional bathroom, digging a pit latrine, erecting a dish-rack, you know, male-oriented tasks/chores, yeah? The things that a woman cannot do (Rafik, 16 years, male – FGD).

Notably, socialisation of orphaned grandchildren in domestic work and gender roles is one-sided or considered incomplete in single-grandparent households, unless there is another adult of the same gender as that of the grandchild. Nonetheless, in such households, a grandparent of the opposite gender may step-in and undertake the socialisation in domestic work and gender roles that could have otherwise been done by the absent grandparent. Thus, in the absence of a grandmother or an adult female relative, a grandfather raising granddaughters may teach them feminine roles. For instance, some of the children from single-grandparent household stated that their grandfather teaches them feminine chores such as cooking and cleaning dishes, as 13-year old Orlando (female) described during FGD: “grandpa teaches us how to cook *nsima* and *ndiwo* [relish] [...] also cleaning dishes.” Still, this may not be ideal as it would had the grandmother was around/available.

Generally, these findings on socialisation practices in gender roles and gendered division of labour are common in much of SSA such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, and Tanzania (e.g. see Robson, 2004a; van Blerk et al., 2008; Allais, 2009; Laird, 2012). This suggests that socialisation of children in gender roles is similar across much of SSA, and is usually influenced by the intersection of norms about gender and age of the children. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the gendered divisions of household labour are not homogeneous in SSA. For instance, a critical examination of some of the studies in the region shows that there are also some differences with what emerges from my study in rural Malawi. For instance, while studies in Zambia (Phiri, 2016) and Ethiopia (Orkin, 2012) show that cleaning dishes, sweeping the house, fetching water, collecting firewood, and mopping the house are chores carried out by both boys and girls, these are generally regarded as feminine in rural Malawi, hence a girls' domain and responsibility. Usually, boys

rarely undertake these tasks except in isolated situations where there is no female household member to perform such chores. Further, Phiri (2016) mentions cutting of grass in the bush as one of the tasks performed by girls in Zambia, and Hollos (2002) reports that girls herd cattle in Tanzania. In rural Malawi, both tasks are usually considered masculine and are performed by boys (e.g. **Figure 8.5**), thus it is extremely rare to see a girl cutting grass or herding livestock (e.g. cattle, goats). These differences suggest that caution must be exercised in interpreting the findings of my ethnographic study in rural Malawi against these previous studies in neighbouring countries and other parts of SSA.

**Figure 8.5:** Mzamo, tending his grandparents' cattle



**Photograph:** Taken by Apatsa, 14 years, granddaughter.

#### 8.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to address research question 2 about the role of *grandfathers in orphan* care in rural Southern Malawi. Evidence from discussions with various research participants in the research communities shows that grandfathers play an important role in the intergenerational transmission of values and knowledge concerning heteronormative sexuality and gender. Thus, as with chapters 5 through 7, this chapter demonstrates that grandfathers who participated in this study are at

the epicentre of their orphaned grandchildren's everyday life – as agents of intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values through socialisation.

The findings presented in this chapter also suggest that in their pursuit to socialise their orphaned grandchildren in these aspects, grandfathers navigate the intersections of culture (i.e. gender norms), age, poverty, and livelihood needs. Thus, none of these intersections (gender alone, or culture alone) is sufficient to independently understand intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values in as far as grandfathers' and their orphaned grandchildren's lives are concerned. This suggests that using intersectionality in this study provided a better analytical tool to understand the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in this respect.

Overall, the findings presented in this chapter replicate what has been previously reported in Malawi and other parts of SSA. This suggests that despite some variations, a grandfathers' socialisation of orphaned grandchildren generally reflects common childrearing practices in the general population in rural Malawi and other parts of SSA.

Reflecting on what has been presented thus far, what has strongly emerged from the interactions with various participants in this study is that grandfathers' role in their orphaned grandchildren's lives is quite challenging, particularly those of securing livelihoods and providing educational needs of their orphaned grandchildren, due to generalised poverty in their households as is in the general population of these rural communities. Thus, the next chapter explores their livelihoods to understand how they navigate their everyday life in their quest to provide for their orphaned grandchildren's daily needs.

## **CHAPTER 9: POVERTY, LIVELIHOODS, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR GRANDFATHERS RAISING ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN**

### **9.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter engages with the theme that emerged from investigations of research question 3 about the livelihoods of grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi to understand more of their everyday life experiences. The chapter demonstrates that grandfathers use livelihood diversification to provide for their orphaned grandchildren's needs. Their livelihood strategies are gendered such that they usually follow masculinities in their communities, thus signifying the influence of culture (i.e. gender norms). The chapter also shows that despite diversifying livelihood strategies, many of the grandfathers' livelihoods are inadequate to meet even their orphaned grandchildren's daily basic needs. This is because of old age and poor health. This is further worsened by unfavourable weather conditions for farming activities. Thus, the intersection of age, physical health, and weather conditions are important factors in understanding a grandfather's [in]ability to care for their orphaned grandchildren. Further, the chapter also shows that, despite facing livelihood challenges, kin, community and public welfare safety nets available in their communities are limited, irregular, and unreliable. Moreover, despite their presence, many public welfare safety nets hardly benefit grandfathers in single-grandparent households and their orphaned grandchildren because many poverty interventions are gendered (i.e. distributed on the basis of gender) and target households with grandmothers because, apparently, care of orphans is usually associated with grandmothers and not with grandfathers. This signifies how cultural norms about gender disadvantage a grandfather's access to social support programmes. The sections that follow expound on these findings.

### **9.2 POVERTY AMONG GRANDFATHERS CARING FOR ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN**

As stated in chapter 3, many Malawians in rural communities are very poor. The national and district economic profile described in chapter 3 mirrors the lives of people in the research communities, including grandfathers. Many grandfathers interviewed stated that they were suffering and hardly afford even basic needs, a view widely corroborated by other research participants:

We are suffering. We just go into the fields and collect pumpkins and cook and eat and sleep [...] our daily life is characterised by a lot of suffering (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

It's always difficult for the grandfather to find resources to adequately support grandchildren. The grandchildren lack food, soap, clothes, yeah, and so forth... the things that a child needs in daily life (Kenwood, 17 years, male – Pilot Interview).

Of the 15 grandfather-headed households participating in this study, only one (belonging to 75-year old Takondwa) could be described as better-off (**Table 9.1**).<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> 'Better-off' in this study does not necessarily signify wealth or income status much above the poverty line, but rather better conditions compared to other households in the research communities. See Ellis and colleagues (2003) for similar conceptualisation and operationalisation in their study on livelihoods and rural poverty in Zomba and Dedza districts.

**Table 9.1: Takondwa's family versus the other grandfather-headed households visited**

### Takondwa's Family

- *Takondwa's family has a dairy cow that produces a minimum of 5 litres of milk per day on good days (i.e., when fed properly) and they sell it at K250 (~30p) per litre. They also have a solar panel. They use it to charge people's mobile phones at a fee of K50 (~6p) per phone. The family also has a radio, mobile phones (for the grandfather and grandmother). Their house has a roof with iron sheets, though with a mud floor. One of their sons works in South Africa, another is a teacher – both send financial support and clothes for the grandparents and the children. The grandfather is a spiritual/African doctor; thus, he has regular customers from within and outside the community who pay him for his services, based on their problem. The grandfather boasted that he makes sometimes over K14,000 (~£16) per month through all these IGAs. Indeed, during the days I visited them, I observed a small TV (which he referred to many times during our discussion) in their living room as I was chatting with them on the veranda. During our discussion, Takondwa and his grandchildren stated that they spend time in the evening watching videos, and sharing nthano. They have tea with bread/buns/potatoes/cassava for many of their breakfasts – a thing that is not common for many rural Malawian households. They have expensive equipment (e.g. a wheelbarrow, a couple of bicycles). They hire people to work in their fields during the growing season, and usually harvest more than they need for consumption.*

### The Other Families Compared to Takondwa's Family

- *Different from Takondwa's family, the rest of the grandfather-headed households visited could be described as ultra-poor (as per official definition presented in chapter 1). They lack the assets Takondwa's family has, except one grandfather who had a mobile phone, radio. Though this grandfather was a retiree, like the rest of grandfather-headed households, he had no viable livelihood strategies except farm produce from smallholder farming (see section 9.3.1). It was clear that the grandfathers were struggling to meet the needs of their household, including their orphaned grandchildren. None of these households had a TV. Although five of them had iron sheets on their roof, it was not a marker of wealth because they had built these houses during middle adulthood when they were able to generate income.*

Thus, orphaned grandchildren who are raised by grandfathers who participated in this study could be described as vulnerable. For instance, **Figure 9.1** shows examples of grandchildren's bedclothes in one of the grandfather-headed households. Lupita (14 years), who took this photo, said that they use reed mats and old blankets, and have no mosquito nets because they cannot afford mattresses, sheets, and pillows. She explained that she took this photo to show how her family was struggling to meet even the basic needs in life.

**Figure 9.1:** Examples of children's bedclothes in rural Malawi



**Photograph:** Taken by Lupita, 14 years, granddaughter.

Besides poverty, many grandfathers are caring for large numbers of grandchildren, ranging from 1 to 8, and averaging 4 per household (see appendix 11). This makes it extremely difficult for them to provide their grandchildren with adequate basic needs in daily life, as described below:

Considering the number of grandchildren that I have mentioned, oooh! it's not easy for everyone to eat and be full! [...] for all of them to eat and be happy, it means I have struggled a lot [...] I fail to support them adequately. I support them, but with struggles because of poverty. Aaah, their sleeping place is not good. Even clothes, they don't have good clothes [...]. The biggest challenge is poverty (Frank, 76 years, grandfather– In-depth interview).

Grandfathers interviewed in this study expressed concern about the lack of adequate provision for their orphaned grandchildren's material needs due to poverty which may lead them into immoral behaviours. For instance, they mentioned that some girls in their community engage in transactional sexual activities to generate money for buying clothes. Boys steal other people's property such as crops in the fields. Matt describes the dilemma he faces as a grandfather living with his orphaned grandchildren:

My main problem is lack of food. So, my worry is on the children, particularly when they are hungry, they may think of stealing in order to survive. They may steal cassava and sweet potatoes from other people's fields (Matt, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Due to generalised poverty among grandfathers in the research communities, I explored their livelihood strategies to understand how they navigate and survive their difficult economic circumstances, as discussed below.

### **9.3 LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES FOR GRANDFATHERS CARING FOR ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN<sup>87</sup>**

The majority (85%) of Malawians live in rural areas, and 93% of rural households depend on smallholder farming, with 93% of them engaging in crop production, and 52% rearing livestock – albeit in small numbers (NSO, 2012a, 2014; NSO & ICF International, 2017). Thus, the country's economy is also primarily agro-based with tobacco, tea, sugar, and coffee being the country's main exports (NSO & ICF Macro, 2011). Although animal husbandry and cash crop production by smallholder farmers (except tobacco) are underdeveloped, the agricultural sector remains the main economic driver for rural livelihoods in Malawi (including Zomba District), contributing to 75% of the country's rural income (Chirwa et al., 2008; Tchale, 2009; Chinsinga & Chasukwa, 2012).<sup>88</sup> Like most of the population in rural Malawi and elsewhere in SSA (Ellis & Freeman, 2004; Devereux, 2009; Loison, 2015), the economic life of grandfathers that participated in this research is characterised by livelihoods diversification (Smith et al., 2001; Adato & Meinzen-Dick, 2002; Andersson, 2011). Typically, as with other people in rural Malawi, grandfathers in the research communities use a portfolio of multiple, sequential or simultaneous, multi-spatial coping and adaptive livelihood strategies to navigate the poor rural economy and provide for their daily needs. These livelihood strategies include on-farm (agricultural/farming), off-farm (exchange of agricultural labour – *ganyu*), and

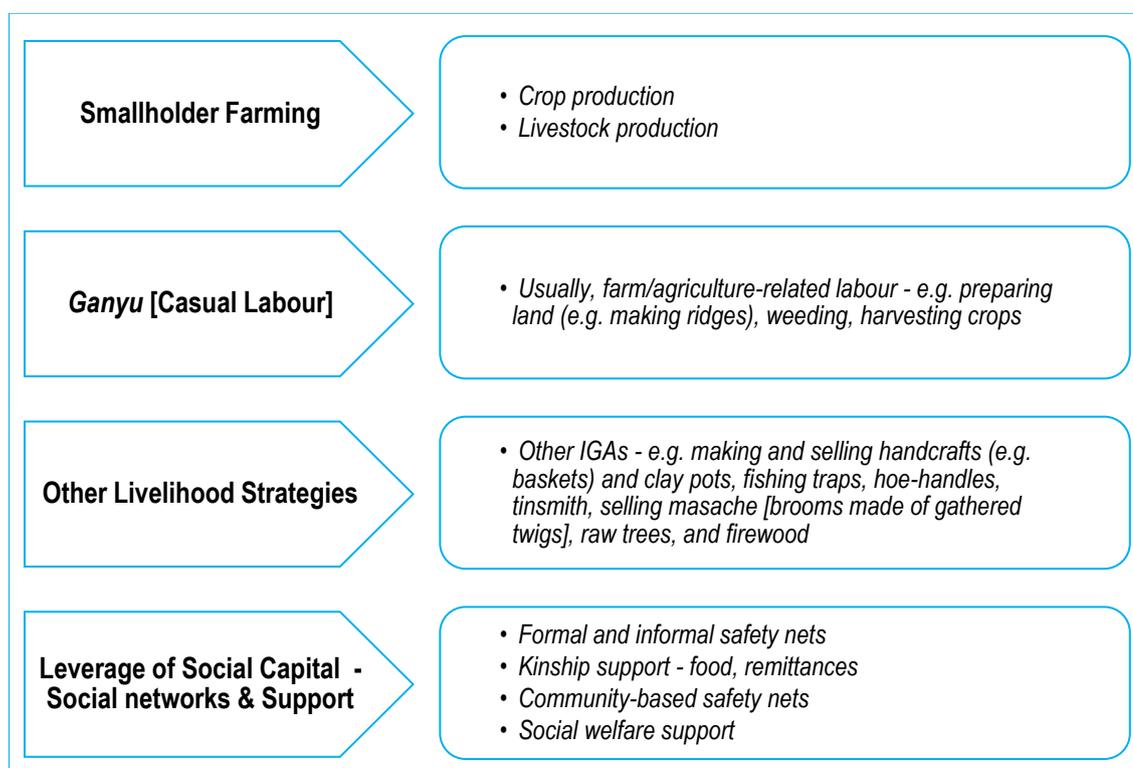
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<sup>87</sup> Chambers and Conway (1992: 5) define a livelihood as “stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs.” Livelihood comprise of “people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and assets.” Livelihood strategies (also called household strategies) are the “multiple activities carried out, simultaneously or sequentially, to obtain income, food security, well-being, and other productive and reproductive goals” (Bezner-Kerr, 2005: 169; see also Ansell et al., 2016).

<sup>88</sup> Poultry (mostly chicken) is the most common livestock for rural households (ZDA, 2009).

non-farm (e.g. small businesses, other IGAs, remittances, social support) activities, as summarised below (**Figure 9.2**).

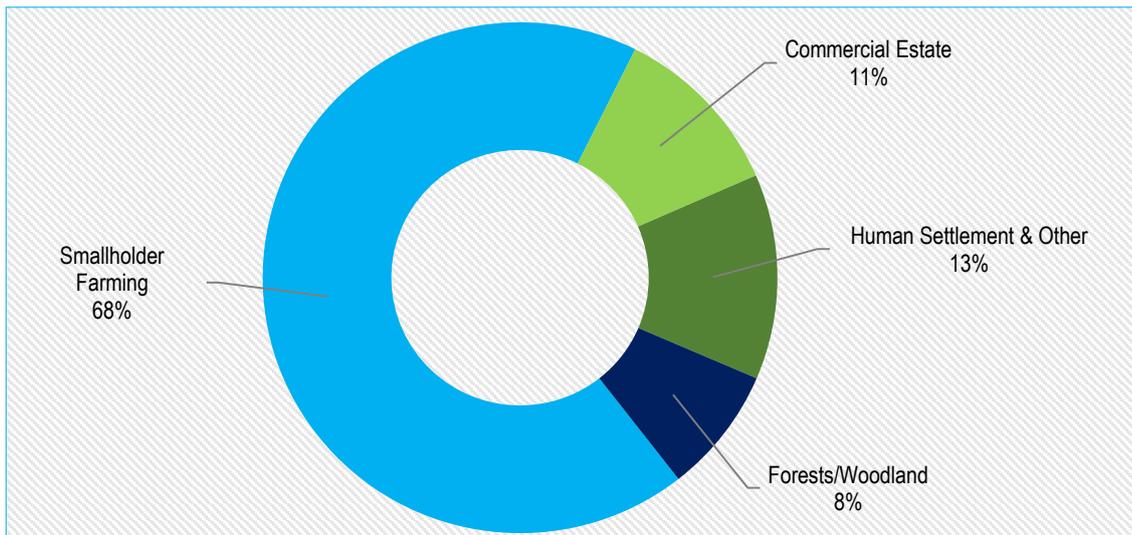
**Figure 9.2:** Grandfathers' livelihood strategies in rural Malawi



### 9.3.1 Smallholder Farming and Seasonality in Rural Malawi

As aforementioned, smallholder farming is the backbone of rural livelihoods and the national economy in Malawi (Saka et al., 2012; Kachulu, 2017). Malawi has a total land area of 9.8 million hectares, of which 5.4 million hectares (representing 55%) are arable land (GoM, 2002; NSO, 2012a). Smallholder farmers (e.g. grandfathers interviewed in my study) own a total of 4.5 million hectares (representing 83%) of all arable land in the country, with the remainder owned by large-scale commercial agricultural estates (GoM, 2002; NSO, 2012a). Zomba District has a total land area of 258,000 hectares, and much of this land (68%) is used for smallholder farming (**Figure 9.3**) (ZDA, 2009).

**Figure 9.3:** Land use in Zomba District



Source: ZDA, 2009.

Consistent with this and other previous studies in Zomba and other parts of rural Malawi (Devereux, 1999; Ellis et al., 2003; Ellis & Freeman, 2004), the most common livelihood for all grandfathers interviewed in this research is smallholder farming. This largely involves cultivating and selling crops such as maize and rice during the rainy season (November-March). Grandfathers also cultivate other crops (e.g. vegetables, tomatoes, onions, and fruits such as bananas, mangos, and papaya) after the main growing season. In the photo below, 13-year old Miguel captures his grandparents inspecting a rice field prior to harvest (**Figure 9.4**).

**Figure 9.4:** Grandparents inspecting a rice field



Photograph: Taken by Miguel, 13 years, grandson.

Besides cultivating crops, grandfathers interviewed in this study also engage in livestock production, involving rearing chicken, cattle, and other livestock. Consistent with other studies in rural Malawi (NSO, 2012b, 2014b; Kachulu, 2017), grandfathers use the harvest and earnings from crop and livestock production for food and income-generating to buy other essential resources (e.g. soap, matches, paraffin, clothes, shoes), and school supplies, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

Although grandfathers in the research communities engaged in farming, their crop and livestock production are quite limited. Like many other people in rural Malawi, many of the grandfathers interviewed have small landholdings, lack agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilisers, farm machinery), depend on manual labour, lack modern methods of farming (e.g. conservation agriculture), and lack capital for a viable investment in crop and livestock production. For instance, of the 15 grandfather-headed households participating in this study, only one (i.e. the better-off family identified earlier) owns cattle, a few own goats, chickens, and other livestock, mostly in small numbers. This is consistent with previous studies in Malawi and elsewhere in SSA (Devereux, 2001; Ellis & Freeman, 2004; Loison, 2015). For instance, a study in rural Malawi in Zomba and Dedza districts found that only 7% of the households owned cattle, 26% owned goats, and only 7% had sufficient maize to last more than 9 months postharvest (Ellis et al., 2003). The recent Malawi DHS reports that 52.9% of rural Malawians own livestock such as cattle, horses, donkeys, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, or other poultry, but in many cases, in small numbers that can hardly meet and sustain a healthy livelihood (NSO & ICF International, 2017). Consequently, many grandfathers interviewed in my study have insecure livelihoods and are prone to livelihood challenges in the context of prevailing poverty and perennial food shortages, particularly common during the annual hungry season (see also Kerr, 2005; Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006; Devereux, 2009).<sup>89</sup> For instance, as stated previously, during the hungry season, some of the grandfathers interviewed survive on foraging plants from the bush and/or eating crops that are not yet mature.

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<sup>89</sup> Livelihoods are considered 'secure' "when adequate access to cash and other resources is maintained or improved upon over time..." (Cole & Hoon, 2013: 408).

Food insecurity among the grandfather-headed households (as in many other households in the research communities) could also be attributed to several factors such as high population density and the resulting small landholdings (GoM, 2002; Peters, 2006; Potts, 2006; Chinsinga, 2011; Kachulu, 2017).<sup>90</sup> For grandfathers interviewed in this study (as with other men in orthodox matrilineal societies in the country), the problem of insufficient land may also be exacerbated by matrilineal practices regarding land ownership. In matrilineal cultures/societies, land belongs to the *mbumba* [matrilineage], that is, grandmothers, their daughters, and their granddaughters (Place & Otsuka, 2001a, 2001b; Peters & Kambewa, 2007; Berge et al., 2008, 2014; Kishindo, 2010b). Thus, it is likely that grandfathers own small plots/pieces of land to farm, allocated to them at the time of marriage, or which they purchased. Moreover, on their spouse's death (the grandmother), grandfathers are likely to lose all or some of the land. It is a common practice for the relatives of their deceased wife to claim back part or all of the land (a common practice known as 'land grabbing') and/or chase the grandfather away to his natal village. As aforementioned, heir spouse's relatives consider the grandfather not consanguineous to the rest of the extended family, hence not belonging there. Where grandfathers are not chased, they may be left with nothing or just small pieces of land, in many cases, the less productive areas. This may lead to low yields and subsequent food insecurity.

