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WHY VOLUNTEER?

PEASANT RATIONALITY RE-EXAMINED: A STUDY OF WHAT MOTIVATES FARMERS TO VOLUNTEER IN MALAWI

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study was to understand the rationality behind the decisions of smallholder farmers to volunteer as Farmer Trainers in the absence of direct financial incentives. Farmer Trainers are responsible for passing on agricultural extension knowledge to their peers as part of a participatory agricultural extension approach dubbed ‘Farmer-to-Farmer’ training programme. Using the existing literature on peasant rationality as an entry point, this study employs a holistic framework which includes elements from the economy of affection paradigm and economic theories of volunteering to explore how national and community level factors influence individual rationality, and hence the motivations of farmers to volunteer.

Through a combination of a literature review, focus group discussions and interviews with farmers in the central region of Malawi, this study found that in addition to being motivated by self-interest, farmer volunteers are also significantly influenced by a desire to develop their community in taking the decision to volunteer. The study concludes by underlining the importance of employing a wider lens when exploring the concept of rationality, as the complexity of peasant life necessitates the inclusion of social and cultural factors in addition to economic ones, as motivations for actions are not solely based on financial or individual considerations.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADD	Agricultural Development Division
ADMARC	Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation
ADP	Agricultural Development Programme
AFO	Association Field Officer
AMC	Association Management Centre
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme
DAES	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
EPA	Extension Planning Area
GoM	Government of Malawi
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBS	Farmer Business School
FF	Follow Farmer
FFS	Farmer Field School
FISP	Farm Input Subsidy Programme (Government of Malawi)
FO	Farmer Organization
FT	Farmer Trainer
FTF	Farmer-to-Farmer
FTFTP	Farmer-to-Farmer Training Programme
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
NASFAM	National Association of Smallholder Farmers in Malawi
RDP	Rural Development Project
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
T&V	Training and Visit
TA	Traditional Authority
TOT	Transfer of Technology

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

In light of the renewed interest in agriculture as a potential engine for development and poverty alleviation, there has been an increase in donor and practitioner realignment towards investment in agriculture (World Bank 2008). However, this realignment has also been accompanied with a resurgence of the debate on the appropriateness of development interventions in the past decades. The World Bank and other multilateral agencies have often been criticized for employing a ‘blue-print’ approach to development, whereby a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model is applied in different developing countries without much attention given to local conditions and context (Ellerman 2007).

The assumptions and thinking underlying these interventions has come under scrutiny especially in the context of Africa, where years of development support in the form of aid and technical assistance are widely perceived to have been wasted (Easterly 2006). It has been argued that a neoclassical economic approach is an inappropriate framework to understand undeveloped economies (Chang 2006), but could be applied once ‘development has been secured’ (Lewis 1954: 401).

In the context of agricultural livelihoods, assumptions about the behaviour and rationality of peasants have been debated since the turn of the 20th century, with academics such as Chayanov (1966), Schultz (1964), Lipton (1967; 1968), Popkin (1979), Adams (1982; 1986) and Bernal (1994) tackling the concept from different perspectives. The debate on peasant rationality came to the forefront as a result of the prevailing perception of peasants during the 1950s and 60s, which characterized them as “backward, unresponsive, and resistant to change” (Ball and Ponder 1996: 740). While these attitudes were mainly directed in terms of economic decision making *vis-à-vis* responsiveness to market incentives and changes, the debate on the subject crossed the fields of economics, political economy, sociology and anthropology. Classical economic analysis has in the past been guilty of ignoring the multi-dimensionality of peasant decision making (Adams 1982; Adams 1986; Edelman 2005: 331), which is not solely influenced financial profit, but cultural and social influences as well.

The interplay between economic, cultural and social factors in decision making has been tackled within the discussion on the *moral economy* (Scott 1976), and more specifically in the African context through Hyden's (1980) *economy of affection*. Hyden (1983) argues that the economy of affection functions in parallel to the formalized market economy within African states, with economic relations and interactions heavily influenced by strong social support networks in rural and non-rural communities. While the concepts of the moral economy and economy of affection have been criticised from different academic fields, it still provides a lens through which to understand the complexities and interaction between economic, cultural and social factors in economic decision makings (Matsumura 2006).

The Case

Agricultural extension¹ has often been pin-pointed as a critical element for smallholders, as the lack of technical and technological knowledge and skills poses a significant barrier to agricultural development (Beynon 1996). Early extension systems in developing countries were characterized by their top-down, linear nature, and have thus failed to show tangible positive results to justify the huge investments in such systems; the World Bank alone spent over \$4.7 billion by the 1980s (Farrington 1994). During the past few decades, however, a more participatory approach to agricultural extension has proved to be more successful, with farmers more likely to be receptive given that training and knowledge transfers are done through their peers using Farmer-to-Farmer (FTF) approach (Rola et al. 2002). This system relies on farmers who volunteer their time and labour to train farmers within their communities, a process which takes considerable time away from the volunteers' own fields.

For smallholders operating close to the margins (usually exclusively employing family labour), such an act of volunteering can be seen as economically irrational, especially since the farmer would be better served using her or his labour on their own fields. In order to understand the motivation behind the decision to volunteer, a more holistic perspective is needed which would

¹ Agricultural extension is the process of disseminating modern technology, knowledge and techniques to farmers at all levels of production

involve giving due consideration to cultural and social elements in the decision making process of farmers. In other words, an expanded view of rationality is needed.

This study seeks to address the issue of peasant rationality by using volunteering within the FTF approach to agricultural extension as its case. The National Association of Smallholder Farmers in Malawi (NASFAM) has implemented the FTF programme country-wide since 2004, using volunteers from within its membership who are then referred to as Farmer Trainers. The study utilized data collected from the central region of Malawi where NASFAM is involved. By using qualitative methods involving focus group discussions, individual interviews and questionnaires from volunteers, farmers and extension workers, this paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate on peasant rationality.

1.2 Aim of Research

1.2.1 Overall Aim

Inspired by the established debate on peasant rationality, this study aims to address the concept of peasant rationality using a broad, multi-disciplinary perspective which gives due consideration to cultural and social factors in addition to economic influences. Through using a participatory, volunteered-based approach to agricultural extension as a case, the main objective is to contribute to a wider comprehension of peasant rationality through qualitative, field-based evidence.

With an expanded and multi-disciplinary conception of peasant rationality as the desired output, this study will build upon existing research within the field in order to understand the motivation of farmers to volunteer; considering that the time spent volunteering can negatively impact the volunteer's own field, and thus considered irrational using traditional economic analysis. The underlying assumption guiding the study is that the concept of rationality, when applied to peasant farmers, transcends purely economic elements and includes social, societal and cultural elements which affect the behaviour and thus decisions of peasant actors. This is achieved through employing an economy of affection perspective to understand the national and community level influences on individual decisions, which will be complemented by a detailed discussion of the individual motivations of farmers to volunteer.

1.2.2 Research Questions

With the debate on peasant rationality as a backdrop, this study aims to answer the following main question:

In the absence of monetary incentives, what is the rationale behind the decision of smallholders to volunteer their time and labour?

Given the relative scarcity of their time and labour, smallholders are often busy during the planting seasons; the time at which extension advice is most valuable and demanded. Acknowledging the multi-dimensionality of the influencing factors on individual rationality, this study seeks to understand the volunteering motivations of farmers within the context of their social settings. While individual motivations are endogenous to the individual in the decision making process, they are nonetheless affected by exogenous factors, which include community and national-level influences. Consequently, this study will answer the main question through an exploration of endogenous and exogenous influences and motivations rationalizing the decision to volunteer. This appreciation of the entire economic, social and cultural context of the volunteers will be achieved by answering the following questions:

National level

What are the economic and policy level elements which influence smallholders' decisions?

Community level

What influence does the local community have on individual decisions of farmers to volunteer?

Individual level

What are the endogenous motivations of farmers to volunteer?

The main unit of analysis throughout the study will be the individual farmers themselves, as the inclusion of the different levels of influences is intended to shed more light on the factors affecting the decisions of individual farmers. As such, more focus was given to the individual and community-level influences, bearing in mind the significance of social relations on individuals in African peasant societies, as suggested by the literature on the economy of affection.

The study hopes to achieve its aim of contributing to an extended comprehension of peasant rationality through the use of a multi-layered analysis of the questions, drawing from literature on the economics of volunteering as well as the economy of affection. By applying these concepts to the difference influences at the national, and especially at the community and individual levels, a more thorough understanding of the factors affecting the behaviour of smallholders can be achieved.

Moreover, understanding the underlying motives of volunteers and the factors which influence them will also contribute to development practice, through adjusting assumptions about smallholder societies which can pave the way for more targeted and appropriate development initiatives.

1.3 Outline of the Study

In the subsequent five sections of this paper, I will first provide a detailed background of the Malawian case used to complete this study. In the following section a review of the literature on peasant rationality, the economy of affection and economic theories of volunteering will be summarized; these concepts form the foundations of the analytical framework which was developed to analyze, treat and organize the data. The ensuing section details the qualitative methods employed in collecting data for this study, while giving specific consideration to validity and reliability issues. For the remaining sections of this study I will present the analysis and discussion of the data followed by concluding remarks that summarize the main findings, before finally discussing the implications of the findings on wider issues within the field of development.

2 Background

2.1 Agricultural Extension: An Overview

Agricultural extension refers to the process of disseminating modern technology, knowledge and techniques to farmers at all levels of production (Anderson and Feder 2004; Davis 2008). This can vary from simply facilitating access to improved seed variety, the provision of training on the correct use of fertilizer or educating farmers in new farm management techniques. While

traditionally a public provision by highly centralized, public government structures (Anderson and Feder 2004), extension services are increasingly being provided privately; both for-profit and non-profit (Umali-Deininger 1997).

Historically during colonial times, agricultural extension in both Asia and Africa was primarily concerned with supporting the marketing of export crops (Feder et al. 1999); a structure which continued to be used by post-colonial governments in developing countries well into the 1960s (Ganguly et al. 2006). Since then, agricultural extension continued to be a top-down, largely nationally centralized process with the main objective being the dissemination of newly available technologies to farmers (Feder et al. 2004). The Training and Visit (T&V) approach, which was promoted by the World Bank from the early 1970s until the late 1990s, characterized such top-down approaches to extension whereby the primary objective was technology diffusion from international research institutes to national ones (Ganguly et al. 2006). Technological advances at the time included the development of high yielding varieties of staples, which under the then prevalent climate of high food prices made the adoption of high-yield crops attractive to farmers (Lipton and Longhurst 1989).

While such an approach seemed appropriate at the time, it proved to be prohibitively unsustainable due to high recurring costs, with many national extension service providers collapsing after the withdrawal of World Bank funding (Ganguly et al. 2006). Additionally, T&V extension was generally shown to be ineffective, mainly due to poor implementation and communication by extension staff (Moore 1984). Moreover, such top-down usually involved an extension officer addressing hundreds of farmers at any one time without an avenue for participation by the farmers, further undermining its effectiveness (Chambers et al. 1986); for example in Malawi, individual extension officers are usually responsible for upwards of 2,000 farmers, making quality contact time virtually impossible.²

The demonstrated lack of success with top-down approaches has led to a movement towards more participatory and demand-driven extension methods (Braun et al. 2000). This has seen an

² From conversation with various government representatives from the Department of Agriculture Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, as well as other experts in the field of agricultural development in Malawi.

increased role for NGOs and other private actors in the provision of extension services (Ganguly et al. 2006). Participatory forms of extension are characterized by their focus on the ability of farmers themselves in understanding the concepts taught, as well as their ability to transfer the knowledge they receive to other farmers within their communities (Davis 2008). Technologies and techniques are demonstrated to farmers on their own fields, making the training accessible and practical through intense and hands-on training regimes (Anderson and Feder 2004).

