

Chapter 2: Characteristics of the Sample

To establish a profile of the respondents, some generic questions were asked about their age, marital status and relationship to the household head. As far as possible, the profile of the respondents has been compared to information from other sources, including the 1998 Housing and Population Census³, to show how representative the sample may be.

Respondents were also asked questions that would help ascertain their poverty status, primarily the number of months in a year they do not have access to enough food, the average size of the landholding, description of their quality of housing and proportion of the household engaging in *ganyu*⁴. The intention behind trying to establish the level of poverty was to analyse the results in these terms. However, this has proved to be beyond the scope of the first round of the exercise, and will need further refinement in future rounds of the exercise.

2.1 Respondent Characteristics

In an effort to ensure that the opinions of both men and women were included in the exercise, the sampling procedure sought to have an equitable breakdown of each gender. Table 2.1 below shows this breakdown, and includes information from the 1998 Housing and Population Census for the population breakdown of each of the districts in question, showing that at least in terms of gender the sample bears considerable resemblance to the entire population.

Table 2.1: Gender of Respondents (by district) (%)

	Male	Female
Mulanje	51.1 (46.9)	48.9 (53.1)
Phalombe	48.6 (47.1)	51.4 (52.9)
Blantyre City	49.6 (51.1)	50.4 (48.9)
Mchinji	50.5 (50.5)	49.5 (49.5)
Salima	49.3 (49.2)	50.7 (50.8)
Nkhata Bay	51.1 (48.6)	48.9 (51.4)
Total	50.0 (49.0)	50.0 (51.0)

(census figures).

The opinions of competent adults were sought, therefore only those aged 16 or over were included in the sample (See Table 2.2). Of the respondents, 18.6 per cent were aged between 16 and 25, 26.4 per cent between 26 and 35, 18.6 per cent between 36 and 45, 17.2 per cent between 46 and 55 and 19.2 per cent over 56⁵.

³ In this section all references to the census refer to the results of the Population and Housing Census carried out in 1998, the results of which are contained in the following publication – Malawi Government (2001) "Census Analytical Report" National Statistical office, Zomba, Malawi, available at www.nso.malawi.net

⁴ *Ganyu* is casual labour, usually allocated on a piecework basis.

⁵ The age profile of the respondents is not directly comparable to those in the census analytical report, as the age groups there can be grouped as follows - 15 – 24, 25 – 34, 35 – 44, 45 – 54 and over 55. The population breakdown for those over the age of 15, is as follows for these groups 36.9 per cent; 24.8 per cent; 15.1 per cent; 10.2 per cent and 12.9 per cent. Suggesting there is an over representation in the current sample amongst the older age groups, while the younger age group is under represented.

Table 2.2: Age of Respondents (by district) (%)

	16 – 25	26 – 35	36 – 45	46 – 55	Over 56
Mulanje	15.6	25.0	19.4	18.3	21.7
Phalombe	22.5	21.9	13.5	23.6	18.5
Blantyre City	19.4	38.2	18.1	16.0	8.3
Mchinji	16.7	25.0	16.7	18.1	23.5
Salima	21.5	24.3	22.4	13.6	18.2
Nkhata Bay	15.3	27.1	21.5	13.2	22.9
Total	18.6	26.4	18.6	17.2	19.2

Respondents were also asked to provide information about their marital status. Again, there are differences between the sample and the results of the 1998 Population and Housing Census. This is a direct result of incorporating the answers from different portions of the population. All the respondents to the current questionnaire were over the age of 16, whereas the census analytical report provides information on marital status for all those over 10. This helps to explain the larger number of respondents in the census who say they are not married. (See Table 2.3 for an overview).

Table 2.3: Marital Status of Respondents (by district) (%)

	Married	Divorced / Separated	Widow	Widower	Single / Never Married	Other	Missing
Mulanje	60.0	8.9	9.4	2.8	10.6	0.6	7.8
Phalombe	77.2	7.8	6.7	1.1	6.7	0.0	0.6
Blantyre City	75.7	2.1	7.6	0.7	11.1	0.0	2.8
Mchinji	73.0	6.0	11.2	1.9	4.2	0.0	3.7
Salima	80.0	5.6	6.5	0.5	3.3	4.2	0.0
Nkhata Bay	80.6	7.6	2.1	6.9	2.1	0.7	0.0
Total	74.3 (54.8)	6.4 (4.7)	7.5 (7.1)	2.1 (1.1)	6.1 (35.4)	1.0 (--)	2.5 (--)

