AN INVESTIGATION INTO WHY PROJECTS FAIL IN AGRICULTURE, A CASE
STUDY OF HORTICULTURE AND FOOD CROPS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
(HFCDP) IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF MALAWI

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ABSTRACT

This is a report of a research on an investigation into why projects fail in agriculture. It is a case study of a Malawi government’s horticulture and food crops development project (HFCDP) which was implemented in some districts of the central region of Malawi between 2002 and 2008. This research has been conducted as a requirement for an award for a Master of Science Degree in Project Management.

The report covers the background of the study, literature review, research design and methodology, data collection and analysis, research findings, conclusions and recommendations. To a larger extent, the findings of the research showed that there were gaps in the initiation, planning and designing, execution, monitoring and closure of the HFCDP which led to its failure. The research findings were meant to inform project managers on the best way to manage projects in order to reduce project failure. In the academic circle, the findings of the research added new knowledge and insights on why projects fail in agriculture by bringing in contemporary knowledge from Malawi.

The study recommended that projects need to involve right people with appropriate expertise, promote ownership, adopt bottom-up approach and assess contractors. It further recommended proper project monitoring, execution of situational assessment, need to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment, strengthen cooperatives and establishing linkages of the project beneficiaries to markets where they can sell their produce. The recommendations did not spare the introduction of project technologies which are simple, cost-effective and appropriate to community expertise and resources.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
2.0. Background

Project Management Institute (2004) defines a project as ‘a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product or service’. A project can be any series of activities that have a specific aim to be finished within certain stipulations, defined beginning and end time, specified funding, consume human and non-human resources and are multifunctional (Kerzner, 2009). More often than not, big and small projects alike fail at an astonishing rate. As different studies have shown, projects frequently deliver disappointing returns by some estimates, in fact, well over half the time (Matta and Ashkenas, 2003) in their article ‘Why Good Projects Fail Anyway’.

Lock. D (2007), stipulates that the success of project for the past twenty years or so has been defined as its timely completion, according to its specifications and within the budget. These three purposes are traditionally the basic factors for measuring project success or failure. Today, the definition of project success has been modified to include completion with acceptance by the beneficiaries, minimum or mutually agreed upon scope changes without disturbing the main work flow of the organization and without changing the corporate culture (Kezner (2009) and Meredith & Mantel, 2009). The literature is full of success or failure factors in relation to the initial project definition. Lock (2007), Kerzner (2009), Matta and Ashkenas (2003), posit that any of the following nine shortcomings during the early period can judge a project to almost certain failure: when the project scope is not clearly stated and understood, the technical requirements are unclear, the estimates of cost, timescale or benefits are too positive, risk assessment is not properly done, the intended project approach is unsuitable, when inadequate regard is paid to cash flows and the provision of funds, the interests and concerns of stakeholders are not taken into account, undue regard is paid to the motivation and behaviour of people who will execute the project, when approval to proceed with the project is given for political, personal or intuitive reasons without due consideration to the business plan and the end user needs.

The study intends to establish why projects in agriculture fail in Malawi with the Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project (HFCDP) as a case study.

1.1. The Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project (HFCDP)
Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project (HFCDP) was a project implemented under the then Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development. Its goal was to improve the well-being of Malawians, especially among rural people, through poverty alleviation, by promoting broad based and accelerated agricultural development. The objective of the project was to contribute to food security by increasing agriculture productivity and farm income of the smallholder target group through better access to small-scale irrigation, horticulture and marketing development. The project strategy embraced five main issues. Firstly was to build the capacity of the irrigation, crop production and research departments of Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. Secondly was the establishment of a micro-finance credit scheme. Thirdly was formation of small-scale irrigation schemes. The fourth issue was the formation of marketing structure and lastly the establishment of a project management office. Though Malawi government, the donors and other relevant stakeholder showed interest in the project, it still flopped. It is therefore the interest of this study to establish why the HFCDP failed.

1.3. Problem Statement
Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world where the rate of poverty is high (Phiri, et. al; 2012). The Human Development Index for 2010, which combines sub-indices covering wealth, health and education, ranks Malawi lowly at position 153 out of 169 countries surveyed (Maganga, 2012). On the other hand, the country estimates based on the national poverty line show that 40 percent of the populace earn/spend less than the threshold of 1.5 U$ per day (Phiri, et.al, 2012). Agriculture still remains the main instrument for economic growth and development for the country. This means that poverty reduction efforts in Malawi have to put substantial emphasis on improving agricultural production.

Research has shown that cultivation of horticultural crops is a potential alternative source of income to tobacco which is a major income source for most farmers (Maganga, 2012). In addition to national contribution, horticultural commodities have the potential to contribute to household nutrition, food security and income (Kachule et al., 2009). Statistics from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD) indicate that on average, the horticulture sector contributes about 22% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and about 58% within the agricultural sector.
This has encouraged the Malawi government to think of crop diversification while pondering on the substitute of tobacco which has remains a dominant cash crops.

In order to support government policies towards achieving food security and increasing farmers’ incomes, there is need to develop appropriate project management strategies to improve horticultural production and marketing. The government of Malawi, in 2001, through the then Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development secured funding amounting to UA9.67 million from African Development Bank (ADB) to implement the Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project. However, the HFCDP did not meet its aims and objectives and is a typical example of big projects that have failed in the agriculture sector.

1.4. Research aim and objectives
The aim of the research was to critically examine why HFCDP failed. To achieve the stated aim, the following specific objectives were formulated:
1. To establish the process adopted for initiating the HFCDP?
2. To assess how the HFCDP was implemented?
3. To explore how HFCDP was monitored?
4. To assess the impact of the HFCDP?

1.7. Research Questions
A number of questions were framed to guide the research. The main question that the research intended to answer relate to why HFCDP failed? The minor questions were:
1. What was the process of initiating HFCDP?
2. How was HFCDP implemented?
3. How was HFCD monitored?
4. What was the impact that was registered by HFCDP?

1.8. Significance of the study
In Malawi, there are so many projects that have failed due to various reasons related to project management and there are high chances that many will fail in the future if these issues remain uncovered and not addressed. Findings from the study will therefore inform project managers on the best way to manage projects in order to reduce project failure. In the academic circle, the findings of the research will add new
knowledge and insights on why projects fail by bringing in contemporary knowledge from Malawi.

1.9. Structure of the study
The presentation of the study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter which is an introduction contains the background to the study, problem statement, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations of the study and organization of the thesis. Chapter two presents relevant literature that was reviewed in relation to the topic under the study. Chapter three addresses the research methodology and it has described the research design, sources of data, type of data collected, data collection techniques and tools and how data analysis was done. Chapter four presents the results of the study and discusses the implications of the findings. Chapter 5 provides a summary of key research findings, conclusion and recommendations.

1.7. Chapter Summary
Chapter 1 has defined what a project is. It has indicated that projects do fail but some succeed when they get completed on time, according to specifications and within their budgets. There are some more nine reasons of project failure that have been included in the chapter. The chapter has put more emphasis on Horticulture and Food Crop Development Project (HFCDP) as a case project. This project failed despite vested interest by the government and donors. It is therefore the aim of the study to establish why HFCDP failed. This interest is there because projects of this nature have a potential to reduce poverty in Malawi and their failure is catastrophic to the social-economic development of the country. Significance and structure of the study have also been highlighted.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Introduction
Literature review is ‘a review of existing scholarship or available body of knowledge and assists the researcher to see how other scholars have investigated the research problem (Mouton, 2001). The purpose of this chapter is to present findings of a review of literature on why projects fail generally, in an attempt to establish a foundation for
answering the main research question. To aid the understanding of issues in the current study, the review also examines relevant areas of interest in the current research.

2.2. Definition of a Project

One cannot discuss reasons why projects fail without defining a project. A project has been defined differently by many authors and organisations. For instance, the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2008) defines a project as ‘a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service or result’. In this definition, temporary implies that the project has a beginning and an end. Turner (1993) defines a project as ‘an endevour in which human, material and financial resources are organised in a novel way to undertake a unique scope of work comprising of given specification within constraints of cost and time so as to achieve beneficial change defined by quantitative and qualitative objectives’. Barnes (1989) looks at a project simply as ‘something which has a beginning and an end.’ According to Andersen, et. al., (1987), a project is a human endeavour which creates change, is limited in time and scope, has mixed goals and objectives, involves a variety of resources and is unique’. Cleland and King (1983) put it that a project is ‘a complex effort to achieve specific objective within a schedule and budget target, which typically cuts across organisational lines, is unique and is usually not repetitive within the organisation. As it can be appreciated, these definitions are not far away from each other. They share a lot in common. However, each one of them adds something new to the definition of a project which the researcher considers to be important and forms part of the characteristics of a project. For the purposes of this research, the definition by PMI (2008) will be adopted because it is current and straight forward. However, most of the issues in the other definitions will be adopted as part of the characteristics for a project.