The Farmer-to-Farmer (FTF) approach to agricultural extension is one such method being employed globally (Feder et al. 2004). The FTF approach has been applied in various forms worldwide since the late 1980's and in Malawi for the last decade or so. The approach was first popularized through Farmer Field Schools (FFS), an FAO initiative aimed at acting as an alternative to traditional, top-down agricultural extension in the specific context of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). More recently, the government has been piloting Farm Business Schools (FBS) as a follow up to FFS, where the focus is shifted from IPM towards farm business management (Kahan 2007). The increased visibility of such participatory extension models has also encouraged adoption outside the government sector, with NGOs and private actors also joining in (ibid).

2.2 Malawi: The General Context

Malawi's agricultural landscape is characterized by a dominance of smallholders, where land is scarce and population density is high in the south and less so in the north (Dorward 1999). In 2004, agriculture accounted for 39% of GDP, 83% of total foreign exchange earnings as well as 85% of labour, underlying its importance to the Malawian economy (GoM 2006). Maize, the staple food in Malawi, is grown country-wide, while the main export crops include tobacco, tea and sugar, which have traditionally been grown by large-scale commercial farmers (Chirwa et al. 2006).

In the wake of the drought and subsequent famine in 2005, Malawi has moved from a state of food deficit to a 53% surplus in 2007 (Denning et al. 2009). Since the famine, the Government of Malawi (GoM) has prioritized the agriculture sector for growth and development, and has undertaken the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) aimed at increasing food security for

vulnerable households. While some elements of the programme have been criticised, it has also been lauded for its part in increasing productivity of smallholders in the country (Denning et al. 2009). Underlining the importance the GoM attaches to agriculture, approximately 16% of the total government budget in 2009 is dedicated to agriculture and related activities, well surpassing the 10% minimum which the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) recommends. Moreover, the GoM is in the process of finalizing a detailed Agricultural Development Plan (ADP), which will act as the foundation for a more comprehensive agricultural SWAp (GoM 2008).

In a country which depends heavily on agriculture, smallholder farmers in Malawi are affected by the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, low agricultural productivity, low levels of irrigation adoption, lack of government capacity (especially in the provision of extension services) and lack of farm business management knowledge (GOM 2008; Chirwa et al. 2006; Harrigan 2003; Orr and Orr 2002).

2.3 Agricultural Extension in Malawi

The government, through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) administers and maintains its public extension system through the Department of Agriculture and Extension Services (DAES).

The public extension system suffers from financial and human resources deficiencies, resulting in an average of 1.5 extension visits per household per year (Chirwa 2003). Financial constraints are characterized by a lack of recurring funding for research and extensions services (Chirwa et al. 2006), while high staff turnover and HIV/AIDS critically affect human resources in public extension (GoM 2008; Ngwira et al. 2001). Moreover, the system has been frequently criticised for its ineffectiveness, and in some instances even its nonexistence (Ellis et al. 2003). For example, the 1990s saw a period in which public extension (mainly aimed at promoting the use of improved and hybrid seed) was focused on the richest 25% of smallholders, leaving the poorest and most vulnerable without access to the knowledge and technology (Harrigan 2003).

Recognizing the inefficiency of traditional extension models such as 'block visits' and T&V, public extension in Malawi has seen a movement towards more participatory and group based

methods, as evident through the government's piloting of FFS and FBS approaches (Ngwira et al. 2001). Moreover, recent trends in the last decade have seen non-government actors entering the market for the provision of extension services, mainly through private Farmers' Organizations (FOs) and NGOs.

Such non-government involvement efforts are exemplified by the FTF training programme (FTFTP) adopted by the National Association of Smallholder Farmers in Malawi (NASFAM), the largest organization of smallholders in Malawi (outlined in the text box below). Within NASFAM, the FTFTP was initiated in 2004 in order to extend the reach of extension services while at the same time relieve some pressure of the Association Field Officers³ (AFOs), and is now being carried out in 43 associations countrywide (NASFAM 2008). Moreover, the apparent success of the approach has also led development agencies to invest more in similar approaches, both through NASFAM's development arm and other channels.

NASFAM's FTF programme comprises a number of elements. Initially, the targeted community is expected to choose a farmer from among NASFAM members willing to volunteer and become a Farmer Trainer. This volunteer is expected to fulfil a minimum set of criteria, mainly concerning literacy and the willingness to share her/his knowledge after receiving the training. As part of the programme, FTs receive a bicycle (which remains the property of NASFAM), rubber-boots and a raincoat, in addition to the training they are expected to disseminate to their fellow farmers. They also receive inputs (seeds, fertilizers) for their demonstration plots, from which the yields are not retained fully by the FT.⁴ While the FTs receive no financial incentives for volunteering their time, the approach employed in the programme has been well received⁵ by government, NGOs and farmers themselves; to the extent that a number of NGOs and government departments have already been using the NASFAM-trained FTs as part of their extension and other public-awareness programmes.

³ AFOs are NASFAM's front line extension staff, and are the NASFAM equivalents of government extension agents.

⁴ the local NASFAM associations, through which the FTs are trained and supervised negotiate deals with the farmers on yields from demonstration plots. Typically, FTs retain anywhere up to 50% of the total yield, depending on the specific association.

⁵ From informal conversations with Programme officers at NASFAM and government officials from MoAFS and DAES

Box 1- NASFAM: An Overview

NASFAM is a member-owned organization exclusively open for smallholders. On a village level, Action Groups or Marketing Centre Committees are created through the union of a number of Clubs, the smallest units within the NASFAM structure comprising 10-20 individual farmers. These groups in turn form associations (of which there were 43 at the start of 2009, consisting of up to 5,000 individual farmers each), which are then assigned to 14 Association Management Centres (AMCs).

The governance structure is based on principles of democracy and representation, whereby paying members elect their representatives in the Association Committees, who in turn elect the National Assembly representatives. NASFAM is further governed by an elected Board of Directors.

NASFAM functions are divided into its commercial and development arms; a for-profit company and legally-registered NGO respectively. NASFAM Commercial functions as a Farmer Organization (FO) which is cooperative in nature; is responsible for marketing both inputs to farmers and produce from them. The goals of the commercial arms include: increasing profit for members; improve quality and yields; and to influence policies on a national level. NASFAM's development arm is tasked with taking charge of externally-funded development project, which include the FTFTP.

Both commercial and development arms are governed by a democratically elected Farmer Board.

Source: NASFAM

3 Theoretical Overview

Although the dominant frame of analysis in development interventions, neoclassical economics has been argued to be an inappropriate framework to tackle under-developed economies (Byres 2006: 236). This is especially relevant in the context of agriculture in developing countries, where traditional 'capitalist' views of 'rationality' have proved to have limited applicability in analyzing agriculture in developing countries, given the intrinsically-linked nature of market and non-market forces (Bernal 1994: 792). Smallholders in particular fall into this category, as there still remains considerable debate as to the extent of the applicability of neo-classical, microeconomic concepts in their analysis (Adams 1982; Adams 1986; Edelman 2005: 331).

The following chapter presents an overview of studies on peasant rationality from different disciplines and theoretical foundations, as well as related concepts which were employed in this study's analysis. The aim is to combine the concepts of peasant rationality, the economy of affection and economic models of volunteering into a framework that will be used to analyze the data in a manner which takes into account the economic, social and cultural influences on farmers' decisions. After a discussion of peasant rationality, both the economy of affection and an overview of economic models of volunteering are presented.

3.1 Defining the 'peasant'

Before going any further, it is important to establish what is understood by the term *peasant*. While the term might have some historically-negative connotations, it does not function derogatory term for *farmers* in studies of agriculture (Ellis 1988: 4). Rather, it is used to distinguish certain farmers from not only non-farm actors, but also from other agriculture actors. The reality of the agricultural landscape involves a number of different actors engaged in farming; from smallholders to capitalist, large scale producers who effectively act in different ways and are motivated by different influences (Byres 2006: 243). The most significant difference (in addition to the stark difference in landholding size) which separates peasant agriculturalists and commercial farmers stems from the almost exclusive use of family labour on farms by smallholders rarely relying on external labour (Chaianov et al. 1966; Ellis 1993; Lipton 1968; Schultz 1964). This highlights the contrast in the degree of commercialization or market orientation between the two different actors. This is also true in the case of Malawi (Chirwa 2003: 8).

Generally, smallholders in Africa (and specifically in Malawi) embody the characteristics described in Ellis' conception of peasants, which is outlined above. Given this study's exclusive focus on smallholder as opposed to estate owners, this study will employ the terms 'peasant', 'smallholder' and 'farmer' interchangeably throughout. The following section summarizes the existing literature and research on peasant rationality.

3.2 The ‘Rational Peasant’

While a critical examination of peasant agriculture was underway in Russian academia as early as 1925 through the work of the Russian agrarian economist Chayanov (Kerblay 1988), who proposed the notion that it is impossible to understand the development of peasant agriculture using “analytical tools developed for the understanding of a capitalist agriculture” (Green 2005: 53)⁶, the 1960’s and 70’s marked a period of increased interest from development economists in the field of peasant agriculture. This period also coincided with the rediscovery of Chayanov’s work by Western academics (Chaianov et al. 1966), when his work was introduced into mainstream English-speaking academia (Kerblay 1988). By acknowledging the existence of alternate production and economic systems, the platform was set to more appropriately address the issue of peasant rationality.

Specifically in terms of rationality within developing country agriculture, Schultz’s seminal hypothesis of *poor but efficient* provides one of initial challenges to the prevalent attitude towards farmers in developing countries, which viewed them as barriers to development.⁷ In essence, Schultz rejects the notion that farmers are *irrational* actors with low propensities to both save and invest; instead proposing two basic premises. First, he rejected the notion that low agricultural incomes in developing countries were caused by irrational and thus inefficient use of existing resources by farmers, but rather due to the low productivity of those available resources. Second, outside experts (including extension agents, development practitioners and other actors) cannot help farmers by simply recommending reallocating their factors of production, but rather to focus on disseminating new productivity-improving factors (Ball and Pounder 1996: 735). These arguments were embodied within his *poor but efficient hypothesis* which stated that “[t]here are comparatively few significant inefficiencies in the allocation of the factors of production in traditional agriculture” (Schultz, 1964: 37; italics in original).

⁶ Chayanov argued that classical economics and the marginal theory of capitalist entrepreneurial behaviour do not apply in a peasant economy which utilizes family labour exclusively Kerblay, B. 1988. "Chayanov and the Theory of Peasant Economies." In *Peasant and Peasant Societies*, ed. Teodor Shanin. London: Penguin Books.

⁷ This section draws heavily on Schultz’s (1964) original work *Transforming traditional agriculture*, in which his ‘poor but efficient’ hypothesis was first proposed.

Traditional agriculture, according to Schultz, comprised a situation where the physical and economic environments farmers face are at equilibrium; an equilibrium which takes quite some time to attain (Schultz 1964: 29). Farmers' preferences within this equilibrium are determined over this long period, and thus lead to optimal resource allocation and investment decisions. This definition of traditional agriculture is proposed as an alternative to the traditional view prevalent at the time, which identifies developing country agriculture in terms of the cultural makeup of smallholder farmers (Ball and Ponder 1996: 737). This limited and narrow definition has been the subject of subsequent criticism, with critics arguing that there are few instances where such conditions hold (Ball and Ponder 1996). Moreover, the absence of social and cultural dimensions also contributed to a more incomplete view of traditional agriculture, since Schultz did not accept the importance of including cultural elements in explaining the way traditional agriculture works (Adams 1986: 275).