The majority of respondents to the questionnaire were the household head (55.2 per cent), followed by those saying they were the spouse of the household head (36.5 per cent) (See Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Relation of Respondent to Head of Household (by district) (%)

	Is the head	Spouse	Child	Parent	Other	No Relation
Mulanje	51.7	33.9	7.2	7.2	0.0	0.0
Phalombe	51.7	37.2	10.6	0.6	0.0	0.0
Blantyre City	55.4	35.3	9.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mchinji	67.1	30.0	1.4	1.0	0.5	0.0
Salima	50.7	44.0	2.9	1.9	0.5	0.0
Nkhata Bay	53.1	38.5	2.8	4.2	0.7	0.7
Total	55.2	36.5	5.5	2.5	0.3	0.1

Further to this, respondents were asked how many people lived in the household. The average household size was 5.1. The household sizes in the survey were considerably bigger than those in 1998 Census. These are presented as Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Average Household Size (by district and poverty level)

	Sample	Census
Mulanje	4.3	4.1
Phalombe	4.8	3.9
Blantyre City	5.3	4.1
Mchinji	5.4	4.6
Salima	5.2	4.2
Nkhata Bay	5.8	4.9
Total	5.1	4.3

The respondents were also asked whether there were times of the year when they did not

have enough to eat (a means of assessing food security levels). In answer to this question, only 11.9 per cent of the respondents said their household was never without food. The most common answer (made by 42.5 per cent of respondents) was that there was not enough to eat for up to three months of the year. Almost 16 per cent of respondents said their household did not have enough food for between 10 and 12 months of the year.

Table 2.6: Number of months the household does not have enough to eat, by district (%)

	Between 10 and 12 months	Between 7 and 9 months	Between 4 and 6 Months	Up to 3 Months	Never
Mulanje	11.7	24.4	25.0	27.8	11.1
Phalombe	10.7	9.0	23.0	51.7	5.6
Blantyre City	0.0	0.0	4.2	66.7	29.2
Mchinji	34.9	12.4	10.5	33.5	8.6
Salima	16.7	19.6	8.6	48.8	6.2
Nkhata Bay	14.1	23.2	17.6	28.9	16.2
Total (n=1062)	15.8	15.1	14.8	42.5	11.9

Further to this, respondents were asked whether their household owns land – 12.1 per cent of the total said they did not (as opposed to 18.2 per cent of the poor and 26.5 per cent of the non-poor in the IHS). Unsurprisingly, this was highest in the urban area of Blantyre, where 40.3 per cent of respondents had no landholding. The most common answers were that households had landholdings of between .5 and one hectare (21.4 per cent) and between one and two hectares (21.8 per cent) (See Table 2.7)⁶

Table 2.7: Average Size of Land Holding, by district (%)

	No Land Holding	Up to ¼ Has	¼ - ½ Hectare	½ - 1 ha	1 - 2 has	> 2 has	Missing
Mulanje	10.6	16.1	29.4	34.4	7.8	1.1	0.6
Phalombe	2.8	12.8	23.9	25.0	27.2	6.7	1.7
Blantyre City	40.3	4.2	5.6	13.2	20.8	14.6	1.4
Mchinji	7.0	7.9	12.6	23.7	27.0	18.6	3.3
Salima	7.0	21.9	14.9	13.5	17.7	23.3	1.9
Nkhata Bay	12.5	9.0	8.3	17.4	31.9	20.1	0.7
Total (n=1078)	12.1	12.5	16.2	21.4	21.8	14.3	1.7

Respondents were also asked to assess the type of house they live in. In total, 93.8 per cent reported owning their own house (against a national figure of 86.1 per cent contained in the census), while 6.2 per cent said they rented their accommodation (this figure was 10.8 per cent in the census). Respondents were also asked to describe their house – of the options provided 15.3 per cent said their house was well constructed, using burnt bricks with an iron sheet roof; 28.1 per cent said that it was well constructed of local materials, while 50.4 per cent said it was poorly constructed, using only locally available materials.

These categories roughly correspond to those used in the 1998 Population and Housing Census – which found that 15.8 per cent of all houses were permanent, 18.4 per cent semi permanent and 65.8 traditional.