Although there is dearth of scholarship specifically documenting issues of land disputes and other challenges affecting grandfathers and other men in matrilineal societies in rural Malawi, my findings suggest that these practices are common. During my discussions with various participants in the research communities, the problem of land grabbing was raised frequently. The participants explained that this practice affects not only grandfathers in matrilineal communities, but also

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<sup>90</sup> For further discussion on land scarcity and associated problems, land ownership (including customary land), land policy and programming, and land and development issues in Malawi, refer to Kishindo's extensive work (e.g. see Kishindo, 2004, 2006, 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2013, 2014; Kishindo & Mvula, 2017; see also work by Place & Otsuka, 2001a, 2001b; Peters & Kambewa, 2007; Peter et al., 2008; Takane, 2008, 2011; Chinsinga, 2011, 2015; Chinsinga et al., 2013).

grandmothers who practice *chitengwa* [virilocal marriage]. When their spouse dies, they also face similar problems, as described by one of the chiefs:<sup>91</sup>

When the grandfather dies, his relatives grab the land from the grandmother, saying, “this land belonged to your husband’s sister, and we are taking it back.” And, you tend to ask, “why is it that all this time she was using it they never mentioned that it belonged to her husband’s sister? Just because her husband has died, then it automatically belongs to her deceased husband’s relatives?” The same thing happens with another piece of land, and eventually she remains with one small land left or a small garden surrounding her house. So, it’s a big problem on her part because there is no one among her husband’s people to be on her side. It is always difficult for both the grandfather and grandmother once one of them has died (Ishan, 48 years, chief – CAG Validation Meeting).

Further, lack of the use of modern methods of farming, and lack of access to capital for viable investment in crop and livestock production, and unpredictable weather conditions that affect annual crop yield such as variations in rainfall patterns (onset, duration, and amount), unstable planting seasons, and recurrent and severe droughts (e.g. the most severe famine of 2002) and floods could also be contributing factors to food shortages in grandfather-headed households as has been reported in the other households in rural Malawi (see Devereux, 2007; Stevens et al., 2002; Dorward & Kydd, 2004; Devereux & Tiba, 2007; Rubin, 2008; Saka et al., 2013). For instance, as stated in chapter 3, data collection for this study coincided with a drought/famine year (2016). The research communities were some of the worst hit areas in the country due to dry spell that burnt the crops soon after planting and continued for several months. Many households harvested very low yields that could only last for a few months postharvest. Other households with fields on higher land harvested literally nothing as the crops withered. I witnessed incidences of desperation as many household ran out of food in their granaries and slid into destitution. Thus, although many grandfathers in the research communities are proactive in livelihood activities, the aforementioned weather conditions may reduce their capacity to adequately support the welfare of their orphaned grandchildren. Nonetheless, rather than giving up, many diversify their livelihoods.

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<sup>91</sup> Chiefs are custodians of all customary land under the Land Act of 1965. Hence, they are familiar with issues of land. They not only allocate land, but also settle land disputes among their subjects. Thus, their views are quite important on this issue.

Thus, besides smallholder farming, grandfathers also use *ganyu* [casual labour] as a survival strategy. This emerged from this research as the second most common livelihood strategy after farming.

### 9.3.2 *Ganyu* and Seasonality

*Ganyu* refers to a “short-term informal contractual labour arrangement” (Mkandawire et al., 2013: 130) involving cash-based and/or commodity-based transactions whereby those in need offer short-term labour to better-off individuals/households/families in exchange for resources. For instance, it may involve working on a small piece of land for a few hours, or days (e.g. weeding a 10m-by-15m plot), or for a big piece of land (e.g. whole plot, for instance, an acre or a hectare) for several days, weeks, or a few months. *Ganyu* is one of the key safety nets for supporting livelihoods among the poor in rural Malawi and elsewhere in Southern Africa, particularly during the lean/hungry period (Mkandawire et al., 2013; Devereux, 2009; Porter et al., 2014; Phiri & Abebe, 2016). Devereux (1999: 26) contends that *ganyu* “has been incorporated into the routine of rural livelihoods by millions of Malawian smallholders for whom annual food production deficits are the norm.” Consistent with these narratives, *ganyu* emerged from this research as one of the major livelihood strategies for grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. Similar to the dominant rural livelihood patterns of seasonality and *ganyu* in SSA (Whiteside, 2000; Cole & Hoon, 2013; Phiri, 2016), grandfathers interviewed in this study (like other people in rural Malawi) mostly engage in *ganyu* during the peak of the growing season (October/November to March/April), a time when demand for agricultural labour is also highest (see Bezner-Kerr, 2005; Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006), as described below:

Well, if it's like in the growing season like we are currently in, someone may say, “can you please help me with *ganyu* of preparing the land?” I mean working in the *dimba*, I go and work. Whether it's in the fields, someone says, “please help me with *ganyu* of ridging”, I go and do the work (Nthanda, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Thus, grandfathers, like other people in the research communities and elsewhere in this region of SSA (Bezner-Kerr 2005; Cole & Hoon, 2013; Phiri 2016) provide on-farm *ganyu* labour (e.g. preparing fields, weeding) to better-off individuals/families (e.g. teachers) in exchange for food, money, and other resources. Grandfathers use

the earnings from *ganyu* to provide various needs in their households, such as their grandchildren's school necessities:

Well, I buy soap for them to be able to attend school, [...] "oh this one is lacking clothes", so I look for money somewhere, I go and do *ganyu* somewhere, go and buy them clothes [...] When they come from school and say "Grandpa, I need abcd", I go and look for *ganyu* and work. Whether they want pocket money to use at school, I do *ganyu* and give them (Tumbikani, 87 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

However, *ganyu* is seasonal as it largely depends on the agricultural/growing season and favourable rain conditions. It is also limited in that better-off families seeking labour services are few in rural areas. Hence, *ganyu* is not readily available throughout the year (Smith, 2001; Devereux, 2001; Mkandawire et al., 2013). For instance, grandfathers who participated in this study mentioned that opportunities for *ganyu* are sporadic and extremely rare during a drought year as better-off families/households and individuals refrain from investing their farm inputs in a futile enterprise. Consequently, grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren who depend on farming and *ganyu* may suffer:

When the rains are good, I do *ganyu*, but then *the way things are this year, ganyu* is not available... it's very scarce. So, I just stay because there is nothing I can do (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

[...] As you have seen the way the famine is this year, the challenges are so many because as of now I cannot find *ganyu* [...] So, a day can pass without us eating anything, we just sleep (Faith, 81 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Notably, when *ganyu* is available in rural Malawi, the wages are usually low. For instance, in her study in rural communities in Lilongwe, Bryceson (2006: 198) noted that *ganyu* wages per day "is barely enough for one's day's food needs" (see also Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006). Similar to this observation, grandfathers in my study complained that what they gain from *ganyu* does not match the time and energy they invest, as summed up by 83-year old Rudolf during interview: "I see *ganyu* as wasting my time, I don't gain anything."

Although some scholars have reported that among rural Malawians and Zambians *ganyu* is "a traditional labour practice that reduces socio-economic disparities through a system of sharing and redistribution of resources between individuals and households" (Phiri, 2016: 6), the evidence shown above suggests that there may

be exploitative practices in the transaction of *ganyu* in the research communities. Recent studies in Malawi and Zambia have highlighted similar unfair practices in casual labour (Cole & Hoon, 2013; Mkandawire et al., 2013). The high numbers of the poor seeking *ganyu* (particularly during the lean/hungry season) may influence some better-off individuals and families to exploit the poor by establishing unfavourable terms aimed at maximising profits and accumulation of personal wealth (Bezner-Kerr, 2005; Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006; Cole & Hoon, 2013). Because of this, some scholars view *ganyu* as an agent perpetuating or increasing wealth inequalities because it serves the interests of better-off households well at the expense of the poor (Devereux, 1999; Bryceson, 2006). For instance, Devereux (1999) contends that *ganyu* reinforces chronic poverty and seasonal food insecurity. Bryceson (2006: 191) agrees and states that *ganyu* has been “an integral part of deepening rural impoverishment over the past 15 years.” Thus, even though *ganyu* is an important safety net for the poor masses in rural Malawi, it “may be considered as an unfortunate necessity” (Whiteside (2000: 5) by some people because it may proliferate social inequalities. Bryceson (2006:199) refers to *ganyu* as “a vortex of impoverishment, intensifying the unequal exchange between haves and have-nots – a lifeline turned noose, strangling vast numbers of Malawian peasant households and communities.”

Other evidence emerging from further studies in rural Malawi and Zambia indicates that *ganyu* may attract social stigma and humiliation. Apparently, society views doing *ganyu* as an admission of livelihood problems in the household such as poverty and food insecurity (Bezner-Kerr, 2005; Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006; Mkandawire et al., 2013). However, during our discussions, none of the grandfathers or other participants in this study stated that they experience any social stigma or humiliation because of their participation in *ganyu*. Given the evidence from other studies in Malawi and Zambia (see Whiteside, 2000; Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006; Cole & Hoon, 2013), the absence of stories of social stigma, humiliation, and/or exploitation in *ganyu* among the grandfathers in the research communities is surprising. It is possible that the grandfathers are reticent to discuss issues/incidents of exploitation because of fear of losing *ganyu* opportunities from better-off families that may be implicated in their testimonies. Bezner-Kerr (2005: 172) notes that *ganyu* may be “part of a wider network of ties that provides a type of safety net for poorer households, and people may do *ganyu* as a means of

maintaining the safety net...” Others have stated that *ganyu* is offered to poor individuals/households as a moral obligation from better-off family members to strengthen social relations such as kin ties and social networks (Devereux, 1999; Mkandawire et al., 2013; Phiri, 2016). Thus, grandfathers’ reticence to talk to me about stigma associated with *ganyu* may have been due to fear that their kin would learn about our conversation. Hence, it is possible that it was a strategic way of avoiding severing the social networks that provide them safety nets during the times of need.

While there is evidence from other studies indicating exploitive transactions in *ganyu* (Whiteside, 2000; Bezner-Kerr, 2005; Cole & Hoon, 2013), the findings from this study suggest that there may be other factors contributing to lower earnings among grandfathers who do *ganyu*. As shown in chapter 3, many grandfathers in this study were very old and have poor physical health.<sup>92</sup> Thus, despite investing more time in *ganyu* and other economic activities, they are less productive, hence gain little:

A lot of things are difficult to access because their [grandfathers’] bodies are now weak. So, it is difficult for them to work. Even if they try to do *ganyu* like working in other people’s fields, it means it will take months for the grandfather to complete the work. At the end of the *ganyu* the money he receives is not enough to support all the children in the household adequately... (Lundi, 41 years, male – FGD).

This suggests that grandfathers in rural Malawi whose livelihoods depend on agriculture and *ganyu* may face triple jeopardy as old age and poor physical health intersect: 1) they have less ability to work in their fields, hence produce inadequate food for their households; 2) when they encounter livelihood challenges (e.g. seasonal food shortages), they seek *ganyu*, demonstrating agency, but they generate inadequate money, hence they are unable to meet their household needs adequately; and 3) *ganyu* worsens their situation because the low wage disadvantages them further from their less productivity and they neglect their own fields. Also, except for younger grandfathers (e.g. those below 50 or in the 50s), the hard physical/manual labour takes a toll on the health and frail elderly bodies of many

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<sup>92</sup> Given only 4% of the population in Malawi is above 65 years old and above (NSO & ICF International, 2017), this sample comprises the oldest generation in the country.

grandparents (see also Schatz & Gilbert, 2014; Mugisha et al., 2015), including older grandfathers.

Despite this, many grandfathers interviewed in this study have limited livelihood alternatives, hence continue seeking *ganyu* for survival purposes, in many cases, to address an immediate or urgent need (e.g. food shortage). Bryceson (2006: 198) noted that *ganyu* provides “a quick fix for hunger rather than a long-term earning or accumulation strategy.” Unfortunately, this desperation comes with a huge price for grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in my study. Some grandfathers in the research communities abandon their own fields to pursue *ganyu* to find food and/or urgent other resources. As noted by the several other studies in the general population in Malawi and Zambia cited earlier, this livelihood strategy conflicts with primary food production in their households. The climax of the hungry period is from January to February (Devereux, 2009) and coincides with heavy rains and fast growth of weeds in the fields. As grandfathers abandon their own fields to engage in *ganyu* for survival purposes, the weeds in their fields compromise the growth of crops, hence resulting in poor yield. Consequently, this creates a vicious circle of perennial food insecurity, thus proliferating rather than alleviating dependence on *ganyu*, (Bezner-Kerr, 2005; Bryceson & Fonseca, 2006; Devereux, 2009).

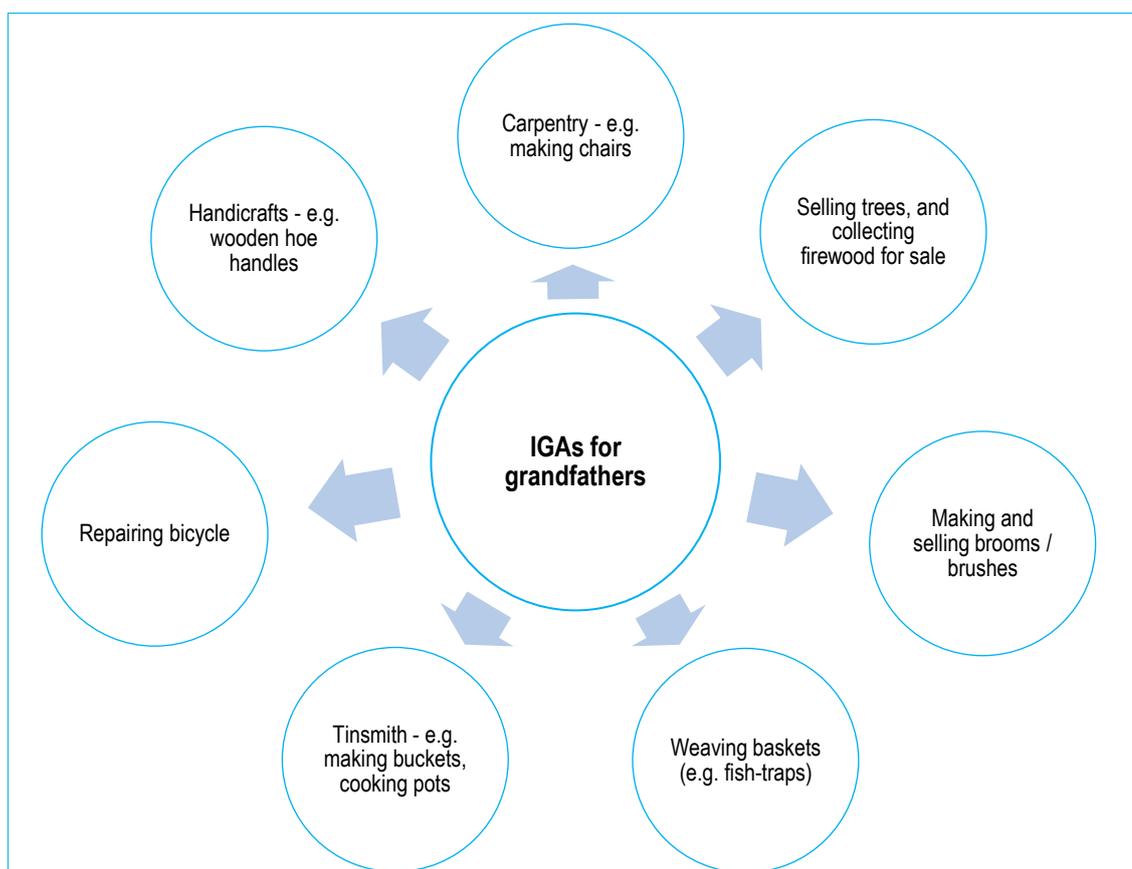
Nonetheless, some grandfathers in this study (as with other people in the general population) develop ways of addressing the challenges of *ganyu*. For instance, some of the younger grandfathers mentioned that they work in their own fields in the morning, come home and eat lunch, and later go out to do *ganyu* in the afternoon. This, however, may work for those with good physical health/strength, but not others such as older and frailer grandfathers. Still, those who are able to do *ganyu* find it one of the few informal safety nets in their communities, particularly during the hungry period when economic and nutritional stresses worsen. This highlights how poverty and physical health intersect and impact the livelihood strategies of different grandfathers in this study.

Overall, *ganyu* and farming are the major livelihood strategies for grandfathers in rural Malawi, but do not necessarily provide secure livelihoods for many of them. Besides *ganyu* and farming, grandfathers also engage in other livelihood strategies to earn a living, as explored below.

### 9.3.3 Other Livelihood Strategies

Loison (2015) states that income from non-farm activities accounts for 35% of the rural household cash economy in SSA. Similarly, grandfathers interviewed in rural Malawi rely on income from various IGAs in addition to their farming activities and *ganyu*, as depicted in **Figure 9.5** below.

**Figure 9.5:** Examples of common income sources for grandfathers in rural Malawi



This reiterates the recurring theme of livelihood diversification stated earlier. For instance, some of the grandfathers interviewed in this study rely on weaving utensils such as *malichero* [winnowing baskets] and selling them to raise income to buy household needs or exchanging them with food, particularly during the hungry season, and when the rainfall has been erratic:

There are some grandfathers who weave baskets to avoid just being idle, others weave mats, so that when they are through, they can exchange with maize. That is very common now. They weave baskets and exchange with maize when things have gone bad like it is this year. Sometimes they weave and sell the baskets to buy maize. That is how grandfathers earn something (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).

Although grandfathers diversify their livelihoods, many of these livelihood strategies also generally depend on good crop yield. For instance, during a drought year, they find it hard to sell and/or exchange the items they make for maize as other people would have also been facing food shortages. This suggests that despite livelihood diversification, their livelihoods are, in many cases, still insecure, thus demonstrating how poverty, weather conditions, and opportunities for IGAs influence livelihood strategies for grandfathers who participated in this study.

A surprising finding regarding IGAs for grandfathers interviewed in this study is the absence of formal and informal borrowing or moneylending practices. A common form of informal borrowing in Malawi is called '*katapila*' – a similar practice in neighbouring Zambia is called '*kaloba*' (Phiri & Abebe, 2016). *Katapila* involves informal financial or commodity credit arrangements (usually with relatives and friends) with exorbitant interest (Bolnick, 1992; Devereux, 1999; Mkandawire et al., 2013). Despite strong evidence suggesting *katapila* being one of the survival strategies for the poor in rural Malawi, and that similar informal borrowing practices have been observed elsewhere in the country and neighbouring Zambia (Chilowa, 1991; Bolnick, 1992; Mkandawire et al., 2013; Phiri & Abebe, 2016), none of the grandfathers in this study acknowledged their participation in it, or its existence. Further, none of the grandfathers belonged to any credit clubs in their communities, and only a few mentioned that their spouses are members of microfinance schemes such as the rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs or merry-go-rounds) through Village Savings and Loan Schemes (VSLs) and/ or *Banki Ya M'mudzi* [Village Bank].

Given these microfinance schemes are common in the research communities and other rural parts of Malawi, and in other parts of SSA (Lowicki-Zucca et al., 2014; Hansen et al., 2015; Skill et al., 2016), it raises questions as to why grandfathers in this study were not participating in them. However, evidence from the study indicates that most of the businesses available in rural Malawi require good physical health. Given their old age and poor physical health, it is possible that many grandfathers cannot manage to engage in viable businesses. Thus, they do not want to borrow from or participate in these ROSCAs for fear of losing the capital and being subjected to penalties. This suggests that age and physical health intersect and limit

grandfathers' participation in microfinance schemes available in their communities, which may affect their ability to adequately care for their orphaned grandchildren.

It is also possible that grandfathers do not have sources to borrow from (e.g. friends, relatives) due to generalised poverty in the research communities. Further, their reticence in disclosing *katapila* practices must be interpreted with caution. It is possible that they engage in *katapila*, but do not want to disclose due to embarrassment, as the practice is usually associated with social stigma. For instance, Devereux's (1999) study in rural Malawi found that although people mentioned their friends as sources of debt/credit, they rarely disclosed it as *katapila* due to embarrassment. Of the 104 participants in his study, only one reported borrowing from a moneylender (Devereux, 1999). Further, 36% of the urban residents borrowed money from creditors compared to just 6.7% of their rural counterparts (Devereux, 1999), thus suggesting less borrowing or disclosure practices among rural people. This could partly explain the findings in my study. Also, my discussion with one of the NGO staff revealed that informal credit facilities are dominated by women. According to him, NGOs perceive men as defaulters of debt, and women as faithful. As such, many NGOs favour women in microfinance projects/programmes (e.g. ROSCAs). While this study did not specifically find evidence to support this, it could be one of the reasons grandfathers interviewed were not participating in ROSCAs.

Another livelihood strategy for grandfathers caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural Malawi is the leverage of social capital (social networks & support), as explored below.

#### **9.4 SOCIAL CAPITAL**

Lin (2008: 51) defines social capital as "the resources embedded in one's social networks" that can be accessed or mobilised in times of need. According to Adato and Meinzen-Dick (2002: 9), social capital encompasses "any networks that increase trust, ability to work together, access to opportunities, reciprocity; informal safety nets; and membership in organisations." Thus, it includes social resources, claims, relations, affiliations, and associations (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Morse et al., 2001; Woolcock & Narayan, 2002; Nombo, 2007). Ellis (1998: 4) notes that social and kinship networks are important for "facilitating and sustaining diverse income

portfolios” for a livelihood in rural communities. Evidence from my research study in rural Malawi shows that there are various forms of social capital for grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren. These include [community-based] informal and formal safety nets situated at various levels of their micro-environment and macro-environment, as discussed below.

#### **9.4.1 Community-Based Informal Safety Nets**

Community-based informal safety nets are non-market transfers of goods and/or services, as well as coping and mitigating strategies that individuals and/or households/families utilise to alleviate livelihood challenges (Arnall et al., 2004; Foster, 2005; Arthur, 2015). They involve “drawing on social networks – extended family, friends and neighbours, wealthy patrons – for assistance in times of need, with or without expectations of reciprocity” (Devereux, 2001: 513). Although some have questioned the continued existence of informal safety nets in cushioning livelihood challenges for vulnerable households in the face of complex social, economic, and cultural transformations (Foster, 2007; Arthur, 2015), informal safety nets remain a characteristic of rural African societies, a “manifestation of ‘social capital’ or the ‘moral economy’” (Devereux, 1999: 5), and a coping resource during livelihood challenges (Adams, 1993; Devereux, 2001; Arnall et al., 2004; Arthur, 2015). Evidence from this study shows that there are various kinds of informal safety nets for grandfathers caring for orphaned grandchildren. These include the extended family, friends, community structures and support groups, and religious institutions (i.e. churches and mosques), as discussed below.