Alternatively Lipton, in his (1968) seminal *Theory of the Optimising Peasant* proposes a *survival algorithm* in which peasants arrive at rational choices that are "security-centred"; farmers arrive at livelihood and production decisions depending on the contextual circumstance in which they live, which sometimes leads to different "rational" choices within the same village for example (pg. 348). In addition to ensuring that all aspects related to production are exhaustively included in analyzing production decisions, he also points to the effects of institutional and cultural effects on the decisions of peasants, which he argues are critical to farmers in making their optimum decisions which aim at maximizing their utility. However, Lipton himself concedes that quantitative analysis of such decisions can never be achieved due to the large number of factors to include in calculations, which he believes cannot be completely captured (Ibid). This conclusion raises a critical point; that peasants are influenced by a multitude of factors that transcend simply economic ones.

The most radical aspect of Schultz's work lied in his conception of *profit*, which contradicted the mainstream economic definition of the concept. Schultz's definition of profit was not limited to commercial profit, as he identified non-marketable gains in productivity (for example yield gains of subsistence staple food) as profit in direct contrast to classical economic reasoning (Schultz 1964: 165). Additionally, he also argued for the inclusion of the dimensions of risk and

uncertainty within profit calculations, as farmers living on the margins are less likely to be able to cope with high levels of risk. Most importantly, Schultz identified the costs associated with the search and/or learning of adopting new factors as the critical aspect in farmers' determination of profitability. Schultz employed this conception of profit to prove that farmers make rational decisions and are responsive to changing market conditions; as long as the benefits of adopting changes outweigh the costs that are associated with the actions.

A major criticism of Schultz's analysis lies in the fact that, in imperfect market conditions which characterize the reality of agricultural markets in developing countries, individually rational decisions do not necessarily lead to socially efficient outcomes on the community level (Adams 1986; Lipton 1968). Lipton (1968) argued that Schultz meant for his *poor but efficient hypothesis* to be applicable to both individuals *and* communities; although his interpretation of Schultz's intention has been questioned, as Schultz did not tackle the distinction between individual and group efficiency (Ball and Pounder 1996: 744).

However, it is important not to dismiss Schultz's work, as it was a direct challenge to the prevailing attitude of academics and practitioners towards traditional agriculture at the time, who viewed farmers as "backward, unresponsive, and resistant to change" (Ball and Pounder 1996: 740). Thus the importance of Schultz's hypothesis was not in its efficiency declaration, but rather in his recognition of the responsiveness of farmers to changing incentives (Ball and Pounder 1996: 736)

The body of literature on peasant rationality mainly deal with the concept of rationality from a strictly economic perspective of responsiveness to price changes and market conditions (Adams 1982; Bernal 1994). For example, neo-classical proponents of the concept often cite the price-responsiveness studies of the 60's and 70's as evidence for the 'capitalist' rationality of all peasants (Bhaduri 1973); however Byers (2006: 243) states that such studies treated producers in aggregate terms, ignoring social differences between the different types of farmers.

However, the more flexible view of rationality which such studies have proposed (for example, through Schultz' broader conception of profit) can be equally applicable in looking at the decisions made by smallholders to volunteer their labour and time. By extending the models

which are proposed, it is possible to gain an understanding of the decisions of smallholders in non-market related decisions; an aspect which has been lacking from studies of peasant economies. This study attempted to fill this gap by infusing an element of a more socially-oriented perspective to analyze the volunteering decisions of farmers.

In other words, this study used the position articulated by Ellis (1993: 76) as a jumping off point, who argued that the significance of Schultz's hypothesis lies not in its accuracy in predicting price-related behavioural changes, but rather through managing to place peasant economics in the forefront of discourse.

In order to gain a more complete appreciation of the behaviour of farmers in developing countries, purely economic models whose basis stem from classical and neo-classical roots (such as the conception of rationality outlined above) are better supplemented with an understanding of the cultural context. The concept of the *economy of affection*, which combines and gives due consideration to the interplay between the social, cultural and economic realities which characterize developing countries, provides such an understanding.

3.3 The Economy of Affection

For a more thorough understanding of peasants' economic and social livelihoods in Africa, it is important to acknowledge the existence of a *peasant mode of production* which operates parallel to the capitalist or socialist economic systems in operation (Hydén 1983: 6). This economy, dubbed the *economy of affection* (Hydén 1980), is usually distinguished from the purely capitalist, classically rational economy, suggesting the lack of exclusive consideration being given to price and profit factors, as markets are not perfect and information asymmetry prevails (Adi 2005: 4).

The economy of affection represents "a network of support, communications and interaction among structurally defined groups connected by blood, kin community or other affinities" (Hydén 1983: 8). These interdependent relationships shape economic decisions at the micro level, which makes the affective economy prevail over the formal economy (Adi 2005; Hydén 1983). Individuals operating within the economy of affection are thus not exclusively motivated by monetary incentives:

“Most times, the sense of group loyalty and solidarity overrides the need to conform to rational economic principles. Economic exchanges are often not underwritten in monetary terms and transactions are not always motivated by profit.” (Adi 2005: 5)

Consequently, peasants would respond rationally to market incentives to improve their position in the economy of affection; not necessarily to solely increase their financial profit (Hydén 1983). Such cultural practices are attributed to the persistence of indigenous African models of social order, whereby the concepts of mutual self-help, solidarity and sharing are valued above individual welfare (Adi 2005).

While it is a form of social support and the dominant economic system in Africa, Hyden (1983) argued that Africa’s persistent economy of affection inhibits its chances of achieving sustainable economic growth, as it prevents the accumulation of sufficient surplus capital. More recently, African academics have argued against this notion, insisting that capitalism can flourish alongside the affective economy (Adi 2005; Mkandawire and Soludo 1999).

The concept of the economy of affection has not been without its critics. Some academics have questioned the extent to which African peasants are able to “evade the reach of the state”, arguing that the view distorts reality (Lemarchand 1989: 34). Furthermore, as an intrinsically static concept, the economy of affection fails to account for the dynamic nature of society; a weakness which believes renders the concept non-operationalizable (Ibid). However, this study employs the affective economy notion as a *complimentary* perspective to investigate the decision making processes of farmers, guiding the research to include more socially-aware undertones. Using the paradigm in this way oversteps the limitations outlined above, as even critics agree that the paradigm has useful heuristic properties (Lemarchand 1989).

Given the constant interplay between social and cultural factors on economic decision making in African peasant society, an analysis of peasant rationality cannot be complete without due consideration given to the cultural and social dynamics in which they operate (Ellis 1993; Popkin 1979). Expanding the discussion on peasant rationality to encompass elements of the affective economy more concretely creates a more holistic framework through which to query the

rationale behind smallholders volunteering their time and labour. The following section outlines a selection of economic theories of volunteering which are designed to understand the motivation of individuals to volunteer their time; a critical element of this study.

3.4 Volunteering

There have been a number of studies attempting to ‘quantify’ and analyze the reasons why people volunteer from an economic perspective at the micro level (e.g. (Freeman 1997; Menchik and Weisbrod 1987; Ziemek 2006), which can generally fit three models; the public goods model, private consumption model and investment models (Ziemek 2006: 533). The benefits and motivations of the three models are summarized below.

Table 1- economic models of volunteering

Model	Benefit	General Motivation
Public Goods	Altruistic benefit	To increase the supply of the public good
Private consumption	Self-value benefit	Joy from the act of volunteering, ‘warm-glow’ utility
Investment	Exchange benefit	To gain labor market experience, skills and contacts

Source: (Roy and Ziemek 2000)

The assumption underlying the **public goods model** is that individuals volunteer their time to increase the supply of a public good or service (Andreoni 1988). Given the public good nature of extension services (Quizon et al. 2001), where certain types of information are generally non-rivalrous and non-excludable (Ziemek 2006), volunteering would simultaneously benefit the volunteer and the wider community as well.

Contrastingly, the **private consumption model** has its roots in more *inward* motivations, where utility is derived from the ‘feel good’ factor which accompanies volunteering (Andreoni 1988; Freeman 1997). The **investment model**, on the other hand, reflects a more individualistic motivation to volunteer, where the direct ‘benefits’ of increased human capital (if training is provided for example) drive decisions (Day and Devlin 1998; Duncan 1999). In other words, individuals would volunteer their time in the expectation that their investment will pay dividends in the future, for example through enhancing their skills set for enhanced employment opportunities. This motivation can also be described as *self-improving* (Boz and Palaz 2007).

It is important to note that the motivations presented above are not necessarily mutually exclusive; an individual can have a number of factors influencing the decision to volunteer. For example, in a study of community volunteers in Turkey, Boz and Palaz (2007) found that in addition to altruistic motives, volunteers were also mainly motivated by the need for affiliation and personal improvement motives (which can be equated with the investment model outlined above). A combination of motivations is thus commonly observed in empirical research.

While such models might be applicable in developed economies with fully developed labour markets with its accompanying underlying neo-liberal assumptions, this does not automatically discount them for looking at smallholder farmers in developing countries. This study aims at understanding the motivations which drive individual farmers to volunteer their time; whether it is for a romanticized notion of helping their communities, or simply for self-gain purposes through their training. By complimenting the main framework of an economy of affection perspective on peasant rationality, the volunteering models discussed provide an additional dimension in understanding the behaviour of smallholders, as outlined below.

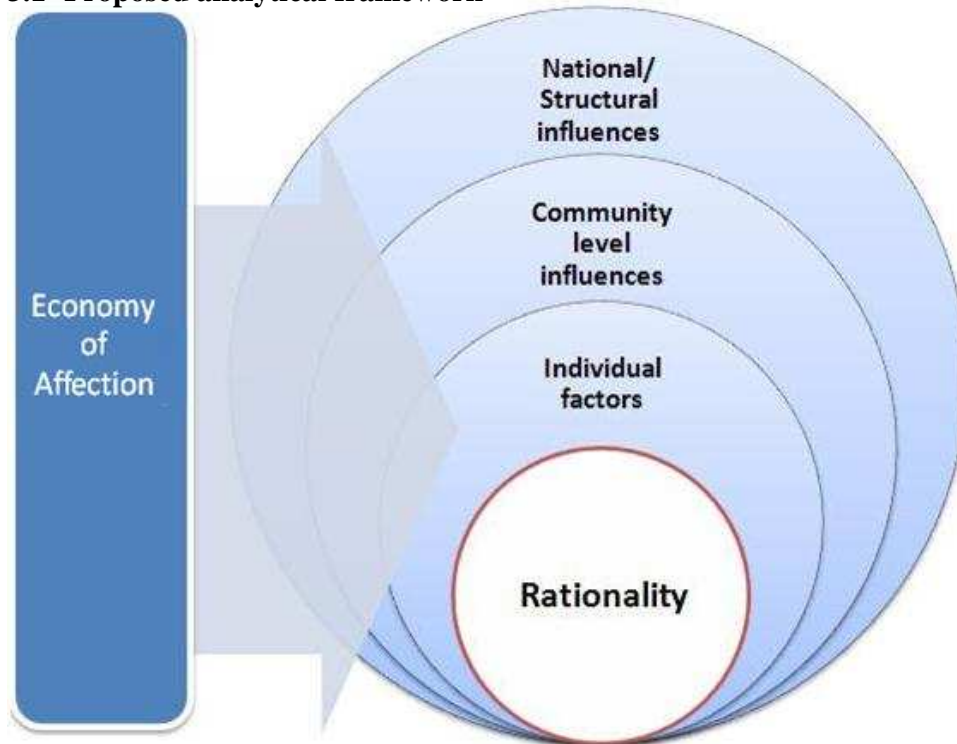
3.5 Operationalization

Using the three theories and models outlined above, this study seeks to answer the main question:

In the absence of monetary incentives, what rationale drives smallholders to volunteer their time and labour?