2.3. Characteristics of a project

According to Westland (2006), a project has the following characteristics: time scale, uniqueness, budget, limited resources, involves a level of risks and brings beneficial change. Schwalbe (2008) adds that a project may have a sponsor who is paying for the project and that because every project is unique; it is difficult to define its objectives, estimate its costs and determine its schedule. Turner (1990) and Kerzner (19992) also present key characteristics of a project which include: has a set of
activities or tasks; has time frame; has well-defined objective; consumes resources (i.e., money, people, materials, equipment); has a quality aspect; involves risk at every step of the process; it is unique; it may never be repeated in the same way by the same group of people at the same place; intended to generate benefits; and has future benefit perspective. Some of these characteristics have been highlighted in the definitions of a project by different authors. Where, in the definitions some characteristics were mentioned and they have not been highlighted in this section, the researcher as earlier on indicated adopts those elements as further characteristics of a project. It should be known that projects differ in size, cost, schedule among many things (Dekkers and Forselius, 2007).

2.4. Project Failure
There is generally much ambiguity associated with what project failure entails. However, in the awake of such ambiguity, some scholars have come up with what project failure implies. For instance, Yeo (2002), quoting the Standish Group International study defines project failure as 'either a project that has been cancelled or does not meet its budget, deadline or goals.' Another thought indicate that ‘a project that achieves the planned outcomes within the allocated time, scope, quality and budget constraints could still be perceived as a failed project’ (Bellassi and Turkel, 1996). Ibid extends that ‘projects often are victims of perceived failure if project if project boundaries, constraints, deliverables, measure for success and communication methods were not clearly defined at the on-set’. According to Cusworth and Franse (1983), project failure can be identified at two levels: (1) failure to implement the project on time, within the budget and in line with the plan (2) Failure that occurs when implementation has been completed but fails to achieve the effects intended. The current research focuses on project failure at all the two levels.

2.5. REASONS WHY PROJECTS FAIL
The literature in the field of Project Management is replete with reasons for projects failure. For instance, it is recognized that one of the reasons for project failure is poor management of the project cycle stages. According to PMI (2008), there are five stages in a project cycle. These processes are: Project initiating or commencement phase; Project planning or design phase; Project executing or production phase; Project monitoring and controlling systems; and Project closing
or completing phase (Ibid). According to Ibid, the initiation stage determines the nature and scope of the project. It involves defining a new project or a new phase of a project by obtaining authorization from stakeholders. At this level, the initial scope is defined, outlined and documented, initial resources committed for commencement of the project or phase. Further, internal and external stakeholders are identified. In the argument of PMI (2008), if the initiation phase is not performed well, it is unlikely that the project will be successful in meeting the objectives.

The planning and designing stage entails determining how to plan; developing the scope statement; selecting the planning team; identifying deliverables and creating the work breakdown structure; identifying the activities needed to complete those deliverables and networking the activities in their logical sequence; estimating the resource requirements for the activities; estimating time and cost for activities; developing the schedule; developing the budget; risk planning; and gaining formal approval to begin work (Ibid, 2008). Ibid extends that planning for communication planning and scope management, identifying roles and responsibilities, determining what to purchase for the project and holding a start off meeting are also part. Kerzner (2009) adds that planning involves defining the requirements, quality, quantity of work, resources, time and evaluating risks. As with the initiation phase, failure to adequately plan reduces the project's chances of successfully accomplishing its goals (PMI, 2008). According to Pieterse (2001), poor project planning was rated one of the major causes of project failure.

The execution stage involves carrying out and implementing the activities defined in the project management plan, organizing and utilizing people and resources as indicated in the project management plan, integrating and performing the activities of the project in accordance with the project management and producing deliverables as outputs from the processes performed as defined in the project management plan (PMI, 2008). As is the case with the planning stage, poor execution may lead to project failure (Ibid 2008). Another stage in the project cycle is the monitoring and controlling stage. The monitoring and controlling stage involves tracking, reviewing and regulating the status, progress and performance of the project so as to identify potential problems in a timely manner and take corrective action where necessary (Ibid). This helps to observe and measure project performance against the set performance in the
project management plan. If project monitoring and control is not well handled, the project may fail to attain its objectives (Pieterse (2001).

The closing stage according to PMI (2008) involves formal acceptance of the project and the ending thereof, administrative activities which include the archiving of files and documenting of lessons learnt. It further involves the finalization of all activities in the other processes and handing over the product/service, project documents, releasing project resources and communicating the closure to all stakeholders (Westland, 2006). Similarly, poor execution, poor monitoring and controlling and poor closure can lead to project failure (PMI, 2008).

All the issues that have been highlighted above can be summarized as poor project management. Poor project management was rated as the most important factor contributing to project failure in cases where there was serious budget and cost overrun (KPMG, 1997). According to Martin and Tate (2001) project management is ‘a set of tools, techniques, and knowledge that when applied, help produce better results for the project’. PMI defines project management as ‘the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements’. It involves the planning, organizing, directing, controlling of resources that have been established to complete specific goals and objectives. In terms of human resources, project management also involves leading and inspiring project team and stakeholders in order to achieve the desired results. Project management brings together and optimizes the resources necessary to successfully complete the project. Martin and Tate (2001) have likened managing a project without project management to playing football without game plan.

Cusworth and Franks (1993) note that the main causes of project failure include faulty assessment of the resource base, poor planning, problems with procurement and technology transfer, lack of resources such as finance, skilled personnel and organisational in efficiencies. Morris (1994) add to the list by stating that projects fail because projects are often completed late or over budget, do not perform in the expected ways, involve severe strain on participating institutions and /or are cancelled prior to the competition after the expenditure of considerable sums of money.
Christensen et al. (1995) also point out that government projects have often not been completed because of factors such as inadequate financing, non-existent counterpart funds and insufficient local implementation capacity. Further, Eggers (1998) identified reasons for the projects failure as including a general tendency to confuse the project with the people who were meant to profit from its implementation and functioning. He extends that projects fail because vital and important aspects of projects are often overlooked in projects preparation, implementation and follow-up and decisions are taken without being subjected to the required decision-making discipline appropriate to each phase in the project cycle.

Citing a KPMG study, Glass (1998) highlights seven primary reasons for project failures: project objectives not fully specified; bad planning and estimating; technology new to the organisation; inadequate and or no management methodologies; insufficient senior staff on the team; poor performance by suppliers and performance problems. Reasons for developmental projects failure according to World Bank evaluation reports include: Lack of shared perception and agreement on the objectives of the project by donor, staff and stakeholder; Lack of commitment to the project by the team, management and stakeholders; Lack of detailed, realistic and current project plans (schedule, budget and procurement); Unclear lines of authority and responsibility (organisation not structured for project management); Lack of adequate resources; poor feedback and control mechanisms for early detection of problems; and poor or no analysis of major risk factors. IDA (2000) also mentioned delays caused by bureaucratic administrative systems-approvals, procurement, personnel and release of funds.

Penner (1994) indicates that failure to acquire or develop a clear statement of requirements, failure to control the project baseline, in experience and not knowing how to lead and manage, underestimating technical difficulty, or getting too involved in technical rather than management aspects of the project are all factors that contribute to project failures. According to ibid, incompetence in the project management discipline leads to a propensity for creating success-oriented plans. Ibid further shares that when determining why projects succeed or fail, it is worthwhile to consider who managed the project, which project resources were available and the execution methodology utilised by the project team.
Gioia (1996) provides twelve primary reasons why projects fail. The reasons are: Failure to understand project complexity; lack of access and internal communication; failure to integrate key elements of the project; failure to create and implement measurable controls; Failure to control the requirements baseline; effective implementation strategy; reliance on software as a means to manage project; differing or inconsistent contractor and customer (beneficiary expectations); Lack of shared win-win attitude; Insufficient formal education (project manager not trained on process); lack of leadership, commitment, and sponsorship; and project not viewed as autonomous project. Andersen, Grude, Haug, & Turner (1987) identified project pitfalls that project managers might do or not do which increase the possible chance of project failure. Such pitfalls occur in the way in which the project is established, planned, organised and controlled. Morris (1988) mentioned poor leadership as a failure factor during formation, build up and close out of a project but not during execution.