##### **9.4.1.1 Kinship support**

Kinship support (i.e. support from the extended family) is one of the most widely documented form of informal safety nets for vulnerable households in SSA (Foster, 2005; Abebe & Aase, 2007; Nombo, 2007; Zagheni, 2011). Grandfathers and other participants in this study mentioned that they receive various kinds of support from kin, usually from their adult children and close relatives, including, inter alia, help with farming activities, household needs, agricultural inputs, and monthly or seasonal remittances, as described below (see also de Klerk (2011) for similar findings in neighbouring Tanzania regarding kinship support for grandparents):

I have children, yeah, my children, one is working in the [government institution], the other is working at the [government department], they are the

ones who help me. Sometimes they buy me soap, sometimes they send me food (Chikondi, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Some relatives do help them. For instance, during the rainy season, they sometimes buy them fertilizer to apply in their fields. In case of lack of food, they sometimes buy them maize so that they can use it in their household. In terms of clothing, some relatives also buy them clothes. They also buy school uniform for the children to put on as they go to school, and sometimes pay school fees (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).

Similar to other studies in Malawi (Ellis, 2000; Schatz, 2007; Andersson, 2011; Porter et al., 2015), these findings suggest that kinship support may mitigate livelihood challenges of rural impoverishment and food insecurity among some grandfather-headed households. However, of the 15 grandfather-headed households participating in this study, only three reported receiving support from kin, a finding consistent with other studies in the general population in Malawi (Pearce et al., 1996; Mthindi et al., 1998). For instance, Bandawe and Louw (1997: 532) note that the “extended family and clan ties are not as cohesive anymore” in Malawi due to the poor economy and other factors. Similarly, grandfathers interviewed in this study stated that, while in the past relatives used to share the responsibility of caring for orphans, the practice is fading away, such that the moment they, as grandfathers, assumed the primary guardianship of orphans, relatives pay little or no attention to support them (**Box 9.1**). Moreover, kinship support for grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in the research communities was noted to be usually irregular, unreliable, and inadequate compared to the magnitude of their needs.

**Box 9.1: Adults’ and children’s views on kinship support**

*The relatives are not concerned with helping Agogo. They leave everything to you! [...] the whole responsibility is shovelled on/at you and they pull out and say, “that’s it! You’ll see how to deal with it! We don’t care! You’ll see how you can take care of them [...] it’s all on you!” (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*They [relatives] are here in this village, but the support is not enough. They say, “it’s none of their business!” (Matt, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*Well, it [supporting Agogo] happens sometimes, when they [the relatives] are happy, it does happen, but not necessarily counting on them (Chimwemwe, 15 years, male – FGD).*

*We do have relatives but they don’t really help a lot (Orlando [chipping in]: actually they don’t help/support us! When we go visit them we just eat nsima and come back with nothing) (Orlando, female, 13 years – FGD).*

*The role by uncles is declining. Some relatives used to play a role, but it is of lesser magnitude now because of responsibility in their own homes. As a result, the help for grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren is not there, really. If anything, it is just minimal, very minimal. In fact, others even choose not to play any role at all (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

#### 9.4.1.1.1 Culture and marriage practices and kinship support for grandfathers

Influences on kinship care for orphans are complex. Evidence from this study suggests that besides the impact of poverty, HIV/AIDS, and the resulting large numbers of orphans, the problem of declining kinship support may also be a result of cultural and marriage practices concerning belongingness for grandfathers living in matrilineal cultures. Although it was not universally shared by the research participants, many stated that a grandfather who is caring for orphaned grandchildren and practicing *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage] usually receives little or no support from the extended family compared to one who is practicing *chitengwa* [virilocal marriage]. When living in matrilineal communities/societies, a grandfather is considered as not one of them, and not belonging to his wife's people, hence support to him is limited despite the fact that the orphaned grandchildren he is caring for belong to his wife's people. Notably, such views hardly came from grandfathers, but were widely shared by other research participants, particularly children and young people, as summed up by one of them:<sup>93</sup>

The grandfather who is staying in his home of origin and another who is in *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage] they have different experiences. The grandfather who is living in his natal village among his people [*chitengwa*], the relatives don't allow him to suffer while they're there, not at all! They help him. Whereas the grandfather who is in *chikamwini*, if he is not hardworking and independent, then he's in trouble! This is so because he has just married in this place, and it is difficult for the people there to support him. In contrast, when he's in your natal village, because he was born there, and he grew up there, it is easy for the people to support him and he doesn't suffer (Luntha, 14 years, male – FGD).

Further, the situation of lack of kinship support for grandfathers caring for their orphaned grandchildren in matrilineal societies in rural Malawi may worsen when their spouse [the grandmother] dies first. This is complicated further if the grandfather did not have amicable relationships with her relatives prior to her death. When a spouse dies, a grandfather in matrilineal societies is more likely to be chased, leaving his grandchildren behind. In some cases, this is not even negotiated, thus

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<sup>93</sup> It is possible that, despite assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity, they still felt that their sentiments would reach their wife's relations, and this would in turn jeopardise their relationship with them. Also, given that the interviews took place in their homes, it is possible that they feared other people could eavesdrop on our conversation although we discussed the issues in private (i.e. in a relatively secluded place, in the absence of other people).

signifying how cultural norms surrounding death impact a grandfather's belongingness in some matrilineal societies such those visited during this study. Further, it was noted that when a widowed grandfather is allowed to continue living in their deceased wife's village among her people, he is more likely to be less supported in times of need despite living with and caring for his orphaned grandchildren except in situations where the people 'have a good heart' (i.e. are kind):

If you a grandfather is staying at *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage], if something happens and your spouse dies, you know for sure that, it's over for me! I am definitely heading back to my natal village! [expressing it emphatically]. They won't let you stay! They will definitely tell you that, "when the time comes, you should pack and go!" In fact, you the grandfather know even before they tell you. You know that this is it! My life here is over! (Petros, 74 years, grandfather – CAG Validation Meeting).

For the grandfather who is living in *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage], when the grandmother dies, if the grandfather has a good behaviour and is in good terms with his deceased wife's relations, he continues staying there, but if he has not been good, he is chased away (JJ, 16 years, boy – FGD).

Surprisingly, many grandfathers opt to continue living in these matrilineal communities despite the sociocultural challenges they encounter such as being chased to go back to their natal village or not being supported by kin. When I explored this paradox, grandfathers and other participants in this study explained that they find returning to their natal village being worse than continuing staying among their deceased wife's people. They provided three reasons: First, going back to their natal village may mean severing ties with their orphaned grandchildren because, in many cases, they are not allowed to take them. Many find this difficult to cope with since they may have developed strong emotional bonds with them. Secondly, the grandfather may have left his natal village decades ago, and may have maintained few or no connections with his relatives since leaving, sometimes visiting them only during big family events like weddings and funerals. Hence, when he returns, he is viewed as a stranger by his relatives. Some of the relatives may find it hard to support him because the common perception is that he spent time somewhere and has come back home to his natal village when he is old and frail simply to seek their care and support:

When your marriage has ended, or your spouse has died, and then you move back to your natal village, you meet a lot of challenges (Ntheto [chipping in]):

people say “you’ve come back here when you’re very old and almost dead”) yes, they say, “hey! Don’t give us the headache of caring for you!” Well, it’s very unfortunate! (Eugenio, 49 years, grandfather – FGD).

When a grandfather married somewhere and comes back to his home, they end up not being cared, they don’t get care [...] he is like a stranger. Even the young children are told that, “this one is your grandfather”, they say “well, we don’t know him” (Mbumba, 67, grandfather – FGD).

Further, some grandfathers who go back to their natal village may become strangers to their community members. Some of the friends from their childhood and youth may have died. In other cases, they may not have maintained the friendships. This leaves them with limited social networks. Also, the grandfathers may not have invested back in their natal village, for instance, building a house. Their land may have been transferred to relatives while away, hence they cannot claim it back. Furthermore, some of his deceased wife’s relatives who used to support him and his orphaned grandchildren may not support him when he moves back to his natal village because they now expect his relatives to take on this responsibility. Moreover, even in situations where a grandfather maintains contact when they move back to their natal village, their orphaned children may just visit him for a short period, thus he has to support himself most of the time.

If a grandfather succeeds in taking his orphaned grandchildren with him to his natal village, they are likely to encounter resistance and segregation from his relatives, or being chased back because they are not recognised as belonging there. The grandchildren belonging to their grandfather’s natal village are those that are traced through his sister’s lineage/blood. Thus, his grandchildren belong to their maternal grandmother’s people/relatives. They can be called/claimed back anytime, hence the grandfather’s relatives feel that supporting or investing in them is a waste of resources. All this presents pragmatic reasons for many grandfathers to avoid going back to their natal village despite the challenges they face in these matrilineal communities. In emphasising this point, 41-year old Dumisani (male) used the metaphor of teeth and gums. He said that a grandfather’s biological grandchildren (i.e. those born out of his biological children) are referred by his relatives as ‘*mano*’ [teeth], hence they fall out over time or when an accident happens. In contrast, orphaned grandchildren traced through his sister’s lineage (i.e. his sister’s biological grandchildren) are like ‘*usinini*’ [gums], hence they always remain there no matter what happens. Hence, it is wise for the grandfather’s relatives in his natal village to

support the latter ('the gums') because, unlike those referred to as the teeth, these ones will always be there and will support them back in future. His views are presented below, and were widely shared by other participants, including chiefs who participated in this study (**Box 9.2**).

**Box 9.2: Views about kinship support for grandfathers living in matrilineal cultures**

...when he lives with his grandchildren from his relative in his natal village, like from his sister's lineage (i.e. born out of her children), they refer to the grandchildren as *mano* [teeth] whereas when he takes his biological grandchildren, that is, those born out of his children from his wife's people and live with him among his people in his natal village, they refer to the grandchildren as *usinini* [gums]. Over time, *usinini* [gums] never fall, but *mano* [teeth] do fall. Whether it happens somewhere, you will leave them there. So, his relatives may differentiate in terms of how they support these two kinds of grandchildren. So, if the grandfather is staying with his biological orphaned grandchildren among his people in his natal village, the support from his relatives is usually minimal because the relatives think that they are wasting so much on the grandchildren who don't belong to them or the grandfather (Dumisani, 41 years, male – FGD).

In most cases, the grandfather goes back to his home of origin and the children cannot follow him saying we want to go stay with our grandfather because he will find grandchildren there too, the ones from his sister, and they can actually chase these ones, telling them that, "this is not your place, go back to your relatives!" (Ishan, 48 years, chief [local/traditional leader] – CAG Validation Meeting).

It is difficult to support him because, at *chikamwini* [uxorilocal marriage], he was staying with his spouse and his spouse's relatives were helping him because of his connection to her. And when the grandmother dies, and the grandfather goes back to his natal village, very few relatives from your spouse can say, "let's go and give him such such a thing" because they say, "the grandfather is now among his people and they will take care of him. We lost 'ours', so what else can we do?" That's also why the grandfather is in big problems... he dies suffering [...] His land is also taken away the time he was not around. Who can reserve a land saying, "we are reserving this land for my brother he is marrying somewhere?" (Participants: not at all), yes, that's where the challenge comes (Ishan, 48 years, chief [local/traditional leader] – CAG Validation Meeting).

This suggests that a grandfather living in matrilineal communities such as those researched in this study may experience double jeopardy, particularly when his spouse dies: 1) if he continues staying among his deceased wife's people/relatives, he may not be supported because his spouse's relatives do not see him as belonging there – he is not part of them; and 2) if he chooses to return to his natal village, he may encounter important challenges such as not being welcomed and be supported by his relatives (having spent long time away), and he may have limited social networks.

Both scenarios, however, are usually avoided under two scenarios: Firstly, marriage through *chitengwa* [virilocal] (i.e. taking his wife to live with her in his natal village among his consanguine family) at the formation/beginning of the marriage, or at a certain point in the marriage. Under such arrangement, a grandfather is considered belonging among his relatives, respected by them, and they support him because they do not see him as stranger. He also enjoys quite a rich network of friends from

which/where he taps various kinds of support (e.g. moral, spiritual, financial) in times of need such as support during funerals. Secondly, by possessing a neutral land/place. If a grandfather marries and finds/buys land in a neutral place to avoid living in his wife's village, he continues staying with his orphaned grandchildren when his spouse dies.<sup>94</sup> As such, there is no need for him to go back to his natal village. He is also likely to receive support from his relatives and/or the deceased wife's relatives. Thus, culture (matrilineal versus patrilineal marriage practices and land ownerships) seems to influence kinship support for grandfathers who are caring for orphans.

#### 9.4.1.1.2 Is kinship support waning?

Whether grandfathers practice *chikamwini* [uxorilocal] or *chitengwa* [virilocal] marriage, the general sense among many participants interviewed in this study is that kinship support is weakening. This narrative resonates with hegemonic narratives of orphan care in rural communities severely impacted by HIV/AIDS and poverty in SSA (Foster, 2002; Beard, 2005; Richter & Norman, 2010; Shaibu, 2013). As pointed out in chapters 1 and 2, there is extensive literature suggesting the weakening of kinship networks in Malawi and other parts of SSA (Mtika, 2001; Foster, 2007; Porter et al., 2015). Although numerous factors have been attributed to this social phenomenon, inter alia, HIV/AIDS, rural poverty, urbanisation, migration, market liberalisation of staple food and other commodities (Devereux, 1999; Foster, 2004; Ruiz-Casares, 2009; Riley, 2013), the overwhelming impact of the AIDS epidemic and the resulting large number of orphans emerged as the most frequently cited reasons for weakened kinship support among participants in this study. One of the religious leaders in my study summed up the situation:

In the past orphans weren't many as it is today, such that in the whole village, you could find maybe just two orphans. These days there are lots of orphans in the community. There are at least two or three orphans in almost every household. People are now overwhelmed with the huge number of orphans (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).

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<sup>94</sup> This kind of marriage arrangement is increasingly becoming common in contemporary Malawi among matrilineal groups for men who marry in matrilineal society. They view this as a viable alternative to escape the influence of *mwini mbumba* and a door to freedom. This is negotiated with the *mwini mbumba* and they may charge the man some fee in order to take his wife away. This applies to both taking her to his home village, or to live in a neutral place.

The situation is worsened by the economic challenges facing many rural households. Consistent with previous findings that suggest that besides HIV/AIDS, poverty is another factor contributing to diminishing informal safety nets (Adato et al., 2005; Nombo, 2007; van Blerk & Ansell, 2007a; Arthur, 2015), many participants interviewed in this study identified economic hardships as the reason for this situation. They expressed that deepening poverty has made it extremely hard economically for relatives to help each other. People seem to be transitioning from a more collective to a more individualistic life, a narrative synonymous with the findings of other studies in Malawi (see Devereux, 1999; Tsoka & Mvula, 1999). For instance, unlike in the past where inter-kin food transfers, meal sharing, and/or eating together (group eating) were common cultural norms, such practices are now less common, and in some cases, non-existent, as described by 71-year old Lungisa during interview: “in the past, this house, that house, and that house, we prepared *nsima* together and sat together to eat, but these days that tradition has stopped.” Consequently, grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren with less viable livelihoods and limited kinship support may become destitute. Thus, the lack of kinship and social support for orphans and their grandfathers underscores the important role grandfathers have in the lives of their orphaned grandchildren, without which some of the children may suffer – the case of Cristian presented in chapter 4 incontrovertibly illustrates this point. Notably, some grandfathers may benefit from the friendships they have, as discussed below.

#### **9.4.1.2 Friends and other community members as sources of support**

Grandfathers in the research communities have friends within and beyond their neighbourhoods, particularly from their places of religious worship (i.e. church and mosques). These friends may offer them support in times of need, for instance, visiting them during weddings, illness/sickness, and funerals. However, material support from these friendships is generally rare and usually limited, as described below:

Those things [material support] are not happening. It only happens when the person is ill/sick and they may think about you and say, “let’s visit our friend who has fallen ill/sick”, but such things for things like helping the grandparent with material things are not happening (Tayanja, 40 years, female – FGD).

Support from friends from the community is very minimal. Such cases are few and sporadic. If some people conclude that the grandfather is in a dire situation,

that is when friends come in. But, it is small things that they intervene on, for instance, providing things like salt, but not substantial or sustained support. You find that the grandparent is fending for themselves (Olwethu, 38 years, female, NGO staff – Key-informant interview).

Similar to kinship support, it is possible that poverty may constrain grandfathers' friends from providing material support. Researchers have noted that although horizontal redistributive practices exist in SSA, they are highly vulnerable to various micro-level and macro-level livelihood challenges (Devereux, 2001; Smith, 2001; Ellis & Freeman, 2004). This suggests that, like other people in their communities, grandfathers' support from friends is limited, and if available, it may be occasional. Nevertheless, friends may provide spiritual and emotional support vital for emotional and psychological wellbeing. Moreover, friends may be poor too, but it does not cost anything to offer moral support and consolation except for time and energy to visit their friends. Thus, grandfathers appreciate their friends because, for instance, sharing problems with them may buffer stress or depression:

It [the friendship] helps to reduce worry. I forget a lot of distressing things (Tumbikani, 87 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

The benefit of these friendships is that, when I fall ill/sick, my friends come to cheer me up to the extent that I forget my problems (Rudolf, grandfather, 83 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

The testimonies of grandfathers I spoke to echoes what has been widely documented in, inter alia, psychology of ageing, social psychology, geriatrics, gerontology, and other social sciences literature, regarding the importance of social networks in older people's lives (Antonucci, 2001; Fiori et al., 2006). Thus, despite the lack of material support, friends form an important component of social capital for emotional and psychosocial support for grandfathers interviewed in this study. Nevertheless, many grandfathers stated that they would have preferred receiving material rather than emotional and psychosocial support only due to the magnitude of their need for daily material resources/needs.

#### **9.4.1.3 Community organisations and support groups**

More formal community organisations and support groups such as Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs), Child Protection Committees (CPCs), Village Development Committee (VDC), microfinance/microcredit savings clubs, income-generating schemes, and

agricultural schemes, have mushroomed in rural Malawi and elsewhere in Southern Africa over the past few decades (Ellis & Freeman, 2004).<sup>95</sup> Their role in supporting vulnerable households caring for orphans has been acknowledged in Malawi and elsewhere in SSA (Arnall et al., 2004; Foster, 2004; Kidman & Heymann, 2009). A service mapping of the research communities identified several community-based organisations and support groups (**Figure 9.6**).

**Figure 9.6:** Examples of community structures in the research communities



Despite the presence of these community organisations and support groups, none of the grandfathers interviewed acknowledged receiving direct material support from any of them. Notably, CBOs and VDCs in the research communities may largely benefit younger/preschool orphaned children because they usually focus on CBCCs and other areas of development, rather than directly providing material support to grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in their households. Still, they

<sup>95</sup> Generally, these are considered less formal and not purely informal (i.e., they are a hybrid of formal and informal). Thus, they are a hybrid of formal and informal safety nets. For instance, CBOs and CBCCs are run by the local people in the community, but they may receive technical (e.g. training) and financial support from government (e.g. through the District Social Welfare Office), NGOs, and FBOs who are working with them.

provide other kinds of support for aged/old grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. For instance, some CBOs may help grandfathers with some of the chores, for instance, digging pit latrines, erecting a *thandala* [dishrack] and other hands-on support, as explained by 38-year old Olwethu (an NGO staff), during interview: “for very old grandparents who do not have relatives, these CBOs do come in to assist them through washing their clothes and beddings, and cleaning the home and surroundings.”

However, as previously noted (Ellis et al., 2003; Arnall et al., 2004; Ellis & Freeman 2004; Bezner-Kerr 2005), support from community organisations and support groups in Malawi is generally limited, rare, and irregular because they largely depend on external support (i.e. from government, NGOs, and other charities) rather than local efforts. Moreover, many of them have limited functional ability to sustainably address the magnitude of the need (Kidman and Heymann, 2009). For instance, many CBOs and CBCCs in the research communities that receive no or little external support and rely heavily on the contributions made by parents and guardians become less active or non-functioning during the lean/hungry period when households are experiencing food shortages. Thus, support from community structures for grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in the research communities is almost non-existent. Others have commented that, like kinship support, community safety nets are generally declining due to the overwhelming impact of the AIDS epidemic, poverty, and other social changes (Foster, 2004, 2007). This may explain the situation of grandfather-headed households visited during this study in Zomba District.

Another source of community support for grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren interviewed during this study may come through religious groups such as churches and mosques. Some of the grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren receive material (e.g. food, soap, blankets) and other support (e.g. help with farm activities) from churches and mosques, for instance. Foster (2004, 2007) and Arthur (2015) have reported similar findings elsewhere in SSA. Also, some churches and mosques have dedicated events (e.g. music festivals, special offerings) organised to raise funds to support orphans in their congregation, as described below (**Box 9.3**).

### **Box 9.3: Support for some orphans and grandparents from religious groups**

*The laws of our faith stipulate that an orphan is the child who is supposed to be supported very much. There is a certain part of offering which believers are persuaded to offer, that is based on our faith. This is done at the end of each year, for instance, when we cultivate crops and harvest, every believer who has reached a certain amount of produce is persuaded to take some of his/her produce and give to the mosque. One of the group of people who benefit from all that offering are orphans (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).*

*As for religious bodies, it [support] may happen. There are committees in the churches, they may collect maize for the elderly. As for Muslims, they have a particular month whereby they give such food items to other people, largely to their fellow Muslims. We have Roman Catholics, they do distribute relief food. I have a belief that they also target their fellow elderly Catholics as well (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).*

However, similar to community structures and support groups in the research communities, support from religious groups is inadequate, unreliable, and occasional. The number of orphans in the communities exceeds the support available, hence such sources of funding are not reaching every deserving orphan. Moreover, such support (if any) is available once, or a few times per year, usually during religious celebrations such as Christmas, Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, as one of the children states:

Usually, the support is once in a while, like in the mosques things are distributed when the Asians visit. They distribute once in a year when they decide that, “let’s go and give these things to people in Kuntumanji.” They don’t come regularly (Mzati, 14 years, Male – FGD).