As stated earlier in the paper, this study seeks to analyze the concept of peasant rationality by employing a multi-layered investigation mainly focusing on community and individual level factors, with consideration given to national level factors which affect individual rationality. This was done by using the existing literature on peasant rationality from an economic perspective as the springboard for investigation, while at the same time employing an economy of affection lens to compliment understanding of the motivation and rationale behind farmers' decisions. Figure 3.1 below outlines the framework through which the data was analyzed. The analytical elements within each level of the model are presented in figure 3.2 for the sake of clarity.

3.1- Proposed analytical framework



The core elements of the framework reflect the inter-related nature of the different levels on individual rationality, whereby the national, community and individual spheres are influenced and affected by each other. While acknowledging that the concept of rationality is an individual notion, an economy of affection perspective necessitates a more holistic view, which the framework conveys.

Consequently, each element within the framework is designed to address each of the research questions. Due to the nature of this study's design, more attention will be directed towards the community and individual levels, employing mainly primary data collected from field observations, interviews and focus group discussions, while the national level will be treated using secondary sources from existing literature on Malawi.

Figure 3.2 below outlines the basic tenants of the analytical framework, along with a brief summary of the elements which will form the basis for analysis. Starting with a treatment of exogenous, national-level influences on individual decisions, analysis will move on to the

community and individual levels. At the community level, the nature of social and economic relationships between the wider community and volunteers will be analyzed using material from interviews and FGDs. Although exogenous to the individual, the community level represents an interesting aspect considering that it intersects with individual, intrinsically endogenous motivations of farmers to volunteer. At the individual level, the different motivations to volunteer outlined in the previous section were used to analyze the volunteering decisions, in addition to a qualitative discussion of the social influences that the farmers are influenced by from their communities.

Figure 3.2- Elements of analytical framework



As stated earlier, the main object of this study is to contribute to an extended and multi-disciplinary conception of peasant rationality. The underlying assumption guiding the study is that the concept of rationality, when applied to farmers, transcends purely economic elements and includes social, societal and cultural elements which affect the behaviour and thus decision of peasant actors. Although the rationality studies referred to throughout this paper are predominately economic in nature, the inclusion of an affective economy perspective reflects a direct attempt to address more comprehensively the potential elements which factor in the decision making process of farmers; specifically in terms of their decision to volunteer. While

specific in focus, findings from this study can contribute to a wider understanding of smallholders' decision making in general.

4 Method

4.1.1 Sampling

Research participants were selected at random from programme areas within the central region of Malawi. Farmers willing to be interviewed from three associations located in Lilongwe North, Lilongwe South and Mchinji (see map in figure 4.1 below) were selected at random, and willing Farmer Trainers (FTs, the farmer volunteers) were also randomly selected. In total, 24 FTs (from a total pool of approximately 250 in the areas studied) and 9 general NASFAM members (dubbed hereafter 'Follow Farmers' to distinguish them from Farmer Trainers) were involved in focus group discussions and interviews, in addition to the NASFAM programme officer and 3 Association Field Officers (AFOs). Although 69 questionnaires were sent out to AFOs country wide, an extremely low response rate (less than 8%) meant that they were not used in aggregated form, instead used to reflect the views of the individuals who have responded.

Figure 4.1- Map of areas studied



Source: author (using Dynamic Maps)

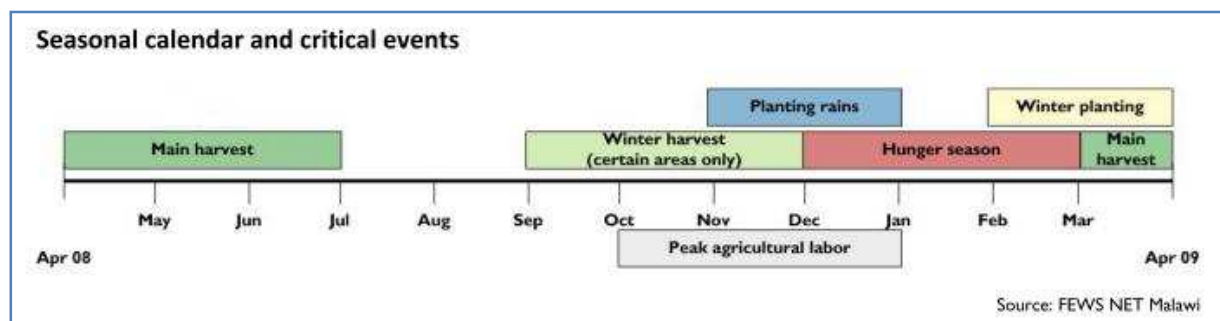
4.2 Data collection

While initial ground work began in December 2008, field observations, focus group discussions and interviews were conducted during the months of February and March 2009, along with the distribution of the questionnaire. February was chosen as it falls after the planting season, where agricultural labour has passed its peak (see figure 4.2 below).

Due to language constraints, a research assistant was employed to translate the questions into Chichewa, as well as help the researcher adjust the wording to be better suited to the cultural context of the research participants. For example, questions relating to finances had to be adjusted and approached in a less direct manner, in accordance with prevalent cultural practices.

Focus group discussions and interviews were fully recorded and transcribed, with attention given to non-verbal gestures to gain further insight beyond what's merely being said (Kvale 1996). Confidentiality and anonymity were respected; volunteers, programme staff and FGD participants are referred to as Informant 1, Informant 2, etc. and FGD 1 and FGD 2 respectively.

Figure 4.2- The agricultural season in Malawi



A questionnaire was designed and distributed to all NASFAM AFOs countrywide who are involved with the FTF programme. The purpose of the questionnaire was to information about the the attitude of AFOs towards the FTF programme in general and the FTs themselves specifically. Questionnaires were employed with this target group of research participants as they are scattered across the country, making individual interviews practically difficult. Moreover, a questionnaire allows a bigger sample to be targeted, which allowed for a high level

of comparability (Ragin 1994). Questionnaires also serve as an effective method of isolating interesting cases, for which further in-depth study could be examined (Yin 2003).

Field observations served as part of the initial, exploratory stage of the study (Silverman 2005). NASFAM trainings of its members, as well as specific FT-led field days were attended in order to ‘get a feel’ of the relationship between the different actors, including farmers, FTs and AFOs. While not necessarily considered as a ‘reliable’ form of data collection (ibid), observations could serve as a means of verification when combined with other data collection techniques (Creswell 2007).

Additionally, two focus group discussions were held, comprising 12 Farmer Trainers and 9 Follow Farmers (FFs) respectively. The purpose of the Farmer Trainer focus group was to gain an overall understanding of the motivation of FTs as a group, as well as compliment data obtained from individual interviews. Moreover, the FT group discussion served as an effective tool to refine the individual interview questions (see Appendix A for FGD guide).

A second focus group was organized for FFs in order to gain an understanding of the wider community’s perception of the programme and the FTs they have picked, in addition to providing further insight to the extent of the FTs’ influence in the community (see Appendix B for FGD guide).

The main mode of data collection came in the form of individual, structured interviews with FTs comprised the primary mode of data collection for the study (see Appendix C for interview guide). Interviews are an appropriate mode of enquiry since they are most effective in helping understand the research participants’ perspectives (Silverman 2005), which is the principle objective of this study. While standard questions were used as a guide, every effort was made to give the interviewees the opportunity and freedom to elaborate on points that they feel were important (Mikkelsen 2005).

A number of additional informal interviews were also conducted with the programme coordinator, regional managers and AFOs. The purpose of these informal interviews was to further compliment the views of farmers.

4.2.1 Literature & Document Review

In order to compliment the data from FGDs, interviews and the questionnaire, a yet unpublished NASFAM evaluation of the FTFTP was consulted and reviewed. The report's methodology included a mass, semi-structured questionnaire, responses from which represent a significantly more representative national sample than this study's scope. Therefore, considering material from the report is meant to enhance the generalizability of any conclusions attained.

Additionally, literature on the agricultural landscape of Malawi, specifically in relation to smallholders was also reviewed, providing the necessary data for analysing factors from the national perspective.

4.3 Analysis

Data has been analyzed in accordance with the analytical framework proposed in section 3.5, starting with the national level, which primarily deals with secondary sources and finishing with the community and individual levels, from which the bulk of the data came from the interviews, FGDs and field observations. Interviews and FGDs were fully translated and transcribed by a research assistant. common themes from interviews and FGDs were identified and coded, supplemented by interesting quotes which were included in the text.

Table 2 below summarizes the methods through which each research question was tackled.

Table 2- Data Analysis

Level	Research questions	Sources	Methods
National	What are the economic and policy level elements which influence smallholders' decisions?	Government officials Government documents Academic literature Own observations	Informal discussion Field observations Literature review
Community	What influence does the community have on individual decisions of farmers to volunteer?	Programme report Programme managers Farmer Trainers Follow Farmers AFOs Own observations	Informal discussion Interviews Field observation Focus group discussions Document review Questionnaire
Individual	What are the endogenous motivations of farmers to volunteer?	Programme report Programme managers Farmer Trainers Follow Farmers AFOs Own observations	Interviews Informal discussions Field observation Focus group discussions Documents review Questionnaire

Source: Author

4.3.1 Reliability, Validity and Ethical Considerations

Having the research conducted through NASFAM itself could pose problem of associability, whereby farmers would be reluctant to speak freely about their perceptions of the programme. In order to minimize such risk, every effort was made to underline the neutrality of the researcher, mainly through a brief introduction to each interview and FGD research assistant from the local agricultural university.

Relatedly, the research assistant was tasked with ensuring that detailed observations were recorded regarding the language used by research participants, considering that interviews and FGDs were conducted almost exclusively in Chichewa, which I do not understand. In order to ensure nothing was missing, post-interview discussions were conducted with the research assistant to draw attention to any observations which might have been relevant for analysis of the interviews.

When employing FGDs as a data collection method, there exists the potential for an individual or small group of individuals to dominate the proceedings. In order to avoid this problem, the FGD facilitators (myself and my research assistant) constantly ensured that all participants were given the chance to voice their opinions.

From an ethical standpoint, a number of considerations had to be made. Given the nature of some research questions, as well as the fact that conversations were to be recorded, confidentiality was guaranteed for research participants in order to allow them to speak freely. For example, a number of interview questions to FFs concern their thoughts and attitudes towards other community members and NASFFAM AFOs. Additionally, it was made clear to research participants that findings from the study would not necessarily result in the alteration of the FTFTP, especially considering that one of the interview questions concerns the interviewee's thoughts on financial compensation for volunteers.

5 Analysis and Discussion

Data was analyzed by applying the framework presented in Section 3.5. This section is divided into three subsections according to each layer of analysis, with more focus given to individual and community-level factors, as those are the primary targets of this study.