⁶ This is in line with household landholding sizes from the IHS, which highlighted that the poor own 0.185 ha per capita (an equivalent of .8 hectares per household) and the rich own .282 hectare per capita (the equivalent of 1.16 hectare per household). Giving a total figure for household landholding of approximately .93 hectare.

Table 2.8: Description of Housing (by district) (%)

	Constructed of Burnt Bricks with an Iron Sheet Roof	Constructed of local materials	Poorly constructed of locally available material
Mulanje	25.1	22.9	52.0
Phalombe	10.7	33.1	56.2
Blantyre City	13.1	34.1	52.9
Mchinji	22.1	29.9	48.0
Salima	6.8	29.2	64.1
Nkhata Bay	26.9	41.8	39.0
Total (n=1046)	15.3	28.1	50.4

Respondents were also asked whether anybody in their household engaged in *Ganyu* (casual labour). Overall, 54.9 per cent of respondents in the sample said this was the case. This figure was lowest in Blantyre (36.4 per cent) and highest in Salima, where 72.8 per cent of the total were engaged in *ganyu*.

Table 2.9: Proportion of Households Engaging in *Ganyu* (%), by district

	Total
Mulanje	56.7
Phalombe	64.0
Blantyre City	36.4
Mchinji	61.7
Salima	72.8
Nkhata Bay	22.9
Total (n=1048)	54.9

Respondents were also asked to assess their own level of poverty. To do this they were given five options – very poor, poor, not poor now but could become poor (vulnerable), rich and very rich. In total, 91.4 per cent of respondents classified themselves as being poor or very poor. Of the rest, over half said they belonged to the vulnerable group, with only 3.4 per cent of the entire sample saying they belonged to the rich or very rich category.

Table 2.10: Self Classified Level of Poverty (by district) (%)

	Very Poor	Poor	Vulnerable	Rich	Very Rich
Mulanje	35.0	62.2	2.2	0.6	0.0
Phalombe	34.4	65.0	0.6	0.0	0.0
Blantyre City	8.3	71.5	19.4	0.7	0.0
Mchinji	47.6	38.7	0.5	13.2	0.0
Salima	40.9	54.4	3.3	0.9	0.5
Nkhata Bay	45.1	43.8	9.0	1.4	0.7
Total (n = 1075)	36.4	55.3	5.0	3.2	0.2

It is apparent that when questioned individually the population have a propensity to over-estimate their poverty status, fearing they may miss out on something if they assess themselves as better-off. An attempt to reclassify the respondents was made, based on their answers to the following specific questions;

- ★ The number of months in the year they do not have enough to eat
- ★ Their average land holding size
- ★ The type of dwelling house the live in and
- ★ Whether they engage in *ganyu*

In essence, respondents were considered to be *very poor* if they responded that their household did not have enough food to eat for more than three months of the year, they had no land holding, or a landholding of less than ¼ hectare, were living in houses that were

poorly constructed of locally available material and engaged in *ganyu*. Those who responded in this manner to three of the four questions were also considered as *very poor*.

Those who had responded positively to two of these criteria were considered as *poor*, those who had responded positively to one were considered *vulnerable* and those who had not answered positively to any of the questions were considered *rich*.

The breakdown of respondents is included in Table 11. Under this 52.5 per cent of the population could be considered poor, with 33.5 per cent vulnerable and 14 per cent rich.

Table 2.11: Re-Assessed (Computed) Level of Poverty (by district) (%)

	Very Poor	Poor	Vulnerable	Rich
Mulanje (n=158)	20.9	32.9	33.5	12.7
Phalombe (n=168)	14.9	36.3	35.1	13.7
Blantyre City (n=80)	3.8	22.5	48.8	25.0
Mchinji (n=174)	24.1	37.4	27.0	11.5
Salima (n=175)	30.9	39.4	24.6	5.1
Nkhata Bay (n=121)	5.0	26.4	43.0	25.6
Total (n=876)	18.61	33.90	33.45	14.04

While these figures may seem more realistic when compared to the IHS figures, which places 65.3 per cent of the population below the poverty line, the number of missing cases meant that it was not possible to carry out meaningful analysis of the access to services using this approach, in the initial round of analysis. In this regard, further research is required to see whether respondents' level of poverty has an impact on their ability to access services. It is also recommended that for future rounds of the exercise greater attention is paid to the elements of computing the welfare of the population, using available information (from the IHS and QIM reports of the Poverty Monitoring System).