Thus, the contribution of informal safety nets (kinship, friends, and community) in supporting grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in the research communities was found to be almost non-existent. Where available, it is less functional and has little or no impact on their livelihoods.

#### **9.4.2 Social Welfare Safety Nets: Gendered?**

In rural Malawi and in other countries in SSA, welfare safety nets provided by the state and its local and international development partners (e.g. through cash and food transfers) offer another vital source of support for poor/vulnerable households in times of livelihood challenges (Laird, 2002; Ricker-Gilbert et al., 2011; Arthur, 2015). Consistent with other studies in Malawi (Chibwana et al., 2010; Chirwa & Dorward, 2011; Takane, 2011), I found several welfare programmes in the research communities. These include: subsidized agricultural inputs through the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP); reduced food prices through the Strategic Grain Reserve

(SGR) operated by the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC); <sup>96</sup> food aid provided during natural disasters (e.g. floods, drought/famine) through relief programmes;<sup>97</sup> public works programmes through Food for Work Programmes (e.g. the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF); household economic empowerment through the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) Programme – locally known as *Mtukulapakhomo*; and the School Feeding Programme. In addition, a few orphaned grandchildren are benefitting from school bursaries from the government (through the District Social Welfare Office) and from SRT Malawi/UK. Some of the grandfathers receive support from some of these programmes.

Given the economic context of rural Malawi (as highlighted earlier), these welfare programmes are crucial for mitigating livelihood challenges such as seasonal food insecurity (Devereux, 2001; Smith, 2001; Ellis et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2011). For instance, grandfathers interviewed in this study who benefit from the *Mtukulapakhomo* programme stated that they use the money/funds to buy basic needs. For some, it was the only regular income/money they had. During our discussions, their appreciation was vivid:

I do receive support from a certain organisation. I am receiving food [...] They give me maize, monthly [...] So, I am getting food and *Mtukulapakhomo* [money]<sup>98</sup> [...] There is a certain organisation that is giving me maize. They also give me money through *Mtukulapakhomo* [...] it's helping me *a lot!* And, I really thank them a lot (Chikondi, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

I got registered in a certain programme and I get financial support [...] I am thankful to the government for supporting us with this money, and others are receiving maize (Matt, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Despite these positive testimonies/stories, these social programmes have significant limitations. Social programmes available in communities that participated in this study have limited coverage, a situation observed in other parts of Malawi (Devereux, 2001; Kidman & Heymann, 2009; Littrell et al., 2012) and in SSA (Foster, 2005, 2007; Nyasani et al., 2009; Tamasane & Head, 2010). For instance,

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<sup>96</sup> A parastatal marketing agency.

<sup>97</sup> Usually by the government through the Department of Disaster Management Affairs in conjunction with local and international NGOs (e.g. FAO), FBO, and other charities.

<sup>98</sup> Among the local people, *Mtukulapakhomo* is synonymous with money, and during discussion of social welfare support, they used these terms interchangeably.

Miller et al (2011) report that the cash transfer programme in rural Malawi reached only 7 out of the country's 28 districts, and targeted only the poorest 10% of households. Although the cash transfer programme has now been rolled to all districts, its coverage remains limited – it is not universal and many people are left out.<sup>99</sup> Thus, despite orphans and the elderly (e.g. grandfathers) being among the four priority target groups for social policy (Smith, 2001), many vulnerable households are still left out of social programmes. Only three of the 15 grandfathers in my research study in rural Malawi are registered in social support programmes, and there are no specific programmes specifically targeting grandparents such as grandfathers:<sup>100</sup>

They [programmes] are not reaching everyone, no! There are lots of other grandparents who are not included in *Mtukulapakhomo* programme to receive support, yeah, it's very few who are benefiting (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather – FGD).

There is not any organisation here saying we want to help old people or grandfathers. The organisations that come here are those ones like *Mtukulapakhomo*, but not those that specifically focus on grandfathers (Ntheto, 55 years, grandfather – FGD).

Secondly, the support from programmes is inadequate due to its irregular flow and large household sizes. The average household in this study was 5.4 persons, which exceeds the national average of 4.5 persons per household (NSO & ICF International, 2017). In fact, the support is too little to effectively address the magnitude of the need due to generalised poverty in rural Malawi. Consequently, the support makes little or no impact in the lives of some of the grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren interviewed in this research. For instance, grandfathers and other research participants mentioned that the cash support from *Mtukulapakhomo* is quarterly, and lasts only for a few days or weeks:

The way the money is received is problematic, and it's very little. It doesn't really do much on meeting our needs (Frank, 76 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

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<sup>99</sup> My own work during consultancy with Save the Children in 2014 (which covered 9 districts in Southern, Central, and Northern Malawi) showed that many deserving people are left out due to limited funds.

<sup>100</sup> This number was corroborated during FGDs with other participant groups.

Some grandparents are failing to provide the necessities in the household through this support because they have lots of needs [...] When they receive the money and bring it home, the grandparents think it will help the children, yet the money is finished immediately, and the problems persist (Basilio, 45 years, male – FGD).

Further, as stated in chapter 2, and as has been reported by other studies in the country and other regions of SSA such as Zambia, Ghana, and Tanzania (e.g. see Chilowa & Devereux, 2001; Baltzer & Hansen, 2011; Kato & Greeley, 2016; Basurto et al., 2017), widespread fraud and corruption, nepotism and local politics during the implementation of many social programmes interfere with equitable access to social support available in the participating communities. The chiefs and their assistants as well as clerks who register beneficiaries are noted for favouring their relatives and friends as well as receiving bribes at the expense of the most vulnerable and deserving people, such as grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren with limited resources. Even though the social protection committee is supposed to select beneficiaries, chiefs and their assistants have a huge influence on who should be included and excluded. During heated discussions, people did not hold back their frustrations, as exemplified below (**Box 9.4**).

**Box 9.4:** *Participants' views about the limitations of welfare programmes*

*The organisations have never included me on the list. The chief's son is the one who registers beneficiaries. So, he includes his acquaintances only (Otulo, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*When they are allocated a figure of beneficiaries of the relief food, say around fifteen or ten, the village headmen could have been considering vulnerable people like grandfathers who are staying with orphans. Unfortunately, for most village headmen, the assistance goes towards their mistresses. They are the ones who are benefiting while the intended beneficiaries are left out, those who are struggling (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Key-informant interview).*

*Many grandparents here are not registered because when the chiefs are registering beneficiaries for the programmes, they favour their relatives. This happens a lot in our community. Such things make many grandparents in this village to suffer and fail to access support from various organisations (Mapula, 20 years, female - FGD).*

Furthermore, social programmes available in the research communities appear to be gender-biased. Although there are more grandmothers than grandfathers in the research communities (as established in chapter 4), and thus it would be expected to have more grandmothers than grandfathers in social programmes, the proportion of grandfathers is strikingly low. This creates frustration among some grandfathers with caring responsibilities of their orphaned grandchildren, as they feel they are being treated unfairly:

When registering people for *Mtukulapakhomo*, or to receive maize, grandmothers are the ones who are mostly considered. Grandfathers, it's very rare to be included [...] when they want to help grandparents with some money to buy soap, their focus is normally on grandmothers. Us, grandfathers, it's very rare. Us, grandfathers, are not considered. It's as if the old people that are in this community are the women only. It's as if men do not grow old. Men do get old also! Aah, am I not old? (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

I should say that, in this community, talking about assistance towards grandfathers, we are lagging. It is mainly grandmothers that are assisted (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).

... most of the times a lot of people, many organisations... they mostly target grandmothers. Grandfathers are discriminated/excluded (Asante, 27 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).

Grandfathers and other research participants in this study outlined three major reasons for why social programmes in their communities tend to be gendered (i.e. focus on grandmothers and exclude grandfathers). Firstly, due to gendered conceptions of care, people view grandmothers, but not grandfathers, as nurturers and carers of grandchildren. Consequently, social support for grandparents caring for orphans is customarily directed to grandmothers rather than grandfathers. This epitomises how cultural norms about gender disadvantage grandfathers in welfare programmes in these communities, thus highlighting the social exclusion of grandfathers [men] who find themselves in roles not associated with notions of masculinities in their communities. This emerged strongly during feedback session on a role-play that children and young people (13-17 years) performed during a dissemination meeting in the community, which focused on discussing the key initial themes emerging from the study. This also emerged strongly during discussions with various participants, as described below:

Most of the times grandmothers are the ones who stay with the grandchildren, that is why the focus is on grandmothers rather than on grandfathers (Ishan, 48 years, chief [local/traditional leader] – CAG Validation Meeting).

They say children stay with the grandmother. The grandfather does not have any responsibility. That's what people say. So, when the support comes, it goes to the grandmothers (May, 70 years, grandmother – In-depth interview).

Many people think that when it comes to someone caring for orphans, then it must be grandmothers. So, when it comes to registering beneficiaries, they increase the number of grandmothers (Montfort, 46 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).

Secondly, evidence from this study suggests that there are also issues of trust and stereotypes against grandfathers. Generally, many welfare benefits are targeted to women/mothers/female household heads in order to see direct benefit to children. Similarly, this perception is prevalent in welfare programmes and appear to permeate even for older people such as grandmothers and grandfathers in the research communities. In contrast to grandmothers, some grandfathers are not trusted with the support from the programmes. A popular discourse is that some grandfathers have a habit of prioritising their personal pleasure at the expense of the welfare of their grandchildren. For instance, it was reported that some grandfathers use the money from *Mtukulapakhomo* and/or sell the things they receive (e.g. maize, cooking oil, beans) to buy beer. Even though this is not universal, it was widely corroborated by the local people and was a source of concern for government and NGO personnel/staff/officers and local residents in the research communities (**Box 9.5**). This suggests that social attitudes (i.e. negative stereotypes) about grandfathers may proliferate gendered social support in welfare programmes, thus demonstrating the influence of cultural norms about gender and care of children.

**Box 9.5:** *Views regarding stereotypes against grandfathers in social support programmes*

*They say, "let's give the support to grandmothers. They should receive these things to eat with the children. If we give these things to grandfathers, some of them like beer", spending the money out there, and as you come back home, all the money is gone (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*A man is perceived as a big crook! So, the thinking is that if we bring maize here in the household, the woman will not sell the maize, she will grind/mill all of it, cook porridge, and everything will be fine, as opposed to a man. So, organisations tend to target women because.... Aah these grandmothers, because they consider them trustworthy [...] They [organisation] don't trust grandfathers (Asante, 27 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

*... the common perception is that grandmothers and grandfathers use the support differently [...] They say once the grandfather gets some assistance, he will rove around, forgetting about the purpose of the assistance he has received. Upon being given a bag of flour, he may sell part of it and use the proceeds for beer. In contrast, upon getting a bag of maize, and considering the hardships she has gone through, the grandmother budgets it so that it can last them longer. That is the reason why people came to the conclusion that, if grandmothers are targeted, then it means that the assistance goes down to the intended beneficiaries, the children. That is the reason most NGOs target the grandmothers and not the grandfathers (Olwethu, 38 years, female, NGO staff – Key-informant interview).*

Lastly, there is an issue of who the community perceives as more vulnerable. According to the research participants, grandmothers are favoured/targeted in most welfare programmes because they are viewed as frailer than grandfathers,

hence they have less/limited economic opportunities, and are (at least perceived as) more vulnerable. In contrast, grandfathers are expected to be better-off physically, hence they can be expected to engage in livelihood activities and be independent. Thus, grandmothers are more likely to be targeted in social programmes than grandfathers, even though some grandfathers are equally physically weak and in need of social support.<sup>101</sup> The participants explained:

They say we are men and some of us may do *ganyu* and support ourselves [...] But, that's not possible for everyone. They say, "men are active in generating income, so don't care about them, let's focus on women" (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Most of the time, if there is any support, grandfathers are segregated/excluded. There is a perception that, being men, they are going to fend for themselves. Support is mostly for grandmothers because the assumption is that the grandfathers are very active and will support themselves. Women get the assistance without any hurdles, but grandfathers are completely left out and not considered at all. In this community, the only elderly persons that are recognised as being vulnerable are the grandmother who is caring for orphaned children (Lungile, 69 years, grandfather, CBO Chairperson – Stakeholder Meeting).

These findings suggest that gendered conceptions of care may influence who (men/grandfathers versus women/grandmothers) gets access to social support in the research communities, hence partly corroborate evidence from some parts of SSA (e.g. Uganda, Kenya). For instance, some scholars have claimed that because of gendered social constructions of care, men are more likely to be naturally overlooked on social support as they are normally not viewed as carers of children (see Ezeh et al., 2006; Mudege & Ezeh, 2009). Other scholars have suggested that due to dominant conceptions of masculinities that view men as providers/breadwinners, men are likely to conceal their access to social support or completely shun seeking it despite suffering because of embarrassment that dependence on welfare support may question their masculinities (provider role) in conservative African societies and label them failures and/or feminine (Mudege & Ezeh, 2009; Mugisha et al., 2015).

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<sup>101</sup> This could also be a result of the issue of belongingness in these matrilineal communities such that grandfathers/men maybe systematically side-lined on the basis that they are not considered as natives to these communities.

However, the findings of my study in rural Malawi do not entirely support some of the above claims. While it emerged clear that welfare programmes were gendered, grandfathers did not seem to hide or feel embarrassed by the idea of receiving welfare support. They expressed their wish to be included in social support programmes even before being prompted to discuss such issues. Given the level of poverty and livelihood challenges they encounter, it would rather be surprising for them to hide their access to social support. Moreover, a triangulation of their stories about lack of support matched the accounts of other research participants, thus indicating the authenticity of their stories. Given the dearth of literature on the issue, the findings on the apparent gendered social support in the research communities in rural Malawi warrant further interrogation, particularly in the context of Southern Africa in specific and SSA more generally. What emerged clearly from my conversations with the research participants, though, is that, gender biases in social support for grandparents, particularly in the presence of livelihood challenges and absence of kinship support, may put children in single-grandparent grandfather-headed households at more risk compared to their counterparts in single-grandparent grandmother-headed households that are more likely to have access to social support programmes. Research participants shared numerous stories of the suffering of grandchildren raised by grandfathers alone with little or no social support, as well as the negative impact this has on their development (e.g. schooling), as described below (**Box 9.6**).

**Box 9.6: Impact of lack of social support on orphaned grandchildren**

*Due to a focus on grandmothers, the grandfather and his grandchildren end up suffering. Those staying with grandmothers are better-off (Zondiwe, 73 years, grandfather - FGD).*

*The lack of support may affect the education of the children. If they are in school, they are likely to miss classes. Like during this period of hunger, when children sleep on an empty stomach, they are likely to be absent at school. Girls may drop out of school and get married early, thinking this would lessen the burden that the family is going through. The boys may decide to start stealing other people's property, a thing that will even worsen the situation they are passing through when they get caught [...] to deal with the problems or to lessen them can be possible if the other relatives assist somehow, without which, it becomes hard to end the livelihood challenges (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).*

*This does affect them, and the most affected victim is the child because the children depend on their grandfather. If the grandfather has encountered some challenges, the children are affected. If he is failing to support the children with their education needs, then it means their future is doomed. If he is failing to source and provide food, it means the children will go hungry and indulge in promiscuous behaviour [...] the children say they have no option. To them, they think they are doing the right thing to improve their situation, but in the end, it affects them, they have unplanned children. (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

## 9.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter set out to address the last research question outlined in chapter 1 about the livelihoods of grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi. Generally, the findings show that grandfathers diversify their livelihoods, including farming/agriculture (crop and livestock production), *ganyu*, and non-farm activities (i.e. small businesses/IGAs).<sup>102</sup> This fits into the dominant picture/discourse of rural livelihood diversification in Malawi and in other regions of SSA (e.g. see Bryceson, 2002a, 2002b; Assan, 2014; Loison, 2015; Takane & Gono, 2017). This also mirrors the sustainable livelihoods discourse, and the sustainable livelihoods approaches and framework more generally, which are prominent in development literature as well as in development programmes and projects by various local, international, and multinational NGOs/donors across the world, but mostly those implemented in developing countries (see Ashley & Carney, 1999; Satgé et al., 2002; Carney, 2003). This suggests that the livelihood strategies of grandfathers and other people in the research communities are similar to those of many other people in rural Malawi, and much of SSA.

However, the findings of this study do not support suggestions of a departure from agrarian to non-agrarian livelihoods due to various social and economic transformations affecting rural livelihoods, as suggested by numerous studies in Malawi and other parts of SSA such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, Kenya (Bryceson, 2002a, 2002b; Heady & Jayne, 2014; Muyanga & Jayne, 2014). The main livelihood sources of grandfathers in this study are, in order of importance, agriculture, *ganyu*, and other IGAs. It is possible that the transition claimed by other scholars (e.g. as cited in the above studies) may be influenced by context-specific factors such as the availability of alternative livelihoods, the absence of which make people remain dependent on agrarian livelihoods. Also, as this study shows, challenges of old age and resulting poor health may limit grandfathers from exploring other more physically-demanding livelihood activities. For instance, reflecting back on the livelihood activities and IGAs (as presented

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<sup>102</sup> Grandfathers' active engagement in various livelihood activities demonstrates agency. As will demonstrate in the next chapter, which focuses on grandfather-grandchildren interdependence, grandfathers' agency is complemented by the priceless contribution of their orphaned grandchildren in daily life.

earlier in **Figure 9.2**), it is clear that, except for farming and *ganyu*, the rest are less physically-demanding. This suggests that the intersections of age and physical health may be crucial in understanding a grandfather's [in]ability to engage in livelihood strategies and provide for his orphaned grandchildren's needs.

Evidence presented in the chapter also shows that despite livelihood diversification, many grandfathers who participated in this study are prone to livelihood challenges (e.g. famine and seasonal food insecurity). Extreme poverty, dependence on rain-fed seasonal farming, lack of inputs and the resulting low crop and livestock production, large numbers of dependents, lack of reliable and sustainable formal and informal safety nets, gendered social support, unpredictable weather conditions detrimental to farming/agriculture, and other contextual factors, all confound the ability of grandfathers to cope with and mitigate livelihood challenges. Subsequently, this limits their ability to care for their orphaned grandchildren adequately, which has a negative impact on their orphaned grandchildren's development such as schooling. Moreover, the lack of social support may have a negative impact on their health due to economic stress, particularly for those with no welfare benefits and private investment and have responsibility to pay school fees for the secondary school age grandchildren (see also Mudege Ezeh, 2009; Ice et al., 2010). This suggests that age, physical health, weather conditions, and lack of viable agriculture are important intersections that help to understand a grandfather's livelihoods in the research communities. Conversely, none of these factors is sufficient to independently explain the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in rural Malawi vis-à-vis livelihoods.

Overall, the findings presented in this chapter suggest that the livelihood strategies of grandfathers in the communities researched follow the dominant masculinities in their communities, in the Malawian society, and in SSA more generally. This demonstrates that gender norms are important factors that aid our understanding of the lives of these grandfathers vis-à-vis their livelihood strategies. As stated in chapter 8 and earlier this chapter, grandfathers do not pursue these livelihood strategies single-handedly. They largely depend on their orphaned grandchildren's contribution in productive and reproductive work. The next chapter explores this symbiotic relationship in detail to highlight orphaned grandchildren's agency and reciprocities of care between them and their grandfathers.

## **CHAPTER 10: RECIPROCITIES OF CARE BETWEEN GRANDFATHERS AND GRANDCHILDREN**

### **10.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 9 established that grandfathers' livelihoods in the communities researched in this study largely depend on farming, small IGAs, and performing and fulfilling various tasks. The present chapter demonstrates that grandfathers do not undertake all the tasks outlined in chapter 9 single-handedly. They rely heavily on their orphaned grandchildren's support. Despite other scholars asserting that patterns of reciprocity in SSA have been disrupted by the general commodification of life, impoverishment, and depredations of HIV/AIDS (see Whyte et al, 2008), this study demonstrates that intergenerational reciprocities remain an important feature of the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi.<sup>103</sup>

Reciprocities denote "a sense of mutual dependence expressed in give and take over time, which entails "sharing and transmission of resources and also mutual expressions of care and regard" (Whyte et al, 2008: 6). Reciprocity is characterised by "the transmission of (material and immaterial) resources and is imbued with assumptions about morality" (Whyte et al, 2008: 6). Whyte et al (2008: 6) describe reciprocity as "the most important quality of intergenerational relationships" in kinship generational and intergenerational relations. Van de Geest (2004: 56) argues that "if practical reciprocity does not enter the domain of kinship, relatedness remains void and shrivels" because "sharing and exchanging goods, services, emotions, reproduction and meaning, constitute the 'stuff' out of which kinship relations are made" (van der Geest, 2004: 56; see also Whyte & Whyte, 2004).

Thus, this chapter engages with a theme that emerged from investigation of research question 2 about the role of grandfathers in the care of orphaned children by taking a child-centred approach and acknowledging children's agency by exploring the reciprocities of care between grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. Specifically, the chapter explores orphaned grandchildren's significant contribution

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<sup>103</sup> See also Geissler and Prince (2004) and de Klerk (2011) for similar observations in Kenya and Tanzania, respectively.

to their households through undertaking productive and reproductive (paid and unpaid) work, individually (e.g. **Figure 10.1** below) or alongside their grandfathers.