5.1 National level

Over the decades, the government of Malawi has gone through a number of policy shifts in relation to smallholders. While no official policy exists in relation to farmer volunteers, the general policy landscape plays a role in the livelihood decisions of smallholders. The following section aims to answer the first of the research questions: *what are the economic and policy level elements which affect smallholders' decisions?* Through a review of the evolving policies relating to the two main outputs of smallholders, maize and tobacco, this section seeks to demonstrate the conditions which can play a role in influencing individual rationality of smallholders, and more specifically those who volunteer as Farmer Trainers.

Although occupying over 70% of land (Chirwa et al. 2006), smallholders in Malawi were marginalized as direct consequence of pro-estate agricultural policies up to the late 1980s

(Harrigan 2003; Kydd and Christiansen 1982). Critically, smallholders were prohibited from growing tobacco- Malawi's most important cash crop- through a series of legislative blocks and policy factors giving a virtual monopoly to estates in growing and selling tobacco (Hazarika and Alwang 2003). Since the removal of the legal barrier that prohibited smallholder involvement in burley-tobacco in 1990, smallholder production increased substantially and quickly, representing 70% of the country's total by 1998 (Peters 2006). This move marked a move by the Malawian government towards a more pro-smallholder agricultural development policy.

After the country's first democratic elections in 1994, tensions with the World Bank and some donors surfaced as a result of the country's new policies of supporting smallholders through a combination of subsidies and input provisions; policies which contradicted the Washington-consensus, pro free-market nature of donor support at the time (Harrigan 2003). This shift came as a result of the failure of the private sector in filling the gap left in the aftermath of donor-promoted liberalization, which saw the withdrawal of support to smallholder maize producers critically through the erosion of state-supported credit systems which exasperated the already low purchasing power of smallholders (Peters 2006). Although liberalization did benefit some elite tobacco-growing smallholders (in addition to estate owners), the majority remained minimally supported throughout that period (Chirwa et al. 2006). A major deficiency of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) has been the assumption that only price incentives were enough to generate a supply response from smallholders; complementary actions aimed at reducing technological, credit and land limitations were needed as part of complete package (GoM 2008: 8). The absence of these complimentary services induces smallholders to come up with solutions on their own, one of which his the decision to volunteer to help close the gap it creates.

The movement towards pro-smallholder policies was characterized by two aims: the intensification of maize production to enhance nutrition and food security; and the promotion of cash crop production to increase income (Chirwa et al. 2006). The most recent such effort by the government has been the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) which provides vouchers for subsidized fertilizer and improved maize seed varieties to vulnerable smallholders since the famine of 2005 (Denning et al. 2009).

While providing poorer smallholders with access to improved technology and fertilizer, government programmes such as the FISP have failed to address other chronic problems facing smallholders. In addition to high costs (exasperated by increasing global fertilizer costs), a major criticism of such programmes⁸ has been the exclusion of a training package to beneficiary farmers on the use of the improved technologies provided. The deficiency in the provision of extension advice to supplement the FISP has led to improper use of fertilizer, diminishing the positive gains that such programmes give to smallholders. This flaw is compounded by a downward trend in recurring funding for research and extension services, further undermining the access of farmers to valuable extension advice (Chirwa et al. 2006). For example, a government review of agricultural policies saw research extension only receiving 37% of its earmarked budget (GoM 2003).

Although the GoM has underlined its belief in agriculture as the engine for poverty alleviation most recently through the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and Agriculture Development Programme (ADP), it also recognizes the main challenges facing smallholders. These comprise weak links to markets (both infrastructural and structural); high transport costs; lack of farmer organizations; poor quality control; and lack of price and market information (GoM 2006). The combination of all these factors directly influenced smallholders' livelihood decisions, which traditionally comprised a subsistence-based strategy with the primary goal of producing as much maize as possible (Peters 2006). While the promotion of smallholder tobacco cultivation led to a degree of diversification into cash crops, causing average annual growth of 42.3% in the smallholder sector in 1995 and 1996, some authors argue that this has led to an increase in food insecurity as burley-tobacco was displacing maize (Harrigan 2003).

From a maize-market perspective, a presidential directive in late 2008 has banned the private trading of maize, decreeing that the Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) as the sole buyer and seller of maize, fixing the price at MK45 per kg (buying) and MK52 per kg (selling).⁹ While this removed the price uncertainty which has plagued planning of smallholders over the decades (Harrigan 2003; Peters 2006), it could also potentially affect the

⁸ author's observations from attending donor-level meetings

⁹ Malawi Kwacha- Approximately MK140 = US\$1

incentives of farmers to produce for the market, which is in direct contradiction to the government policy geared towards smallholder commercialization of agriculture. However, as the majority of small holders are still net buyers of food (Chirwa et al. 2006), this can be seen as a positive short term measure, especially considering that maize market prices have more than tripled in the year leading up to the directive, from around MK20 per kg to over MK60 per kg.¹⁰

Although initially welcoming the directive, it remains to be seen how smallholders will adjust their behaviour to this change in economic environment. In the past, food deficit households experienced a vicious cycle, whereby they have to sell their maize at a time when prices are at their lowest due to the flood of supply during the harvest season, only to have to buy at significantly higher prices during the ‘hunger season’ where families deplete their maize stores (Peters 2006). Such a cycle significantly influences the planning of smallholders, considering that any labour lost (as might be the case with volunteering, for example) can severely affect the wellbeing of these households living on the periphery of poverty. As Orr and Mwale (2001: 1326) observed: “[s]mallholders were not simply the passive victims of policy reform, but active problemsolvers who had employed a variety of adaptive strategies to maintain household income”.

Critically, the interaction between the government and farmers, which has traditionally been done through extension agents, has been quite limited of late. Apart from the contact during the distribution of coupons for the FISP, there is virtually no interaction between smallholders and the central government. While this might change now that ADMARC, the government’s marketing board, is the sole legal maize trader, the fact remains that there is an extremely low level of extension interaction with smallholders (Chirwa et al. 2006). In addition to lack of sufficient funding (GoM 2003), national-scale programmes such as the FISP have also contributed to even shorter contact time with farmers, as field officers are at the centre in the distribution and monitoring of coupon distribution and use.¹¹

¹⁰ author’s observations from living in Malawi

¹¹ author’s observations from informal conversations with MoAFS staff

Additionally, HIV/AIDS has often been cited as a major detrimental factor on the provision of extension, as AIDS related deaths significantly affect front line staff due to their mobile lifestyles; specifically in Malawi, it was estimated in 1998 that 66% of deaths in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) were AIDS related (Ngwira et al. 2001), resulting in situations whereby frontline extension agents can be responsible for upward of 4,000 farming households (Qamar 2001). This makes sufficient contact time virtually impossible, which has facilitated the proliferation of private extension such the endeavours undertaken by NASFAM; however it is important to note that private extension is not immune from the effect of HIV/AIDS either (Ibid).

While the effect of insufficient public extension presents an understandable justification as to why farmers would choose to volunteer to become proxy-extension agents, government policies on a macro level also influence livelihood decisions of smallholders. Indirect as they may be, it is nevertheless important to consider all levels which impact individual decisions. The next section presents community factors which affect individual rationality.

5.2 Community influences

This section presents the findings of community level influences on the decisions of farmers to volunteer as Farmer Trainers, by answering the second research question *what influence does the local community have on individual decisions of farmers to volunteer?* Evidence was drawn from observations, interviews and focus group discussions, while also drawing back to the literature on the economy of affection and peasant rationality.

However before beginning to analyze the influence the community plays on individual decisions to volunteer, it is necessary to first describe the social structure on the village level in Malawi. Through exploring the social structure within which smallholders operate, an enhanced appreciation of the multi-dimensionality of rural life will contribute to a more complete understanding of the factors affecting individual decisions within the community. This subsection begins with an overview of the parallel formal (central government) and informal (Traditional Authorities or TAs) structures which exist in Malawi, followed by an analysis of its effect on individuals, and their rationales to volunteer.

Text Box 2- Village Structure in Malawi

Government

As a country which heavily depends on agriculture, administrative units in Malawi are split into three main levels in its formal system (in order from largest to smallest): Agricultural Development Divisions (ADD); Rural Development Projects (RDP); and Extension Planning Areas (EPA), which encompasses a number of villages, each of which is home to approximately 15 households. With an average household size of 5, this translates to approximately 75 inhabitants per village.

Traditional

The traditional village structure in Malawi varies depending on the region. However, a common feature includes a *Traditional Authority* (TA), which cover a number of villages. TAs can be seen as the EPA equivalent on the formal administrative structure (above). What complicates matters is that in some cases TAs intersect different EPAs, which makes accurate administration somewhat more challenging. TAs cover a number of villages much in the same way EPAs do.

Each village under the TA has a village chief, who acts as the final authority in disputes and other matters between village members (unless the matter escalates, in which case it is dealt at a TA level). Underneath him, *Nduna* act as chiefs at the clan level, who act as a council to deal with matters before they are escalated to the village chief level. *Ndunas* also act as the chief's advisors, but traditionally used to relay messages back to the community, also performing the function of messengers.

Clans are households that are connected through traditional family lines, sharing common last names such as "Banda" or "Tembo", for example. Historically, social networks along clan lines have been very strong, however increasing populations have diluted this effect to a certain extent, making households (i.e. immediate family) within these clans the main unit of mutual support. Clanship still does play an important, albeit slightly weaker, role in maintaining social order and support.

Source: author

Given the social structure of the communities in which the volunteers live in, it comes as no surprise that the community as a whole derives a vested interest in the FTs (Informant 11; FGD 1, 2), since the public-good nature of extension advice implies that they will benefit directly from the FTs increased knowledge. In the absence of direct access to the state (in this case access to extension services), peasants are compelled to rely on their own networks to fill the vacuum, which in this case study comes in the form of an almost universal acceptance of the Farmer-to-Farmer training programme (FTFTP). Farmers view the FTFTP as their only chance of accessing relevant extension advice, considering the negative experience from the public system which was in place prior to the proliferation of the programme (FGD 2). Consequently, individuals volunteering themselves as FTs represent a rational response in attempting to close the

information gap which exists in the absence of formal extension structures, utilizing their membership in NASFAM as a means to access knowledge.

This has been observed in similarly successful agricultural cooperatives in India for example, where a reasonably homogenous membership views the organization “as an instrument for capital formation and the introduction of technical innovation” (Korten 1980: 481). The significance of this fact comes as a direct consequence of a common historical, and unfortunately frequently occurring, reality of agricultural cooperatives, which often sees them turned into tools of control by the state (Holmen 1991). While acknowledging that agricultural extension is not as contentious an example as other historical examples of failed cooperatives, it nonetheless underlines the fact that success depends on the ability of peasants (smallholders) to effectively use their own networks in a manner which they choose; in our case an extension programme whereby knowledge is transferred by fellow farmers.

The strong attachment to the community as a unit is consistent with that of an affective economy, which stresses the significance of group solidarity and social welfare to the individual (Adi 2005; Hydén 1980). Since FTs live in such communities they are invariably influenced, albeit to varying degrees, by their social environment in their individual decisions and rationality. The social interdependence between volunteer and non-volunteer farmers is compounded by the cooperative nature of their economic activities, since for example a NASFAM member is only able to efficiently sell their produce by aggregating her or his output with fellow group members. This economic interdependence also factors in on individual decisions, both economical and social (Adi 2005).

It is interesting to note that while the majority of volunteers interviewed indicated that they had encouragement from the community, two FTs reported a lack of community support during the initial phases of the programme (Informant 3, 9). Both, however, indicated a significant improvement in relations with the wider community once the FTs began conducting trainings and demonstrations. This was confirmed by the follow Farmers (FFs) consulted, who reported that while they were happy to support the farmers who volunteer, it was important to demonstrate that FTs demonstrate a “hardworking spirit” which ensures that the wider community benefits (FGD 2).