Poor risk management is one of the most critical factors that leads to project failure (Kerzner, 2003). PMI (2004) defines project risk as ‘an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or negative effect on at least one project objective, such as time, cost and quality’. Kaplan (1997) sees risk as ‘a mathematical combination of an accident’s event, probability of occurrence and the consequence of that event, should it occur’. Risk management is a procedure to handle the risks in a project and try to mitigate their effects (Toakley, 1989). According to Kerzner (2003) ‘a risk management strategy must be established early in a project and that risk is continually addressed throughout the project life cycle’. Perry and Hayes (1986) also consent that ‘the identification of risks at the conceptual phase of a project is very important, not only because it enables project constraints and appropriate costs to be calculated, but also to focus project management attention on how to control and allocate them’.

According to Ravhura (2010), many projects fail because their activities are not monitored. Ravhura, however, believes that projects should be monitored to assess the progress of the project, identify strengths and weaknesses of the projects, check whether work is costing too much and is achieving too little. In case of community based projects, many studies have identified lack of skills and low levels of education
as a factor that leads to project failure (Pandy and Okazaki, 2005). Ibid encourages project implementers to build in community training that should also take care of the objectives of the project. Further, Project Management has been said to be the most important factor contributing to project failure in cases where there are serious budget and cost overrun (KPMG, 1997). Martin and Tate (2001) indicate that project management is a set of tools, techniques and knowledge project management is a set of tools, techniques, and knowledge that when applied, helps to produce better results for the projects. Ibid has likened managing a project without project management to playing football without a game plan.

Projects may be heavily affected by lack of community involvement (Kakaza, 2009, Pandey and Okazaki, 2005, Berman, 2000). According to Pandey and Okazaki (2005), the common elements of community involvement are partnership, participation, empowerment and ownership by local people. Local people should own problems, consequences and challenges of any initiative (Ibid). SMARTE (2010) mentions that community involvement is crucial as it helps to identify local knowledge for example ‘community members may provide useful information on site history, past land issues and associated constraints’; community members may have specific issues that if incorporated into project may help to reduce likelihood of project failure; helps in gaining acceptance as they better understand the process and will be more likely to support the project. Berman (2000) adds that individuals of the community must also accept full responsibility for the outcomes of the undertaking and own the project. According to SMARTE (2010), ‘without community buy-in, a project may never get off the ground or may not be accepted once it is completed’. Pandey and Okazaki (2005) indicates that lack of community participation leads to ‘failures in meeting the appropriate and vital humanitarian needs, unnecessary increase in requirement for external resources and general dissatisfaction over performance.’ Further, Mansuri and Rao, (2004) suggest that the success of community based projects depends on community leaders’ accountability to beneficiaries.

Top-down approach to project designing has been said to be one of the contributing reasons to project failure. Maduagwu (2000) indicates that projects should be embarked upon because people need them not because external bodies are pushing for them. Lack of government involvement is another factor that may contribute to
project failure. According to Haider (2009) excluded government authorities may become obstacles to their successful project implementation. On the positive angle, government involvement has benefits such as: contributing to the success of community approaches, dampening resistance leading to support for such activities and linking projects to government policies and institutions thereby extending the reach of such projects and their sustainability. Elenbaas (2000) postulates that ‘projects are about communication, communication, communication’ and lack of communication leads to project failure. Field (1997) asserts that ‘projects fail too often because the project scope was not fully appreciated and or user (beneficiary) needs not fully understood’.

2.6. Project Success
Just like the definition of project failure, the definition of project success is ambiguous (Salleh, 2009). According to PMI (2008), a project is successful ‘if it achieves the triple objectives outcome of within time, scope and quality.’ This thinking is in line with the thinking of Erling et al (2006). However, ibid adds that ‘overall project success considers the wider and long term impact of the project’ meaning both project management success and project product success. This definition of project success agrees in principle with that of Baccarini (1999) who views project success as product success in terms of ‘quality and impact of the end product to the end beneficiary’. Turner (2004) agrees with the idea of time and also includes within budget and to specification. Baker et al., (1988) considers project success to include technical performance and satisfaction among various key stakeholders such as project team and beneficiaries. Steinfort (2011) concurs with Baker et al., by indicating that project success should be investigated from the perspective of active project team stakeholders as well as from beneficiaries. From this discussion of project success, one can gain a great insight of what can be considered as project failure and from what perspectives should one investigate project failure.

2.7. Project Critical Success Factors
Zwikael and Globerson (2006) describe critical success factors as the main reasons responsible for project failure or success. Erling et al (2006) defined critical success factors as “those features which have been identified as necessary to be achieved in order to create excellent results: if the critical success factors are not present or taken
into consideration, one can largely expect that problems will be experienced which act as barriers to overall successful outcome”. As it can be appreciated, these definitions almost provide the same meaning. Taking it from these definitions of critical success factors, one can make a conclusion that if the critical success factors are absent, projects are deemed to failure.

Many studies have been conducted over the years to determine which project success factors influences the success of a project. Fortune and white (2006), state that there is a clear lack of consensus between researchers and authors regarding what factors affect project success. Baccarini (1999) and Liu and walker (1998) agree that determining critical success factors for a project is contentious and intricate. For instance, Kerzner (2003) has described seven critical success factors for a project. These are within the planned time, within the predicted budget, aligned with expected performance and specification level, accepted by the client (beneficiaries), minimum or mutually agreed scope alterations, minimum disturbance of the main stream of workflow in the host organisation and least effect on corporate culture. The issue of time and budget is in line with PMI (2008), Turner (2004) and Erling, etal., (2006). Besides the critical success factors, Kerzner (2003) believes the key performance indicators (KPI) measuring the quality of the process used to achieve the end results could be utilised to gauge the success of a project. Morris and Hough (1987) have added some new perspective to the critical success factors by highlighting that the project should deliver its pre-stated objectives, should get terminated sensibly and effectively if it is sensed that it is destined to failure. Turner (1993) extends the list by underlining the satisfaction of the needs of key stakeholders such as the project team members and users (beneficiaries).

Horine (2005) has identifies other critical success factors for a project. These are: project objectives aligned with organisational objectives; Effective top management support for project; Effective and competent leadership for project; Addresses all stakeholders’ agreement on the purpose, goals and scope of the project; addresses all key stakeholders’ shared vision on the project results; Results meet the expectations of the key stakeholders; being able to manage and validate stakeholders expectations constantly all the way to the end; making an investment in proper planning; Having clearly defined and agreed upon scope, approach and deliverables
during planning; Communicating clearly each stakeholder's and team member's roles and responsibilities; Placing a high priority on accurate and complete work effort estimates; Developing and agreeing upon a realistic schedule; Making the project team to have a strong results-focus; Providing consistent, effective, and focused on 'understanding' project communications; Measuring project progress consistently from the current baseline; Pursuing aggressively project issues and subsequent action items; Fostering a strong sense of collaboration and teamwork; Managing closely expectations and changes surrounding scope, quality, schedule, and cost; Providing skilled project resources when needed; Identifying proactively risk and determining mitigation strategies to reduce project exposure; and anticipating and overcoming obstacles to ensure project meets objectives.

Anderson and Jessen (2000) identified critical success factors based on a step-wise structure, reflecting progression through a project. These factors are: Scope (project mission and goals, terms of references); Planning (planning at higher level, planning at detail level); Execution, (activities, decisions); and control (financial and technical control, internal and external communication). Barbara (2010) used a multi-method to identify critical success factors for projects and classified them as: people (right mix of people in terms of skill based, role and the type of people), process (short-time span, tight dateline, time for celebration), task (meaningful and real), and location (appropriate venues). Lester (1998) presented a different set of critical factors namely: senior management commitment, organisation structure and risk management.

Pinto and Slevin (1988) identified 10 project critical success factors namely: Project mission meaning clearly defined goals and direction; Top Management Support inform of resources, authority and power for implementation; schedule and plans which provides detailed specifications for implementation; Client (beneficiary) consultation which entails communication with and consultation of all stakeholders; Personnel which involves recruitment, selection and training of competent personnel; technical tasks which means the ability of the required technology and expertise; client (beneficiary) acceptance; Monitoring and feedback which mean comprehensive control; Communication which means timely provision of data to key players; and Troubleshooting which entails the ability to handle unexpected problems. The World Bank (1999) highlighted that financial management is a critical ingredient of project
success and that sound project management provides essential information needed by those who manage, implement and supervise projects, the comfort needed by the donor community that funds have been used efficiently and for the intended purpose. It goes without saying that if what have been discussed are critical success factors for a project, then the absence of these factors may lead to project failure.