**Figure 10.1:** A granddaughter emptying water before going to the well to fetch water



**Photograph:** Taken by David, 80 years, grandfather.

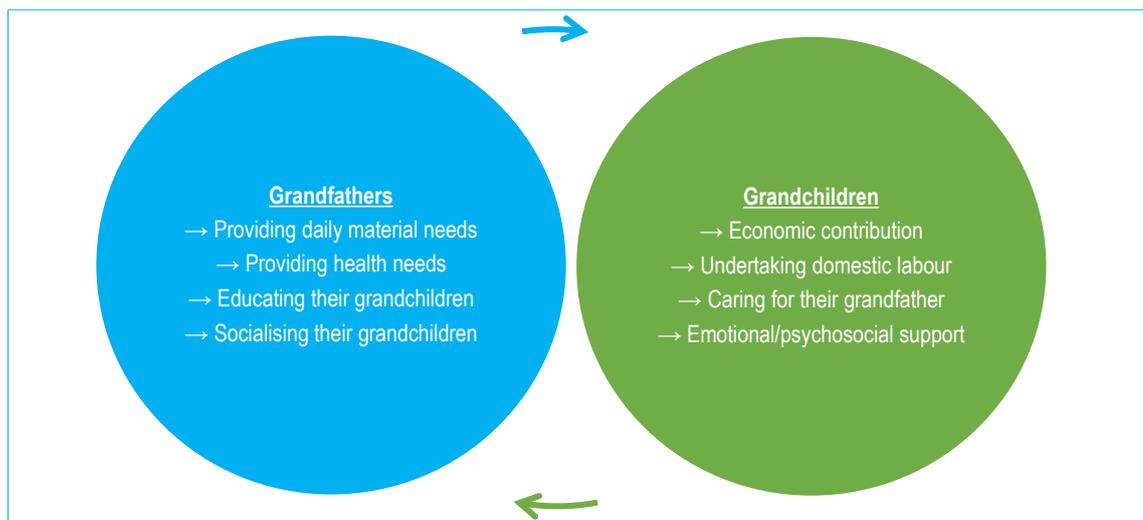
The chapter demonstrates that orphaned grandchildren's economic contribution to the household ensures its survival, as eloquently summed up by one of the local primary school teachers quoted above. Thus, although chapters 5 through 8 focused on unidirectional care and support (i.e. from grandfathers to grandchildren), grandfathers' and grandchildren's daily lives are characterised by reciprocities of care, as eloquently captured by one of the teachers (**Box 10.1**), and illustrated in **Figure 10.2** below.

**Box 10.1:** Views regarding the reciprocities of care between grandfathers and grandchildren

*In the absence of his orphaned grandchildren, he [the grandfather] is likely to face difficulties. The immediate benefit they get is that, for the home to look tidy, the children sweep every morning, they share tasks, making sure the home looks beautiful. They look for soap to use in the household, sometimes doing ganyu. They relieve their grandfather with work in the field. The work that could have lasted several days is completed only in two days, all because he's staying with the children. Some of the things he couldn't manage doing alone as an elderly person, tasks like digging up a pit latrine, constructing bathing place, cleaning around the home, drawing water, cleaning utensils, all these chores are easily undertaken by the children. In contrast, a grandfather who's living alone doesn't live a good life, he struggles a lot to undertake household chores. Even when the children are very young, say around ten, they prove to be helpful. That is the benefit that the grandfather gains from living with his orphaned grandchildren (Lusungu, 21 years, male, teacher – Key-informant interview).*

The chapter further shows that orphaned grandchildren’s productive and reproductive work is influenced by the interplay and intersections of poverty, household division of labour, and cultural norms about gender and age. Thus, the findings suggest that, to understand orphaned grandchildren’s productive and reproductive work in rural Malawi, one must appreciate the mutual and constitutive interplay and intersection of these factors because none of these factors can sufficiently explain this topic independently. The sections that follow expound on these findings.

**Figure 10.2:** Reciprocities of care between grandfathers and grandchildren



## 10.2 CHILDREN’S WORK IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

African childhoods are synonymous with family work. Children participate in myriad household chores and other livelihood activities in their daily life (Bourdillon, 2011; Okyere, 2012; Laird, 2015). Abebe and Bessell (2011: 770) state that children’s work in SSA and other developing regions is “an integral part of everyday life and indispensable to family livelihoods.” Subsequently, children perform household chores “as part of household production... and children’s participation in work is vital to maintain subsistence economies...” (Abebe & Bessell, 2011: 771). For instance, Twum-Danso (2009b: 425) notes in Ghana that “...adults alone cannot complete the tasks that need to be done for the family to survive.”

Bourdillon (2011: 101) agrees and states that “in impoverished families, with a few human or material resources, the work of children can contribute significantly to family sustenance, whether through reproductive work that frees adults for

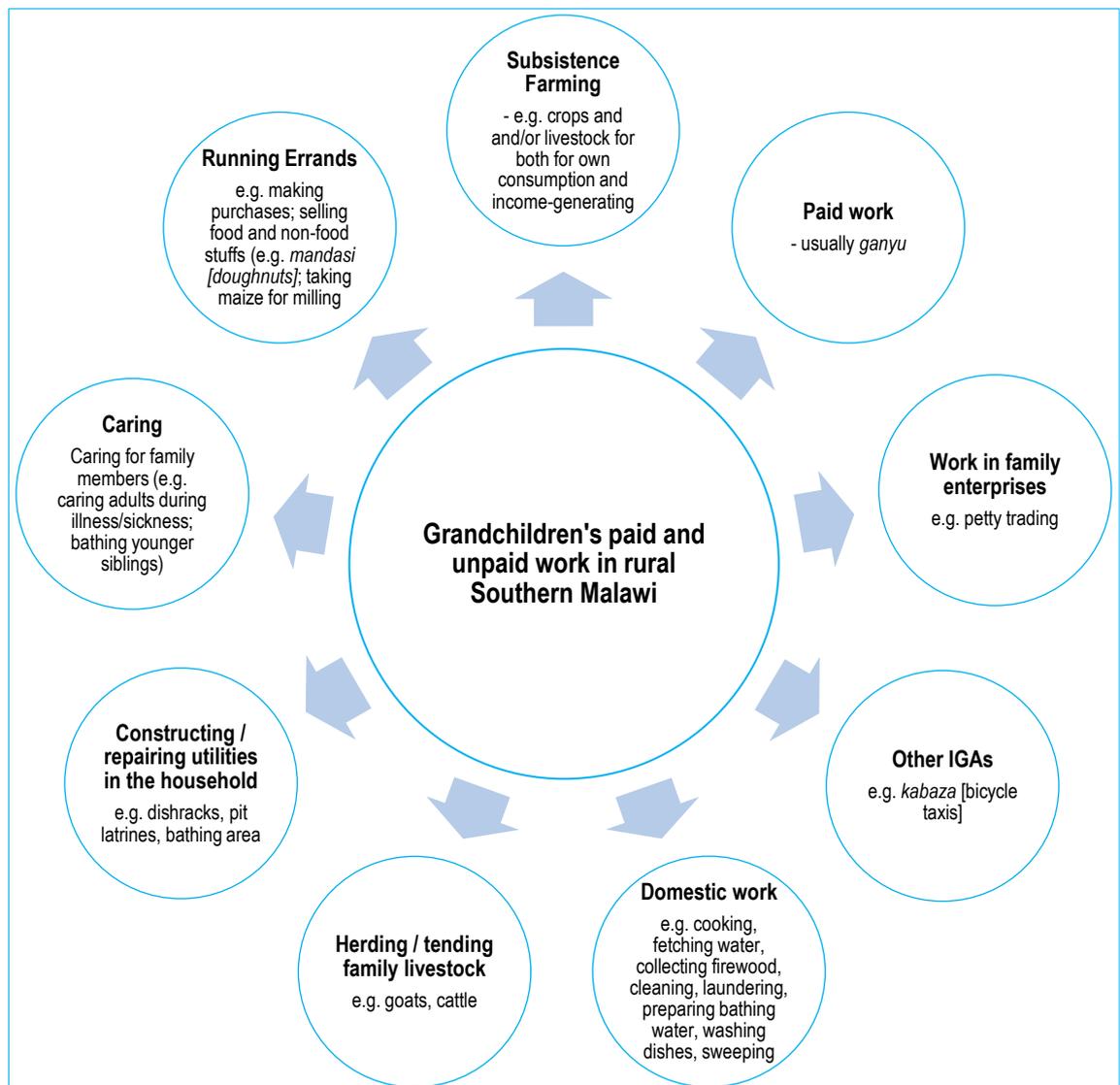
productive activities, or in unpaid or paid productive work.” Robson (1996) notes that children in West Africa are central to household sustenance through their important contribution to productive and reproductive work. Similarly, Hollos (2002: 176) notes that, in Tanzania, “work is not considered to be the adults’ domain where children ‘help in’, rather, it is what everybody does for the mutual benefit of the family.” Further, Robson’s (2004a) work in rural Northern Nigeria demonstrates that children participate, independently or alongside adults, in agricultural production, domestic production, and trade. Heissler and Porter (2010: 15) report that rural Ethiopian children view their work as their obligation to contribute to the functioning of the family unit because “everyone makes a contribution to the household.”

Thus, like all members of the household, children in SSA are expected to support their households through undertaking various household chores that ensure the household’s survival (Abebe & Skovdal, 2010; Mugisha et al., 2015). By the time children transition from preteens into their early teen years, many would have mastered all domestic chores appropriate for their age, some of which are similar to those performed by adults (Robson, 1996; Hollos, 2002; Laird, 2012), as widely documented by studies across SSA and outside of Africa. For instance, Hollos (2002: 175) notes that, among Tanzanians, “by the time girls are 12 and boys are around 14 years of age, they are considered to be equal to adults in power and skill in most work and they can take care of themselves and of the household in the absence of grown-ups.”

Drawing from a multi-country study in Ghana and other countries outside of Africa (i.e. Cambodia, China, Guatemala, and India), Guarcello et al (2005: 9) observe that children’s work in the household “is seen as a normal feature of society and housework is not considered labour, but a duty.” Notably, poverty, cultural and moral conceptions a ‘good child’ and subsequent socialisation, and the children’s own agency and sense of empowerment (i.e. feelings of self-reliance, self-esteem, self-respect when they undertake productive and reproductive work) by doing ‘adults’ work are some of the main drivers for children’s engagement in paid and unpaid work across this region (e.g. see Robson & Ansell, 2000; Robson, 2004a; Maconachie & Hilson, 2016; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016).

Similarly, orphaned grandchildren in the communities that participated in this study are expected to undertake various chores in their household. These can be categorised into two broad themes, namely: 1) economic contributions to their household (paid/productive work – paid in cash and/or kind); and 2) undertaking reproductive/unpaid work (**Figure 10.3**). The next sections explore these findings in detail.

**Figure 10.3:** Children's productive and reproductive work in rural Southern Malawi



### 10.3 ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN'S PRODUCTIVE WORK

Reciprocities of care between grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren in the communities that participated in this research can be traced through several facets. One of these is displayed through orphaned grandchildren's productive work via their participation in a myriad of economic activities in their households, including: 1) agricultural work for sale of crops and livestock; 2) paid work through *ganyu*; and

3) contribution in family businesses. In addition, grandfathers also benefit from other economic support through social programmes (e.g. grants, cash payments,) that come through their orphaned grandchildren.

### 10.3.1 Grandchildren's Economic Contribution through Farming

The Malawi 2015 National Child Labour Survey reports that nearly 9 in 10 children (89%) in rural Malawi participate in farming activities in their households (NSO Malawi & ILO, 2017). Consistent with this and previous studies in other parts of rural SSA (e.g. Guarcello et al., 2006; Abebe & Skovdal, 2010; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016), farming-related activities dominate children's economic life in the communities researched in this study. All the grandchildren interviewed said they work in the fields alone and/or with their grandfathers, cultivating various crops throughout the year for both food and cash. This was corroborated by their grandparents. For instance, 80-year old David explained that his two granddaughters, Orlando (13 years) and Ottilia (15 years) contribute to crop production through participating in farming activities, for example by helping him making ridges in readiness for the maize planting season (**Figure 10.4**), planting seeds, weeding, and harvesting crops.

**Figure 10.4:** Grandchildren working in the field



**Photograph:** Taken by David, 80 years, grandfather.

Notably, the incomes of grandfathers in research communities rely heavily on the sales from seasonal crops. Thus, grandchildren's participation in farming activities is crucial to the household cash economy, livelihoods, and survival. For instance, many elderly grandfathers are poor and cannot afford to hire labour during the growing season. Their grandchildren fill in this gap by undertaking farming activities on their family/household fields.<sup>104</sup> Households generally sell part of the crops produced to buy some of their needs. Importantly, agricultural production also eases dependence on perpetual food buying. This suggests that poverty and children's work are important intersections in understanding household's survival in the research communities of rural Southern Malawi.

Further, evidence from this research suggests that the volume of farming activities in the participating households is gendered such that boys and their grandfathers are likely to do more farming activities compared to girls and their grandmothers. For instance, in dual-grandparent households, grandparents and their grandsons and granddaughters may go together to work in their family/shared field, but granddaughters and their grandmother usually knock off earlier to go home and undertake household chores such as fetching water and cooking so that they have meal in good time. Meanwhile, grandsons and their grandfather continue working in the field until late in the day. This household division of labour is based on the cultural understanding that women should undertake feminine tasks (e.g. outlined above) and ensure they prepare meals for men in time, while men should focus on masculine roles and tasks associated with the role of men as providers, such as working hard in the field to provide food for their families. This demonstrates how culture (i.e. gender norms) influence household division of labour, and ultimately, what tasks orphaned grandchildren undertake vis-à-vis agricultural activities.

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<sup>104</sup> None of the grandchildren who participated in this research had personal fields. Thus, they farm collectively on their household fields. As discussed in chapter 9, landholdings are increasingly getting smaller due to rapid population growth and high population density. Coupled with climate change and soil degradation due to overuse of land, crop production is limited. Hence, it would be unwise for parents and/or guardians to further fragment the already limited land and give it to their children, particularly where they have no assurance that the children will be able to produce food out of it on their own. Such land transfers are increasingly happening only when the child gets married.

Reciprocities of care are also evident in unforeseen circumstances such as illnesses. Many grandfathers who are incapacitated by old age and/or illness largely depend on their grandchildren's work to sustain the household to ensure its survival. Grandchildren may also step in to be providers in their households when their grandfather is incapacitated by old age and/or illness. They farm, and thus provide food for the household. For instance, two grandfathers who participated in this research had been bedridden for three years and heavily depended on their grandchildren's farming and other economic activities. When I visited and interviewed them, the grandfathers shared emotional stories about their long period of illness and how their grandchildren had become pillars of strength, caring for them and providing for the daily needs of their households through farming and other IGAs. Their appreciation of their grandchildren was unequivocal and overwhelming, as described below:

I am ill/sick and unable to work, it's my grandson who has cultivated the maize. That's the benefit of staying with children. He has helped me a lot this year, knowing that, "my grandfather is not feeling well, let me be strong and work hard in the fields" (Chikondi, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

They help me very much. And, this is my third year without doing any farm work. I am ill/sick and my arms and fingers are hurting. I have been going to the hospital to get different kinds of medication/treatment, but it has proved futile. My grandchildren are the ones farming, and I am eating what they are producing. They say, "grandpa is ill/sick, he used to farm, but his hands are hurting, he cannot farm anymore, let's farm" (Otulo, 86 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

### **10.3.2 Grandchildren's Economic Contribution through Paid Work: Ganyu**

Children's engagement in paid work (usually *ganyu*) for livelihood purposes in rural SSA is ubiquitous (Hajdu et al., 2013; Mkandawire et al., 2013; Ansell et al., 2014; Phiri, 2016). In Malawi, nearly 3 in 5 children (58%) start engaging in paid work before the age of 10 years (NSO Malawi & ILO, 2017). However, like children in other parts of SSA such as Tanzania, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Zambia (Robson, 2004a; Guarcello et al., 2006; Heissler & Porter, 2010; Abebe & Bessell, 2011), the bulk of children's work in the participating households and communities in this study is unpaid. None of the grandchildren interviewed for this study had formal paid work. Nonetheless, all of them engage in informal paid work (usually after school hours, at weekends, and during school holidays) through doing *ganyu* for other better-off individuals and families in exchange for money, food, or other items (e.g. clothes,

exercise books). As with children's casual labour in rural Zambia and Ethiopia (Orkin, 2009; Phiri, 2016), children's *ganyu* in rural Malawi is usually agriculture-related activities such as ridging, weeding, applying fertiliser, harvesting, carrying crops. In many cases, boys are more likely to engage in *ganyu* compared to girls because, as stated previously, boys undertake less household chores compared to girls, hence have more time to seek and do *ganyu*. This signifies how culture and household division of labour intersect and influence children's participation in *ganyu* in the research communities in rural Malawi.

Besides farm-related *ganyu*, grandchildren also engage in other kinds of *ganyu* such as digging pit latrines, constructing dishracks, thatching houses, fetching water, and collecting firewood for better-off people:

...on Saturdays, we go and do *ganyu* in other people's field [...] also *ganyu* such as harvesting maize and carrying it home (Agness, 15 years, female – FGD).

When it's during the rainy season when people are weeding in their gardens, you find that during Saturdays and Sundays they have done *ganyu* and generated K100 which they use to buy food at school (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

As in neighbouring Zambia (Phiri, 2016; Phiri & Abebe, 2016), children's *ganyu* in rural Malawi is both child-initiated and collective. In child-initiated *ganyu*, the grandchildren seek *ganyu* often without their grandfather's involvement. Subsequently, grandchildren usually decide on how they use the money generated, with many spending it on their own individual needs such as buying food at school, paying to watch video, or buying clothes and shoes for themselves. In collective *ganyu*, however, the grandfather initiates *ganyu*, but his grandchildren work together with him, as described by 20-year old Mapula during FGD: "The children engage in *ganyu*. On the days grandchildren are not going to school, they tell their grandfathers that, "let's go and help you with the *ganyu* you're doing today." In contrast to child-initiated *ganyu*, grandchildren have little or no say on how the income generated from collective *ganyu* is used. Usually, the money is used to support the welfare of the household as a unit (e.g. buying food, soap, matches, paraffin) rather than meeting the individual needs of family members (see also Phiri, 2016; Phiri & Abebe, 2016). Importantly, whether collective or individual, grandchildren seek *ganyu* often as a response to livelihood challenges in their

households, for instance, when their grandfather fails to provide them with essential needs:

As I said earlier, we do *ganyu* to support the household... say there's no *ndiwo* [relish] [...] we do our best to do *ganyu* and buy *ndiwo* (Alick, 17 years, male – FGD).

When there is no *ndiwo* in the house, they go and do *ganyu*, and when they are coming back home, they buy *ndiwo* (Zolani, 72 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

As with their contribution in farm-related activities, grandchildren's contribution to the household cash economy through *ganyu* is crucial. When grandchildren engage in *ganyu* and other economic activities and buy supplies on their own (e.g. school materials), it relieves their grandfathers from the burden of care, as summed up by one of the grandfathers:

The money my granddaughters generate through *ganyu* helps me a lot. Sometimes when they don't have exercise books for their school, or they don't have a pen/pencil, they buy these things by themselves. This means that they have helped me as well, they have stepped in. Sometimes you find that we don't have *ndiwo* in the household and, as they have explained, they tell each other to contribute to buy *ndiwo*. When they do *ganyu* they usually keep the money hoping to use it to buy food at school [...] they tell each other, "Agogo doesn't have money today, let's each contribute and buy *ndiwo* for today", and they buy *ndiwo*. (David, 80 years, grandfather – photo-elicited interview).

### **10.3.3 Grandchildren's Economic Contribution to Family Enterprises**

Orphaned grandchildren in rural Malawi participate in various family-based microbusinesses, usually outside of school hours, at weekends, and during school holidays. Some of the households participating in this study run small business such as cooking foodstuffs, selling trees and firewood, making things for sale (e.g. *miphika* [clay pots], *mitsuko* [large water pots], and *makala* [charcoal]). Thus, orphaned grandchildren participate in these activities. For instance, they take and sell cooked foodstuffs (e.g. *mandasi* [doughnuts]) and perishable goods (e.g. vegetables and tomatoes) along the main roads, at the market, and door-to-door on behalf of their grandparents:

Regarding business, some grandchildren are wise and they assist their grandparent. After knocking off from school they are sent to the market to sell commodities. (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).

The other benefit is that the very same grandchildren he's looking after may... say there are some things like businesses, he sends the children to sell stuffs and generate income... (Stella, 42 years, female, teacher – Key-informant interview).

Another example is that of Takondwa (75-year old) and his orphaned grandchildren. Takondwa owns a dairy cow (given to him by an NGO). During our conversation, he described how his five orphaned grandchildren (four grandsons aged 6, 13, 14, and 17 years, and an 11-year old granddaughter) support him and his spouse (May, 70 years) in their milk production business. For instance, the children cut and collect livestock fodder from the bush, carrying it home to feed the dairy cow and its calf. They milk the cow daily and take the milk to customers for selling. The photo below (**Figure 10.5**) was captured by Takondwa, and it shows his eldest grandson Ndai preparing milk for distribution to customers/buyers early in the morning, before setting off to school.

**Figure 10.5:** *Ndai, preparing milk for distribution*



**Photograph:** *Taken by Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather.*

The income generated from the family businesses that orphaned grandchildren take part in is used to cater for households needs. For instance, as mentioned in chapter 9, Takondwa's dairy cow produces sometimes 5 litres of milk or more per day on good days, which they sell at K250 (~30p) per litre. Thus, the family raises quite a

reasonable amount of income from milk sales for an average rural Malawian family/household.<sup>105</sup> This income caters for essential needs such as food, clothes, as well as the children's school needs, as Takondwa describes below:

We use some of the money from the milk sales to buy needs in the household such as soap for the children, for them to bath and go to school, sugar for them to use for tea in the morning before they leave for school [...], food, so that when they are coming back from school, they should find food [...] So, we use the money to buy *ndiwo* [relish] so that they find food. Even cooking oil, *ndiwo*, and tomatoes, we buy using the money from the milk sales (Takondwa, 75 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

Besides taking part in family enterprises, some of the orphaned grandchildren (as with other children in their communities) run their own microbusinesses, usually after school hours, during weekends and school holidays. They use the money to buy items for personal need (e.g. clothes, shoes, school necessities) and/or household needs (e.g. food). For instance, both boys and girls farm and sell tomatoes and vegetables, order and sell food and non-food stuffs. Also, older girls bake snacks (e.g. *zigumu* [local bread] and *mandasi* [doughnuts]) and sell them along the main road and/or trading centres, and/or local markets, and older boys run *kabaza* businesses along the main roads linking local trading centres.<sup>106</sup> Other orphaned grandchildren cut and sell grass for thatching houses and erect *mipanda* [grass fences] for better-off individuals and families. Others make and sell brooms, collect firewood from the bush and sell them along the main roads to generate income, as described below:

Some of them [grandchildren] take firewood and sell it along the road (Nandi, 78 years, grandmother – In-depth interview).

...these days most boys are [...] are engaged in running *kabaza*. So, when they generate money through *kabaza* they buy maize and bring it home... Sometimes they buy *ndiwo* [relish] and bring it home (Mzati, 14 years, Male – FGD).

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<sup>105</sup> During the rainy season when livestock fodder is easily found, and the cows are fed properly, the family makes at least K20,000 (~£25) per month from the milk business alone. This is a significant amount for a rural Malawian household.

<sup>106</sup> Rural Malawians usually farm tomatoes, vegetables, and maize (after the rainy season) in *dimba* [small irrigated plot], which is usually alongside rivers and streams. Although, landholdings are small in these communities, some families have pieces of land along the banks (*dimba*) and give their older children who are transitioning into adulthood (particularly boys) to farm and use the money for their personal needs such as soap, clothes, and school necessities. As discussed in chapter 8, this is part of socialisation to equip them with skills to become self-reliant (e.g. socialising older boys for adulthood through giving them *dimba* to cultivate and obtain some of their needs). It is also a livelihood strategy by many parents and guardians to relieve themselves from the burden of care.

Besides their economic contribution through agriculture, *ganyu*, and family enterprises, another productive work of orphaned grandchildren in the research communities is tending family livestock. This is usually undertaken by boys, particularly older boys, usually from age 10. Thus, the findings suggest that gender norms and age are important intersections for understanding children's productive work vis-à-vis their contribution to household cash economy through participation in various economic activities.

The economic contribution of grandchildren in rural Malawi mirrors similar practices in other parts of the country. A recent country-wide study found that 30% and 69% of children aged 5 to 9-years and 14 to 17 years, respectively, are actively involved in economic activities in their households (NSO Malawi & ILO, 2017). For instance, generally, nearly 6 in 10 (59%) children in rural Malawi participate in family-based microbusinesses (NSO Malawi & ILO, 2017). Elsewhere in rural SSA, children's participation in various personal and household enterprises through petty trading and other economic activities is widespread (Heissler & Porter, 2010; Hajdu et al., 2011; Laird, 2012; Putnick & Bornstein, 2015). For instance, Laird (2002) reports that girls as young as 7 in Ghana help their mothers with income generation through petty trading. Robson (2004a) notes that among the Hausa women in Northern Nigeria, children as young as 5 years learn hawking skills to sell on the streets on behalf of their secluded Muslim mothers observing *purdah*.<sup>107</sup> This demonstrates that children make substantial economic contribution to their households, hence displaying their agency and initiative rather than dependence.

#### **10.3.4 Direct and Indirect Benefit from Social Support for Orphans**

Some of the orphans in the research communities (albeit few) receive direct support (e.g. regular cash payments, food handouts, blankets, clothes) from government, NGOs, FBOs, and other charities. Grandfathers whose orphaned grandchildren are beneficiaries of such programmes are not only relieved from some of the economic challenges and the burden of care, but also use the received support themselves. While this was hardly acknowledged by grandfathers and their grandchildren (it

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<sup>107</sup> *Purdah* is an Islamic custom in which married women (and sometimes girls who have reached puberty) are strictly secluded from the sight of men and interaction with strangers inside and outside the home (Tuwor & Sossou, 2008: 368).

was not specifically recounted by them) interviewed in this study, it was widely stated by the other community members and professionals working in the research communities:

There are some grandfathers living with orphans and there are some things that are coming in the household from outside because of the children. There are various social support that are coming in the household because of the orphans, and grandfathers benefit through such things (Pemphero, 41 years, male – FGD).

In our case, we do provide support, but in form of loans. We do provide things like fertilizer to orphaned children. So, the grandparents do benefit in the name of their orphaned grandchildren (Olwethu, 38 years, female, NGO staff – Key-informant interview).

There are some organisations that support the orphans, and it happens that as the organisations provide support to the orphans, the grandfather is relieved somehow, and he, too, finds support through such help (Stella, 42 years, female, teacher – Key-informant interview).

Thus, as grandfathers are caring for their orphaned grandchildren, they may benefit tremendously from the handouts to their grandchildren and the other economic contributions of their grandchildren. This underscores the reciprocities of care and co-dependencies between grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren who live together in the participating communities. Besides this, grandfathers also benefit from their orphaned grandchildren's domestic work, as explored below.

#### **10.4 ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN'S REPRODUCTIVE (UNPAID) WORK**

As stated earlier, and consistent with previous studies on children's work in the general population of rural Malawi (Nelson et al., 2017) and in other parts of SSA (Foster & Williamson, 2000; Robson, 2004a; Bourdillon et al., 2010; Evans, 2010b), orphaned grandchildren who participated in this research perform a myriad of unpaid household chores and other productive work, independently and/or alongside their grandfathers. Notably, as with intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values, the intersections of cultural norms about gender and age influence the kind of reproductive work orphaned grandchildren are assigned and undertake. Thus, grandsons and granddaughters usually perform different chores marked by socially prescribed masculinities and femininities, respectively, as scripted in the rural Malawian society (as discussed in chapter 8).

Further, clear expectations between and among family members, smooth coordination of household chores, teamwork, and performance of complementary chores are key defining features of the divisions of labour between and among grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren interviewed in this study. Depending on the chores and the need, grandchildren perform chores alone, or with their grandfathers, simultaneously, or sequentially. For instance, while the girls are busy fetching water early in the morning, the boys are busy sweeping around the home, and their grandfather and grandmother are off to work in the field; when one granddaughter cooks lunch, the other cleans the dishes, and they swap in the evening when they are preparing supper, as described below:

We share the chores [...]. When it comes to cooking *nsima*, we take turns (Otilia [chips in]: when we come back from school, one of us cooks lunch the other one cooks supper). One of us cooks the supper, the other cleans the dishes after we eat. When one of us cooks lunch, say I have cooked lunch, Otilia cleans the dishes. So, I will... she will cook supper and I will clean the dishes. When it comes to sweeping, we do it together, one of us sweeps... I sweep inside the fence, and she sweeps outside the fence.<sup>108</sup> Otilia sweeps inside the house, and I sweep in the kitchen. When it comes to fetching water, we go together (Orlando, female, 13 years – FGD).

Despite this romanticised and harmonious picture, household division and undertaking of labour between and among siblings and other household members is a source of generational and intergenerational conflict in the research communities. For instance, conflict may occur when grandchildren fail to fulfil their assigned household tasks because they want to go and play with their friends. Intergenerational conflict may also happen when grandparents ask grandchildren to undertake excessive household chores. Further, sibling disagreements may ensue during the sharing of the chores. Given that failure to perform and/or fulfil those chores may disrupt the family, it was not surprising that generational and intergenerational conflict related to household division and undertaking of labour emerged as a recurring theme during discussions with the participants (**Box 10.2**).

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<sup>108</sup> Part of their house is surrounded by a brick wall, but not of a high standard.

**Box 10.2: Intergenerational conflict in the participating households**

*Well, shouting and scolding each other is always there, because if, for instance, you tell the child to do something and he/she refuses, you end up scolding him/her (Tumbikani, 87 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*It happens that they are asking me to do something and I am arrogant, or sometimes they ask me to do a certain chore and I complain. It makes them angry and they shout at me or scold me. And, when they do that, I answer them back like, “you’re scolding me? Well, I won’t do what you wanted me to do” and I run away from home to wherever I want. When later I come back home, they reignite the issue (Vitu, 14 years, male – FGD).*

*Conflict arises mainly because of the children’s defiance of their grandfather’s authority. When they are assigned chores, they choose to go out playing, upon coming back, if asked why they did not do a particular chore, then misunderstandings erupt and brew into conflict (Mollina, 32 years, CPC member – Key-informant interview).*

Nonetheless, such intergenerational conflict does not necessarily eclipse the tremendous contribution of orphaned grandchildren to productive and reproductive work in their households. Notably, grandchildren’s commitment to undertake various chores in their households may create positive intergenerational relationships. Grandfathers in the research communities are grateful to their orphaned grandchildren, stating that they relieve them from the burden of undertaking household chores. This is particularly important for a widowed grandfather who is living with his granddaughters and grandsons as the granddaughters may undertake many of the roles and tasks of the wife. Their gratitude for this was strongly articulated by the grandfathers who participated in this study:

*It is them who cook for me [...] I don’t have situations where I take the maize to process at the maize mill and bring the ufa [maize flour], no! Or going to the market to buy ndiwo [relish], no! because the children go to the market to buy ndiwo, they take maize and go to the maize mill to process ufa, they cook relish and nsima [...] When I ask them to give me water to bath, they give me. So, shouldn’t I appreciate that? (Praise, 74 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

*Well, I feel proud of my grandchildren because without them and with my singlehood I would have been carrying water in the mtsuko [large water pot], going to fetch [water]... at the borehole and bring it here. But now it feels like I am married [I’ve a spouse] [...] they cook and say, “Agogo [grandpa], nsima is ready.” [...] They warm the water, put them in the bathroom, and I go take a bath then sit down and relax [...] My life wouldn’t be the same [without them]! It would have been worse. My life is doing well right now because of who? Because of them. I don’t do certain [household] chores because they’re done by them (David, 80 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).*

These positive stories from grandfathers interviewed in this study about their orphaned grandchildren underscore grandchildren's agency in ensuring the functioning and survival of their households. This challenges other discourses on orphan care in SSA that have tended to associate orphanhood with dependence and destitution (Abebe & Skovdal, 2010; van Dijk & van Driel, 2012). Scholarship on and reports of the situation of orphans in SSA by scholars, governments, NGOs and the donor community have forged images of orphans as "a burden in the time of AIDS" (Ingstad, 2004: 73), "social casualties" (Meintjes & Giese, 2006: 418), "the epitome of vulnerability in contemporary SSA" (Meintjes & Giese, 2006: 410), "...objects of pity and charity appeals" (Abebe & Skovdal, 2010: 570), and overly destitute in "need of rescue" (van Dijk & van Driel, 2012: 285).

However, such a discourse fails to recognize the strengths, capacities, and capabilities of orphans in their households and communities (Ansell & van Blerk, 2004; Skovdal & Campbell, 2010). Orphans (like non-orphans) exhibit remarkable agency, coping and resilience by making substantial social and economic contribution in their households to ensure its survival as shown in this chapter and widely documented in other literature in SSA (e.g. Robson, 1995; Robson et al., 2006; Lane et al., 2015). In fact, reflecting on their active roles in the function of their households, orphans have been described by their guardians as "the wealth of the house" and "a blessing from God" (Abebe & Skovdal, 2010: 573).

Moreover, evidence from literature also suggests that orphans may adapt coping strategies peculiar to their situation and context such as forming supportive social networks, developing mutual sibling support, and migration (Peters et al., 2008a; Riley & Lupafya, 2011; Andersen, 2012). Importantly, the challenges that orphans in impoverished communities in SSA face are not dissimilar to what other children are experiencing in their everyday lives, yet the media, government, donors, and NGOs tend to overlook this, and paint a bleak and destitute picture about the plight of orphans as if they are experiencing unique problems (Meintjes & Bray, 2006; Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Tamasane & Head, 2010). Thus, the pessimistic depiction of orphans in SSA warrants interrogation.

The continued negative representation of orphans in SSA has been strongly challenged (Skovdal, 2010a; Payne, 2012; Ansell, 2015). Researchers have argued that this negative representation may be perpetuated because orphanhood is

regarded by the donor community as a significant marker of disadvantage, a social disorder that needs redress (see Ansell, 2015). Orphans are portrayed as abandoned by relatives and the community, overpowered by the AIDS epidemic and passive, with little or no agency to effectively respond to the impact of HIV/AIDS, and as “blameless victims of a situation beyond their control” (Meintjes & Bray, 2006: 150). Meintjes and Giese (2006: 410, 420) assert that “...orphans remain the recipients of an abundance of tragic imagining” which leads to “commodification of their status.” Subsequently, HIV/AIDS and orphan care is a popular conduit through which donor funds flow from the Global North to SSA – a “funding magnet” (Ansell, 2015: 7). Thus, the findings of my research corroborate the argument made by other researchers in SSA (e.g. see the extensive work by Helen Meintjes and her colleagues in Southern Africa and other parts of SSA) and challenge the negative stereotyping of orphans such as the orphaned grandchildren raised by grandfathers in rural Malawi who participated in this study.

Besides making economic contributions to their households and undertaking various productive and reproductive work, orphaned grandchildren also reciprocate the care they receive from their grandfathers by looking after them during periods of illnesses, as explored below.

#### **10.4.1 Caring for Grandfathers during Illness/Sickness – Emotional and Psychosocial Support**

Key evidence about reciprocities of care between grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren is also displayed through the care they offer each other during periods of illness/sickness.<sup>109</sup> A classic example is that of Cristian discussed earlier in chapter 4. Many of the grandfathers in the research communities experience frequent physical challenges and illnesses due to old age. Two grandfathers (72-year old Chikondi, and 86-year old Otulo) who participated in this study had been bedridden for over three years at the time of data collection, and it was their grandchildren who cared for them in addition to undertaking productive and other reproductive work. For instance, their granddaughters bring them water to drink,

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<sup>109</sup> Care in this section refers to “a responsiveness toward the needs of others that cannot be equated with the casual dealings that we have with one another in most daily affairs” (Sabatino, 1999; 375). Thus, it entails ‘care’ as conceptualised in medical disciplines, such as doing personal/intimate tasks that the one cared for (patient) cannot do for themselves.

and warm bathing water for them; their grandsons take them outside the house to sit in the sun, and bath them. If their illness persists, older grandsons take them to the health centres on a bicycle to seek further medical attention. These roles of granddaughters and grandsons epitomise culturally situated roles of men and women in light of the care and support orphaned grandchildren provide for their grandfather during illness. The grandfathers expressed immense gratitude for the care they receive from their orphaned grandchildren, and their accounts were echoed by the children too:

When I am ill/sick and I want water to drink, I just call and tell them like, “may you bring me water please?” and they go and get the water for me. So, I am thankful of that... that's the reward of living with grandchildren (Lungisa, 71 years, grandfather – In-depth interview).

When grandpa wants to go to Hunger<sup>110</sup> to buy medicine, we tell him to give us the money to buy for him [...] we warm water and put in the bathroom for him to bath (Orlando, female, 13 years – FGD).

Children’s caregiving for their grandfathers during illness mirrors the wider literature on children’s work across the globe. Children’s caregiving for ill, or less able family members is widely documented in Malawi and other regions of SSA such as in Zimbabwe, Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania, and Uganda (e.g. see Robson, 2000, 2004c; Robson et al., 2006; van Blerk et al., 2008; Abebe & Skovdal, 2010; Evans, 2010b). Similarly, children’s caregiving has also been the centre of research work in the developed countries such Australia, Canada, the US, and the UK (e.g. see Smyth et al., 2009; Barry, 2011; Evans, 2011b; Kavanaugh et al., 2016; Stamatopoulos, 2014, 2016). Thus, the findings of my research in rural Malawi generally mirror the profile of children’s work in many societies across the globe.

Besides care during illness/sickness, grandfathers interviewed in this study stated that they also benefit psychosocially through their orphaned grandchildren’s companionship. This concurs with what has been documented in other regions of SSA (see Howard et al., 2008; de Klerk, 2011; Schatz & Seeley, 2015). Evidence from my study suggests that companionship is particularly crucial for single/widowed grandfathers because they have someone to talk to and share problems, thus

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<sup>110</sup> A small popular trading centre.

relieving/reducing loneliness, stress, and depression. Also, sometimes it is their grandchildren who come up with solutions to the pressing problems they face in daily life such as lack of resources in their households. Further, seeing their grandchildren daily is a source of comfort and consolation for the death of their adult children because they see them as a substitute to their deceased children. Even though grandfathers, grandmothers, and grandchildren did not specifically talk about this, possibly due to silences surrounding discussions of the dead as stated in chapter 3, it was discussed by other research participants, as described below:

Grandpas benefit from staying with their grandchildren in their household in that it reduces depression because if grandpa is facing challenges and struggling, it is the grandchildren who step in and encourage their grandpa emotionally, saying, “don’t worry, let’s do abcd so that we are able to have the things we need in our household” (Mapula, 20 years, female – FGD).

When grandfathers look at their orphaned grandchildren, it’s like they are seeing their deceased children. So, it’s like they have that picture in their mind to comfort/console them (Omar, 32 years, Sheikh – Key-informant interview).

Thus, grandchildren provide some practical, emotional and psychosocial support and care to their grandfathers besides undertaking productive and other reproductive work.

## **10.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter set out to address research question 2 about the role of grandfathers in the care of orphaned children by taking a child-centred approach and acknowledging children’s agency. The evidence presented in the chapter shows that, not only do grandfathers do a lot to care for their orphaned grandchildren (as shown in chapters 5 to 8), but those orphans in rural Malawi also contribute significantly to their households through extensive participation in productive and reproductive work. Grandfathers acknowledge and appreciate their grandchildren’s economic contribution, help with domestic work/labour, care during illness/sickness, emotional and psychosocial support, and providing companionship. This underscores children’s agency, as well as the reciprocities of care between grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren, thus challenges the dominant discourses of orphans as [always] destitute, passive and dependent prevalent in some literature on orphans in SSA.

Importantly, given the level of poverty in the research communities, orphaned grandchildren's productive and reproductive work is pivotal for the functioning and survival of their households. Thus, like non-orphaned children, orphaned grandchildren's paid and unpaid work is indispensable to livelihoods and survival, without which their households would fall into destitution. Moreover, given children make up over half the population of Malawi (51%), and that 85% of the country's population live in rural areas (NSO, 2014; NSO & ICF International, 2017), children's productive and reproductive work, such as that of orphaned grandchildren that participated in this study, form a crucial base to rural livelihoods and the economy.

Further, the findings presented in this chapter suggest that poverty, culture (i.e. gender norms such as those regarding household division of labour) and age are important factors that intersect and influence orphaned grandchildren's productive and reproductive work. Importantly, it is the mutual and constitutive interplay and intersections of these factors that further our understanding of this topic because none of these factors may be sufficient to independently explain orphaned grandchildren's productive and reproductive work in households and communities that participated in this study. This suggests that intersectionality offers a nuanced understanding of orphaned grandchildren's productive and reproductive work in rural Malawi, which may also apply to other regions of SSA.

## **CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS**

### **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this thesis, I set out to demonstrate that grandfathers may contribute more significantly to orphan care in SSA than is currently assumed and/or acknowledged in research and policy. In chapter 5 through 8, the thesis provides the evidence of this claim/assertion by exploring grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in the participating communities of rural Southern Malawi. The evidence presented in this thesis shows that grandfathers play important roles in their orphaned grandchildren's daily lives. Specifically, they secure livelihoods to meet their orphaned grandchildren's needs, support their formal education, and transmit moral, cultural, and religious values, as well as knowledge and values concerning heteronormative sexuality, and gender through socialisation (informal education). Thus, this chapter draws from the empirical evidence presented in chapters 4 through 9 to outline conclusions, revolving around the four research questions of this study as outlined in chapter 1, namely:

1. Who are the carers of orphans in rural Southern Malawi?
2. What role/place do grandfathers have in the care and upbringing of their orphaned grandchildren?
3. What are the livelihoods of grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren?
4. What social support is available for grandfathers who are caring for their orphaned grandchildren?

Specifically, the chapter reiterates the following key findings: 1) grandmothers are not the only carers of orphans in the research communities; there are multiple carers, including grandfathers (research question 1); 2) grandfathers are at the epicentre of the care of their orphaned grandchildren, performing myriad roles vital for their orphaned grandchildren's daily lives (research question 2), yet invisible in many ways to their communities; 3) grandfathers' diversify their livelihoods, but in many cases, the livelihoods are not adequate to meet the daily needs of their orphaned grandchildren (research question 3); 4) although there are some social support programmes in the communities researched in this study, grandfathers are usually excluded because, unlike grandmothers, they are not socially associated

with the care of orphans, as care is conceived as a woman's role/duty (research question 4).

Evidence presented in this thesis also suggests that the interplay and intersections of various factors, including, inter alia, culture (e.g. about gender norms), age, generation, poverty, number of dependent orphaned grandchildren, future prospects of education investment, physical health, illness, caring space, livelihood needs, weather conditions, and household division of labour are crucial to a grandfather's caregiving of his orphaned grandchildren. These factors are, in many cases, constitutive, and none of them may be sufficient to independently explain grandfathers' caregiving of orphaned grandchildren in the research communities, thus demonstrating the important contribution of intersectionality to the thesis.

From these findings, the chapter outlines the limitations of this study, its implications, put forward some directions for new/further research, and provides recommendations for social policy and programmes on grandparenting in rural Malawi (which may also be applicable to other regions of SSA) to improve the welfare of orphans being raised by grandfathers. Overall, this chapter cements the underpinning argument of this research, that gendered conceptions of care in much of SSA may eclipse acknowledgement of the contribution of grandfathers in grandparenting, such as their role in orphan care. Thus, the thesis makes a theoretical contribution in our understanding of the role of grandfathers in orphan care. In the sections that follow, the chapter weaves the findings presented in this thesis around the four research questions of this study, as outlined above, while also highlighting how various intersections outlined above influence grandfathers' caregiving for orphaned grandchildren in rural Southern Malawi.

## **11.2 GRANDMOTHERS ARE NOT THE ONLY CARERS OF ORPHANS (RESEARCH QUESTION 1)**

Contrary to what is predominantly implied in research and policy on grandparenting in Malawi, and SSA more generally, this study suggests that grandmothers are not the only or lone carers of orphans. There are various carers of orphans, including grandmothers, grandfathers, and other kin (e.g. older siblings, uncles, aunts). Thus, there is need to interrogate hegemonic discourses and narratives of grandparenting and orphan care in Malawi and SSA to extend and broaden our understanding. Further research on orphan care could focus on

grandfathers and other carers besides grandmothers. In terms of social policy and programmes, there is need to avoid a limited focus on grandmothers because, by ignoring other carers or viewing them as less important than grandmothers, orphans raised by such guardians (e.g. grandfathers) may be excluded from welfare (social support) programmes. This may impact their development, particularly those living in impoverished communities such as those researched in this study.

Analysis of intersectionality suggests that, generally, orphans raised by grandparents may be more vulnerable and at higher risk compared to those living with the surviving parent, particularly if the parent is not incapacitated by illness and/or disability. This is because, compared with the surviving parent (particularly if not incapacitated by illness and/or disability), grandparents are likely to have poorer health, hence less able to secure livelihoods. This signifies how age, generation, and physical health and/or illness may intersect and limit grandparents' (e.g. grandfathers) livelihoods strategies/activities and ability adequately care for their orphaned grandchildren, which, again, ultimately impact their development such as schooling and educational outcomes.

Further, analysis of intersectionality also shows that orphans raised by grandparents are more likely to undertake more chores compared to those living with the surviving parents. This may have an impact on their schooling such as reducing their study time at home. This highlights how orphanhood in grandparents' households may intersect with the volume of household chores and impact orphan grandchildren's development such as schooling and educational outcomes. However, this study did not specifically compare the education outcomes of orphans raised by grandparents versus those raised by their surviving parent. Thus, research could address this gap, as well as explore the volume of household chores undertaken by orphans raised by grandparents to ascertain whether it disrupts their schooling (e.g. school attendance and performance) and affects their education outcomes (e.g. school attendance and performance).

Further, given this study also suggests that orphans raised by grandparents (whether one or both) may suffer unique challenges compared to children raised by one or both parents (e.g. lack of adequate care, and large volumes of household work), research could compare orphans raised by grandparents versus their counterparts raised by single/surviving parents to ascertain the extent to which

these differences impact developmental outcomes. Evidence based on such research could inform social policy and programmes on grandparenting and orphan care in rural Malawi. For instance, orphans raised by grandparents could be targeted, as these may be the most vulnerable compared to those raised by a surviving parent, particularly if the parent is not incapacitated by illness and/or disability.

### **11.3 GRANDFATHERS ARE AT THE EPICENTRE OF ORPHAN CARE, BUT REMAIN LARGELY INVISIBLE IN PLAIN SIGHT (RESEARCH QUESTION 2)**

Evidence from this study also demonstrates that for orphans who live with their grandfathers, grandfathers are at the epicentre of their orphaned grandchildren's daily life. The absence, withdrawal, or disruption of a grandfather's care for his orphaned grandchildren would negatively impact their development (e.g. educational outcomes such as school attendance, performance, and dropout). This demonstrates the centrality or epicentredness of grandfathers in their orphaned grandchildren's lives. Despite this, the evidence from this study suggests that grandfathers are not visible when issues of orphan care are discussed. Even though they undertake many of their roles outside their homes (e.g. searching for *ganyu*), grandfathers, nonetheless, perform them within the gaze of their communities and the surrounding areas. Ironically, the findings suggest that grandfathers are in many ways invisible in the plain sight of their communities. However, the study shows that both grandfathers and grandmothers contribute to care of their orphaned grandchildren largely in line with the gender roles prevalent in their communities. Although some of their roles overlap, many are distinct. Despite this, their roles can be viewed as complementary to their orphaned grandchildren's development, rather than autonomous or antagonistic. Thus, it is paradoxical to ignore or overlook the contribution of grandfathers to orphan care while recognising that of grandmothers.

Furthermore, grandfathers have been shown to have fluid and contradictory social identities regarding their role in the care of orphaned grandchildren. On the one hand, within the masculinities of a rural Malawian society, grandfathers are expected to be and are recognised as providers, key to the education of their orphaned grandchildren, and important in intergenerational transfer of knowledge and values. However, grandfathers seem to be ignored, overlooked, or hardly recognised in their community as important carers, unlike grandmothers.

Paradoxically, when people describe what ‘caring for children’ or ‘caring for a child’ means, their descriptions match with what grandfathers do for their orphaned grandchildren. Thus, the study suggests that culturally gendered notions of care in the participating communities may contribute to this social phenomenon of overlooking grandfathers’ contribution in orphan care. Even though the research participants’ own descriptions of care matched with the roles grandfathers usually undertake, it seems the society intuitively/inherently associates ‘caring’ with feminine roles and tasks, which, usually, are undertaken by women. Subsequently, the cultural perception is that, within the context of grandparenting, ‘care’ of orphaned grandchildren is a traditional role of grandmothers. This may explain why grandfathers remain largely invisible despite their important contribution to their orphaned grandchildren’s lives.

In addition, the findings presented in the preceding chapters suggest that even though descriptions of care include roles undertaken by men, including grandfathers, people culturally associate care of children with feminine tasks (e.g. cooking) performed by women such as grandmothers. Unlike masculine tasks, these feminine tasks are usually performed within the home vicinity, sometimes alongside children. This seems to make grandmothers more visible than grandfathers in the eyes of the community. Subsequently, grandmothers are readily recognised as carers of orphans. However, given that grandfathers are providers for their orphaned grandchildren, and that they support their education, as well as provide a cultural, religious, and moral framework for them, it may be erroneous to relegate them to the periphery of orphan care on the basis that they are men and rarely undertake feminine roles and tasks that women usually undertake.

The lack of visibility of grandfathers’ caregiving for orphaned grandchildren is also replicated in research and policy on grandparenting in Malawi and other regions of SSA. For instance, there is hardly any published research primarily focusing on grandfathers with caring responsibility of orphans. However, as this study suggests, being invisible does not mean being absent or less present. And, performing different roles (i.e. masculine) from that of grandmothers (i.e. feminine) does not mean grandfathers are not carers of their orphaned grandchildren. Thus, there is need for more research that primarily focuses on understanding grandfathers to further our knowledge about their importance in orphan care. Also, social policy and

programmes on grandparenting in Malawi need to be more inclusive by going beyond gendered notions of care (i.e. further than grandmothers) and recognising grandfathers as other important contributors to orphan care through the roles they play in their orphaned grandchildren's daily lives.

Furthermore, an analysis of intersectionality reveals that grandfathers navigate a complex socioeconomic and sociocultural context as they care for their orphaned grandchildren. This involves, *inter alia*, navigating and negotiating: 1) cultural ideologies about gender in their communities (e.g. about gender roles and socialisation of children); 2) deep and perennial poverty and the resulting limited resources and inability to adequately care for their orphaned grandchildren; 3) their age and physical health (i.e. old age) and their subsequent impact on their ability to engage in livelihood activities and adequately support their orphaned grandchildren; 4) the age of their orphaned grandchildren (e.g. what is appropriate for socialisation); and 5) generational difference, particularly those resulting from social transformations happening in their communities, and rural Malawi more generally (e.g. the impact of technologies like videos and mobile phones on children and young people's lives, changing parenting practice such as disciplining, and intergenerational relationships).

This suggests that no single factors or social category of difference (e.g. gender alone, or or age alone) can independently explain a grandfather's caregiving of orphaned grandchildren sufficiently. Rather, it is the interplay and intersections of various social categories of difference that constitutively shape grandfathers' caregiving for their orphaned grandchildren in the research communities. Research on grandfathers' caregiving of orphaned grandchildren (which may also apply to caregiving of orphans by other carers) could consider these factors and their intersections in order to have a holistic understanding of this social phenomenon. Equally, social policy and programmes on grandfathers' caregiving of orphaned grandchildren (which may also apply to caregiving of orphans by other carers) may benefit from recognising these intersections and their complex interplay to optimise the effectiveness of social interventions. For instance, rather than focusing on gender ideologies only, it is imperative to consider other factors such as the age of grandfathers, their physical health, and their culture to align initiatives accordingly, to benefit them and their orphaned grandchildren.

#### **11.4 USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IS PERVASIVE IN RURAL MALAWIAN HOMES**

Evidence from this study shows that grandfathers are moral authority figures for their orphaned grandchildren. However, the disciplining methods they employ for moral socialisation of their orphaned grandchildren seem controversial, for instance, corporal punishment. The study reveals that the use of corporal punishments in the participating grandfather-headed households is widespread, which also mirrors other households in the participating communities, as well as in other parts of Malawi, and SSA more generally. However, the findings on professionals such as teachers condemning use of corporal punishment seem to indicate that they may not use it in school. If this is case, the findings in this research contradict what other studies have reported, that corporal punishment in school is widespread in much of SSA (e.g. Archambault, 2009; UNICEF, 2017b). Given this research did not specifically explore the issue in the school setting (e.g. visiting school and interviewing teachers and learners), the findings are not conclusive. Thus, more research insight is needed to further explore the issue. For instance, research could address this knowledge gap by exploring the school environment to ascertain whether corporal punishment has indeed been eliminated in the school, and hence the teachers' negative attitudes towards its use as this study suggests.

Given that there is already social policy and programmes for eliminating corporal punishment in schools, initiatives could focus on evaluating progress made thus far, and how this can be interpolated to the home. Also, given that grandfathers, parents, and other guardians who participated in this study seem less concerned about the emotional and psychological impact of harsh punishment on children, research could assess the extent to which the children subjected to such punishments are impacted. Subsequently, government policy could respond accordingly by introducing a law that prohibits corporal punishment even in the home, and programmes could be developed to align with the new policy.

#### **11.5 GRANDFATHERS' LIVELIHOODS ARE INADEQUATE TO MEET GRANDCHILDREN'S NEEDS (RESEARCH QUESTION 3)**

With regards to livelihoods, the study reveals that grandfathers who participated in this research pursue diverse livelihood strategies to provide for their orphaned grandchildren's daily needs. However, like many other people in their communities, many grandfathers are living in deep and enduring poverty, thus, their support is, in

many cases, inadequate to meet even their orphaned grandchildren's basic needs (e.g. food). This impacts on their orphaned grandchildren negatively, such as their education.

Given that many grandfathers are more likely to be excluded from welfare programmes (as established in chapter 9), it implies that orphaned grandchildren raised by grandfathers in single-grandparent households with livelihood challenges may be at more risk than their counterparts raised by grandmothers in single-grandparent households with access to social support. This signifies how age, poverty, and livelihood strategies intersect and impact a grandfather's [in]ability to secure viable livelihoods and access social/welfare support, and adequately support his orphaned grandchildren's needs. Further analysis of intersectionality also reveals that grandfathers' livelihoods follow masculinities in their communities, thus highlighting how cultural norms about gender influence the livelihoods of grandfathers who participated in this research communities. Thus, the analysis of the intersections of poverty, age, and culture (i.e. gender norms) provides a holistic understanding of grandfather's caregiving for orphaned grandchildren vis-à-vis their livelihoods.

In terms of further knowledge, research could assess (e.g. through nutrition assessment, developmental milestones, school/education performance and attainment) the developmental outcomes of orphaned grandchildren raised by grandfathers in single-grandparent households in rural Malawi and compare them with orphans raised by grandmothers in single-grandparent households to ascertain if there are significant differences in their vulnerability. If differences exist, policy and interventions could respond accordingly so as to improve the lives of the disadvantaged orphaned grandchildren.

#### **11.6 SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR GRANDFATHERS CARING FOR ORPHANED GRANDCHILDREN IS INADEQUATE, UNRELIABLE, GENDERED (RESEARCH QUESTION 4)**

Evidence from the investigations of research question 4 (i.e. social support for grandfathers caring for orphaned grandchildren) shows that, despite the economic challenges grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren face in daily life, kinship support appears to be waning. Thus, many grandfathers may receive little or no support from the extended family. Further, social support from the community (e.g. their friends, community organisations such as CBOs, VDCs, and religious groups)

and welfare support programmes seems limited, irregular, and unreliable, hence many grandfathers may not benefit from safety nets.

Importantly, due to gendered conceptions of care, social support for grandparents who are caring for orphans seems to be gendered, often focusing on grandmothers, and in many cases excluding grandfathers. This highlights the social exclusion of grandfathers [men] who find themselves in roles not associated with notions of masculinities in their communities. Consequently, this may leave many grandfathers with little or no access to welfare support, which may ultimately negatively impact their orphaned grandchildren.

These findings demonstrate how culture (e.g. gender norms) may influence a grandfather's access to welfare support, and ultimately, his [in]ability to care for his orphaned grandchildren, as well as his orphaned grandchildren's developmental outcomes (e.g. education). Thus, research could further explore gendered social support to broaden our understanding on the issue. Social policy could benefit from these findings by revising interventions to include/accommodate grandfathers with insecure livelihoods who are caring for orphans to offset their livelihood challenges and improve the lives of the orphans under their care. For instance, the study suggests that, although the livelihood challenges of grandfathers are similar to those of many other households in rural Malawi, grandfathers face further vulnerability due to old age and poor physical health. Their exclusion from existing social support may worsen their problems, and subsequently impact their orphaned grandchildren's development negatively, for instance, dropping out of school, and engaging in transactional sex to survive, or entering into early marriages. Thus, there is need to interrogate and revisit social policy and programmes on grandparenting and orphan care to make them more inclusive by not only focusing on grandmothers, but also including grandfathers who have primary caring responsibility for orphans. Importantly, given many grandfathers with financial limitations may prefer educating boys over girls, social support programmes such as cash transfers could target such grandfather-headed households to ensure that their orphaned granddaughters are kept in school.

Further, the findings of this study also reveal that many of the friendships that grandfathers have may not offer material benefits. Nonetheless, these friendships are crucial for emotional support because they buffer stress and depression, hence

promote their emotional wellbeing. This suggests that social policy and programmes could focus on initiatives that enhance such friendships in their communities. For instance, government, NGOs, community organisations, and other stakeholders could establish Grandfather Clubs for grandfathers to meet regularly, spend social time together, and share their caring experiences and success stories. This may help a grandfather to appreciate that the challenges he meets are not unique to him, but affect other grandfathers too. These Grandfather Clubs could strengthen their friendships, and improve their emotional and psychological health. These Grandfather Clubs could also be used as conduits through which their lives are investigated and social programmes for grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren are channelled.

Furthermore, none of the grandfathers interviewed in this study were participating in microfinance programmes/projects (e.g. ROSCAs) even though these informal credit institutions were available in their communities. Although this study speculates about some of the factors contributing to their none-participation in microfinance programmes, the evidence is weak and inconclusive. Thus, there is need for more research to look into this social phenomenon to understand why the younger grandfathers (e.g. those in their 50s) do not participate in these socio-economic initiatives. At the moment, though, social policy and programmes could look into ways of encouraging younger grandfathers to participate in microcredit schemes available in their communities. For older grandfathers, it may be more effective to channel such support through their older grandchildren who can participate in these microcredit schemes, run small business (e.g. after school, and during holidays) and support their household livelihoods.

### **11.7 MODERNITY CHALLENGES OLD WAYS OF LIFE AND CREATES INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT**

Evidence from this study replicates other studies in Malawi and other regions of SSA about the impact of modernity and the resulting proliferation of technologies (e.g. videos and mobile phones) on intergenerational conflict (e.g. see Ingstad, 2004; Mphande, 2004; Oduaran & Oduaran, 2004; Mturi et al., 2005; Twum-Danso Imoh & Ame, 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Porter et al., 2015). The study shows that there is great controversy on the issue, often grandfathers, parents, and other guardians on one side, and children and young people on the other. The former perceives these social

transformations as a threat to local culture and traditions, while the latter prefer modern life styles, viewing them as good and admirable for a contemporary youth, thus signifying the intersections of age and generation and tradition/modernity in the lives of grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren. Given this mismatch and the paucity of research on this topic, more research is needed to explore this social phenomenon. Social policy and programmes could focus on initiatives that would mutually benefit all generations by maintaining optimal intergenerational relationships in the era of increased access to technologies such as videos and mobile phones, and other social transformations happening in rural Malawi.

### 11.8 SILENCES

As stated in chapter 3, there were [social] silences surrounding HIV/AIDS and death in the accounts given by the participants in this study. None of the grandfathers interviewed in this study mentioned AIDS as the cause of death for their orphaned grandchildren's parents. Similarly, they did not talk at all about death in general. While there was no direct evidence suggesting the parents of their orphaned grandchildren had died of AIDS, it is very possible that some of these parental deaths may have been AIDS-related, and some of the grandchildren may be living with HIV, given Zomba District is one of the areas in the country heavily affected by the AIDS epidemic (as established in chapter 3). These silences may be two-fold: first, Malawians (as with other people in other regions of SSA) rarely talk about *malemu* [the dead/departed].<sup>111</sup> It is a cultural taboo to talk about *malemu*. Thus, it is possible that research participants felt restrained from talking about the deceased parents of the orphaned grandchildren as this would be a taboo.

Secondly, as mentioned in chapter 3, people rarely disclose their HIV status, or HIV-related illnesses, or AIDS-related deaths because AIDS often attracts social stigma. The widely-held social attitudes in Malawi and other regions of SSA associate living with HIV or dying of AIDS with promiscuity, thus it brings shame on the person, their family, and kin (Campbell et al., 2005; Varga et al., 2006; Mahajan et al., 2008

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<sup>111</sup> My own childhood experiences also attest to this practice. During the 8 years I stayed with my grandparents in rural Southern Malawi, they hardly mentioned my late mother and anything relating to her life. When they did, it was only during the inevitable circumstances (e.g. encouraging us to work hard in school and 'visit other countries' like my mother did).

Hejoaka, 2009; Walker, 2017). Thus, in Malawi, during funerals, people never mention the exact cause of death when someone has died of AIDS. Instead, they attribute the cause of death to a proxy disease such as malaria, TB, typhoid, and so forth, even in circumstances where some people in the community know the person died of AIDS. This may explain the silences on HIV/AIDS-related illnesses and deaths encountered during this study in Zomba District.

Cheney (2017) notes similar practices in her study in Uganda. She describes how children and other people suffered the perils of the AIDS epidemic in silence for social and protective reasons such as stigma. She states that people view AIDS as a “big curse” or “disease of sin”, hence “people living with HIV/AIDS often purport to want to protect their children, and they see silences and misdirection as meeting their responsibilities to do so” (Cheney, 2017: 118), a claim echoed by other studies in SSA (e.g. see Campbell et al., 2005; Varga et al., 2006; Mahajan et al., 2008 Hejoaka, 2009). Cheney (2017: 119) concludes that, due to social stigma children face in their communities, “silence around AIDS as an agent of parents’ deaths may be justified as a means of preserving memories of the deceased against the stigma of AIDS– a stigma that can indeed tarnish them even in death.” Thus, if some of the parental deaths of orphans in my study in rural Malawi were due to AIDS, it could further explain the silences about the deceased and causes of deaths in the participating families/households and communities.

Some evidence from other parts of SSA (e.g. see Cheney’s 2017 in Uganda) suggest disclosure of AIDS-related deaths may be beneficial for the loved ones of the deceased, including orphans (Cheney’s 2017). However, it remains inconclusive whether Cheney’s (2017) findings mirror the situation in rural Southern Malawi. Thus, caution must be exercised as these findings from Uganda cannot be generalised to other parts of SSA without drawing from empirical evidence. My study in rural Malawi offers no conclusive evidence regarding the silences surrounding HIV/AIDS in rural Malawi such as whether they are beneficial for the grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren.

Thus, research could focus on involving grandparents and their orphaned grandchildren, as well as other kin in communities affected by HIV/AIDS to explore whether silences on disclosing HIV-related illness and AIDS-related deaths are beneficial for them. This could be effective by conducting action research where the

participants are immediately compensated by programmes and project tailored towards mitigating their emotional and psychosocial challenges of losing loved ones.<sup>112</sup> Such research could also inform future social policy and programmes, for instance, raising social awareness if studies found a positive association between disclosure of HIV/AIDS as cause of death and positive emotional wellbeing of orphans, grandparents, and other kin. Given my research experience in rural Malawi, I would, nonetheless, take Cheney's (2017) stance with much hesitancy.

## **11.9 FINAL REMARKS**

A single study may not sufficiently answer all the questions surrounding complex social phenomena such as grandparenting/fathering of orphaned grandchildren/children in SSA. Nonetheless, this thesis makes an important theoretical contribution to grandparenting and orphan care in this region, by interrogating gendered notions of orphan care. The thesis provides empirical evidence of the contribution of grandfathers to orphan care that substantiate its underpinning argument that grandfathers may contribute significantly to orphan care than is currently assumed/acknowledged in research and policy on grandparenting and orphan care in SSA. Thus, the thesis incontrovertibly demonstrates that dominant gendered narratives of orphan care in SSA may not offer us a complete understanding of the varied forms of orphan care in this region. The short-sighted focus on grandmothers may fail to capture the realities of orphan care in the research communities, such as the existence of other carers, such as grandfathers who participated in this research. As such, the thesis provides additional and alternative narratives of orphan care in rural Malawi and other regions of SSA that challenge less inclusive discourses surrounding grandparenting and orphan care. The absence of grandfathers in most research on caregiving for orphans in SSA and the predominance of research on/about and with grandmothers must, therefore, be interrogated and alternative and additional discourses/narratives, like the one presented in this thesis, must be accommodated

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<sup>112</sup> Engaging people in such emotional laden research without developing and including them in projects/programmes that address their problems would be unethical.

within the arena of scholarship on grandparenting in SSA. Intersectionality provides one of the powerful frameworks and analytical tools to achieve this endeavour.

Overall, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on grandfathers' caregiving in rural Southern Malawi. The fact that participants in the research communities outlined numerous roles and responsibilities that grandfathers play in their orphaned grandchildren's daily lives, but rarely see them as 'carers' because they often associate care with women and feminine roles and responsibilities, suggests that this ethnography may have been transformative for the research participants. For instance, during the community dissemination meeting, a CBO chairperson from one of the communities commented as follows:

Your study has 'opened our eyes'. As we will be discussing social programmes for grandparents who are caring for orphans, we will now also talk about grandfathers rather than grandmothers only [as has been the case].