“The AFO assesses people who are hard working in the villages, so it was the AFO who endorsed my name and this was confirmed by the committee members from our chapter. The members saw my hardworking spirit.” (Informant 10)

“People selected me at club level. I accepted because the people had trust in me; they knew I was a hardworking person” (Informant 7)

The “hardworking spirit” was mentioned a number of times in discussions with both FFs and FTs, as well as AFOs and programme officers during the course of the research. Individuals are rewarded for their hard work not only at the community level through the elevation of the volunteer’s social status, but also in the form of enhanced social capital when they demonstrate a willingness and ability to satisfy communal needs. Although the concept has been widely debated due to its complexity, the following definition of *social capital* is used for the purposes of this study:¹²

“The rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity and trust embedded in social relations, social structures and society’s institutional arrangements which enable members to achieve their individual and community objectives.” (Narayan 1997: 50)

In the absence of formalized insurance, social capital acts as a sort of safety-net in times of need; the notions of obligation and reciprocity in times of need are fundamental to the affective nature of the peasant economy in which these farmers operate (Adi 2005). Farmers indicate that there has been a significant increase in their willingness to volunteer, not only to help themselves and their communities but also to increase their status within their communities; when FFs were asked whether they would want to volunteer, a universal enthusiasm and agreement was visibly felt when one of the senior members of the focus group said: “no one can refuse such an honour and responsibility” (FGD 2). FTs are usually referred to as *Alangizi*, Chichewa for ‘advisor’, a term which has positive connotations; the term is also used for government extension workers and NASFAM AFOs as well, which indicates a high degree of respect which the community bestows on FTs. The elevation in social status within a community is perceived favourably in

¹² It is not within the scope of this study to enter the debate on the concept of social capital, but rather to use to demonstrate the importance individuals and the community place on the aspects of social relations outlined within the definition.

Malawian society, as the prestige can facilitate economic and social opportunities for the individual. In this sense, volunteering to gain such a status can be seen as an investment which the volunteer expects to pay dividends in the future; consistent with Adi's (2005) prediction that individuals seek to elevate their position in the economy of affection.

Interestingly, some FTs have also taken the initiative in sharing knowledge with non-NASFAM members within their own communities and adjacent ones (Informant 7, 11, 12). The good will and respect generated from undertaking the volunteering role often elevate FTs to leadership positions within not only their NASFAM clubs and action groups, but also within the wider community, which some farmers see a motivation in itself for becoming an FT.

“Since people are learning a lot from us- people are harvesting more because of the knowledge [we pass onto them] - they pay some respect. Of course there are others who do not mind about us. People now know that I am an important person and other non-NASFAM members approach me on their problems”
(Informant 7)

Although FFs were overwhelmingly positive in their views of FTs, a few farmers raised a minor concern regarding the democratic process through which FTs are chosen (FGD 2). Some reported that the election process was not as transparent as they would have liked, as committee leaders themselves initiate the process by hand picking a number of candidates from which members are expected to then choose. However farmers did not see this as a major issue as they indicated that they are happy with the choices in place. Moreover, it is important to note that FTs must generally satisfy a set of criteria, including the ability to read and write, which in practical terms means that most (not all) FTs tend to be slightly more well-off and already occupying some degree of leadership positions within their community (Informant 11). Potential FTs then reinforce their position in society by taking the step to volunteer, which as discussed above improves their position in the economy of affection; a rational motivation socially and economically.

In addition to it being an economic decision to volunteer their time, FTs are also making a social choice which affects their status in society. While the economic benefits in the form of enhanced agricultural knowledge are apparent, the social benefits from volunteering, in the form of increased social capital do play a factor in their decisions to volunteer. The rationality of their

choices is not solely guided by the potential of higher yields and harvests but by their interactions within their communities, the interplay of which will be presented below.

5.3 Individual motivation

Given the intrinsic nature of rationality to the individual, this section represents the main focus of this study, answering the guiding question: *what are the endogenous motivations of farmers to volunteer?*

Considering the importance farmers place on extension services and advice, as well as the closely-knit nature of the social environment in which they live, it was inevitable that motivations for volunteering will be mixed. While a number of farmers expressed that their decision to volunteer was primarily based on self-improving motivations (Informant 1, 2, 3, 9), an equal number were mainly motivated by wanting to help develop their communities (Informant 4, 5, 7, 10). Additionally, a significant number of others also indicated a degree of “wanting to give something back” to NASFAM as a motivation for volunteering (Informant 3, 5, 6, 10; FGD 1).

The following analytical section dealing with individual motivations and their rationality is divided according to two main themes identified above: the volunteers’ self-improving motivation; and their motivation for developing their communities and give something back to NASFAM.

5.3.1 “My personal interest as a farmer”

Personal economic interest in improving the volunteer’s own livelihood certainly plays a major factor in the decision to volunteer. Since access to extension services was limited before the FTFTP was introduced, some farmers saw it as the perfect opportunity to expand their knowledge on more efficient farming practices (Informant 1, 2, 3, 9). While accepting the responsibility of taking the time to teach others, the primary motivation was to increase the volunteer’s human capital:

“Although friends chose me, I accepted this role because I could foresee some advantages from the trainings [...] I was also inspired when I saw friends who

were doing well for themselves after being active in some NGOs.” (Informant 3)

“Why did I volunteer? It was mainly because of my personal interest as a farmer, not because of encouragement from friends or relatives. The benefits [from higher crop sales] are likely to increase since we are now using improved farming methods.” (Informant 2)

“Personally, as a farmer I knew if I became a Farmer Trainer I would learn a lot of things, since I need more extension advice” (Informant 8)

Moreover, a few FTs indicated the significance of “learning from others” on their decision to volunteer in the first place, as they felt that the FT platform will allow them to supplement the technical knowledge they receive from the training with Indigenous Knowledge they will be exposed to from other farmers; especially during exchange visits (FGD 1).

In addition to the direct knowledge returns resulting from the additional knowledge FTs attain, one farmer even hopes that with more training he can one day become a ‘full extension worker’, pursuing extension service delivery as a career working with NASFAM or the government:

“I volunteered mainly from personal interest; as a farmer, I need to get more knowledge about farming methods. I hope that [with additional training] I can become more like a full extension worker.” (Informant 1)

Through facilitating the process of accumulating human capital, farmers are increasing their labour market value for potentially leaving farming as their primary livelihoods, for example to pursue careers as extension workers. While most of the farmers interviewed did not express a desire to leave farming, the training attained does provide for an alternative income-generating activity through diversifying the farmer’s skill set, which in itself can be seen as a rational response to the environmental (economic, social and natural) uncertainty facing farmers. In this case, FTs are benefiting directly from the act of volunteering; a fact dubbed *the exchange value benefit* within the investment model of volunteering (Ziemek 2006: 525).

Relatedly, a large majority of the farmers consulted indicated that FT households have seen a significant improvement in economic terms. Since FTs get extension advice directly, they are able to immediately apply the new knowledge to their own fields before passing it on to the rest of the community. Incomes at least doubled or tripled (which the FTs themselves attribute

directly to the adoption of improved farming methods in which they were trained) for most of the FTs interviewed (Informant 3, 4, 9, 10); one farmer even reported a markedly more substantial increase in his income:

“Before becoming a Farmer Trainer my income from crop sales was MK 50,000. Now I get much more; for example last year I received MK 280,000! I have been able to buy iron sheets, and I am just waiting for the rains to stop so I can build another house.” (Informant 7)

Although some of the FTs indicated that they anticipated a rise in income as a result of using improved methods (Informant 1, 5, 10) few expected their incomes to rise that significantly in such a short period of time (Informant 7, 9). The fact that the FTs themselves feel that their expectations have been met indicates that they factored in the increase in income, making their decision to volunteer economically rational.

Surprisingly, most FTs did not view the time spent on others’ fields as a problem (Informant 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; FGD 1), especially considering that FFs reported that FTs attended to problems extremely efficiently and were always accessible (FGD 2). This could be attributed to the fact that AFOs advise FTs on the importance of time management, and even occasionally check up on FTs’ own field to ensure that they are not being neglected (Informant 7, 11); FTs are advised to meet and advise farmers no more than three times a week (Informant 8). However some FTs have complained that due to their presence directly in the community, people (even non-NASFAM members) approach them for help at any time (Informant 10). While this view supported by the responses of some follow farmers who observed that “the FT programme keeps them busy so it is costly to their time and their own work in the field” (FGD 2), responses from interviews with FTs seem to overwhelmingly indicate otherwise.

The combination of higher-than-expected income rises and sound time management imply that the direct economic benefits of volunteering (higher incomes) have exceeded the direct economic costs (lost labour due to time spent off field), further underlining the *economic* rationality of the volunteering decision, without yet taking the *social* costs and benefits into account. The sections below deal with the social-related motivations of FTs.

5.3.2 “Giving something back”

This influence of the wider community is apparent from the responses of almost all the FTs interviewed (Informant 3, 4, 5, 9; FGD 1); even individuals whose *main* motivation was individualistic and inward looking indicated that helping their community played a positive role in their decision to volunteer (Informant 1, 2, 10).

“People selected me at club level. I accepted because the people had trust in me; they knew I was a hardworking person and have been a NASFAM member for a very long time [11 years]. The main inspiration came from the people.”
(Informant 7)

Such a motivation would be consistent with the public goods model of volunteering, where the main motive is to increase the supply of the public good (in this case agricultural extension) to the community at large. The model also suggests that FTs derive an altruistic benefit from the act of volunteering (Ziemek 2006); however it is important to note that since FTs directly benefit from the training from the volunteership, they cannot be viewed as purely altruistic in their actions.

The following account from an FT in Mchinji demonstrates both the individualistic and community-oriented motivation of volunteering. When the AFO responsible for Informant 8’s area died, a replacement was not readily available which left a gap in the community’s access to extension advice, as government extension agents were not accessible regularly either. In this scenario, the farmer saw it as a necessity for himself and for the community to undertake the training to become an FT, as this represented the only viable avenue to access extension services. However he admitted that his duties were much more difficult in the absence of an AFO since the community hold the FT in higher regard in the presence of the AFO, which they see as his ‘mentor’ (FGD 2). In this case, the public-goods nature of agricultural extension has a direct influence on the volunteering decision, since not taking the opportunity forgoes access to extension completely; a situation which rational farmers will strive to avoid.

Additionally, the prestige gained in the community from becoming an FT plays factors into farmers’ decisions to volunteer (Informant 11, 12; FGD 2). As discussed in the previous section, Malawian society attaches a premium to occupying advisory positions, which makes the FT role

a sought-after “honour” (Informant 11; FGD 2). While FTs themselves did not necessarily disclose the factor “increased prestige” as a motivation to volunteer, it was apparent from their enthusiasm in acknowledging their improved social status after becoming FTs; one of FTs interviewed even showed up in his NASFAM-issued dustcoat which is provided.