2.8. Chapter Summary
The chapter has presented a review of scholarly material in the area of project management. Specifically, the review has covered areas such as: definition of a project, project failure, reasons projects fail and project success factors whose absence entails project failure. Consequently, a good foundation on which the research will be built on has been laid down.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction
Singh (2006) defines a research design as a mapping strategy. It is ‘a statement of the object of the inquiry and strategies for collecting and analyzing data and reporting findings’ (Ibid). Sekaran (2003) defines it as ‘a way that the requisite data can be gathered and analysed to arrive at a solution’. The chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed in the study to establish why the Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project (HFCDP) executed under the then Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development failed. Specifically, the chapter discusses the research philosophy, research strategy, sources of data, types of data, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data collection methods and data analysis tools that were adopted in this study.

3.1. Research Philosophy
Saunders et al., (2003), indicates that the person conducting a research should decide the research philosophy to be adopted. Research philosophy has been defined as ‘an inquiry into the nature of, the reasons for, and the consequences of any particular set of circumstances, whether these particular circumstances are experimentally controlled or recorded as they occur’ (Kothari, 2004). Saunders et al., (2003) and Collis and Hussey (2003), point out that there are two views about the research process: positivism and interpretivism. A research follows the principles of positivism when it
adopts the philosophical stance of the natural scientist where ‘the researcher prefers working with an observable social reality and that the end product of such research is a law-like generalization similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists’ (Saunders et al., 2003). According to ibid, the research that follows this philosophy in practice tends to use a highly structured methodology to facilitate replication and quantifiable observations that land themselves to statistical analysis.

According to Saunders, et al, (2003), a research adopts an interpretivism philosophy if the issues have to be interpreted subjectively depending on the circumstances around it. This research followed the interpretivism philosophy rather than positivism.

3.2. Research Approach

There are two approaches to a research: deductive and inductive (Saunders et al, 2003 and Singh, 2006). Deductive approach involves testing of a theoretical proposition by use of a research strategy specifically designed to test the hypothesis to validate the predictions (Polit & Beck, 2006 and Saunders et al, 2003). According to Sekaran (2003), in deductive approach, ‘the researcher arrives at a reasoned conclusion by logical generalization of a known fact’. Inductive approach entails the ‘development of theory as a result of the observation of empirical data- data is collected first and theory is developed out of the data analysis’ (Ibid). The study employed a deductive approach as opposed to an inductive approach.

3.3. Research Strategy

The study adopted a case study strategy because of the nature of the study. According to Sekaran (2003) a case study ‘involves in depth, contextual analysis of similar situations in other organisations, where the nature and definition of the problem happen to be the same as experienced in the current situation’. The case study strategy is not longitudinal (Singh 2006). In addition, the case study has ‘a considerable ability to generate answers to the question ‘why’ as well as ‘what’ and ‘how?’ (Robinson, 1993 cited in Saunders et al., 2003). Further Yin (2003) points out that “the ‘What’ questions may also be answered by a case study strategy. The study therefore adopted a case study strategy because the researcher wanted to gain in-depth insights of the topic of study under study within the short term horizon. Further, the questions highlighted by Robinson (2003) and Yin (2003) are what the research is trying to answer.
3.4. Type of data to be collected
In the field of research, two types of data exist: qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data is information gathered in a narrative form and normally depicts people’s attitudes, perceptions and views (Sekaran, 2003). This data does not present itself in numerical form, is descriptive and appears mostly in conversational or narrative form (Saunders et al, 2003). Quantitative data is basically data measured with numerical values or figures. (Saunders et al, 2003). This study collected both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.5 Sources of data
There are basically two sources of data available to a researcher, namely primary and secondary sources. Primary sources of data provide information that is ‘gathered for research from the actual site of occurrence of events’ (Sekaran, 2003). Secondary sources of data provide data that ‘already exist and do not have to be collected by the researcher’ (Ibid). The study collected its data from the primary source. This was necessary because first-hand information was sought from the targeted population and in addition, the primary source of data provided the researcher with current information on the issue at hand.

3.6 Sampling Technique and the Research Sample
The study of the total population sometimes is not possible considering the practical limitations of cost, time and other factors which usually stand in the way of studying the total population (Singh, 2006). Consequently, the concept of sampling was introduced to deal with this challenge. The HFCDF project was implemented in Dedza, Lilongwe, Salima, Dowa and Nkhotakota. Three project districts (Dedza, Salima and Dowa) participated in the study. As for the respondents who took part in the study, sampling was done to select a manageable sample size given the time and resource constraints. Singh (2006) refers to sampling as a process of selecting a small group of a population for a study that is ‘assumed to be related to the large group from which it is drawn’. The definition is not far from that of Burns and Grove, 2005 and Saunders et al, 2003 which define sampling as the process of selecting subjects that are a representative of the population being studied. A sample according to Sekaran (2003) is a ‘subset of the population’.
In this study, a non-probability sampling technique in which ‘the elements do not have a known or predestined chance of being selected as subjects’ (Sekaran, 2003), was used to select the research sample. In a non-probability sampling, the groups are used as samples of population because ‘they are readily available’ (Singh, 2006) or because they possess the needed information (Sekaran, 2003). Within the non-probability sampling technique, the researcher settled for purposive sampling technique. According to Tashakkor and Teddli cited in Teddli and Yu (2009) ‘purposive sampling technique involves selecting certain units or cases based on specific purpose rather than randomly’. In other words, it is a deliberate choice of research participants due to the qualities they possess. It enables the researcher to obtain information from specific target groups and specific types of people who can provide the desired information, either because they are the only ones who have it, or conform to some criteria set by the researcher (Sekaran, 2003). There are two major types of purposive sampling—judgment sampling and quota sampling (Ibid). The research adopted judgment sampling which involves ‘the choice of subjects who are most advantageously placed or in the best position to provide the information required’ (Sekaran, 2003). The people were expected to provide firsthand information, to have expert knowledge by virtue of having gone through the experiences and processes themselves, and to provide good data or information to the researcher (Ibid). Thus, the choice of judgment sampling allowed the researcher to use own judgment to select cases that were believed to possess the right information regarding the research at hand. In this case, three project committees (one from each project district) with a representation of 5 members from each committee, making a total of 15 formed part of the research participants. In addition, the research participants comprised 4 government officials, 4 project staff, 1 lecturer from Bunda College of Agriculture and 1 supplier. The research would have been incomplete without the voice of the project beneficiaries. Consequently, four groups of project beneficiaries, one from each project district were identified. In each district, 10 project beneficiaries were selected giving a total of 30 project beneficiaries for the three project districts. Overall, the research planned to collect information from 55 people.
3.7. Data Collection techniques
Data collection is a systematic collection of information by administer- ing various research tools (Singh, 2006). There are various data collection methods, ranging from face to face interviews, telephone interviews, self- administered questionnaires, observation and focus group discussions (Sekaran, 2003). Two data collection techniques were employed in this study. These were focus group discussion (FGD) and face to face interviews. The FGD was used to collect information from the three project committees and the three groups of project beneficiaries. FGD was chosen because it is a quick, flexible and economical method of gathering in-depth information. According to Sekaran (2003), FGDs are relatively inexpensive and provide fairly dependable data within a short time frame. During the FGDs, a FGD interview guide as appended in Appendix 1 was used to guide the discussion in order to achieve the intended purpose. Face to face interviews were utilised to collect information from the government officials, project staff, lecturer from Bunda College of Agriculture and supplier. The researcher settled for this method because of its ability to improve response rate, enhance speed as compared to self-administered and posted questionnaire and the opportunity the researcher has to probe for more information and even seek clarification. During the interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire (refer Appendix 2) which contained both closed and open-ended questions was used. This type of questionnaire allowed the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

3.8. Data analysis
Microsoft Excel package was used to organise and analyze the collected data. Simple descriptive statistical were done. It should be mentioned that the qualitative data was first summarized, categorized, classified according to their themes and coded before being entered into Microsoft Excel for development of descriptive statistics.

3.9. Summary
The chapter has presented the research design and methodology that was adopted in the study to achieve the objectives of the research. Particularly, the chapter has outlined the research philosophy, research strategy, sources of data, types of data, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data collection methods and data analysis tools that were employed in this study.
CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents analyses of data collected on why projects fail with focus on the Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project (HFCDP) as a case study. Specifically, the chapter will present data collected and analysis carried out with respect to the process adopted in the initiation, planning and designing of the HFCDP, how the HFCDP was implemented, monitored and closed, the impact registered by the HFCDP and the factors that contributed to the failure of the HFCDP. In addition, critical issues discovered are discussed in terms of what the literature review established on the same. The following research questions will guide the presentation of the findings:

1. What was the process of initiating, planning and designing the HFCDP?
2. How was the HFCDP implemented, monitored and closed?
3. What was the impact that was registered by the HFCDP?
4. What factors contributed to the failure of the HFCDP?

5.6. Response rate

The researcher planned to collect data from three project committees (one from each project district) with a representation of 5 members from each committee, making a total of 15. In addition, the researcher planned to collect information from 4 government officials, 4 project staff, 1 lecturer from Bunda College of Agriculture and 1 supplier and three groups of project beneficiaries (one group from each project district).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Planned Number</th>
<th>Actual number</th>
<th>Reasons for change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Committee</td>
<td>15 (from 3 committees)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>It was established that the project had no project committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government official</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The other government officials retired and some were transferred to other districts hence were not accessible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lecturer from Bunda | 1 | 0 | Not available during the time of research
Supplier | 1 | 0 | Not available during the time of research
Project staff | 4 | 3 | The other project staff was not accessible as the project closed off
Project beneficiaries | 30 (from 3 groups) | 30 (3 groups) |
Total | 55 | 36 |

Table 4.1: Planned versus actual number of research participants

In all, 30 project beneficiaries were targeted for the study – 10 from each group. Overall, the researcher planned to collect data from 55 people. However, the reality on the ground was different. The researcher collected data from 36 out of the 55 expected respondents translating to 65.4% response rate. The numbers per specific group are specified in Table 1 and reasons for the variance are provided in the same table.

4.3. The process of initiating, planning and designing the HFCDP

4.3.1. Process of initiating the HFCDP

On the question of initiation of the project, all the respondents indicated the Ministry of Agriculture, representing the government of Malawi, did initiate the project with funding from African Development Bank. It was also discovered that the communities had needs which the project was intended to address. On whether stakeholder consultations were done before the initiation of the project, 67% of the respondents revealed that it was done whereas 33% of the respondents indicated otherwise. All those who said it was not done were project beneficiaries. This possibly signifies that there were little consultations with the project beneficiaries.

As regards the extent to which the respondents were satisfied with the way stakeholder consultations were done, 17% mentioned that they were satisfied, 50% indicated they were somehow satisfied and 33% said they were dissatisfied with the way stakeholder consultations were done. This entails that 67% of the respondents were on the satisfied side and 33% of the respondents were on the dissatisfied side. The respondents believed that the stakeholder consultations were
not adequate and that the project beneficiaries did not put their ideas at this critical stage. Consequently, what was on paper in some instances was not tallying with the situation on the ground and in many instances the project was not addressing the specific needs of the people. An example was given in one of the project sites where the project beneficiaries were encouraged to grow tomatoes and fruits when in reality tomatoes and fruits do not do well in that area. After the project, the project beneficiaries turned to growing their traditional maize crop.

![Figure 4.1: Stakeholder Consultations (Source: Field data)](image)

On whether needs assessment was done at the beginning of the project, all the respondents (the project staff, government officials and project beneficiaries) agreed that needs assessment was done at the beginning of the project. Respondents only differed on describing the approach that was followed during the process. For some project beneficiaries, they believed that since it is them (the community) that presented their needs to the District Council and the District Council responded to their needs, it follows that the needs assessment was done
As for the government officials and the project staff, they were of the view that since the project used data that already existed – data that were collected for the purposes of defining what was needed in each community (data collected for distribution of projects) and were always available at the district council for consumption then the needs assessment took place. However, some project beneficiaries believed that much as the holistic project needs assessment was done, it was not done for specific project sites and this meant that the needs of some projects site were not taken care of. As to the extent of respondents’ satisfaction towards the way in which needs assessment was done, 33.3% of the respondents highlighted that they were satisfied; another 33.3% mentioned they were somehow satisfied and 33.3% hinted that they were dissatisfied. This means that 66.6% of the respondents were satisfied and 33.3% dissatisfied.
From the researcher's point of view, a thorough needs assessment was required but it was not done and considering the complexity of the project, this was a must to do before initiating the project. This would have helped the project to get critical information that would have assisted in the design of the project and possibly leading to the success of the project.

When the respondents were asked their level of satisfaction on how the definition and documentation of project scope was done, 67% mentioned that they were satisfied while 33% said that they were somehow satisfied. This implies that all the respondents were on the satisfied side as regards the way definition and documentation of project scope was done. The respondents believed that the project had clearly defined and documented project scope.
In terms of respondents' satisfaction on how commitment of initial resources for the project commencement was done, 17% of the respondents expressed that they were satisfied, 50% said they were somehow satisfied and 33% hinted that they were dissatisfied. This depicts that 67% of the respondents were on the satisfied side and 33% were dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction came in because of the delays in funds disbursement that the project experienced.
When asked of their levels of satisfaction with the manner in which identification of internal and external stakeholders was done, 33.3% of respondents indicated they were satisfied, another 33.3% highlighted they were somehow satisfied and the other 33.3% pointed out that they were somehow dissatisfied. This entails that 66.6% of the respondents were on the satisfied side and the 33.3% were dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction came in because the respondents believed that the project failed to realize that district stakeholders were a very critical stakeholder in the planning and implementation of the project and for the sustainability purposes of the project.

Apart from the factors above, 78% of the respondents asserted that there were other things that were not considered very well during the initiation of the project that might have affected the success of the project. Such factors included: top-down approach to project management, other expertise such as those from the crop management were not fully involved, lack of accountability on the part of
project implementers and lack of through needs assessment. Again, the respondents felt that the project was overambitious and the technologies did not consider the local environment. For example, the nature of the project products required that the beneficiaries should have refrigerated trucks to transport produce to the market and the project could not provide for these.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whether there were other things that did not happen well during initiation phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.7: Other considerations that did not happen well during initiation phase (Source, Field data)

As it can be appreciated from the findings of the research, there were some gaps in the execution of the initiation phase of the HFCDP. This leaves some great chance of project failure arguing from the revelations of the literature review. In the argument of PMI (2008), if the initiation phase is not performed well, it is unlikely that the project will be successful in meeting its objectives.

4.3.2.1. Process of planning and designing the HFCDP

As regards the extent to which respondents were satisfied with the manner in which selection of the planning team was done, 16.5% indicated they were satisfied, another 16.5% said they were somehow satisfied, 50% mentioned somehow dissatisfied and 17% indicated they were dissatisfied. This means that 33% of the respondents were on the satisfied side and 67% were not satisfied. Those who were dissatisfied pointed out that there was no involvement of project beneficiaries and district structures during the planning and designing of the project. The planning team only composed of stakeholders at central level. When the respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction in relation to holding start of meeting, 67% of the respondents shared that they were satisfied,
33% said somehow satisfied. This implies that all the respondents were on the satisfied side. They cited that the start off meeting was done and had the participation of the project beneficiaries and in this meeting, they project team shared with the beneficiaries what they should expect and how the project will benefit them.

![Holding start off meetings](image)

**Figure 4.16: Level of satisfaction with holding of start off meeting (Source: Field data)**

As can be noted from the findings of the research on how the planning and designing phase of the HFCDP was done, there were some weak spots in the execution of the planning and designing phase of the project. As with the initiation phase, there is possibility that failure to adequately address elements of the planning and designing phase during the planning and designing phase of the HFCDP reduced its chances of success based on the assertion of PMI (2008) that poor planning and designing of projects reduces the project's chances of successfully accomplishing its goals. This also agrees with Pieterse (2001) who argues that poor project planning was rated one of the major causes of project failure.

### 4.4. Implementation, monitoring and closure of the HFCDP

It was learnt during the research that the project was initially a five-year project which had to be extended for two years; thus, making its implementation seven years.
4.4.1. Implementation of the HFCDP

Regarding respondents’ levels of satisfaction with the implementation of activities defined in the project proposal document, 66% of the respondents’ indicated that they were somehow dissatisfied whereas 34% mentioned that they were dissatisfied. This shows that all the respondents’ were on the dissatisfied side as regards the implementation of project activities. On the organisation and utilization of people and resources as indicated in the project proposal document, 33% of the respondents expressed that they were satisfied, 22% mentioned that they were somehow satisfied and 45% said they were somehow dissatisfied. This entails that 67% of the respondents were on the satisfied side and 33% on the dissatisfied side.

On integration and carrying out of activities in accordance with the project management, 88% of the respondents said that they were somehow dissatisfied whereas 22% mentioned that they were dissatisfied. By implication, therefore, all the respondents were on the dissatisfied side regarding the integration and conduction of activities in accordance with project management. On production of deliverables as output, 67% of the respondents shared that they were somehow dissatisfied and 33% asserted that they were dissatisfied with the extent to which the project produced deliverables as project outputs. This shows that all the respondents were on the dissatisfied side in regards to production of deliverables as output. On involvement of stakeholders during project implementation, 50% of the respondents expressed that they were somehow satisfied and the other 50% mentioned that they were somehow dissatisfied. On this one, it was felt that during implementation there was less involvement of the project beneficiaries and district structures and this affected the project implementation.

Apart from the factors highlighted above, all the respondents indicated that during the execution phase of the HFCDP, some other things were not done well and these affected the project success. Such things included the following: project prioritised trainings and tours where allowances were paid out. This affected the implementation of the project to the extent that there was no major implementation of activities which could have brought tangible results.
In addition, the planned project activities were not implemented as designed and scheduled. Further, it was mentioned that the project could not link the beneficiaries to the market for easy access of profitable markets as was committed in the initiation phase. The beneficiaries were also not given adequate resources during the implementation period.

As the results of the research show, most of the elements under the execution phase of the HFCDP were not done to satisfactorily levels. This might have greatly contributed to project’s failure considering the contributions of authors such as PMI, 2008, Cusworth and Franks (1993), Morris, (1994) and Christensen etal., (1995) that poor execution may lead to project failure.
4.4.2. Monitoring of HFCDF

There was a mix feeling on how monitoring of the HFCDF was done. Some project beneficiaries indicated that the project was not being monitored while some government officials revealed that the project was been monitored by the Ministry of Agriculture central level team. When the respondents were asked the extent to which they were satisfied with the way the tracking, reviewing and regulating of status, progress and performance of project was done, 67% indicated they were somehow dissatisfied while 33% mentioned they were dissatisfied. On identification of problems in a timely manner and taking corrective actions, 50% of the respondents said they were somehow dissatisfied and the other 50% mentioned they were dissatisfied.

On sharing with stakeholders the project progress, 33% hinted that they were somehow dissatisfied where as 67% revealed that they were dissatisfied. These revelations show that all the respondents were either somehow dissatisfied or dissatisfied completely with the way the monitoring aspect of the project was managed.

In addition to the issues raised above, the respondents asserted that during the monitoring phase of the project, some things were not handled well and these affected the project success. Such things included: lack of joint monitoring and supervision of project, monitoring was not given the appropriate priority and lack of

![Figure 4.18: Level of satisfaction with how project monitoring was done](Source: Field data)
regular review meetings. The respondents believed that the lack of monitoring attributed to the poor quality of work by the contractors, non-completion of project activities and misappropriation of resources by contractor. This is because the contractors had no one to hold him or her accountable on the ground.

As the results of the research demonstrate, there were some gaps in the monitoring of the HFCDP. These gaps might have contributed to the failure of the project as monitoring helps to observe and measure project performance against the set performance in the project management plan. This belief is in line with the assertion of Pieterse (2001) and PMI (2008) that if project monitoring is not well handled, the project may fail to attain its objectives.

4.4.3. Project Closure
As regards the project closure, all the respondents agreed that the projects ended up in suspense. For some they explained the reason for this to be pulling out of development partner due to frustrations upon realizing that the project was not yielding the intended results after seven years of implementation. For some particular those from the government side, the project concluded as per target because it reached its life span. It is not surprising therefore that most of the respondents’ extent of satisfaction with the project closure phase activities were mainly skewing towards the dissatisfactory side.

For instance, on finalization of all activities, and handing over of project, 17% of the respondents expressed that they were somehow dissatisfied where as 83% said they were dissatisfied. On concluding administrative activities such as filing of project records and documentation, releasing of project resources, closing up contracts with supplier/contractors and communicating closure to all the stakeholders, 17% mentioned that they were somehow satisfied, 33% said they were somehow dissatisfied and 50% elaborated that they were dissatisfied. Again, much as there is a minimal degree of satisfaction in some closure elements, most of the revelations of the levels of satisfaction are showing that a highest number of respondents were leaning more towards the dissatisfied arena.
As it can be acknowledged from the results of the research, the HFCDP did not close up well. This possibly contributed to the project failure as it literally affected the sustainability of the project activities and the sustainability of the impact registered. This argument is in line with PMI (2008) assertion that poor closure can lead to project failure.

4.5. Impact registered by HFCDP

As regards the impact that was registered by the project, 20% of the respondents were satisfied with the impact that was registered by the project, 10% were somehow satisfied and the remaining 70% were dissatisfied with the impact registered by the project. This means that 30% of the respondents were on the satisfied side and 70% on the dissatisfied side. Those on the satisfied side highlighted the following as the impact that was registered by the project: increased food levels, increased income levels, the social status of the people has improved, capacity building, offered introduction of horticulture farming to communities that were not traditionally in horticulture farming and introduction of irrigation
technologies. Those on the dissatisfied side expressed that they felt cheated and used, the project had not benefited them as they thought and as they were promised.

![Level of satisfaction with project impact](image)

**Figure 4.20: Level of satisfaction with project impact (Source: Field data)**

It is worth noting that some of what the respondents of this research highlighted as the impact that was registered by the HFCDF is in line with the goals of the project as presented in the project document. The HFCDP objective was to contribute to food security by increasing agriculture productivity and farm income of the smallholder target group through better access to small-scale irrigation, horticulture and marketing development.

### 4.6. Factors that contributed to project failure

The respondents highlighted a number of factors that contributed to project failure. All the respondents mentioned the top-down approach to the project which led to non-ideal projects being implemented and bureaucratic administrative systems such as those to do with approvals and procurement processes, personnel and release of funds which led to delays in the implementation of project activities. Poor performance of supplier and lack of commitment of the project management team were highlighted as contributing factors by 80% of the respondents. On performance of suppliers, the respondents believed that the contractors lacked capacity in terms of knowledge and skills to manage such kind of project and had
limited human capacity. This led to poor quality of work and failure to deliver on schedule. Poor internal and external communication, lack of beneficiary involvement particularly in the initial, planning and designing phase of the project and in decision making processes and poor financial management were spotted out by 67% of the respondents as factors that contributed to project failure. In addition, failure to understand the project complexity was highlighted by 60% of the respondents followed by lack of commitment from project team, lack of commitment from stakeholders and lack of government official involvement particularly at district level which were mentioned by 50% of the respondents.

Figure 4.21: Factors that contributed to project success (Source: Field data)

Apart from these factors, other factors that the respondents believed contributed to the failure of the HFCDP are presented below:

- There was no proper identification of project stakeholders
- The project did not target the ultimate beneficiaries of the project. It went to communities that were not traditionally involved in what the project was working
on. For instance, the project was initiated in areas which were not traditionally engaged in horticulture.

- Feasibility study was not comprehensively done
- Local markets for the produce were not established
- The project did not take the target groups to the level where there would be sustainability and where impact could have been registered. It phased out so quickly.
- The project did not empower the cooperatives that were established
- The development partner stopped funding the project before its conclusion. The development partner provided just slightly half of the committed resources.
- Limited involvement of district structures for example there was no project staff at district level.
- The project activities were not completed for instance the constructional works
- There was no beneficiary and other critical stakeholder participation during initiation and designing phase of the project. These were involved at a later stage.
- What was on paper was different from what was on ground and this resulted in a lot of change on the ground which led to lost time and delays.
- Emphasis was put on capacity building only and not monitoring and supervision of project implementation. The project therefore under estimated the role of monitoring and supervision in successful project implementation
- Period given to contractors to construct the schemes (6 months) was limited and this affected the quality of the work.
- Contractors had no capacity both in terms of human resource and skills.
- Most activities including resources were managed and coordinated at central level.
- Project focused on wrong priorities-trainings and national and international tours.
- Resources reached project beneficiaries very late and this did not tally with field plans.
- The project activities were not done on schedule.
- In some project sites issues of land dispute affected the project.
- Lack of accountability and transparent.
- The project was donor driven and as such it could not benefit the targeted communities.
- The project did not use local technologies.
The project was thinly spread across the country. As it can be appreciated all these aspects fall within the management of the project cycle phases: initiation, planning and designing, execution, monitoring and closure. This agrees to the assertion of a number of authors like Eggers (1998) who argue that projects fail because vital and important aspects of projects are often overlooked in project initiation, preparation, planning and designing, implementation and follow-up.

4.7. Chapter Summary
This chapter presented and analysed primary data collected from the critical stakeholders of the HFCDP. To a larger extent the data show that there were gaps in the initiation, planning and designing, execution, monitoring and closure of the HFCDP which might have led to the failure of the HFCDP. The next chapter provides a summary of findings and practical recommendations for consideration by those who implements project aimed at empowering the communities.

CHAPTER 5: KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction
This final chapter of the dissertation presents key findings of the research. The main research question was: Why did HFCDP fail? The minor questions were: What was the process of initiating HFCDP? How was HFCDP implemented? How was HFCD monitored? What was the impact that was registered by HFCDP? In addition, the chapter presents practical recommendations based on the research findings. Further, the chapter outlines recommendations for further research in the area of project management.

5.2. Key research findings
The key research findings of the study are as follows:

5.2.2 Involvement of stakeholders is essential for successful projects
The process of initiating the HFCDP was a fairly a consultative process. However, it lacked the involvement of the right stakeholders and taking things to deeper levels rather than scratching on the surface.

5.2.3 Project initiation must be thorough
There were some gaps in the execution of the initiation phase of the HFCDP. This might have left great chances of project failure.

5.2.4 Project planning is important
There were some weak spots in the execution of the planning and designing phase of the project. As with the initiation phase, there is possibility that failure to adequately address elements of the planning and designing phase during the planning and designing phase of the HFCDP reduced chances of success.

5.2.5 Project execution must involve all identified elements
Most of the elements under the execution phase of the HFCDP were not done to satisfactory levels. This might have greatly contributed to project’s failure.

5.2.6 Project monitoring must not be left to chance
There were some gaps in the monitoring of the HFCDP. These gaps contributed to the failure of the project as monitoring is a critical component of project management.

5.2.7 Project closure must be given the needed attention
The HFCDP did not close up well. The project ended before its scheduled time. This possibly contributed to the project failure as it literally affected the sustainability of the project activities and the sustainability of the minimal impact that was registered.

5.2.8 Impact of the HFCDP was minimal
The HFCDP registered some minimal impact. Such impact included: increased food levels, increased income levels, the social status of the people has improved,
capacity building, offered introduction of horticulture farming to communities that were not traditionally in horticulture farming and introduction of irrigation technologies.

5.2.9 Other factors that contributed to HFCDP failure

There were a number of other factors that contributed to the failure of the HFCDP. These factors included:

1. The top-down approach to the project which led to non-ideal projects being implemented.

2. Bureaucratic administrative systems such as those to do with approvals and procurement processes, personnel and release of funds.

3. Emphasis was put on capacity building only and not monitoring and supervision of project implementation. The project therefore underestimated the role of monitoring and supervision in successful project implementation.

4. Poor performance of supplier due to inadequate capacity in terms of knowledge and skills to manage such kind of project and had limited human capacity.

5. Lack of commitment of the project management team.

6. Poor internal and external communication.

7. Lack of beneficiary involvement particularly in the initial, planning and designing phase of the project and in decision making processes.

8. Poor financial management.

9. Failure to understand the project complexity.

10. Lack of commitment from project team.

11. Lack of commitment from stakeholders.

12. Lack of government official involvement particularly at district level.

13. There was no proper identification of project stakeholders.

14. The project did not target the ultimate beneficiaries of the project.

15. Feasibility study was not comprehensively done.

16. Local markets for the produce were not established.
17. The project did not take the target groups to the level where there would be sustainability and where impact could have been registered.
18. The project did not empower the cooperatives that were established.
19. The development partner stopped funding the project before its conclusion.
20. The project activities were not completed for instance the construction works.
21. There was no beneficiary and other critical stakeholder participation during initiation and designing phase of the project.
22. Period given to contractors to construct the schemes (6 months) was limited.
23. Most activities including resources were managed and coordinated at central level.
24. Project focused on wrong priorities-trainings and national and international tours.
25. Resources reached project beneficiaries very late and this did not tally with field activity plans.
26. The project activities were not done on schedule.
27. Lack of accountability and transparent.
28. The project was donor driven and as such it could not benefit the targeted communities.
29. The project did not use local technologies.
30. The project was thinly spread across the country.

5.3. Practical Recommendations
Based on the revelations of the research findings, the following recommendations were arrived at for consideration during the initiation, planning and designing, execution, monitoring and closure of projects in order to avoid failure:

5.3.1 Projects need to involve right people with appropriate expertise to provide sound technical guidance
Individuals with the requisite knowledge and expertise must be sought and involved in projects at all levels to ensure that the right decisions are taken at every stage of the project.

5.3.3. Ownership
There is need to fully involve project beneficiaries and stakeholders throughout the entire project cycle. In projects of this nature, project beneficiaries need to be fully empowered to run project without support from the project resources for project sustainability purposes. Involvement of district structures during initial, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and closing phase of project are an ingredient for effective and efficient project implementation and sustainability.

5.3.4. Adopt bottom-up approach
Follow down-top approach as the people on the ground understand issues more deeply than distance people.

5.3.5. Assessment of contractors
In projects of this nature, the capacity of contractors in form of human resources, equipment and skills should be assessed before they are given contracts.

5.3.6. Project monitoring
Project monitoring and supervision should be given the priority it deserves. In addition, a monitoring system should be in place right from the beginning to clearly capture shortfalls and provide quick remedies.

5.3.7. Situational assessment
Projects of this nature should be initiated in communities that traditionally engage in similar production. In this way, the project will strengthen and enhance the community capabilities rather than introducing new things that are sometimes not practical. As a result, they are not embraced by the beneficiaries.

5.3.7.1. There is need to be undertaking comprehensive needs assessment before planning and designing projects
Needs assessment provides a good starting point for every project. When comprehensively done, the project rightly focuses on the actual needs of the people. Once actual needs are addressed, the targeted people are contented happy, consequently instilling automatic project sustainability.

5.3.8. Strengthening cooperatives
Projects of this nature should strengthen cooperatives. Strong cooperatives continue supporting themselves once the projects phase out.

5.3.9. Linking project beneficiaries to better markets
Projects of this nature should link project beneficiaries to markets where they can sell their produce. Good markets have a pull effect on agricultural productivity. As such, project beneficiaries benefit more and sustain their activities.

5.3.9.1. Project technologies should be simple, cost-effective and appropriate to community expertise and resources
Though technology is evolving at a speed unprecedented some few years ago, its absorption must be gradual. The use of technologies that are not commensurate with available expertise will create challenges that will likely lead to project failure.

5.4. Recommendation for future research
The study put the following recommendations for future research:

a. Further studies should look at the impact of donor-driven projects in the attained of desired project objectives; how sustainable are the projects that target the local communities; and the role of project beneficiaries in the project initiation, planning and designing, implementation and monitoring of projects.

b. The current study adopted a case study strategy and as such the results cannot be generalized to the whole population. Future research should adopt a survey strategy to maximize on the benefits of surveys like allowing generalization of research findings to the total population.

5.5. Chapter Summary
The concluding chapter presented key findings of the study and recommendation for improving project management in Malawi. Implications of the findings for further studies were also discussed.


Baker, et al. (1983), Project Management in the Public Sector: Success and failure patterns compared to private sector projects National Technical Information Services, N-74-30092.


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Kakaza, V. (2009). An evaluation of selected steps to achieve successful community development projects with specific reference to crime and housing in Langa township within Cape Town. Cape Peninsula University of Technology.


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Yin K. (2003), Case Study Research Design and Methods; Sage publication, London


APPENDICES
DATA COLLECTION TOOLS
1.0. QUESTIONNAIRE
Introduction
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PROJECT STAFF, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, BUNDA LECTURER AND CONTRACTOR

Introduction
I am Patrick Namakhoma. I am carrying out an academic research on ‘why projects fail in Malawi’ with the Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project (HFCDP) as the case in point. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment for the Masters Degree in Project Management offered by University of Bolton. The aim of the research was to critically examine why HFCDP failed with the hope that the findings of this research will inform project managers on the best way to manage projects in order to reduce project failure. The information sought will be treated with a lot of confidentiality and will only be used for the academic purpose only. You have been selected to participate in this study through purposive sampling and because I believe you have valuable information that will help me in this research. May I humbly request you to participate in this study by giving me time to answer the questions that I have for you.

A. Personal details
Please circle the response on each question (from question 1 to 4).
1. Gender
A) Male.
B) Female.
2. What is your age range?
A) 18-25.
B) 26-34.
C) 35-44.
D) 45-54
E) 55 and above
3. What is your marital status?
A) Married.
B) Single
C) Divorced.
D) Widowed.
E) Separated.

4. What is your highest level of education?
A) None
B) PSLE
C) From JCE and MSCE
D) From Diploma to Degree
E) Post graduate degree.

5. What is your occupation?

Research Question 1: What was the process of initiating HFCDP?
6. What was the process of initiating the HFCDP?

7. Who initiated the HFCDP?

8. During the initiation of the HFCDP, to what extent were the following satisfactorily done (Rate them as follows: 4 = satisfactorily done; 3 = Somehow satisfactorily done; 2 = Somehow dissatisfactorily done; 1 = Dissatisfactory done)
9. Do you think there were any other things that did not happen well during the initiation of the project that might have affected the success of the project?  
Yes…..No……

10. If yes, what were those things?

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11. What do you think should have been done differently during the project initiation phase for the project to be successful?

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12. During the planning and designing phase of the HFCDP, to what extent were the following satisfactorily done (Rate them as follows: 4 = satisfactorily done; 3 = Somehow satisfactorily done; 2 = Somehow dissatisfactorily done; 1 = Dissatisfactorily done)

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<th>Why are you thinking that way?</th>
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<td>Identification of activities needed to achieve deliverables</td>
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<td>Creation of work breakdown structure</td>
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<td>Estimation of time and cost</td>
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<td>Development of implementation schedule</td>
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<td>Communication planning</td>
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<td>Planning for scope management</td>
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<td>Definition of quality and quantity of work</td>
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<td>Risk planning</td>
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<td>Identification of roles and responsibilities</td>
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<td>Determining what to purchase for project</td>
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<td>Holding start off meeting</td>
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13. Do you think there were any other things that did not happen well during the planning and designing stage of the project that might have affected the success of the project? Yes.....No......

14. If yes, what were those things?

15. What do you think should have been done differently during the project planning and designing stage for the project to be successful?

Research Question 2: How was HFCDP implemented?
16. How was the HFCDP implemented?


17. During the implementation of the HFCDP, to what extent were the following satisfactorily done (Rate them as follows: 4 = satisfactorily done; 3= Somehow satisfactorily done; 2 = Somehow dissatisfactorily done; 1 = Dissatisfactorily done

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<th>Why are you thinking that way?</th>
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<td>Implementation of the activities defined in the project proposal document</td>
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<td>organizing and utilizing people and resources as indicated in the project proposal document</td>
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<td>Integration and conduction of the activities of the project in accordance with the project management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production of deliverables as outputs from the processes performed as defined in the project proposal document</td>
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<td>Involvement of stakeholders</td>
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18. Do you think there were any other things that did not happen well during the execution of the project that might have affected the success of the project? Yes…No……

19. If yes, what were those things?
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20. What do you think should have been done differently during the project execution phase for the project to be successful?
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Research Question 3: How was HFCDP monitored?

21. How was the HFCDP monitored?
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22. During the HFCDP life, to what extent were the following satisfactorily done (Rate them as follows: 4 = satisfactorily done; 3= Somehow satisfactorily done; 2 = Somehow dissatisfactorily done; 1 = Dissatisfactorily done

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<th>4</th>
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|   |   |   |   |   | Why are you thinking that way?
| Tracking, reviewing and regulating the status, progress and performance of the project |
| Identification of potential problems in a timely manner and taking corrective action where necessary |
| Sharing with stakeholders project progress |

23. Do you think there were any other things that did not happen well regarding monitoring and control that might have affected the success of the project? Yes….No……

24. If yes, what were those things?
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25. What do you think should have been done differently in terms of project monitoring and control for the project to be successful?
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26. During the HFCDP closure, to what extent were the following satisfactorily done (Rate them as follows: 4 = satisfactorily done; 3 = Somehow satisfactorily done; 2 = Somehow dissatisfactorily done; 1 = Dissatisfactorily done)

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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Why are you thinking that way?</th>
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- Finalization of all activities in the other processes
- Administrative activities which include the archiving of files and documenting of lessons learnt.
- Handing over the project
- Releasing project resources
- Closing contracts with suppliers/contractors
- Communicating the closure to all stakeholders

27. Do you think there were any other things that did not happen well regarding monitoring and control that might have affected the success of the project?

Yes.....No.....

28. If yes, what were those things?

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29. What do you think should have been done differently in terms of project monitoring and control for the project to be successful?

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30. During the HFCDP, to what extent were the following satisfactorily done (Rate them as follows: 4 = satisfactorily done; 3= Somehow satisfactorily done; 2 = Somehow dissatisfactorily done; 1 = Dissatisfactory done)

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<th>Why are you thinking that way?</th>
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31. Do you think there were any other things that did not happen well regarding monitoring and control that might have affected the success of the project?

Yes.....No......

32. If yes, what were those things?

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33. What do you think should have been done differently in terms of project monitoring and control for the project to be successful?

34. Do you think the following factors contributed to project failure?

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<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>If Yes, How?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Poor performance of supplier</td>
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<td>Lack of commitment to the project by project team</td>
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<td>Lack of commitment to the project by project management</td>
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<td>Lack of commitment to the project by project stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic administrative systems-approvals, procurement, personnel and release of fund</td>
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35. Apart from the mentioned factors, are there any other factors that you think contributed to project failure?

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Research Question 4: What was the impact that was registered by HFCDP?
36. In your assessment, what was the impact that was registered by HFCDP?
37. To what extent were you satisfied with the impact made by the project?

Greatly satisfied…….  Satisfied………….Somehow satisfied…….

38. In general, why do you think the HFCDP failed?

39. What do you think should have been done different for HFCDP to be successful?

Thank you for participating in the study and for your time
2.0. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSS INTERVIEW GUIDE

FGD INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROJECT COMMITTEES AND BENEFICIARIES

Introduction

I am Patrick Namakhoma. I am carrying out an academic research on ‘why projects fail in Malawi’ with the Horticulture and Food Crops Development Project (HFCDP) as the case in point. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment for the Masters Degree in Project Management offered by the University of Bolton. The aim of the research was to critically examine why HFCDP failed with the hope that the findings of this research will inform project managers on the best way to manage projects in order to reduce project failure. The information sought will be treated with a lot of confidentiality and will only be used for the academic purpose only. You have been selected to participate in this study through purposive sampling and because I believe you have valuable information that will help me in this research. May I humbly request you to participate in this study by giving me time to answer the questions that I have for you.

B. Composition of the FDG participants

1. Gender
   A) Male. .......
   B) Female.......

2. Age range
   A) 18-25......
   B) 26-34......
   C) 35-44......
   D) 45-54......
   E) 55 and above.......

3. Marital status?
   A) Married.....
   B) Single......
   C) Divorced....
D) Widowed…
E) Separated…

4. Highest level of education
A) None…..
B) PSLE…..
C) From JCE and MSCE…..
D) From Diploma to Degree…..
E) Post graduate degree…..

5. Occupation
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Research Question 1: What was the process of initiating HFCDP?
6. What was the process of initiating the HFCDP?
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7. Who initiated the HFCDP?
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8. Were there stakeholder consultations during the initial stages of the project?

9. Was the needs assessment done before initiating the project?

10. Do you think there were any other things that did not happen well during the initiation of the project that might have affected the success of the project?
    Yes.....No.....

11. If yes, what were those things?

12. What do you think should have been done differently during the project initiation phase for the project to be successful?
13. Do you think there were things that did not happen well during the planning and designing stage of the project that might have affected the success of the project? Yes…..No…..

14. If yes, what were those things?

15. What do you think should have been done differently during the project planning and designing stage for the project to be successful?

Research Question 2: How was HFCDP implemented?

16. How was the HFCDP executed?

17. Do you think there were things that did not happen well during the execution of the project that might have affected the success of the project? Yes…..No…..
18. If yes, what were those things?

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19. What do you think should have been done differently during the project execution phase for the project to be successful?

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Research Question 3: How was HFCDP monitored?

20. How was the HFCDP monitored?

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21. Do you think there were things that did not happen well regarding monitoring and control that might have affected the success of the project? Yes…..No……

22. If yes, what were those things?

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23. What do you think should have been done differently in terms of project monitoring and control for the project to be successful?

24. Do you think there were things that did not happen well during project closure that might have affected the success of the project? Yes….No…..

25. If yes, what were those things?

26. What do you think should have been done differently in terms of project closure for the project to be successful?
27. What do you think should have been done differently in terms of project closure for the project to be successful?

28. Are there any other factors that you think contributed to project failure?

Research Question 4: What was the impact that was registered by HFCDP?

29. In your assessment, what was the impact that was registered by HFCDP?

30. To what extent were you satisfied with the impact made by the project?

31. In general, why do you think the HFCDP failed?
32. What do you think should have been done different for HFCDP to be successful?

Thank you for participating in the study and for your time