This mirrors many other testimonies from the participants in this study, and suggests that the study may have been empowering to not only grandfathers, but also the community, local leaders, and other key stakeholders such as members of community organisations (e.g. CBOs, VDC, CPCs). Local leaders (chiefs) and community organisations such as CBOs, CPCs, and VDCs are entry points for government, NGOs, and other charities. They are the key vessels of community development, hence usually at the epicentre of the implementation of social initiatives/interventions. Thus, this study may have raised social awareness about the role of grandfathers in orphan care, and may influence social perceptions and practices. Ultimately, this may make grandfathers' caregiving of orphaned grandchildren more visible than it currently is, and benefit both grandfathers and their orphaned grandchildren.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL – UNIVERSITY OF HULL



The Chairperson  
National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences & Humanities  
C/O National Commission for Science & Technology  
Lingadzi House, City Centre  
Private Bag B303  
Lilongwe 3  
MALAWI

19<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dear Chairperson:

#### **Grandparenting in the Context of HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi**

I am happy to confirm that the above PhD research project to be undertaken by Mayeso Chinseu Lazaro, a PhD student at the University of Hull, was reviewed and granted formal ethical approval by the Department of Geography, Environment and Earth Science (GEES) Research Ethics Committee, University of Hull, at its meeting on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2015.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew E.G. Jonas  
Professor of Human Geography  
GEES Research Ethics Committee (Human Geography representative)

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## APPENDIX 2: ETHICS APPROVAL – NCST



### NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Lingadzi House  
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Email: [directorgeneral@ncst.mw](mailto:directorgeneral@ncst.mw)

Website: <http://www.ncst.mw>

**Ref No: NCST/RTT/2/6**

**30 November, 2015**

Mr Mayeso Chinseu Lazaro  
PhD Student  
University of Hull  
England, HU6 7RX  
**Email Address:** [m.c.lazaro@2014.hull.ac.uk](mailto:m.c.lazaro@2014.hull.ac.uk)

Dear Mr Lazaro,

**RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL NO P.10/15/62:  
GRANDPARENTING IN THE CONTEXT OF HIV/AIDS AND POVERTY IN RURAL  
SOUTHERN MALAWI**

Having satisfied all the ethical, scientific and regulatory requirements, procedures and guidelines for the conduct of research in the social sciences sector in Malawi, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research study has officially been approved. You may now proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this letter. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities in a format that is available at the secretariat. Once the study is finished, you are required to furnish the Committee and the Commission with a final report of the study.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Martina Chimzimu  
NCRSH ADMINISTRATOR AND RESEARCH OFFICER  
**HEALTH, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**  
**For: CHAIRMAN OF NCRSH**

### **APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS**

*Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

#### **Brief Background**

This study is investigating *grandparenting in AIDS-affected and poor communities in Malawi*, focusing on *the place of grandfathers in care work for orphans*. I want to understand the: 1) experiences of grandfathers as they care and support *orphans*; 2) relationships between grandfathers and grandchildren; and 3) views that people have about the place of grandfathers in care work for grandchildren. I believe that you can provide important information about grandfathers in this community. It is anticipated that this study will run from January 2016 to August 2016.

#### **Ethical Approval and Permission by Authorities**

This study was approved by the Department of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences at the University of Hull in England, and the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) here in Malawi. Criminal record clearance was done by the United Kingdom government through Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, and also by Eastern Region Police Headquarters here in Zomba.

#### **About the Researcher**

This study is being conducted by me, Mayeso Chinseu Lazaro. I am a PhD student in the Department of Geography, Environment, and Earth Sciences, Faculty of Science and Engineering at the University of Hull in England. I am also a lecturer in the Human Ecology Department, Faculty of Science at Chancellor College (a constituent college of the University of Malawi). I am conducting this project as part of the doctoral programme in Human Geography.

#### **Purpose of this Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore grandparenting in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty in Malawi. I want to learn your views about the place of grandfathers in care work for orphans.

#### **Study Procedures**

This study will involve collection of data through: 1) stakeholder meetings and role plays; 2) discussions with members of the Community Advisory Group (CAG); 3) In-depth interviews; 4) photovoice interviews; 5) ongoing observations; 6) key-informant interviews; and 7) focus group discussions. You will be invited to participate some of these activities. I will seek you permission to digital-record the activities.

## **Privacy, Anonymity, and Confidentiality**

The information you share with me in this study will be typed out and translated into English by me. All the information you share with me will be kept private and confidential and will not be shared with anyone except my supervisors at the University of Hull and when professional codes of ethics or the law requires reporting (e.g. when I discover child/elder abuse or neglect). This is the only information that cannot be kept private. If this situation occurs, I will talk with you about it. During focus group discussions and stakeholder meetings, I will come with a research assistant (RA) to help me with taking notes. The RA will keep any information of this research project private and confidential.

After typing out and translating the interviews transcripts, another person will translate a sample of the English transcripts back into Chichewa. This person will maintain confidentiality to adhere to ethical standards and keep your information confidential. Importantly, a unique code will be developed for data management and analysis purposes, and to keep your identity anonymous, none of the transcripts will have your name. All the information will be kept in a locked cabinet and on a secure (password-protected) computer networks at Chancellor College (University of Malawi) and at the University of Hull in England.

## **Use of Information**

The information collected in this study will be primarily used in support of my thesis for the doctoral programme at the University of Hull in England. Apart from this, I will share the findings through publication of papers in local and/or international journals as well as presentations in local and/or international platforms such as conferences, seminars, and symposiums. As such other scholars and researchers may refer to the findings in this study in their studies. The findings will also be shared with you and the community as well as policymakers in government and non-governmental organisations. However, my thesis report or any publication(s) or presentation(s) resulting from this study and all information from this study will not contain your name. Instead, I will use code number and pseudonyms to conceal your identify.

## **Benefits of Your Participation in this Study**

There are no material benefits attached to your participation in this project. However, the information you share will help me, other researchers, policymakers, and other people to know more about what grandfathers are doing in the lives of grandchildren. Such information may help government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in planning programs and services that align with needs of grandfathers who are caring for grandchildren. Ultimately, these programs and services may benefit grandfathers and other people in communities like yours.

### **Risks of Taking Part in this Study**

There is no specific harm associated with your participation in this study. However, in the event that some of the things you tell me or some of the questions I ask upset you and/or provoke feelings of discomfort in you, I will talk with you and help you decide how to deal with your feelings. Also note that you are free not to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable of or you may choose to ask me to turn off the recorder. You are also free to tell me to adjourn the interview for another day.

### **Voluntary Participation and Freedom to Withdraw from the Study**

Participating in this study is entirely voluntary. Thus, you are advised to take your time to make a decision about whether to participate or not. When you decide to be in the study, you will have the freedom to withdraw at any time without giving reasons and there will be no penalty for doing so. If you decide after the interviews that you do not want me to use your information, you can call and tell me this and I will not use your information.

### **Informed Consent**

After explaining the study to you, you can now tell me whether you agree to take part in this study. If you agree, I will ask you to read (or I will read to you) and sign the *Consent Form* (or use a thumbprint). Once again, signing the consent form does not mean that you cannot stop participating in the study. You have the freedom to discontinue at any time without penalty/consequence. There will be ongoing consent for your participation in any research activity.

### **Questions or Concerns about this Study**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a research participant, you can contact me or my supervisors, Dr Elsbeth Robson and Professor Liz Walker at the following:

#### **Contact Information**

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Supervisors</b>	
Mayeso Lazaro	Dr Elsbeth Robson	Professor Liz Walker

**APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS (18+ YEARS)**

*Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

*Please answer the following questions by checking "YES" or "NO"*

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in this study?

YES

NO

Have you received and read a copy of the *Information Sheet* describing the study? Or has the researcher read and explained to you what this study is all about?

YES

NO

Do you understand what taking part in this study means?

YES

NO

Do you understand the benefits and risks of taking part in this study?

YES

NO

Have you had a chance to ask questions and discuss this study with the researcher?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you are not forced to participate in this study and that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason and without any penalty or consequence?

YES

NO

Do you understand who will have access to the information you give?

YES

NO

Do you understand what the researcher will do to ensure privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of the information you give?

YES

NO

Do you give the researcher permission to use photos that you produce for this study and in future (e.g. during conferences, seminars, publishing of journal papers) – including the photos you and your family members take about you and them?

YES

NO

Do you give the researcher the permission to record the interviews?

YES

NO

Do you understand how information collected in this study will be used?

YES

NO

Do you give the researcher the permission to use your information for his thesis report and future related studies, reports, presentations, publications?

YES

NO

Do you give permission to contact you in future about this or related studies?

YES

NO

This study has been adequately explained to me by the researcher.

YES

NO

I agree to take part in this study.

YES

NO

Participant's Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Witness (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.*

Researcher's Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information (Redacted)**

Researcher	Supervisors

**APPENDIX 5: GUARDIAN’S PERMISSION FOR CHILD’S PARTICIPATION**

*Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

**YOUR PERMISSION TO ALLOW THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

Details about this study have already been provided in the *Information Sheet* and explained to you. I am asking for your permission to let your child participate in this study.

Do you allow \_\_\_\_\_ (**child’s name**) to participate in this study?

*Please answer the above question by checking “Yes” or “No” below:*

**YES**

**NO**

Guardian’s Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Guardian’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Witness (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in this study and voluntarily agrees to let his/her grandchild to participate in this study.*

Researcher’s Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information (Redacted)**

Researcher	Supervisors	

## APPENDIX 6: ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN

### *Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

My name is Mayeso Chinseu Lazaro and I am studying at the University of Hull in England. I have asked your grandparents for their permission to allow me talk with you. I have also explained all the details about this research study.

I am doing a research study about grandfathers in your community/village. A research study is a way to learn more about something. I want to learn about the lives of grandfathers who are looking after orphans and vulnerable children, for instance, his daily life (e.g. what he does or does not do for you). Your participation will help me learn more about grandfathers. If you agree to join this study, I will come and talk with you. Our meeting will last 30 to 45 minutes. During our talk if you do not want to say something, feel free not to say it. You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say **“Yes”** today and change your mind later and no one will punish you in any way for doing so. All you have to do is tell me you want to stop.

Before you answer **“Yes”** or **“No”** to being in this study, I will answer any questions you have. If you join this study, feel free to ask me any questions at any time. Just tell me that you have a question and I will answer you immediately.

**Now that I have explained what I am doing, do you want to join this study?**

**YES**, I will participate in this study\_  **NO**, I don't want to do this\_

Child's Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Guardian (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Witness (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I believe that the child has understood what his/her involvement in the study means and voluntarily agrees to participate.*

Researcher's Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Contact Information (Redacted)**

Researcher	Supervisors

**APPENDIX 7: CONSENT FOR PUBLIC USE OF PHOTOS AND DRAWINGS**

*Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

**Participant Code Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

Have you seen all the images/photos taken during this study?

**YES**, I've seen them \_\_\_\_\_       **NO**, I have not seen them \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give me the permission to use the image(s) for the report of this study, and future presentation(s) and publication(s)?

**YES**, I give him permission \_\_\_\_\_       **NO**, I do not give him permission \_\_\_\_\_

Do you give me (the researcher) the permission to use the drawings you have made for the report of this study, and future presentation(s) and publication(s)?

**YES**, I give you permission \_\_\_\_\_       **NO**, I do not give you permission \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Witness (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*I believe that the person signing this form understands what use of his/her images/photos means and voluntarily agrees to let the images/photos be used for the report of this study and future presentation(s), and publication(s).*

Researcher's Name (Printed in Full): \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information (Redacted)**

Researcher	Supervisors

**APPENDIX 8: RESEARCH ASSISTANT'S DECLARATION FOR CONFIDENTIALITY**

*Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

**The Research Project:**

This research project is exploring *grandparenting in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty in rural southern Malawi*. The focus is on *the place of grandfathers in care work for orphans and vulnerable children in Zomba*. Participants will include grandfathers, grandmothers, children, professionals (e.g. teachers, Child Protection Officers, HSAs, officers from NGOs), and local leaders and community members. Data will be generated through discussion with a Community Advisory Group, stakeholder meetings and role plays, In-depth interviews, photovoice interviews, ongoing observations, and focus group discussions. However, you will only be involved in stakeholder meetings and focus group discussions to help with note taking.

**Research Assistant's Declaration:** I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to maintain the confidentiality of the data to which I have access through my involvement in stakeholder meetings and focus group discussions in the study described above. I will not discuss the information with anyone other than the researcher, I will not reveal the name of any participants, and I will not retain in my possession copies of the data or other information about the study participants.

**Research Assistant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness' Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness' Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 9: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**

*Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

**Participant Code Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction**

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study. In this form, I want to record your demographic information. Either you write it by yourself or I will ask you and write, whichever way you prefer.

**Demographic Information**

*Please write your answer in the spaces provided or check the appropriate box for you answer:*

**1. Your Age (Years):** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Family Composition**

Number of grandchildren in your family: \_\_\_\_\_

Grandchild Number 1: Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Grandchild Number 2: Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Grandchild Number 3: Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Grandchild Number 4: Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

***If more than 4 children***, please write their age and gender below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Apart from you grandchildren, is there anyone staying with you *in your household*?  
If yes, please write them below (e.g. cousin, spouse, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Highest Level of Education** *(Please check your current level of education)*

No Education \_\_\_\_\_

Primary School Education \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary School Education \_\_\_\_\_

University/College Degree/Diploma \_\_\_\_\_

Other. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Current Employment Status** *(Please check your current employment status)*

Employed \_\_\_\_\_

Self-employed \_\_\_\_\_  Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Irregular/casual/seasonal \_\_\_\_\_

Unemployed \_\_\_\_\_

Retired \_\_\_\_\_

Other. Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Source(s) of Income** *(Please check all that apply)*

Employment-related \_\_\_\_\_

Agriculture produce \_\_\_\_\_

Family business \_\_\_\_\_

Pension \_\_\_\_\_

Other. Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Religion** *(Please check the religion to which you belong)*

Christian \_\_\_\_\_

Islam \_\_\_\_\_

No religion \_\_\_\_\_

Other. Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Ethnicity** (*Please check the ethnicity to which you belong*)

Yao \_\_\_\_\_

Lomwe \_\_\_\_\_

Other. Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**OBSERVATIONS BY THE RESEARCHER ABOUT THE PARTICIPANT'S HOUSEHOLD ENVIRONMENT (WILL ASK IF NECESSARY)<sup>113</sup>**

*Please check all that apply*

**a. Cooking Fuel**

Wood \_\_\_\_\_

Charcoal \_\_\_\_\_

Electricity \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Roof material for the house**

Thatched with grass \_\_\_\_\_

Corrugated iron \_\_\_\_\_

Tiles \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**c. Floor of the house**

Mud/earth \_\_\_\_\_

Cement \_\_\_\_\_

Tiles \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>113</sup> This question has been adopted from *Young people and cell phone in sub-Saharan Africa* — a study by Dr Elsbeth Robson and colleagues.

**d. Drinking Water**

Tap \_\_\_\_\_

Community standpipe \_\_\_\_\_

Well \_\_\_\_\_

Borehole \_\_\_\_\_

Surface water (e.g. river, dam, stream) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**e. Sanitation**

No toilet \_\_\_\_\_

Latrine (private) \_\_\_\_\_

Latrine (shared with other families) \_\_\_\_\_

Borehole \_\_\_\_\_

Surface water (e.g. river, dam, stream) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**f. Wealth**

Wealthiest third \_\_\_\_\_

Middle third \_\_\_\_\_

Poorest third \_\_\_\_\_

Borehole \_\_\_\_\_

Not known \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 10: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### *Grandparenting in the Context of the HIV/AIDS and Poverty in Malawi: The Place of Grandfathers in Care Work for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

Code Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Started: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Finished: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focal Question:** *What is the place of grandfathers in care work for orphans in AIDS-affected and impoverished communities in southern Malawi?*

#### **PREAMBLE**

Thanks a lot for your time today. Before we begin the interview today, I would like to assure you that whatever you tell me in this interview will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purposes. I will not discuss with other people what I discuss with you today. Similarly, I will not talk with you about anything other people tell me during individual interviews. So, feel free to express your views.

In this interview, we will start by talking about a general overview of your everyday life. After that, we will talk about the lives of grandfathers, focusing on helping me understand their: 1) caring experiences; 2) relationship with grandchildren; 3) people's view about the role of grandfathers in orphan care. Throughout our conversations, I would like you to respond to the questions by reflecting on the life grandfathers.

#### **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

##### **A. Typical Day of the grandfather**

1. What is the grandfathers' 'typical day' like? (e.g. if I were watching a grandfather throughout the day, what would I see?)

##### **B. Contribution of Grandfathers to Orphan Care: What grandfathers do to their grandchildren in everyday life.**

1. Who is caring for orphans in your community?
2. What does *caring for children* mean to you?
3. What types of care do grandfathers provide to grandchildren? [What things do grandfathers do for their orphaned grandchildren in daily life?]
4. What are grandfathers' needs as they look after their orphaned grandchildren?
5. What are grandfathers' rewards as they look after their orphaned grandchildren?

**C. Social Capital: What kind of support is available for grandfathers who are caring for orphaned grandchildren?**

1. Do grandfathers get help (if any) from anyone (i.e. relatives, community members, government, NGOs) as they care for grandchildren? If yes, what kind of help? How important is it? If they do not get any help, explain why?

**D. Intergenerational Relationships: Grandfathers and grandchildren**

1. What is the nature of relationships between grandfathers and grandchildren?
2. What influences the relationships between grandfathers and grandchildren?

**E. Normative Views: what the society thinks about the role of grandfather in caring for orphans**

1. What are the views/perceptions/attitudes of people about the role of grandfathers in care work for orphans?
2. How do people's views/perceptions and attitudes affect grandfathers' caring work for orphans?

**F. Advice to Policymakers, Program Planners, and Service Providers**

1. What advice would participants give to program planners and/or policymakers about grandfathers who are caring for /grandchildren?

**G. Closing the Interview**

This is all I wanted to talk with you today. Before we finish our discussion:

- Is there anything about grandfathers in general we have not touched in our discussion which you would want to tell me?

**H. Affirming Consent**

Now that you know what you told me about grandfathers who are caring for orphans, are you willing to have the interview/discussion used for the purposes stated in the Information Sheet and explained to you?

**I. Final Remarks**

Thank you very much for your time today.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

## APPENDIX 11: KEY DEMOGRAPHICS FOR GRANDFATHERS AND HOUSEHOLDS

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Description of Household	Education Level	Religion	Ethnicity	Number of orphans	Orphaned Grandchildren Cared By The Grandfather – Age and Gender (M=male; F=female), Number	Category of orphanhood
David	80	M	Separated	Single-headed	Primary School	Christian	Lomwe	2	13(F), 15 (F)	Maternal orphans*
Lungisa	71	M	Married	Single-headed	Primary School	Christian	Lomwe	6	2(M), 4(M), 6(F), 8(M), 10(M), 17(M)	Double orphans
Nthanda	63	M	Widowed	Single-headed	Primary School	Christian	Nyanja	4	4(F), 6(F), 8(M), 15(M)	Double orphans
Akonda	92	M	Widowed	Single-headed	No education	Christian	Lomwe	5	4(F), 7(F), 9(F), 11(M), 12(M)	Paternal orphans**
Praise	74	M	Widowed	Single-headed	Secondary School	Christian	Yao	2	7(F); 13 (M)	Double orphans
Faith	81	M	Widowed	Single-headed	No education	Christian	Nyanja	1	14(M)	Double orphans
Otulo	86	M	Widowed	Single-headed	No education	Christian	Yao	5	11(M), 14(F), 15(M), 16(F), 17(M)	Double orphans
Rudolf	83	M	Divorced	Single-headed	Primary School	Christian	Nyanja	4	9(F); 11(F); 14(M); 16(M)	Double orphans
Zolani	72	M	Widowed	Single-headed	Primary School	Christian	Nyanja	5	6(M); 7(F); 7(F); 12(F); 15(M)	Double orphans
Chikondi	72	M	Widowed	Single-headed	Primary School	Islam	Lomwe	5	6(M), 12(F); 13(M), 15(M); 17(M)	Double orphans
Takondwa	75	M	Married – spouse 70 years	Dual-grandparent	Primary School	Islam	Yao	5	6(M); 11(F); 13(M); 14(M); 17(M)	Double orphans
Matt	74	M	Married – spouse 68 years	Dual-grandparent	No education	Islam	Yao	4	10(M), 11(F), 14(F); 13(F)	Double orphans
Osteen	54	M	Married – spouse 54 years	Dual-grandparent	No education	Islam	Yao	7	15(F), 13(F), 13(M), 8(F), 7(F), 6.5(F), 4.5(F)	Double orphans
Frank	76	M	Married – spouse 69 years	Dual-grandparent	Primary School	Islam	Lomwe	8	1.25(M), 2(M), 3(M), 7(M), 8(M), 9(M), 10(F), 15(M)	Double orphans
Tumbikani	87	M	Married – spouse 78 years	Dual-grandparent	Primary School	Christian	Nyanja	4	5(F), 9(F), 11(M), 11(F) [twins]	Double orphans

### Notes:

- \* Father moved back to his natal village after losing his wife. He visits and supports his children, but not regularly.
- \*\*Mother working in another district and visits her children from time to time.
- Only one grandfather was employed. One grandfather (Praise) had retired, having been working in the civil service as a clerk. The income status for all the grandfathers falls within the poorest except two grandfathers who were within middle third (see NSO reports for how these categorised are identified). The main source of income was agriculture and ganyu (see chapter 9), but one household had other means of generating income.
- All orphaned grandchildren of school-age were attending school.
- All households used firewood for fuel, and had access to water from boreholes in their communities – usually at a short distance. All had pit latrines (6 shared with other households; 9 private).
- All but four grandparent-headed houses (Takondwa's, Praise', Osteen's, and Frank's) participating in this study had thatched roofs. Only one (Praise') had cement floor, and the rest had mud floors.

## APPENDIX 12: AN EXAMPLE OF NTHANO SHARED BY A CHILD

**Orlando [speaking very softly]:** The nthano was about Mwandu. Mweandi forgot a *chipande* [a wooden spoon used to scoop nsima from the pot into the plate] at the river. So she went back home, and when she arrived home, her mother was cooking *nsima* and asked Mwandu like, "Mwandu where is *chipande*?" Mwandu answered, "I've forgotten it at the river" So, her mother said, "go, rush and get it back". So, when Mwandu arrived at the river, she found that a spirit had already taken the *chipande*. The spirit put the *chipande* in a *ng'oma* [drum], and the drum was producing a noise. The spirit told Mwandu, "come and get your *chipande*", but Mwandu could not see who was speaking. She was just hearing the voice. So, Mwandu refused and started singing [Orlando now singing the song]:

**Mwandu:** *the drum please sound please sound again*

**The drum:** *it's not me but it's Mwandu; she has forgotten chipande at the river, and the spirit has found it; the spirit has found the chipande and put inside his/her drum [The drum sounds koliko kolikoko]*

**Orlando [continues narrating the nthano]:** Mwandu was enjoying the tune from the drum. So, she told the spirit, "would you sing again, I will give you beer". So the spirit sang again [**same song as above**].

**Orlando [continues narrating the nthano]:** Then the spirit asked Mwandu to give it water. Mwandu gave it the water and the spirit fell asleep. Then Mwandu took a very sharp knife and cut the drum, and got the *chipande* out of it... so eventually she took the *chipande* and gave it to her mother.