“Now they even respect us as extension agents!” (Informant 5)

“The community now respects me more as they know I’m an important person now. They gather for my meetings!” (Informant 9)

One of the FTs was more humble in his description, stating that “it is our tradition to respect one another. But I try to control the farmers not to give me too much respect as a full extension worker. The respect should not go beyond” (Informant 10). In spite of the generally favourable response from the community, a few farmers reported negative sentiments at the initial phase of the programme (Informant 3, 9). Nonetheless, both FTs indicated that the ill feeling evaporated after they demonstrated that they are there for the benefit of the community as well:

“At first, people were jealous of things we got from NASFAM. But now people appreciate the advances we are making in farming methods, which they are trying to adopt” (Informant 3)

Volunteers repeatedly stressed the importance of community development as part of their responsibility, and even indicated that they would encourage non-FTs to volunteer to increase the reach of the programme (FGD 1). This is not surprising considering that the main feature of the volunteership is non-excludable (i.e. by volunteering to become an FT, farmers are not preventing others from benefiting from the extension advice which they are taught). As noted earlier in the paper, most FTs did not see their time as being wasted, reaching out to members and non-members can overextend FTs slightly. However they still view it as an investment for the community:

“Yes it does [take away time] because I leave some of my work. But it is okay because I also assist others and that is our tradition. It can be a problem but I live with it”. (Informant 9)

This further underlines the importance farmers place on maintaining and strengthening their social capital. The process of strengthening the social capital benefits both the volunteer and his

or her community, since social capital is “embedded in social structure and has public good characteristics” (Narayan 1997: 50). In this respect, farmers invariably consider social-related factors when rationalizing the decision to volunteer, a fact which was also supported by AFO respondents to the questionnaire.

In addition to building social capital, a number of farmers indicated a desire to “give something back” to NASFAM as it had served them well (Informant 6, 5, 10; FGD 1). “Giving back” in this context will naturally be focused towards the volunteer’s own community, since NASFAM, as a member-driven organization, is owned and ran by the farmers themselves. Clubs are formed at the village and sub-village level where communal ties are strong, which translates into a much deeper commitment towards the welfare of the group. Just as Boz and Palaz (2007) observed in Turkish community volunteers, farmers are highly motivated by the “need for affiliation” which drives them to participate more actively in their communities:

“I considered that NASFAM helped us with our biggest problem which was transportation of our produce. So like a person who wants to uplift my community and myself I thought it was important to become a Farmer Trainer” (Informant 10)

“I chose to volunteer mainly because NASFAM assisted us a lot [...] Now that this FT programme came along I thought of volunteering in support of NASFAM activities.” (Informant 6)

Furthermore, this need for affiliation has also contributed to a higher sense of responsibility on the part of FTs, driving to take a more noticeable sense of responsibility towards the welfare and development of their communities. A number of FTs have, from their own accord, pooled some resources together, creating a support system amongst the FTs themselves to ensure efficient delivery of their services to the wider community, as well as to ensure a degree of continuity in the case NASFAM support diminishes (Informant 5, 7). This level of commitment demonstrates a genuine interest in the preservation of the programme, further indicating the importance the volunteers attach to their community in their decision making processes.

A final note of interest:

A small group of Follow farmers from the discussion group indicated that they felt some FTs simply volunteered in order to have access to the incentives, namely the bicycle (FGD 2). All

FTs interviewed strongly dismissed this notion, insisting that they in fact were not aware of the incentives at the time of joining, fully understanding that this is a volunteering position for which no remunerations will be given (FGD 1; Informants 1-10).

5.4 Conclusions

The purpose of the preceding sections has been to answer the following overall question:

In the absence of monetary incentives, what rationale drives smallholders to volunteer their time and labour?

Having analyzed findings of national- and community-level influences along with the individual motivations affecting the rationality behind volunteering, this section groups the main findings in accordance with the framework presented earlier in the paper.

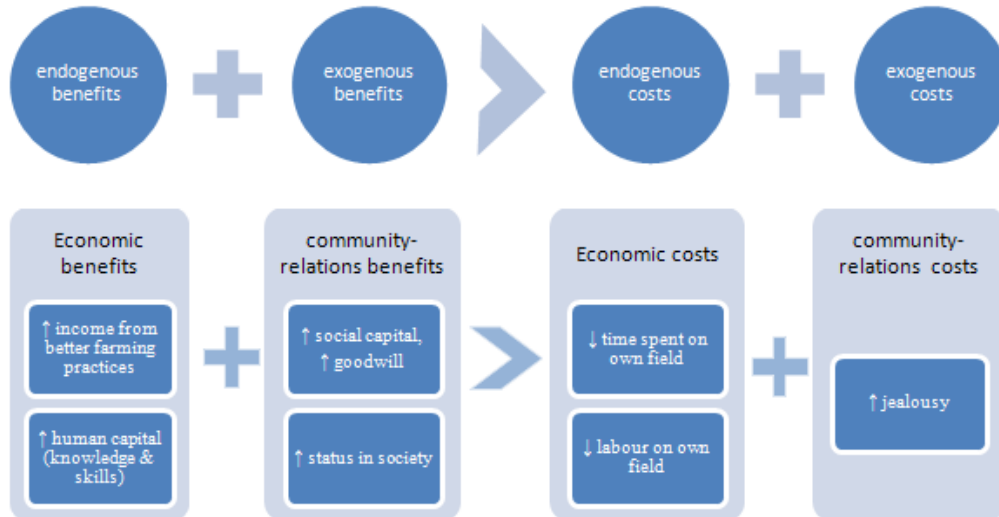
Although the individual and community levels are the main focuses of this study, a review of national policy factors towards smallholders indicates a main deficiency in the provision of extension services, a feature common to many national-scale public systems (Ganguly et al. 2006). This gap has been created due to a number of factors, mostly notably the lack of recurrent funding for research and extension, as well as severe staff shortages both centrally and in the field. Despite government efforts to reverse this trend, this shortcoming can be considered as an exogenous factor which affects both communities and individuals; through acknowledging and recognizing the resulting knowledge gap, farmers and their communities adjust their behaviour in order to maximize the benefit from extension. On the individual level, this translated into enhancing the rationale to volunteer as Farmer Trainers, as it represented the most direct way in which to access extension knowledge.

The public good nature of extension, in that it is both non-rivalrous and non-excludable, facilitates the process in which the community and the individual arrive at an equilibrium of some sorts whereby both entities are benefiting from the good without negative consequences. The participatory nature of the Farmer-to-Farmer approach to extension presents such a platform, which is further enhanced through the affective nature of the peasant economy; the community is satisfied as it is receiving extension advice which would otherwise be insufficient or even absent completely, while the individuals who volunteer are content with the additional economic and

societal benefits which they derive from becoming Farmer Trainers. By raising their position in the economy of affection, FTs are ensuring investing in the future. Although somewhat time-consuming (not prohibitively, as responses suggest), the motivations to volunteer are demonstrated to be rational not only in a purely economic sense, but also from a community-relations perspective as well since the benefits significantly exceed costs (see figure 5.1 below).

The closely-knit village structure in which the farmers live has a direct and significant influence on their motivations to volunteer. However, self-interest in increasing their own skills was reported as the main motivation for volunteering, with the majority still also indicating that community-development was also a significant motive. Moreover, building and strengthening existing social capital was understood to be another motivation for volunteering, which supports findings from another study on community volunteers in Malawi (Uny 2008).¹³ As figure 5.1 below demonstrates, the actual benefits compared to the costs of volunteering justify the decision to volunteer.

Figure 5.1- Costs and benefits of volunteering

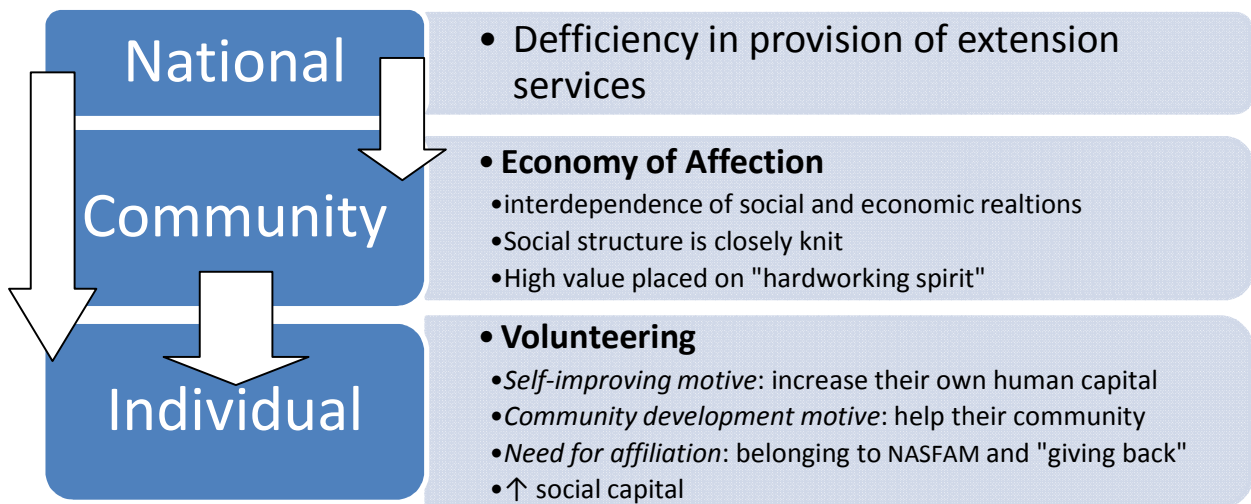


Source: author

¹³ Uny conducted a study on nursery feeding volunteers. The work is cited here to direct the reader towards other similar studies from different fields in Malawi.

While the figure above illustrates *individual rationality* as a function of economic and community-related benefits outweighing their costs, figure 5.2 below summarizes the main findings of all the main influences at all levels which were outlined in the original analytical framework. The factors identified in the diagram represent the critical influences of the different levels of analysis on the individual rationale to volunteer.

Figure 5.2- Summary of findings



Source: Author

6 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this study was to contribute to expanding the debate on peasant rationality in order to more fully appreciate and understand the realities facing smallholders in developing countries.

By applying features of the concept to analyze the case of farmer volunteers in Malawi, an appreciation for the complexity and multi-layered nature of farmers' rationality, smallholders were shown to be fully aware and responsive to changes in their environment in a manner that is not only beneficial for themselves, but their communities at large. Building on the work Schultz, Lipton, Ellis and others after them, a more realistic picture of the peasant landscape can be built, forcing academics and practitioners alike to adjust their assumptions about the rationality of peasants in order to advise on and design more potent development interventions in the future.

Through elevating their status in the economy of affection both economically and socially, Farmer Trainers were able to contribute positively to the development of their communities.

Given the right incentives, conditions and most importantly encouragement, the Farmer-to-Farmer model continues to provide an interesting alternative to traditional extension methods which have not been successful in the past. Although the main focus of the study was the motivation of these FTs, it was also observed that the farmers to which they are transferring the knowledge also act in a responsive manner, adopting technologies and farming methods which they can see are benefiting their fellow farmers in front of their own eyes. The outdated notion that farmers are “backward and resistant to change” needs to be seriously re-examined. Farmers living on the margins of subsistence are generally risk averse, and the only rational way for most to accept changing their farming techniques is to observe first hand the effects of technological adoption; a feature that was virtually non-existent in traditional extension.

With the world economy in recession, cost effectiveness and financial sustainability are likely to become buzzwords in the international development field yet again. Findings from this study further support the vast body of literature which exists on the ability of farmers in developing countries to take charge of their communities’ and their own development. However, a critical conclusion to draw from the evidence presented manifests itself in the significance of context; the factors which motivate farmers to volunteer in the central region of Malawi might not necessarily have direct applicability elsewhere. Only through a comprehensive understanding of factors which influence individuals’ decisions to support themselves and their communities will development practice achieve its long term goals. While not denying the participatory focus of many organizations in the field, the truth is that the majority of large-scale, national interventions are carried out using outdated assumptions about the very people they are intended to benefit.

Finally, the strong communal relationships and networks have demonstrated time and time again their effectiveness in lifting communities out of poverty. The high value communities place on the “hardworking spirit” ensures that members of the community who demonstrate a willingness to work for the community. While a fair amount of research has been conducted on community health volunteers, more studies are needed in other critical sectors, including agriculture. Volunteering can provide a cost-effective means to an end, since “[v]olunteering in the South is not a pastime... [it is] work” (Uny 2008: 444).

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Appendix

Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Farmer Trainers

Intro: Explain purpose of research, confidentiality, the fact that they will be recorded, feel relaxed, say what's on your mind

Cover the following topics:

1. Experience with agri extension in the past with:

- a. Gov't extension workers
- b. NASFAM AFOs

What's your experience/interaction with them now?

2. The FTF programme and extension: has it changed the way farmers get information?
3. *****Why volunteer? [...] Doesn't it take a lot of time? [...] Did anyone encourage you?**
4. Did the bicycle/gumboots/raincoat/access to inputs make you want to be come an FT more?
5. Financial compensation for being an FT
6. How has the response been from the wider community? are they happy to come to you for advice? [...] Did you anticipate how much work this will be?
7. How did becoming an FT change the way you're perceived in your community? [...] What changes occurred in your Household? [...] Did these changes (perception, HH) meet your expectations before becoming FTs?
8. Imagine that there was no NASFAM anymore. Would you continue as FTs? Why?
9. Do you have anything else to say that has not been covered yet?

Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion themes for Follow Farmers

Intro: Explain purpose of research, confidentiality, the fact that they will be recorded, feel relaxed, say what's on your mind

- How would you describe your relationship with FTs? (tell us about any problems you've ever had, are they supportive?)
- How often do you ask for help from FTs? (is it limited to Farmer Field Days? or can you go to them anytime you have a problem? How often do you interact with them?)
- Do you think having an FT in your community to be a good thing for you?
- Why do you think FTs volunteer themselves in the first place?
- Do you think FTs should be paid?
- Do you think it's fair that FTs get a bicycle, boots and raincoat?
- What does becoming an FT mean in your village? (are they looked upon differently once they become FTs?)
- Have you considered becoming an FT yourself? why?
- Do you feel that you're better off being supported by an FT instead of a gov't extension worker/AFO?
- Do you have anything else to add that has not been covered?
- If you could change one thing about the FTF programme, what would it be?
- Do you feel that FTs are better off than you? Do you think they withhold information/knowledge from you?

Appendix C: Interview checklist for Farmer Trainers

Basic Questions

- How long have you been a member of NASFAM? How long have you been an FT?
- What do you grow in your field?
- How many people live in your household? Married? How old are you?
- Education
- Do you own the demo plot

- How did you hear about the FTF programme?
- When did you get your first training? (did you enjoy it? think it was enough? think it's rewarding at the time?)
- How did you become a volunteer? who inspired you?
- How helpful has the bicycle been for you? *Did the bicycle (and other incentives; gum boots, rain coat) play a factor in your decision to become an FT?*
- Does being an FT take up a lot of your time? does the amount of time you put in prevent you from doing other things that you otherwise would do?
- Do you think FTs should be paid?
- How has becoming an FT changed your status in your village? How did it change your household economically? Did that meet your expectations?
- How would you describe your relationship now with NASFAM AFOs and/or extension workers? (tell us about any problems you've ever had, are they supportive?)
- If NASFAM pull out tomorrow, will you continue as an FT? Why?
- Imagine you're the boss of NASFAM. What would be one thing you would change about the FTF programme?
- Do you think the FTF programme makes it knowledge attainment for farmers better?
- Is there anything you would like to add/ask?

Appendix D: Questionnaire for NASFAM AFOs

Please answer the questions in the space provided.

If you require more space, use the blank sheet at the end of this questionnaire.

When you're finished, seal it in the envelope provided and forward it to NASFAM HQ.

Association: _____

Sex: M / F

Age: _____

Education level: _____

Section 1: Background

1. What's your position at NASFAM?

2. Have you held any other positions at NASFAM in the past?

3. How long have you worked for NASFAM?

4. Briefly describe your duties for NASFAM:

Section 2: The Farmer to Farmer Programme

5. Are you directly involved in the Farmer to Farmer Programme?

a. Yes

b. No

6. How long have you been involved in the Farmer to Farmer Programme?

7. Briefly describe your duties in relation to the Farmer to Farmer Programme:

8. Do you believe that the Farmer Trainer approach is effective in helping farmers?

a. Yes

b. No

9. Please explain your answer

10. Has the Farmer to Farmer Programme changed your role/duties in NASFAM?

a. Yes

b. No

11. Please explain your answer

12. Do you believe that the FTF programme is consistent with NASFAM's mission? Please explain

- a. Yes
- b. No

Section 3: The Farmer Trainers

13. How many Farmer Trainers do you interact with per week (approximately)? _____

14. How much time do you spend with Farmer Trainers per week? _____

15. How would you describe your relationship with Farmer Trainers?

- a. Excellent
- b. Very Good
- c. Good
- d. Poor
- e. Bad

16. Please explain your choice above:

17. Have you ever had any complaints from Farmer Trainers? (if no, go to question 19)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't remember

18. If yes, what kind of things did the Farmer Trainers complain about?

19. Why do you think these farmers volunteer as Farmer Trainers?

- a. Bicycle/boots/inputs
- b. training
- c. want to help their community
- d. Other

20. Please explain your choice of answer:

Appendix E: List of Interviewees and Focus Group Discussions

Reference	Position	Organization	Location	Date
Informant 1	Farmer Trainers	NASFAM	Nathenje	February 2009
Informant 2			Nathenje	February 2009
Informant 3			Nathenje	February 2009
Informant 4			Nathenje	February 2009
Informant 5			Nathenje	February 2009
Informant 6			Mchinji	March 2009
Informant 7			Mchinji	March 2009
Informant 8			Mchinji	March 2009
Informant 9			Mchinji	March 2009
Informant 10			Mchinji	March 2009
Informant 11	Programme Officer	NASFAM	Lilongwe	Dec 08- Jan 09
Informant 12	AFO	NASFAM	Chiwamba	February 2008
Focus Groups				
FGD 1	Farmer Trainers	12 participants	Chiwamba	February 2008
FGD 2	Follow Farmers	9 participants	Nathanje	February 2008
Informal				
N/A	Agribusiness specialist	MoAFS-DAES	Lilongwe	January 2009
N/A	Nutrition advisor	MoAFS-DAES	Lilongwe	December 2008
N/A	Economist	DFID	Lilongwe	November 2008
N/A	M & E officer	NASFAM	Lilongwe	December 2008



Appendix F: NASFAM Farmer Trainer Agreement

**MEMORUNDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)
BETWEEN**

_____AMC,

Mr/Ms

(Farmer Trainer)

AND

**NATIONAL SMALLHOLDER FARMERS ASSOCIATION
OF MALAWI (NASFAM)**

ON

Farmer to Farmer Extension Program

INTRODUCTION:

National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) through its NASFAM Development is carrying out Farmer to Farmer extension Program in partnership with Cordaid.

This Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) (hereinafter referred to as ‘Agreement’) is made between National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) (hereafter referred to as Head Office/Regional Office) on one part Association Management Center (AMC) (hereafter referred to as a Monitor) and Mr/Mrs/Miss..... (Hereafter referred to as Farmer Trainer) on the other part.

The agreement is made and effective on the.....
(Day).....(Month).....(Year) on the following conditions and obligations:

NASFAM HEAD OFFICE/REGIONAL OFFICE OBLIGATIONS:

1. Provide the said Farmer Trainer (FT) implementation resources such as pushing bicycles, dustcoat, raincoat, gumboots, tape, stationery, inputs (.....tick whichever is applicable) for the purposes of assisting him/her to carry out training on specific technologies.
2. Provide technical support such as
 - a. Training of staff and Farmer Trainers
 - b. Training Material
 - c. Material for demonstration plots
 - d. Monitoring the program
3. NASFAM Head office/Regional Office through its NASFAM Development department has the right to seize the materials if it sees fit to do so after warning the Farmer Trainer concerned upon being satisfied that the materials are not being used and/or are used for other purposes.
4. Link AMCs and FTs to various institutions providing similar services e.g. ARET, ICRISAT, MoAFS etc

ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT CENTRE (AMC) OBLIGATIONS:

- 1 Provide overall technical and management support to Farmer Trainers and AFOs who are implementing the program.
- 2 Ensure that FTs are not executive arm of the association (Chairperson, and Vice Secretary and Vice, and Treasurer)

- 3 Supervise selection of sites for the demonstration plots; and on the use of the chosen sites for the intended purpose
- 4 Ensure that selected FTs meet the set criteria e.g. paid up member and practicing model farmer
- 5 Provide the appropriate number of field staff dedicated to the program
- 6 Train all participating Farmer Trainers.
- 7 Distribute materials to Farmer Trainers
- 8 Ensure all participating Farmer Trainers will have.of the proceeds from demonstration plots taken to association.
- 9 Record keeping on activities and resources of the program
- 10 Ensure records are being maintained by Farmer Trainers, AFO, etc.
- 11 Reporting progress on demonstration findings, results and impact on monthly basis and periodically as appropriate.
- 12 Provide quick feedback to NASFAM Head Office/Regional Office on problems that may arise, so corrective action can be taken.
- 13 That the said Association Management Centre (AMC) shall endeavour from time to time to monitor the use of the materials and provide advisory services to the person on its maximum use.
- 14 Seize the material from the participant if it sees fit to do so upon being satisfied that the materials are not being used or are used for other purposes.
- 15 Facilitate replacement of under-performing (FTs) where necessary
- 16 Maintenance and safe keeping of the materials
- 17 Plan and facilitate field days

FARMER TRAINER (FT) OBLIGATIONS:

1. That the said (FTs) shall exercise maximum due care for the materials at all times.
2. Shall be responsible for costs related to labour and security of inputs for the field.
3. Shall haveproceeds from the garden. In case the field does not belong to the Farmer Trainer, the owner of the field will get while the Farmer Trainer will getof the proceeds

4. Shall maintain all records for the training and fields.
5. Shall report on progress on experiments/demonstration findings on a monthly basis; and periodically on results and impact to the Association Management Center (AMC) and BODs where necessary.
6. Provide quick feedback to Association Management Center (AMC) Office on problems that may arise, so corrective action can be taken.
7. Shall report to the AMC for any damage caused or loss of the bicycle.
8. Shall always make sure that not every part of the bicycle will be used for personal gains.
9. Attend all AMC trainings and meetings
10. Shall make sure that the bicycle is returned to the association upon withdrawal of membership from NASFAM
11. Conduct field days
12. Conduct training to the following clubs-----

TERMINATION OF THE MEMORUNDUM OF UNDERSTANDING:

Either party may terminate this agreement by giving a minimum notice period of 1 month. However, NASFAM Head Office/regional Office reserves the right to terminate the agreement without notice for the reasons of gross mismanagement of the materials by the participant or in accordance with **clause 3** under NASFAM obligations.

SIGNATURES:

Signed by:

The Memorandum Of Understanding has been signed by the following representatives for and on behalf of the parties to the agreement:

7 1. For/on behalf of NASFAM Head Office/Regional Office

Name:
Designation:
Signature:
Date:

2. For /on behalf of Association Management Center (AMC).

Name:
Designation:
Signature:
Date:

3. The Farmer Trainer:

Name:
Club name:
Signature:
Date: