

**WOMEN VOICE IN CHURCH OF CENTRAL AFRICA PRESBYTERIAN (C.C.A.P)  
MALAWI - Acritical Evaluation Especially with Nkhoma Synod**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Women are left out in Nkhoma Synod in that they are not allowed to be in leadership position, as church ministers, following the biblical patriarchy. Secondly, women are not offered theological trainings. The purpose of this case study is to critically evaluate the role of women in the church today.

This paper gives a background of CCAP Malawi and Nkhoma Synod and how women have been viewed since the introduction of Christianity in the central region of Malawi. In addition, how this in turn has contributed to the development of the congregations and the Synod as a whole. This study also reveals how Christianity influenced culture and traditions in society of Malawi's Central Region. Women represent 65% of the Church membership.

Best tools helps one to have a good result, in this case study, gender and power, and ecumenical diakonia theories were used to help answer the research question. Observations and interviews were done with influential leaders and ministers of congregation, women in the leadership positions and in laity. Secondly, published and unpublished sources have been used together with internet sources.

The paper has analyzed and explored the need for Nkhoma Synod to address gender and power issues, being a Church and a diaconal actor. The paper suggests the need to transform and empower the women in all areas of the church existence.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this paper to Emmanuel my husband for his love, inspiration, support, and sacrifices he has proved in this period of study to be a man of virtue. I am very proud of his high ability in the way he understood and encouraged me during the stressing moments of research. I owe him and our girl Favour my golden gratitude.

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**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CCAP	Church of Central African Presbytery
DPP	Democratic Progress Party
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
DRCM	Dutch Reformed Church Mission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MCC	Malawi Council of Churches
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MDHS	Malawi Demographic Health Survey
Min.L	Minister Leader
Min.M	Minister Male
Min.W	Minister Women
PP	Peoples Party
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat
UDF	United Democratic Front
WARC	World Alliance Reformed Church
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRC	World Community of Reformed Churches
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (C.C.A.P) in Malawi constitutes of three Synods namely Nkhoma Synod, Livingstonia Synod, and Blantyre Synod. In addition, is a member of C.C.A.P. General Assembly, which includes Zambia Synod in Zambia and Harare Synod in Zimbabwe.

In this paper, the researcher will focus more on C.C.A.P Nkhoma Synod as a case study, and the researcher belongs to this Synod. This paper will unveil the position of Nkhoma Synod on the role of women in the church. To achieve this goal, the paper will discuss the statement of the problem and its historical background. In addition, the paper will portray its hypothesis, theories, methodology, and conclusion.

Note: In this paper leadership position, refers to church deacon, elder and minister positions. Secondly, the word church and Synod are interchangeable in some places.

### **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Being a member of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod the researcher is aware that since its inception in 1889, the CCAP Nkhoma Synod has not fully accepted women to be in leadership positions (*deacon, elder and minister*).

As stated by Walter Lawrence Brown that the struggle on the role of women creates a special problem for many leaders at Nkhoma Synod and it continues to be a problem with no easy resolution currently. The dilemma faced by the Synod deals with the different viewpoints by both genders. On the other hand, this region traditionally values a woman; the Chewa people occupy it. Even at society level, the final decision for a leader to be chosen comes from women. As such, Brown observed that this will lead to women with needed skills and gifts feel compelled to leave if female church leadership is not accredited in Nkhoma synod (Brown 2004:57).

Isabel Apawo Phiri also stated that the debate concerning women participation in church leadership, in the Nkhoma Synod, could be dated from September 1966, the time a question was

raised in a Synodical meeting on women to be allowed to go to theological college and be ordained. The response was the Committee of the Joint Theological College should discuss the feasibility of having women into the theological college. On the second part of women ordination, the Synod decided that the committee, which was also studying the probability of having women as elders, must investigate the last part of the question. Since the establishment of DRCM (*Dutch Reformed Church Mission*) in 1889, no woman had received theological education since the first woman was excluded from her training (Phiri 2007:56).

At the Ninth assembly of the Synod, held in August 1968, it was decisively affirmed that women were not to be leaders in the church; therefore, women receiving theological training should only teach other women. In 1990, the C.C.A.P. General Assembly, had a meeting which declared the use of women in all dimensions at the church level. These were the recommendations

In view of the world's recognition of women's role in the church, the following recommendations were presented:

- For future Synod meeting (sic) each of the five Synods send (sic) women delegates with a view to increase women participation.
- The ordination of women be considered at all five Synod levels.
- Women's Desk be established at the General Synod Secretariat on part time basis (Brown 2004:58).

The General Assembly acknowledged and suggested it to all the five synods, but Nkhoma Synod continued with the ban against women leadership in the church in 1991, by saying, it does not approve women to preach at any time and also to take any leadership positions. In 1995, Nkhoma Synod restated this view that women should not be in the leadership positions (*elders, deacon and minister*) women should be taught their responsibility in the church. In 2004, there was what people would have thought a change of things in Nkhoma Synod with a document they signed with the other synods about women ordination. However, this agreement was not implemented, and the qualified women were post to secondary school to teach Bible studies (Brown 2004:59).

This stand is in great contrast to the other CCAP Synods namely Blantyre and Livingstonia; they give leadership position to women. Although Nkhoma Synod is immovable on the women leadership, its church and society's mission statement states:

Nkhoma Synod Church and Society Department is a faith based organization that exists to promote democracy, good governance, gender equality and equity with institutions of similar mandates through advocacy, training, mediation, networking, empowerment and civic education for vibrant and just Malawian Society.

In addition, out of the seven core values that the church and society have one is about gender equality and equity which says, *“We work to promote human rights for both sexes with a focus on equal opportunities to access the basic human needs, education, work and positions in the society at all levels”* (Nkhoma Synod Church and Society)

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION**

Despite women membership being majority, and despite the fact that women are more active in giving to the church and in other church activities, they are not fully allowed to occupy leadership positions like deacons, elders, and ministers in the Nkhoma Synod. This increases the interest of critical evaluation on the role of women in the Nkhoma Synod.

In particular with Nkhoma Synod, how can the role of women in CCAP Malawi be explained, and how have the CCAP Synods in Malawi acted in order to improve the role of women in the church, including in leadership positions?

### **1.4 BACK GROUND OF PROJECT**

In Malawi, the researcher has seen some women serving in a leadership position in some churches like Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods. These women are leaders in the churches where men are present as members. The researcher wants to use this and apply it in Nkhoma Synod

context. In addition, some churches in Malawi are empowering their female members to participate actively in leadership roles and decision-making positions.

### 1.5 Hypothesis

- *Preaching and teaching*, the way the reformed missionaries introduced Christianity has contributed to the marginalization of women as they follow the patriarchy of the Bible.
- *Prophetically*, the church has not lifted the women's rights, and God's liberating love incarnated in human reality.
- *Culturally*, women church members, with skills and gifts feel not acknowledged, and they look for other opportunities.

### 1.6 THEORETIC FRAME WORK

- *Gender and power* theory states that we are all created in the image of God, to be equal and responsible as we care for God's creation. The Holy Spirit empowers us all. Jesus valued human beings; He never excluded but included everyone in his ministry regardless of gender, race, status etc. This theory calls for equal justice and participation of male and female in church as God has demonstrated it.
- *Ecumenical Diakonia* aspect is not just the caring ministry but also the go-between. The work of Nordstokke, emphasizes Diakonia as being inclusive, involving transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment. In view of this, church as a body of believers should be like Jesus the master who showed hospitality to the untouchables of the society, he invited them to the table. Diakonia has the church, faith and bold actions to bring transformation, and no ethnic, gender and economic issues for empowerment to be done.

### 1.7 METHODOLOGY

This research will be qualitative in nature as it aims to understand the experience and attitudes of Nkhoma Synod on women's perspective. *Observation* was done to explore the natural scene, to have access to the relevant documents, and to use an audio recorder.

*Interviews:* Unstructured interview guide was developed and care was taken to avoid leading questions. The researcher appeared natural, and attention was paid where the interviews were being held, place, people, and culture were taken into account.

As documents are a useful source of data in qualitative research, in this case written materials were also used. The researcher found some sources that might be helpful to the topic, from Africa and other countries and only one book from Malawi written by Isabel Apawo Phiri. There are also unpublished document from Nkhoma Synod that the researcher has used some of these have been documented in chapter three.

Ethical issues were also observed for the benefit of both the participant and the researcher. This was a typical case study which captures the circumstances and condition of everyday situations. The case study was chosen because Nkhoma Synod is a member of C.C.A.P. Malawi and provide suitable context for certain research question to be answered.

When analyzing this study, SWOT analysis will be used, as a measure and to high light areas which needs some improvement and maintenance.

## **1.8 Necessity of the topic**

The church is an integral part of society. On 29<sup>th</sup> August, 2008 the then President of Malawi late Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika was awarded the Millennium Development Goal Champion Torch in Oslo, Norway at the African Green Revolution Conference, for his efforts in promoting women in Malawi, to him, he believed this to be a sign that the work of women is known worldwide. This incident indicates that the equality of men and women is general concern. Malawi is also a signatory to a number of international human rights conventions ([www.africamission-mafr.org/kanengoavril09.htm](http://www.africamission-mafr.org/kanengoavril09.htm)& [farastaff.blogspot.no/2008\\_08\\_01\\_archive.html](http://farastaff.blogspot.no/2008_08_01_archive.html) accessed on 17 January 2013).

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2013 Malawi parliament passed the gender equality bill with an intention of promoting gender equality and equal integration of men and women in all tasks of society. The Minister of gender, children, and social welfare, Anita Kalinde explained “*the bill*

*seeks to eliminate uneven distribution of opportunities, which has existed, for many years”* (Malawi News Agency, <http://www.nyasatimes.com/> accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013). This gives women a chance to be heard and contribute in public life and decision-making positions, in any society.

This paper is written because CCAP Nkhoma Synod has not fully accepted the use of female leaders at the church level.

### **1.9 LIMITATIONS**

- Some people responded in a way to get the researcher out of their way as they strongly feel nothing will change and discussing this women issue is a waste of time.
- Women were shy to share their ideas with the researcher because culturally they lost their power and secondly they are not empowered by church.

Therefore, care was taken that these two situations did not have a major effect on the information given.

### **1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 introduces the study and briefly describe the C.C.A.P. in Malawi.

Chapter 2 discusses the brief context of Malawi in general and Nkhoma Synod.

Chapter 3 discusses the procedures and methods used.

Chapter 4 discusses the theories.

Chapter 5 presenting the women’s place in Nkhoma Synod.

Chapter 6 analyzing the findings

Chapter 7 Discussion and concludes the study.

### **1.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter gives a brief account of what is going to happen in this study, to answer the research question that has been presented above. It should be noted that the use of leadership positions in

this paper refers to offices of the ordained minister, church elder and deacon. The next chapter discusses brief the context of CCAP Malawi and a little more on Nkhoma Synod.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **CONTEXT OF NKHOMA SYNOD**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the researcher will give a brief geographical and historical background of Malawi in general and CCAP Malawi including the context of Nkhoma Synod, and discuss how the role of women has been viewed since establishment. Women issues are a worldwide concern. In Malawi, gender issue is advocated from both political and social point of view, and the church has not been left out, as it is part of the society. Secondly, other churches are allowing women to participate in decision-making in churches as a way of empowering them.

#### **2.1 MALAWI IN GENERAL**

Malawi is a small landlocked country of 118,484 square kilometers 20 percent of which is water, located in southeast Central Africa, west, and north of Mozambique, east of Zambia, and south of Tanzania. Eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas where the main means of living is rain fed agriculture. Malawi's population is 13,077,160 people; 82.7% are Christians, 13% are Muslims, 1.9 % other religions and 2.5 % non- religious. Women represent 51.4% of the total population (Malawi National Statistics 2008). The country is divided into three administrative regions namely north, center, and south.

Christianity in Malawi is a combination of Catholics, Protestants and African churches. Catholics are less than Protestants in number. Protestants are further grouped in the following; Presbyterians, Baptist, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Apostolic, and Methodist just to mention a few. The CCAP Malawi has the highest population of the Protestant.

##### **2.1.1 Brief History of Malawi**

Malawi was colonized by Great Britain from 1891 until July 1964 when she got her independence and gained republic status in 1966, under the leadership of Ngwazi Dr H. Kamuzu Banda who ruled the country autocratically from 1964 to 1994 with the Malawi Congress Party



(MCP). In 1994, the country adopted a multi-party system of government after a referendum, and the term for the presidency is now five years with one more time of re-election. Dr. Banda was succeeded by Dr. Bakili Muluzi who ruled for two terms up to 2004 under United Democratic Front (UDF) party. Later he was succeeded by Dr. Bingu Wa Muntharika who became Malawi's president after winning the 2004 elections under UDF and later formed his own party known as Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and was re-elected in 2009. He died in April 2012. His vice, Joyce Banda who by then had also formed her Peoples Party (PP) took over the presidency to finish his term, which ends in 2014. As the researcher is writing, Malawi has the first ever woman president since it became independent. Hence, Malawi becomes the second country in Africa to be led by a woman. Some people liked the idea of having the woman president while some have not accepted that a woman is leading them. This shows that the marginalization of women even in public social sphere is present. Some men and women do not allow a woman to lead them.

### **2.1.2 Gender issues in Malawi**

Malawi is one of the emerging countries and the highest population lives below one dollar a day. Malawi's major problems are population growth, corruption, HIV/AIDS, and increased pressure on agricultural land. The Malawi society has several tribes, and the majority is Chewa ethnic group.

The Malawi government recognizes the position of women as an important factor in development, poverty reduction, and improvement in the standard of living. Despite equality in rights being guaranteed by the Constitution and legislation of Malawi, women are still marginalized. Men still lead in decision-making and employment status as compared to women. Currently, there are a higher number of boys attending school than girls. In a recent study, showed almost 30% women who had no education, which represent a higher percentage of females that have never attended education as compared to male (Malawi Demographic Health Survey (MDHS) 2010:14).

While gender issues have become more normal in policies, challenges keep on with regard to implementation, monitoring, cultural bias, political will, and inadequate budgetary allocations to gender actions (MDHS 2010). From what the Malawi Demographic Health Survey has found,

women status is very low in Malawi because the majorities are poor, illiterate and lack skills, therefore, do not participate in decision-making. Secondly, most of these women live in the rural areas where there are limited facilities to education and employment. Despite the above status, women are key workers in the national economy as they are farmers, income earners, traders, and family-care givers (Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) 2000). Malawi's cultural traditions have for long overlooked most forms of domestic violence, treating them as private issues without the need for external interference. As a result, most violence against women goes unreported.

The government of Malawi recognizes that sustainable economic and social development of the country requires full and equal participation of women, men, girls and boys. There is uneven gender distribution of the labour force in the formal and informal employment (Ministry of Gender, youth and community services 2000-2005).

In view of this, the survey done by MDHS on women participation in decision-making discovered that 37% of women decide for themselves how to spend their earnings, and 21% of women make joint decisions with their husbands; 40% of the married women responded that mainly their husbands make decisions regarding how their earnings are spent. Decision-making on earnings by women is higher in urban than in rural areas: 56% of urban women decide on their own how to spend their earnings compared with 31% of rural women (MDHS 2010). Across the regions, the highest proportion of men who think that wives should participate in all the specified decisions is found in the Southern Region (21%) while men in the Northern and Central Regions are less likely to have this opinion (18 % and 17 % respectively) (MDHS 2010:230). With this report, one can conclude that men still lead in decision-making and women are sidelined to some extent in Malawi.

### **2.1.3 Culture of the Chewa people**

As already stated in chapter one, the Chewa people form the major part of Malawi's population and are largely in the central, the area where Nkhoma Synod is located and southern parts of Malawi. The first Bantu people, known as the proto-Bantu, were the Banda and the Phiri clans of the present Chewa people. They migrated from *Uluba* (now Zaire) and their language,

Chichewa, became the national language alongside with English the official language (Phiri 2007:25).

The Chewa are peaceful people and they had managed to distinguish themselves from their neighbors through language, by having *Nembo* (special tattoo marks), and by the possession of a religious system based on the *Nyau* secret societies, which came under immense pressure with the arrival of the missionaries. The Chewa people, converted to Christianity had to cut relationship links with other Chewa, and were buried in different graveyards. The situation continued throughout the British rule of the protectorate of Nyasaland (now Malawi) (Kawale 2001: 215).

Traditionally, the Chewa are matrilineal society however, today they combine influences of both matrilineal and patrilineal leadership (Phiri 2007:35).

Culturally there is evidence that among the Chewa people of the central region, for a long time women held the highest religious position in the society. In addition, churches in the central region cannot exclude women from the position of leadership by basing their argument on culture. There is evidence to prove that women had such authority in the traditional culture. The Chewa has rich cultural norm that validates women serving in their religion as leaders (Phiri 2007:35).

In chieftainship, the succession passed on to a male child born to the chief's sister, a daughter with leadership qualities could be chosen if there is no male child.

The Chewa woman is traditionally looked upon as *tsinde* (the root of the lineage) as well as *mbumba* (a dependent). A woman is measured as a sacred vessel of life, responsible for continuation of the community, and nourishing and shaping of that life (Phiri 2007:36).

The religious system of '*Makewana*' (mother of all people) in the case of Chewa people as described by Phiri among the Chewa, God was without sex. Chewa people described God through many activities by many incidences and which are not ascribed to any gender (2007:28).

In Chewa religion, all the shrines had a woman who was reflected as a leading light among her people. The woman would prophesy after being possessed by what they believed to be

supernatural. Her position as a prophetess and ritual leaders were inherited by her daughters and other descendants (2007:29)

Chewa tradition religion declined first due to complete disappearing of '*Makewana*'. Secondly, Makumbi village responsible for providing food to Msinja town so that the officials could concentrate on religious roles was no longer there. Thirdly, Christianity, which preached a message against the customary religions, made it difficult for an already deteriorated cult to work with full provision from its people (Phiri 2007:34).

This had a negative impact to a Chewa woman as she lost her dignity with the coming of slave women, i.e women from other tribes within Malawi who were captured in war or purchased from other caravans. In 1810, Chewa chiefs were involved in the slave trade. This was a means of gaining status for the chiefs' status was dependent on the size of the village, and female slaves were a target of slavery as prospective wives, child-bearers, and farmers. The slave women were more submissive to men than the free Chewa woman was. For example in a polygamous family, Chewa free woman was forced to be submissive to her husband for the reason that husbands started preferring slave women as a result of slave women unconditional submissiveness (Phiri 2007:46).

Secondly, the foreign influence comprising of people from the patrilineal lineage who came and settle among the Chewa like the Swahili, Chikunda and Ngoni. The Ngoni were war like people and with their patriarchy destroyed the religious power of women among the Chewa, through intermarriage (Phiri 2007:46).

Thirdly, Christianity seems to have been an influential factor as far as changing the image of Chewa women is concerned. Phiri puts it as the 'most decisive change' brought in by missionaries. Apart from its positive influence the church perpetuated patriarchal theology use of biblical reasons, to prohibit women from becoming leaders i.e. deacons, church elders, and ministers in the Nkhoma Synod (Phiri 2007:47). The church made most decision in the matrilineal system of the Chewa.

However, the church had positive transformation. The status of women changed for better because the church liberated them from a number of de-humanizing practices done in the name

of tradition, like the banning of bride wealth, the abolition of child marriages, and the banning of polygamy, which brought women a blessing at the same time suffering. Once a polygamous man becomes a Christian, he was supposed to maintain his marriage with his first wife, and had to divorce the other wives. While women who were first wives were liberated from the sufferings of competing for the same man, those who were not first wives were divorced and suffered economic hardship. (2007:70-77).

## **2.2 C.C.A.P. MALAWI**

The Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (C.C.A.P.) Malawi is divided into the three political administrative regions according to their originality, language, confessional standards, theology, liturgy and polity (Brown 2004:22). In the northern part, is Livingstonia synod, established in 1875 by Dr Robert Laws, who was a Scottish doctor, clergyman, educationalist and explorer, from Free Church of Scotland. In the central region, is Nkhoma Synod, established in 1889 by two missionaries Rev. A.C. Murray and TCB Vlok, from Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. In the southern region, there is Blantyre Synod, established in 1876, by Henry Henderson from Established Church of Scotland.

In 1924, the two Scottish Presbyterian missions, Livingstonia and Blantyre, joined to form the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). Shortly afterward, in 1926, Nkhoma Presbytery joined the CCAP Malawi (Brown 2005:16-19).

Although the Livingstonia and Blantyre Synods opened the leadership positions of deacons, elders and ministers to women, this was not done in order to treat men, women as equals, but feeling the space that was created by men who joined the army in the First, and Second World War and some had traveled to other countries in search of employment. Very few women have been ordained as ministers and in fact, only recently (Hawkins Chepah Tom Gondwe 2009:15).

According to J. Mlenga (2008:9), the first woman minister in Livingstonia Synod was ordained on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2000, yet theological training for women started in 1977.

According to Dr W.R. Kawale (2001:217), Blantyre Synod ordained the first woman minister on 7 January 2001, yet women started receiving theological training in the mid-1990. These trained women could not be ordained but given other jobs such as teaching jobs in secondary schools.

### **2.2.1 Nkhoma Synod**

Andrew Murray established the first station of the Nkhoma Synod of the C.C.A.P. on 28 November 1889 near Chiwere Village about 26 miles west of the present Salima district headquarters. The station was called 'Mvera', (Chichewa, *Malawian language*) which means 'listening'. Murray was sent to Malawi by the Minister's Mission Union of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of South Africa in 1888 (Phiri 2007:49). Nkhoma Synod Headquarters was established in 1896 at the request of Mazengera, a Chewa chief, in a bid to gain protection against the Ngoni raids (Phiri 2007:50). *In 1956 Nkhoma Presbytery became Nkhoma Synod. It was to remain under the stewardship of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) until 1962* (Brown 2004:19)

As indicated above, Nkhoma Synod is found in the central region of Malawi, which is 35,592 square kilometers and has 9 districts, a population of 5,510,195, with the Chewa people as the majority ethnic group in the region and Malawi as a whole (Malawi National Statistics 2008). In the Nkhoma Synod, women are more than men in their church membership, over 65 % are women. Nkhoma Synod C.C.A.P. has 16 Presbyteries, made up of 160 congregations and 2500 prayer houses, a membership of over 1.6 million, with only 155 active male ministers and 18 retired male ministers (From interview). Like the women that accompanied Jesus and the twelve in Luke 8:1-3, the women in Nkhoma Synod play a critical role and the importance in their voice in promoting a church tolerance, integrity, and diversity. Women appear to be better organized in the church than men are. For example, women formed a well-organized Women's Guild, which has existed as an integral part of the church since 1940 (Zolamulira 2006:81).

The C.C.A.P. Nkhoma Synod in all levels regards the Bible as the Word of God. For them, the Bible's authority is above every other authority. The church's authority is under the authority of the Bible.

The Nkhoma Synod has a Reformed identity with a strong emphasis on the centrality and transforming power of the Word of God (Chatha Msangaambe 2011:106). To the extent that

even though the mother church DRC started some time, back accepting women in leadership and decision-making, some leaders in Nkhoma Synod feel the mother church has neutralized the gospel just as the western world has because they brought in a pure gospel to Africa and now they are changing it to liberal or feminism. Soon it will be African time to send missionaries to the western world to remind them about the original and pure gospel they brought to Africa (Interview with Rev. Likhoozi)

In 1958, Rev JS Mwale became the first Malawian Moderator of the Nkhoma Synod (Brown 2004:20). Every two years there are meetings of the Synod at Chongoni (Namoni Katengeza Church Lay Training Centre) where main decisions are made and strategies are set for the entire Synod.

The CCAP General Assembly General Secretary Rev. YA Chienda says of this issue that it has long been debated, that no doubt it will be debated again next year, and “My hope is that one day it will pass.” He recalled that a resolution sanctioning the ordination of women in Nkhoma Synod was passed in 1953/54. What happened to them? “It died a natural death later on.” He went on to explain that the women pastors were not accepted in the male-oriented village Churches of Nkhoma Synod. Even today, it is the common practice, even in the urban churches, for men and women to sit separately in church. When asked to verify Rev. Kuthyola’s statement about Livingstonia and Blantyre synods having problems with their women ministers falling into immorality, Chienda would only say that CCAP women ministers have not been around for very long. With the other synods of the CCAP and other Reformed bodies around the world (including the Mother Dutch Reformed Churches) now accepting, even encouraging, women as church officers, it seems unlikely that Nkhoma Synod will continue to hold out against for much longer (Brown 2004:60).

In 2005, they tabled this issue again and the Synod agreed that women should preach in the church, and that was a positive move for women in the Nkhoma Synod. In 2007, the Synod accepted women to take positions of deacons and elders, which was actually done in 2009 in some congregations while some remained adamant until today. This was not easy as culture and tradition is still strong. Some men would move out of the church saying it is an abomination for them to sit in the pew and listen to a woman teaching or preaching.

Nkhoma Synod, as part of CCAP Malawi, is a member of other church councils like Malawi Council of Churches (MCC), which is connected to others like World Communion of Reformed

Churches (WCRC), World Alliance Reformed Church (WARC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) just to mention a few.

### **2.3 CONCLUSION**

Malawi's population has slightly more women than men; women have not enjoyed a fair share of the resources. For every one illiterate man, there are approximately two illiterate women. Girls have had less educational opportunities than boys have. However, women contribute to the financial development of the country.

The north and some parts of the south are patrilineal, and as Gondwe puts women involvement in CCAP Malawi is not based on equality, but on the benefit of the church to fill up the gap. This affirms the first assumption that the way missionaries introduced Christianity has contributed to the women exclusion in leadership positions as they follow the patriarchy of the Bible. The next chapter discusses the process and method used in this study.

Figure 1 below is the map of Malawi showing the three regions north, central, and south, in addition, the neighboring countries.



Figure 1

## 2.4 MAP OF MALAWI



(<http://www.emapsworld.com>)

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher is discussing all the processes and methods used to collect data i.e. the literature review, interviews and observation and tools used for data analysis. The interview guide is accessible at the very end of this chapter.

#### 3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

A special interest focused on practical theological books written in an African context, published, and unpublished works on sociology and practical theology about Malawian issues were considered. The researcher has found some sources that might be helpful to the topic under study. The general historical books about Malawi and the church in Malawi have been used together with some books from Africa and other countries. Nkhoma Synod books, i.e. *Zolamulira* {Nkhoma Synod rules and regulations book}, women's guild, and only one book from Malawi written by Isabel Apawo Phiri. A woman theologian from Malawi worked on her doctoral thesis on *African women in religion and culture – Chewa women in the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian: a critical study from women perspective* in 1992. She is the author and co-author of many books and articles. For this study, the researcher is using one of her books, *Women, Presbyterian and patriarchy: Religious experiences of Chewa women in Central Malawi. Third edition published in 2007* and is the first book to be written by a Malawian woman theologian. This book was given the most attention as the main source. This is so because of scarcity of relevant books on the topic under study in Nkhoma Synod. Additionally, two male ministers recommended it to the researcher during individual interviews. The researcher has some unpublished sources also from other scholars in Nkhoma Synod like the work of Walter Larry Brown who did his doctorate in theology; on *the Development in Self-Understanding of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod during The First Forty Years of Autonomy*: This ecclesiological Study was done in 2004. The work of Hawkins Chepah Tom Gondwe, church elder from one of the Nkhoma Synod churches, on *the possible influence of crucial Pauline texts on the role of women in the Nkhoma Synod of the Central African Presbyterian Church* in 2009.

Some sources are in Chichewa, the Malawi national language; the researcher had to translate them into English.

The use of internet information will also form part of this literature survey.

This acted as a secondary data collection because some ideas have changed with time, and the researcher intends to do a comprehensive review of the available literature on the meaning and life in a congregation as the situation is today. Therefore, critical review to avoid having outdated information was done as some ideas might not be consistent and thorough. Secondly, the documented ideas may not reflect the ideas of all people and not all people might be aware of what is written.

## **3.2. INTERVIEWS**

Interviews are explained as a way of bringing the multiple views of people, and a method of maintaining and generating conversations on issues. Clearly, interviews are much more than just a tool as Bridget Somekh & Cathy Lewin has referred to interviews as an instrument to nail deeper into the wide structures that border the spheres of issues. It is a method of seeing, or rather a state for seeing everything (2005:43). In view of this point, total number of people interviewed in CCAP Malawi was 14, with ages ranging from 35 to 60 years old. In every Synod, two ministers were interviewed. However, there was a slight variation in one Synod of interviewing three ministers. In general, care was taken to collect relevant and useful data in all the three Synods.

### **3.2.1 Individual interviews**

The researcher considered this the most important form of data collection in this research study. Moreover, it is the richest only source of data, though it provides information in a chosen place rather than the natural field setting. In addition, the researcher's presence may bias responses. A minimum of 20 and a maximum of 45 minutes were spent for individual interview with the four male ministers and three female ministers each. The interview was conducted at the Synod offices as their work place. Secondly, as a meeting point, some ministers were called from the congregation they were serving to come and meet the researcher for interviews. Except for one

minister, the interview was done at his house this was in Nkhoma synod. Of the four males, three were influential ministers holding high leadership position at Synod level (General Secretaries) for the three synods in Malawi. The remaining male minister is a lecturer at Nkhoma Synod Theological College. The other three were women ministers' serving in the congregation except for one who is a moderator in Blantyre Synod, which is another high office position. This brings seven ministers the uneven number of men and women was by coincidence as the researcher was sampling to accommodate a representative range of interviewees from lower levels to higher levels. By coincidence, the number seven is biblically significant that represent completeness. Hence, we can as well infer that the views of these seven ministers ushers the whole understanding on this debatable topic. Unstructured interview guide was developed; care was taken to avoid leading questions. The researcher appeared natural, and attention was paid where the interviews were being held.

### **3.2.2 Focus group discussion**

Seven women participated in a focus group discussion that was done in Nkhoma Synod only as the case study. These were members from women's guild. As such, the researcher did not stand back from the group members and merely gather their responses. The researcher actively engaged with the women, to explore the possibility and limitations that was placed around their responses and how they would place their views in a suitable context. In view of this process, the researcher introduced the topic, asked a question, controlled departure from the subject, and stopped conversations that would lead participants to depart from the subject. This role was also carried out with ease because the participants already recognized the researcher as the conductor, and there was mutual trust.

The interview guide, during focus group discussion, was translated into Chichewa, Malawi national language for women to be free to discuss the questions.

While the focus group discussion data collecting method can be self-sufficient, it still has room for other methods like in-depth interviews with influential leaders in the Synod hence a need for individual interviews. Interviews were taken as primary data collection as it gives a true picture of what is currently happening in the Synod.

### 3.2.3 Observation

The aim of qualitative research is to provide a complete and detailed description of the research question. Therefore, access to the relevant documents and use of audio recorder making sure that the researcher misses nothing was necessary. Notes were taken during the interviews. Observations were done during both, the individual interviews and the focus group discussion to explore natural scene in the CCAP Malawi. It was observed that some women in focus group discussion were not free to discuss their views; they showed some fears of being reported somewhere. This was surprisingly different from the individual interviews where the participants were free to share their views. However, the researcher was both external as coming from outside and internal as a member of the same Synod. As such, the researcher had the advantage of increasing assimilation and full acceptance by the people involved in the research. Thereby, having first-hand experience with the participants though private information observed is not reported in this paper.

### 3.2.4 Validity

In their book, Somekh & Lewin shows the challenges of accessing the participants and convening the group, the difficulties to ensure privacy and that some people are unwilling to add. Focus group discussions employ either available or strong-minded sampling, neither of which produces a descriptive sample. Secondly, treating focus group data as if they can just be collective and improved up is to overlook the importance of group forces at work. Thirdly, focus groups are not an actual way of measuring attitudes or, even, of provoking people's actual opinions. They provide historical information. This is because they are, essentially, a social practice through which contributors co-produce an account of themselves and their concepts, which is specific to that time and place. "*Focus groups are not simply cheap and dirty surveys*" (Somekh & Lewin 2005:43). Focus groups rely on the researcher as the principal data-generating tool. It allows the researcher to control over the question being discussed.

It should be noted that diakonia is a new term in the context of Nkhoma Synod and all the questions related to diakonia were first explained for people to understand. This helped to have the right answers from the interviewees.

### 3.3 CODING

Interviews were transcribed and compared for similarities, differences, and general patterns, coding of the law data to come up with meaningful information was processed thematically.

Where qualitative research seeks to generalize a general issue representative *sampling*, is desirable. In this research place, people and culture were taken into account. As such, on the empirical chapter, data is presented at Synod levels and the interviewees have been kept as anonymous. Therefore, codes have been used to represent people in quotations. So for all the ministers in a leadership position at Synod level, the researcher has referred to them as Min.L (Minister Leader) while the rest was referred by gender as Min.M or Min.W (Minister Male or Minister Woman respectively). Women in focus group are referred as women FGD. The data is summed up to give an overview of CCAP Malawi in general.

### 3.4. ANALYSIS

#### 3.4.1 SWOT analysis

A method used to analyze an organization by scrutinizing the strong point and weakness as inner factors and chances and fears as outer factors. Albert Humphrey developed this technique in America with the aim of finding failures for corporate planning. This technique is mostly used by business people and companies. It can also be used to assess an individual with an aim of taking advantage on the strength and opportunities and minimize the weakness and eliminate threats. In addition, this has been used by many churches Nkhoma synod being one. It is a good tool because it helps to assess services for the betterment of members in the institution. Especially when conditions are not favorable, SWOT analysis helps to seek and improve organizations routine ([http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_05.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm) accessed on 09.04.2013). Most institutions have benefited with SWOT analysis in that problems are solved, and changes are implemented in many ways. The researcher's assumption is SWOT analysis will be helpful to Nkhoma Synods on the role of women and women involvement in the church. Moreover, it is helpful in planning on the way forward.

### **3.5. CONCLUSION**

The unstructured interview guide had three main points of concentration in consideration with the hypothesis. The first point is the understanding of gender issues in the church. The second is the relevance of women leading in the church, assessing how the church empowers women and challenges of leadership in general. The last point is on the opportunities in the church for effective women leadership. Below is the interview guide:-

#### **A. GENDER AS A CROSS CUTTING ISSUE IN MALAWI.**

1. How is it communicated in the church?
2. What is the church, in the context we are in now, say on women being in leadership position considering culture and tradition of the indigenous people?
3. How can you define the church, in this context that women are not allowed to be leaders in the church?
4. Do you think it is good to have a woman minister in a church, why?
5. Are there any other diaconal works women do?

#### **B. RELEVANCE OF WOMAN LEADING THE CHURCH.**

1. In history of the church, have we ever had a woman minister?
  - a. YES (If yes, what led to its discontinuity?)
  - b. NO (If no, why we do not have woman minister in the church today?)
2. In your own opinion, what do you think is the church stand on this issue?
3. How relevant is it to have a woman leading a congregation?
4. What do you think would be the challenges of having a woman minister?
5. What motivates the women to participate in the church leadership?
6. How do you motivate and help the women as a church?
7. What is your position regarding women ministers in the church?
8. What are the challenges that you face in your ministry?
9. What do you think can be done by the church to help empower women in future?

**C. OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHURCH FOR EFFECTIVE WOMEN LEADERSHIP.**

1. What else do you think women can help in church ministry that is not done now?
2. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of having women as church ministers?
3. In your own understanding, what you think the Bible says about women being ministers in the church?



## CHAPTER 4

### THEORY

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the theoretical tools used in data analysis in a more detailed way. There are two tools that the researcher has used namely; gender and power and ecumenical diakonia.

#### 4.1 GENDER AND POWER

When we come to the way human beings should behave, women are expected to act according to certain norms, defined earlier by another culture in another time (Wanda Deifelt 1997:49). The fact that the Bible has had a strong influence on the Chewa Christian culture, in a way it has been used and misused to keep women bound to subordinate behavior is the starting point of this gender and power theory. The demand is for acknowledgment of women in the leadership position and rethinking of the ideology of making men more powerful than women. In view of this, there is a need to share power equally in both gender, i.e. power to be experienced within individuals and community as a whole. Power within has a potential to transform communities to be inclusive, changes understanding and experience of God, and it guarantees justice for all people. In as much as difference cannot be ignored, it should not be viewed as a foundation of division but rather for a right relation for equality (Ranjini Rebera 1997:85-89). Gender is used to define the appearances of women and men that are socially constructed.

The gender approach goal work to attain just bond by changing the inequality of relationships, gender differences, and prejudices. It seeks to redress the disparities, to empowering the lesser in this case women and ensure them full participation in all areas of community, in addition, to participate in decision-making and promoting women rights (Myra Blyth and Wendy S. Robins 1988:54).

Oxford online dictionary defines gender as a noun, “*the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones)*”

(<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/gender?q=gender> accessed on 16 April 2013). In simple terms, gender has been defined as a way we organize our lives, responsibilities, and roles as males and females. These are learned and enforced behaviors that are sustained through culture, education, language, and faith beliefs. On the other hand, power is defined as “*the ability or capacity to do something or act in a particular way*”(<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/power?q=power> accessed on 16 April 2013 ).

Power is often understood as control, dominion and hierarchy ;- but if we are to understand power from the Biblical perspective as Myra Blyth and Wendy S Robins defined it in the light of crucifixion and resurrection, to freely let go of all that hinders a life of sacrificial love. Within kind of power, revolution takes place in the inner life of an individual, and one starts noticing relationships, as personal and not legal, leadership is communal and not chain of command used to bring change (Blyth and Robins 1988:66).

However, power is defined and whatever it means to individuals and groups, it is important to ensure that women and men work together towards a more just and caring society in which the power base is not automatically male (Blyth and Robins 1988:74).

It should be understood that power is from God. It fills and disperses through those who trust God to recognize and reckon with the marginalized and the excluded (LWF 2009:37).

## **4.2 ECUMENICAL DIAKONIA**

Diakonia has been defined in different ways. For this paper, the researcher has considered this definition;

...the active expression of Christian witness in response to the needs and challenges of the community in which Christians and the church live.....in all its many authentic forms cannot be separated from the struggle for justice and peace; from empowering, transforming, liberating and suffering .....is inclusive (Blyth and Robins 1988:23).

From what Kjell Nordstokke has discussed as key concepts of diaconal ministry (2009:43-46), first it should be transforming through a process which pictures the achievement of certain goals. Transformation is a social change in which human dignity is respected more with peace and justice. Secondly, empowering, a process of understanding that every person is created in the image of God and has the capacity and ability liberated from one's social situations. This denotes shifting power i.e. power differences are distributed with logic. However, most churches mask power behind hermeneutics. Thirdly, reconciliation as a process initiated by God who has acted so that all Christians are restored back to him. The church was shown this as an example to follow in its reconciliation mission and when carrying out the work of Jesus in the society. Diakonia should be understood as unselfish Christian love in the society (Nordstokke 2011:42). Diakonia favors the special method of inclusion that does not consider ethnicity, gender, and economic issues as stated in Galatians 3:28.

Ecumenical diakonia has empowerment element in it. Empowerment is a process, not an event, and concerns people, not objects. Empowerment has a sense of emancipation from some mental and physical captivity it does not only benefit an individual, but also often initiates a cooperative achievement. Empowerment brings about a permanent change that opens a new worldview for individuals and organizations. (Msangaambe 2011:204) Empowerment should focus more on reclaiming, than reacting.

Empowerment is described as adding on the existing power. Marginalized people should be empowered so that they can set their paces to develop socially, spiritually and economically. Empowerment is a theological exercise having God Himself involved at the center of the process. God calls workers into the field, gives them gifts, and empowers them despite their gender differences.

Diakonia as a dimension of being a church has ecclesiological implications. The Nkhoma synod has empowered women in many ways since its establishment. Historically it has played the prophetic role, for instance by providing education for girls as boys.

#### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

Genders issues mostly deal with social or political issues they deal with rights and dignity of human beings. Whereas being a church deals with theology, inclusiveness and society transformation the Bible is the key. Diakonia is the bridge that joins the two, social issues and the theology.

Gender and power theory is essential because men control everything in the Nkhoma Synod. Women are seen as not have ruling power according to the Bible therefore, should not be involved in ordination, but must be commended to serve the lord through the office of all believers (Phiri 2007:59). Hence, women are not offered theological training because they will not be ordained (Phiri 2007:117) though there are women who have studied theology in other colleges with their own efforts and are not recognized or ordained (Phiri 2007:118).

Ecumenical diakonia is important because the church is a diaconal actor and should help empower the marginalized including those who have been left out as less capable and to transform society.

The researcher is for the view that these theories will help in analyzing the data as the research question gets an answer.

## CHAPTER 5

### WOMEN'S PLACE IN NKHOMA SYNOD

#### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

In this empirical chapter, the researcher will present women in Nkhoma Synod in both visible and invisible areas as well as the perception of people in the Nkhoma Synod towards women empowerment and women being in leadership positions. As stated earlier, women have been kept away from some leadership positions. Secondly, the *Chigwirizano cha Amai* (Women's guild), which the researcher is going to come back to it later, has not been spared from this male dominance, with the position of *Mkhalapakati* – a male who is always present in all *Chigwirizano cha Amai* gatherings. The male is supposed to be a spectator and a coordinator between *Chigwirizano cha Amai* and the session, but he influences decision making in *Chigwirizano cha Amai*. When women organize the annual *Chigwirizano cha Amai* conferences and other gatherings, the main speaker is the church minister who is male (Phiri 2007:97).

#### 5.1. VISIBLE AREAS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

##### a) GENERAL

Women contribution is not only in their families and in society. Women contribute in church too. It is not just in number that women make their contribution but also in areas like teaching Sunday school and class Sunday, cleaning of the church and its surroundings and singing in a choir group. In this paper, the researcher just highlights a few.

*Evangelism:* At first women were not allowed to preach in Nkhoma Synod churches, until 2005 when women were accepted to preach in church. Despite the latter situation women have always done a tremendous work for the church for example evangelism, they would go from door to door in their neighborhoods sharing the gospel, and this gave them a chance to speak to both men and women (Kawale 2001:213). Students were not left out as some women were teachers in mission schools and they shared the gospel with them too.

*Care for the needy:* As discussed by both Kawale (2001:213) and Phiri (2007:95) women contribute, raise funds, and collect food for use in caring for the needy. Women visit and counsel the sick, comfort the bereaved and assist the poor. Women plays bigger role in social gatherings be it at funeral ceremony or wedding ceremony. At the funerals, women are always more involved, they sit inside the house singing songs of comfort, hope, and encouraging the bereaved family whilst men usually sit outside the funeral house. The same is during the wedding ceremonies that women are in the forefront helping. In view of this, as an important area of service the Synod has to concentrate, women balance the work of the Synod.

...women in the Nkhoma Synod have played a great role from 1940 and even before that. We had missionaries from South Africa who were coming here with their wives and sometimes women only with an aim of making an impact with Malawi women... (Rev.Likhoozi)

However, women are not allowed to preach even at funeral ceremony of a member of the *Chigwirizano cha Amai*. According to Phiri Nkhoma Synod theology gave ruling power to men, and it would therefore be theologically wrong to give power to a woman (2007:59-60). This point was agreed by Min.M 3, during interview who said, “...we are a church standing on reformed doctrine. Women should be behind men, giving advice to them. That is what I understand about the Bible.”

Women also contribute in the following areas outside the church;

*Education:* Most women are teachers, some head teachers at Nkhoma Synod schools. Some conduct adult literacy in their communities. Through this, women have indeed taken an active part in helping Nkhoma Synod to make an important contribution to the Malawi nation (Kawale 2001:213).

*Health:* Women work as nurses, midwives, and matrons in both Nkhoma Synod hospitals and clinics. Some women are teachers at the Synod’s nursing school while some women members of the Nkhoma Synod serve in government and other hospitals and clinics (Kawale 2001:214). While the Nkhoma Synod plays a major role in health services, women’s role cannot be ignored.

## b) WOMEN'S GUILD

The Nkhoma Synod deliberated the possibility of establishing the Women's Guild in 1939, locally called *Chigwirizano cha Amai* and it was introduced with the following aims;-

- To enhance Christian women to be true witnesses of Jesus Christ through unity among themselves as they work for God.
- Serving others, *Chigwirizano cha Amai* is involved with spreading the gospel, teaching Sunday school and inviting friends to church and other charitable works.
- Responsibilities of women are to begin the work of God in their families, with the children encouraging them to go to Sunday school and not miss church service on Sundays (Zolamulira 2006:81).

*Women opinions-* They greatly appreciated the establishment of *Chigwirizano cha Amai* because for them it was a sign of maturity in Christianity (Phiri 2007:83). According to Phiri before the establishment of *Chigwirizano cha Amai*, the women had a feeling that men only could do God's work (2007:84)

*Leadership-* it was first led by ministers' wives, and later had been taken away from them and given to ministers through their wives (Phiri 2007:83). There is still male dominance in this as women cannot meet without *Mkhalapakati* (male church elder) and this is mandatory (Zolamulira 2006:82).

According to Phiri (2007:80), while the women look at *Chigwirizano cha Amai* as a forum where they display their leadership, evangelistic and other talents, church leaders became afraid that it will degenerate into a 'church in a church'. The leadership, seeing this development, they did everything possible to keep women in check, hence the introduction of *Mkhalapakati*.

Women in *Chigwirizano cha Amai* hold their meetings in three categories.

### 1) Monthly gatherings

During these gatherings, which are held twice a month i.e. first and third week of every month, they follow the yearly guide *Mau a Mwezi ndi Mwezi* (monthly scripture reading) for women's guild and women are accepted to preach since they are all women gathered apart from the *Mkhalapakati*.

### 2) Revival gatherings

These are held annually, several congregations meet at one congregation and all *Chigwirizano cha Amai* members from these congregations do attend, usually it is a very big gathering. Three to four months before the main meeting a preliminary meeting is held at the proposed venue and this is called *kukhoma msonkhano* each station sends a representative. The main issue is to discuss and plan how to run the four-day meeting and how much should each participating congregations contribute. Again, the topic for this four-day meeting is chosen not by the women themselves but a male minister who prepares the yearly guide for *Chigwirizano cha Amai* (Gondwe 2009:22).

Women are not left to organize on their own. The church minister and church elders are much involved. This has some positive result on one side, as the men help women in other areas and as well as negative result on the other side, as men make important decisions on issues concerning women. *Zolamulira* (guidebook for Nkhoma Synod regulation and rules) further adds that this is done to make sure that the meeting is done in a proper order. Moreover, women are told to pay the church minister who is the speaker at the revival meeting (2006:84). This gives an idea that men involvement in assisting women is because women are perceived as less capable (Phiri 2007:102).

### 3) Main gatherings

These are held once in three years (*Zolamulira* 2006:82).

*Chigwirizano cha Amai* yearly guide *Mau a Mwezi ndi Mwezi* (monthly scripture readings) is made by a male minister at Synod level. This book is produced by Nkhoma Synod, the women guild leadership gives a topic to be covered, the women have not studied theology yet, so usually



the ministers' help and all the costs for its production are met by *Chigwirizano cha Amai*. (Phiri 2007:90)

*Chigwirizano cha Amai* practice diakonia without calling it 'diakonia' as expressed in the Greek term. They visit the sick, the lonely, the bereaved, and elderly praying and encouraging them with the word of God. They share the gospel amongst themselves during their monthly meetings. They also lead in Para-Church organizations. Women do a lot in terms of social development and financial contribution. *Chigwirizano cha Amai* makes the church be seen more in the society because of the women's work of serving others, sharing in the suffering of the needy and the broken hearted through their charitable work. Doing door to door evangelism. Actually, women walk the talk because *Chigwirizano cha Amai*, is a powerful wing of the church, faithful to its objectives and result-oriented. It was initiated by women lay leaders and it has grown amazingly due to their efforts. Women have excelled constantly, and have contributed significantly to the financial and infrastructural development of the Synod (Msangaambe 2011:66). With the initiative of the women themselves, they have affected the church and society in no small way.

### **c) CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

From 2005, women were allowed to preach and in 2007, women were allowed to be church elders and deacons. In 2009, women were elected in positions of elders and deacons. It is now four years for those women who have been in these positions.

## **5.2 INVISIBLE AREAS FOR WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

### **a) LEADERSHIP AND THEOLOGICAL TRAINING**

Women appeared nowhere in Nkhoma Synod theological college and in leadership position as church ministers, since the beginning of the church in 1889 until 2007 when women were only accepted at Synod level to be a church deacons and elders and not church minister position. This met an opposition at church level where it was supposed to be implemented, as some male

church minister, elders, and deacons allowed women in the stated position and some until today have not accepted the women.

In view of this, the case of Mary Chinkhwita, which the researcher presents below, proves the reality of a woman's place in Nkhoma Synod church.

### **5.2.1 CASE OF MARY CHINKHWITA**

Mary's case is a wound; it also came up during data collection in all the three interviews that the researcher conducted in Nkhoma Synod, as how the first attempt to involve women in leadership position failed. This case seems to be an obstacle for advancement of women in Nkhoma Synod and has made the marginalization of women in leadership positions to be seen more clearly in the Synod.

As documented by Phiri in her book, Mary Chinkhwita was the first woman to be enrolled at Nkhoma Theological College in 1968 (this contradicts with Brown (2004:59) who documented that she was trained in 1965) with the aim of helping other women and not to be a church minister. In the process, according to Phiri the Synod decided that she should not attend her last year in college, but start work in schools and colleges among girls and women in Lilongwe because the Synod was looking for another university in South Africa for her to continue her studies (2007:58). This step can also be assumed that since the Synod did not want a woman to lead at any point, it was one way of getting her out of the way. (Again, this contradicts with Kawale (2001:217) who states that Mary finished her theological training only that she was not ordained). According to Phiri Mary complained about the work she was doing as being different from the training she did. This led to her resignation that shocked the Synod, which negotiated with her and promised her better working condition that involved evangelism and giving Bible instruction at Lilongwe Girl's Secondary School. Later, Mary learnt that she was not qualified for the South African university because she had insufficient qualifications since she did not finish her fourth year (2007:57). Seven years down the line, she got a British award to study one year in England. (Phiri in her book did not clearly say who gave Mary the scholarship). When the researcher asked the General Secretary of Nkhoma Synod about the scholarship, this was the

answer, *“I am not very sure about her scholarship, it might be by herself because she was frustrated in the end.”* Again, the Synod demanded that she study social work in England, this was another problem for her to find the course. Secondly, she could not study religious studies at degree level as she had insufficient academic background. This made her change career and enrolled in administration course to be an entry point to a degree program in Religious studies. She then developed interest in the new career and ended up with Masters in Administration (Phiri 2007:58). Again, Nkhoma Synod became nervous and saddened that her degree was not in Religious studies. Nkhoma Synod was strong-minded to send her to teach at Mlanda Girls Secondary School when she personally did not like teaching at secondary school (2007:58).

Nkhoma Synod was the first to send a woman to be trained in theology, who was later not ordained and after her, no woman has been sent for training. The researcher’s assumption is that the reason for women subordination was thought to be divinely sanctioned through specific hermeneutics on the creation story in Genesis and Pauline letter (Phiri 2007:55). With this measure, a woman was only to preach fellow women.

The Synod established girls/women schools for example Mlanda, Mvera, Nkhoma nursing and Malingunde Women Lay Training center just to mention a few in almost all levels i.e. primary and secondary, college of nursing and women training center. Through these, many women have been empowered in terms of education and knowledge. Some of these women are leaders in the society they live today in political and social fields.

### **5.3 STUDIES**

Phiri and Gondwe have conducted studies on women issues in Nkhoma Synod, which are similar and useful to this topic. The following studies are given in order to show how Nkhoma Synod attitude towards women leadership has changed overtime. The researcher will present their findings below as they will be helpful in analyzing this study.

### 5.3.1 PHIRI'S STUDY

Phiri had four areas in her survey conducted in 1992, but the researcher will only concentrate on one area which is about women in church leadership positions (i.e. elders, deacon and minister offices) she had 40 interviews in total, 20 men and 20 women. The response against women leadership was as follows:-

#### a) Prejudice and Culture

15 % based their view on prejudice point of view that women are short tempered, and men are patient. Besides, the question how would a woman minister when she is pregnant? This fear should be probably due to the case of *Makewana* as the women involved were not supposed to bear children as long as they held the religious position. 30 % based their view on cultural point of view that a woman's place is at home, giving birth to, and rearing children, citing that culture does not allow a woman to rule over man (Phiri 2007:111:113).

#### b) Conservative theology and Church tradition

20 % based their view on conservative theology and church tradition, that's how the missionaries started it and the Synod, follows it. "*Nkhoma Synod has always followed a conservative theology in everything. In this way we protect the church's reputation*" (Phiri 2007:110). The other point for women marginalization in leadership position was said to be "*..constant fear in the Nkhoma Synod that the presence of women in leadership positions will be a constant temptation to men. Many will lose their faith*" (Phiri 2007:110).

#### c) Biblical reasons

25 % based their view in Bible passages like 1Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1Timothy 2:11-12, which say women can be deacons and not elders or church ministers. Others used the husband and wife subjection as the reason against women in leadership position (Phiri 2007:112).

### *Observation*

- 90% of the men gave the above responses and 10% were positive about women leadership. 90% of the women were positive and 10% had negative responses similar to the men. In her survey, Phiri did not clearly say the influence of these responses she got from the interviewees.

### **5.3.2 GONDWE'S STUDY**

Gondwe did his survey on, '*the influence of crucial Pauline text, I Corinthians 11:2–16 and 14:34-35, and 2 Timothy 2:9-15, on the role of women in Nkhoma Synod.*' He points out the following that are of importance when looking at these Bible texts.

“It is important to note that the word "woman", as used by Paul, is understood differently from the way we understand it. Women were in the category of otherness in relation to men, with all the implications of that. The context in which Paul addressed the issue of women was probably that he was trying to restore peace, order and unity in the church where chaos had come in” (Gondwe 2009:72).

In which he concluded that,

“If these texts are interpreted uncritically, and read without taking the contexts in which they originated into account, thereby regarding them as timeless prescriptions to women, they can indeed be used to keep women from leadership positions in the church” (Gondwe 2009:99).

There is need to understand the context, in which Paul was writing, the culture and what was happening, how the women and men were viewed during that time, for one to interpret these texts by Paul.

In Gondwe's survey, he had 144 participants in total 72 were men and 72 were women. Gondwe's survey was done in categories of women deacons, women elders, and women ministers, Gondwe had almost the same reasons as Phiri of :-

**a) Cultural prejudice and tradition**

57.2 % with men leading based their view on the above point. Issues like pregnant woman leading in a church or a woman in her menstrual cycles discharging duties in the church as concerns. According to Gondwe no woman mentioned any of these as a barrier to lead in a church. It is the men who have problems with women in such situations (Gondwe 2009:119).

**b) Conservative theology**

9.5 % based their view on the above point saying it is against the church to include women in leadership position. This dates back to the formation of Nkhoma Synod by missionaries. Moreover, it is worthy to note that the Dutch Reformed Church, which is the mother church of the Nkhoma Synod started women inclusion in 1982 as deacons and elders and in 1990 women were allowed to serve as ministers (Gondwe 2009:119). Probably this should be the reason why this section has little influence on the marginalization of women in Nkhoma Synod as compared to Phiri.

**c) Biblical reasons**

21.4 % based their view on the above point citing Jesus who had only male disciples. In addition, God asked Adam to account for the fall and not Eve. Out of these 9.5% referred to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14: 34-35 (Gondwe 2009:120).

**d) Practical reasons**

11.9% based their view on the above point saying women are often busier than men are and that they will be overburdened if they are given leadership position. Men acknowledged that women

do many household chores. In addition, in some cases, the relationship of husband and wife is like that of the master and servant hence the point of women being in leadership position in the presence of men is not welcome. *“The statement that women are busy with house chores therefore has negative connotations in the sense that it attests to the fact that a woman is under the authority of man”* (Gondwe 2009:121).

### *Observation*

50% of the men responded negatively to women in church leadership (i.e. to be a minister). This brought in a slight change in the attitudes as compared to Phiri’s survey, which had 90% of the men saying no for women to be in leadership position. These results will be presented in a table format later in analysis chapter to show the changes over time, with the present findings.

With the findings above, the researcher considered a critical evaluation to be done on women and leadership in CCAP Malawi in particular the Nkhoma Synod. This will be useful to the Synod on the areas that needs to be considered for improvement or to be maintained for the benefit of the church. Secondly, how gender and power can be of beneficial to the church as a whole when equality messages is preached and taught from the pulpit. The researcher has in mind the view that, all humans are prone to sin, despite our gender. The nature of Nkhoma Synod order shares power and responsibility; therefore, women should not be treated as less capable in the church leadership.

## **5.4. CURRENT INTERVIEWS**

In this section the researcher, present the responses from the interviews held in the three Synods of CCAP Malawi. Despite taking a survey on people’s opinion on women involvement in the church leadership position, these three areas were taken into consideration, gender issue in the church, relevance of a woman leading a church, and the opportunities in the church for effective women leadership.

The question is: In particular with the Nkhoma Synod, how can the role of women in the CCAP Malawi be explained, and how has the CCAP Synods in Malawi acted in order to improve the role of women in the church, including in leadership positions?

As said in chapter two, the area chosen for research falls into three categories, namely north, center and south covering the CCAP Malawi. Although it is the same church, each region has its own unique influence on the church and women involvement therefore, may have different responses to the questionnaire. Different regions have people with different exposures as far as women leadership is concerned.

Precaution was taken to make sure that the researcher's stand regarding women was not revealed so as not to affect the responses of the participants.

#### **5.4.1. PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON GENDER ISSUES**

##### **a) Livingstonia Synod**

This is what people said :-

- The church does not take gender issues at the center stage whether at service, workshops, and committee meetings. The people hear about gender from other circles and not in the church. *“Sometimes it is ignorance because if the minister knew what it means then relates that to the Bible then the gender issue would be tackled during sermon time but it is not”* (Min.L 1)
- The gender issues are misinterpreted because of how they were introduced, but now with the coming of the woman president people understand the real meaning of gender roles and women are encouraged to be in leadership positions.
- Women in the leadership positions are productive in developments than men do though some people are busy finding ways of pulling women down. *“There are weak women and men and there are strong women and men, so we should not rule out women as weak vessels”* (Min.L 1). Gender issues will have positive impact in the society if preached from the church.
- Gender issues are advocated at a slow pace as the church has left the work under its department of church and society to advocate.



**Observation:**

- Gender issues seem to be unwelcomed in the church because of the way the civil society has advocated it, leading to people to have a negative perception thinking gender issues is something about and for women, and not men. Secondly the patriarch tradition of the Ngoni seem to be strong, that even with other church minister they have not accepted women working alongside men.

**Finding:**

- Gender issues are advocated at a low pace in the church, in addition are viewed as dealing with issues of oppression and women ruling over man.

**b) Blantyre Synod**

This is what people said ;-

- Women demonstrated for their right, and articles were written to trash women involvement in the leadership. The church sensitized many people through meetings held at presbytery and congregation level to accepting women as leaders.
- The 'Fifty-fifty campaign' aimed at equal participation of men and women in the leadership positions, has acted as a way of advocating gender equality in the Synod.
- Equality messages are advocated in the church.
- Both men and women have access to theological training.
- Women are leading and heading different positions like being moderator, church clerk and so on.
- Barring women is there because of how the missionaries taught the early members. The informant is for the idea that Malawian churches should not wait for the missionaries to come again and tell the church that now it is time to ordain women. Indigenous people have to show that they are thinking and learning about the God of equality.

**Observation:**

- Women have fought for their rights in the church and more men in leadership have accepted to work with women in all positions.

**Findings:**

- Women in Blantyre Synod are capable and work in different areas. Whatever men are doing women are also doing.
- Gender issues are advocated at church level, despite the patriarchy background, this has changed not only church but also the society view for a woman.

**c) Nkhoma Synod**

This is what people said :-

- For a long time gender issues have not been communicated in the church, *“in our churches you will not necessarily find people preaching about the gender imbalances that are there.”* (Min.M. 3) Gender issues are communicated at a very small pace, that is during marriage seminars teaching couples that they should help each other and that it should be done out of will and not force.
- Some ministers in Nkhoma Synod view gender issues as a part of feminism, since they are the ones extremely advocating gender issues in the society, and they have funds to do that. The informant added that a caution should be taken when dealing with gender issues as to avoid empowering one side, but both genders.
- Opposition from male ministers, there is a division among ministers on women issues. Some men say the first to be created was Adam, meaning man is a like a vehicle body while a woman is a trailer. Some say women will cause men to sin because Eve was the first to sin in the Garden of Eden.
- Currently, women in Nkhoma Synod are deacons and elders in addition, they help the church in many areas some of which are teaching i.e. Sunday school and class Sunday, cleaning the church building and all its surrounding areas, social work, leading in Para

church organization and administration; believing God as the one who gives people strength to do His work.

- Women exclusion is not seen with the feeling that women are not excluded in the church leadership, as they say that Nkhoma Synod is a well-established church, “.. *but because of tradition and how the whites introduced Christianity here*” (women FGD.2). The church has clung to the old teaching “.. *telling us to involve women but we stick to the first teaching*” (women FGD.5) citing the other example of what was happening long time ago, when school was for boys only and not girls and that today both boys and girls have access to education. The church can do something too on women involvement in church leadership.

#### **Observations:**

- Very few members attend marriage seminars where gender issues are discussed.
- Whilst women from the focus group think, nobody is being discriminated and there is no segregation in the church. There is a mixed reaction between men and women in Nkhoma Synod. “...*people saying if I can see a woman preaching, I can get out.*”(women FGD.1) Even ministers discussing this “*if a woman will be allowed to be a church leader, I will stop serving as a reverend and go home for farming*” (women FGD.7)

#### **Finding:**

- Gender issues are not advocated in Nkhoma Synod. These issues are mostly associated with feminism but actually, men too are involved. Like in the Livingstonia Synod, gender issues, in Nkhoma Synod, are considered as for women only. Gender equality is discussed at family level and not in general church leadership roles.

### **5.4.2 PEOPLES’ VIEWS ON RELEVANCE OF A WOMAN LEADING THE CHURCH**

#### **a) Livingstonia Synod**

This is what people said :-

- Women in the Bible were chosen to lead the entire tribe of the Israelites and they were judges. Even in the New Testament, women were mentioned in a very special way, like being first to witness Jesus' resurrection, and shared the news with the disciples of Jesus. *"..Both old and new testament we have women who have been mentioned highly and had positions of influence."* (Min.L 1)
- The qualifications are the same for college intake, only that now women are advised to get married first because of the challenges the Synod faced with the single women.
- *"Practically, a woman is a leader in our own society, in our own setting and in our own families."* (Min.L 1) With this, they are not doubted of their participation and leadership in the church. *"It is only that men do not say that openly but they know that without a woman in the family, that family is none- existence and it will never be successful."* (Min.L 1) According to the Livingstonia Synod, placing a woman is like placing a mother in a congregation. Women issues at congregation level are addressed amicably as the woman minister understand the women situation more than a man.
- Bible passages that restrict women are seen as for specific occasions and ceremonies and sometimes-geographical location. They aim at making an emphasis on a particular event. In contrary the story of Solomon in the Bible who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, does not give men mandate to go and marry many wives. *"some things were put in the Bible so that we learn from them"* (Min.L 1) therefore, as people follow negative parts of the Bible, care should be taken when one is using these Bible passages as they *"..are very isolated and we have to understand that the Bible was coming amongst people with their traditional beliefs.. God understands us and He is coming with His word at our level"* (Min.L 1).
- People in Livingstonia Synod know there is nowhere in the Bible where it clearly states that a woman can be a minister, bishop or whatever, it is assumed and believed that high positions in the Bible are about leadership. Women leaders, who were not only leaders but also successful leaders, give a belief that the Bible regards women in high esteem not emphasizing in isolated cases where women are barred from doing other things.

- The Pauline text restrict women from leading the church, the same Paul says once you become born again, there is no barrier between a woman and a man and you can witness Jesus. Women too can preach about Jesus. For example, women who went to the tomb early in the morning witnessed the rise of Jesus to Peter and John when men were still sleeping. You find that Peter did not believe a testimony from a woman. He had to run to the tomb to prove for it. The Bible does not contradict itself but supports the ministry of women.
- The story of Anna in Luke 2 who served the Lord during the birth of Jesus Christ, and Deborah in the Old Testament who was a judge shows that women were regarded as leaders. Consideration should be made on the context as the Bible was written in Jewish culture that does not support women, and the way Jesus presented himself to us as the Christ of culture who followed Jewish culture. Jesus said he did not come to destroy but transform it and explain its real meaning. Paul encouraged Timothy to listen to old women but not follow their tales but instructions; he even tells Titus the way women are living. In view of this, according to Livingstonia Synod the Bible supports women ministry.

### ***Challenges of leading a church in Livingstonia Synod***

- Church politics, for instance, if the congregation does not agree with the character of the minister they can chase the minister away and have another minister. (This is done diplomatically as the congregation communicates with the Synod. If the Synod senses some danger, they transfer the minister.)
- Some male ministers do not accept or feel comfortable to work with women ministers. They work against women in the leadership position, and do not consider any woman for any position at Synod level.
- Women tend to feel that they are inferior to men and they cannot trust what they are doing on their own. Some women fail to support their fellow women and prefer to support men. People with negative mind observe and mark everything the woman in the

leadership position is doing. Once a woman makes a mistake it will be an issue, yet when a man makes the same mistake, no issue will rise.

- Women do not propose men in Malawian culture so marriage issue is another challenge in Livingstonia Synod. The case of two women ministers who got married to Anglican priests created problems in the sense that both had to minister in their respective churches. One couple was separated because the wife a CCAP minister was posted to Karonga CCAP while the husband, Anglican minister was posted to Usisya (on the approximation this distance is about 6-8hrs driving). One-woman minister's husband was working for the government and when the church wants to post her somewhere, they have to liaise with the man if the government will allow him to shift hence the introduction of the policy for women to be married first before joining theological college.
- Social challenge whereby the male clerk goes with the female minister to visit Christians in their homes, then rumors start speculating that the woman minister is mongering about with men.
- When a minister is young, the church members tend to belittle the church minister. They resist change and any new idea to them is spoiling the church, as change is not easily welcomed everywhere.
- Financial issues, if the minister wants to raise some funds for development; church members think it is for the minister's welfare and not for the church development.
- Faith issues, especially when a minister preaches about thanking God and about God's love to someone who has lost a child, or is an orphan. The affected party will doubt it because according to them no thanks should go to God who has taken away the life of their beloved. Secondly syncretism, and thirdly, dealing with other denominations that condemn the Presbyterian faith, the liturgy, sacrament, baptism and many more. Members compare and with the coming of Pentecostalism, they flock there. “.. *they say CCAP is as cold as a deep freezer*” (Min.L 1) because people do not sing choruses and dance in the church which is provided by the Pentecostal churches.

- In as much as women have the potential in this Synod, culture, and tradition are strong especially with the Ngoni tradition in Mzimba of patriarchy lineage where to have woman leading a church was not a welcomed idea by men. They think that nothing good can come out of a woman and worse still one to be younger in age to lead the elderly men. Men have the tendency of being heads or leading in most cases.

The case below backs the point above:

A woman minister was sent to Mzimba Solola Congregation after finishing her college and by then she was twenty-five years old. This area is typical of the Ngoni tradition and culture, where a woman cannot lead, or stand whilst men are seated. All a woman can do is to sit down and listen. When the supervising minister introduced the woman minister to the congregation, a church elder stood and said, *“Do you want to tell me that we have assembled here to welcome this grand child of ours as a parish minister in our congregation? Is it an insult from the Synod or what? This one to lead the congregation among the Ngonis, no. My first-born daughter has got a daughter who is older than herself. I don’t think this one can lead us, may you please plead with the Synod to give her something to do and when she is old enough she should come and lead us”* (Min.W. 1). Despite this comment, the woman minister was inaugurated to discharge her duties at this congregation, and she did not know well the tradition of the people in the area. She was coming from another district with different tradition and culture. She was assured within herself that God has called her despite her age and looks. She had no idea of what people like doing in the area. So the first Sunday as she was preaching during service she happened to preach against beer drinking and womanizing. A young man in the church who said, *“How can you preach like that?”* (Min.W. 1) slapped the woman minister, and then another slap. After some months this young man’s son died. She preached at the funeral sermon and consoled the bereaved family. From this, the church appreciated her work as that of a mature person than her age.

There might be more other stories that are untold with the other ministers.

### ***Motivation for women and empowerment***

- When the door was opened for women to lead, more women want to be in leadership positions now. There is a need for more effort so that women should not be sidelined in top most positions “.. *that we did not just open the door for the sake of it but we take them as equals and that they can as well lead..*” (Min.L 1).
- Women in leadership positions act as role models and exemplary when carrying out their duties.
- The preaching and teachings of equality message that all human beings are created and are equal before God can be another motivation.
- Some women feel that the calling itself to serve God is enough motivation for them to be involved in a ministry.

### **Observation:**

- Women need to be empowered more in this Synod by giving them positions at Synod level, like the way Blantyre Synod has done. Giving the position of the moderator for the entire Synod to a woman to experience and differentiate the leadership of a woman from man.

### **Findings:**

- The relevance to involve women in leadership position is drawn from the Bible itself, with a feeling that women have a place in the church and in the leadership roles.
- The society that once refused women leaders in the church now accepts women to lead. Women are now leading the church in almost all levels.

### **b) Blantyre Synod**

This is what people said :-

- Women were accepted after long discussions, before they were to remain silent in the church, and being satisfied with the performance of women minister from abroad. Hence,



equality was seen in all people and the moderator, which is the highest office for the Synod, is a woman.

- When it was accepted in 1991 that women could be ordained, a woman who was studying theology to lead other women was asked to apply for minister position whilst in school and in 2001 she was ordained as a church minister. Actually, she was not the first woman to study theology, it was to her advantage that she was the first female minister to be ordained, later the other women applied and were ordained.
- It is possible to have a woman leading a church where men are present and they work together. Male ministers in Blantyre Synod have accepted that women be given position even at Synod level.

### ***Challenges of leading a church in Blantyre Synod***

- Society challenge, people do not want women to be in the leadership position, some welcomed the idea while some did not because of culture and tradition. The idea that when a woman is amidst men then something is wrong, she is out of place.
- Church politics is another challenge; some church elders who do not want women to be leaders at congregation level they do bad things to frustrate the woman minister so that by the end of the day they prove that women cannot do it. This is a minority group in the Synod.
- The challenge of belittling, women are overlooked because people are used to male ministers and young female ministers are seen as not able to deliver the message. In addition, when one is single, the respect that people give differs with the married one; on the other hand one group of the church suffers. If it is a man, the women side suffers and if it is a woman, the men side suffers. Surprisingly the married male ministers mostly are the ones having secret love affair scandals.
- The congregations have prayer houses, which are geographically located far apart from the main congregation. Therefore, not easy to travel to serve the people with little finances in rural areas, some use bicycles to reach the prayer houses.

- Welfare challenge, care given to male ministers is not the same given to women ministers citing that women have husbands. “.. *people are used to male reverends but since this is new*” (Min.W. 2) in this view there is a possibility of balancing up the welfare imbalance challenge with time, yet the criteria to join the ministry is the same for men and women.
- Few church ministers, especially in the rural areas where one can have six churches and seventeen prayer houses to serve.

### ***Motivation for women and empowerment***

- Mostly women in Blantyre Synod feel that responding to God’s call is their motivation; Holy Spirit forces them to answer the call.
- The Bible stories are another motivation, for example Deborah who led the army and was successful. Male ministers encourage women because they know God uses anyone, citing that Jesus said that if people do not want to glorify God stones would shout what more with women.
- Equality messages, that there is no difference between men and women, we are all equal before God. This helps women develop their self-esteem.
- The ‘Fifty-fifty campaign’ in all church departments is another motivation. Women are encouraged not to refuse when they have been asked to head some offices.

### **Findings:**

- The Bible is the basis for ordaining women as church minister.
- Women are leading alongside men in all church leadership levels. The challenges are there even though there is less number of members opposing women to pull them down.

### **c) Nkhoma Synod**

This is what people said :-

- It is not relevant to have women ordination with the reformed doctrine as the primary factor. “*All along even research shows that the perspective of women is that they have a*

*great role in the church but biblically women have not taken the role in leading the church...*”(Min.M. 3). According to the informant, accepting women in a leadership position in the church is liberal he said, *“even our mother (DRC in South Africa) has gone liberal that’s why they have accepted women.”* In addition, the other two Synods are considered liberal because they have accepted women ordination. This puts more pressure on Nkhoma Synod as the only Synod out of the five that is still holding on denying women ordination. *“Although there has been pressure from our friends but all these years our forefathers clung to this biblical teaching that women should not hold positions in church”* (Min.M. 3).

- Women involvement in Nkhoma Synod is an external influence as the church is affiliated to different bodies. These women are *“..used as bait because they said if you want aid or sponsorship then you should have a woman as coordinator of women desk”* (Min.M. 3). This was so because the Synod wanted to appease the donors and it ended up to be a blue lie, as the synod has not received any sponsorship. The woman in this post is untrained in terms of a refresher course and other motivation.
- In a separate interview, it was highlighted that there is a coordinator for women empowerment mainly on social aspect and the rights of women and that some ministers are just sensitive about this issue. (They categorize women as feminist and liberals) This informant confirms that Mary Chinkhwita was eventually frustrated because she was not ordained. In as much as she did very well as men did in her class, she was considered as a social worker by the Synod and she was lowly paid, lowly regarded when she thought she was as good as her male classmates. She went to work outside the country and this in turn frustrated the Synod (Min.L. 3).
- The Synod accepted women to preach in church in 2005, and later in 2007 to be deacons and elders but with the doctrine problem as a primary factor. In 2009, women were elected to be deacons and elders, but those who had a chance to preach in church, their sermons are seen to be castigatory. *“At the moment there are women who are deacons but soon will cease to do so because of the problems we are facing”* (Min.M. 3). Male leaders feel women take the whole platform when they are given a chance to preach.

- People argue theologically, culturally and historically, *“there is no problem to have a woman as a church minister and doing any work because according to him God created human as equal beings”* (Min.L. 3).
- For a woman to lead a congregation then the Bible should be used to find the basis. Secondly, if the church has gone liberal then its dead *“a social club not a church of God.”* Not with sound doctrine, *“until God speaks in a special way we will not accept”* (Min.M. 3).
- It is difficult to have a woman leading a church in the position of minister, as the Synod has not agreed to ordain any woman to become a minister at the moment. The lesson is drawn from the Bible that women were not top leaders *“Despite gender issues as we do but they are not in the Bible”* (Women FGD.1). There is respect of church doctrine and the Bible that it does not change. Women have their own responsibilities 1Timothy 2:8.
- From the focus group discussion, it was discussed that it is possible to have a woman leading a church, with a condition that the woman should have a well-established family. Women too have possibilities and gifts of bringing people into God’s sheepfold. Though there was a feeling that it contradicts the Bible, with the reformed doctrine background, but women also have been given gifts of leading.
- The challenges she can face are the same met by men. There are times when things are smoothly running but not all days because we are still on earth. Jesus, who called the woman to His ministry, will be there with her. *“God can use anyone, even a donkey, what more human being created by Him?”* (Women FGD.6).

### ***Challenges of leading a church in Nkhoma Synod***

- In as much as worldviews are difficult to change, culturally people have to change on the view of a woman especially in the church considering the Chewa tradition. The Chewa culture has women in the highest position, from rituals to chieftainship *“Chewa culture is based on women in religion as well as in society”* (Min.L. 3).

- Social challenge that may be the husband will be jealous of the wife if men surround her during meetings. Secondly, pregnancy issues “*will demand maternity leave leading to closure of duties which I think is another challenge*” (Women FGD.1). Looking at it as possible if one ceases giving birth then it will be fine to lead as a minister
- For women it will be a challenge when the woman is married and is a minister in the rural area when the husband is working in urban area, some Christians and church elders nowadays disguise themselves and work against the Reverend. They can agree to kill him or loot his property. How will a woman deal with such cases? “*Today’s Christianity is very difficult*” (Women FGD.3).
- Women belittle themselves thinking only men can do. In addition to pull down syndrome: In as much as men do, women too tend to pull each other down to the extent of shunning church service because they have learnt that a fellow woman will be preaching which makes the woman preacher feel she cannot deliver.
- Finding resources and how to manage them, in terms of development, not an easy job to lead a congregation because sometimes one is placed in rural area that need the minister to travel to different places using a bicycle and you have to cycle for about ten kilometers to reach a prayer house or for a funeral service sermon.
- Faith challenge; backsliding of male leaders in position of elders and deacons who could not finish their term of service without making blunders, and of uniting the church and other churches in the society to work together.

### ***Motivation for women and empowerment***

- Some ministers in Nkhoma Synod think there is no need to motivate and empower women, as they will be overloaded. Secondly, only men apply for theological trainings though more women are doing theology on their own efforts. Women are already empowered but they just need to be encouraged to be doing what they are doing through the women’s guild.

- On the contrary, other ministers think women should be ordained citing example of three women who are studying theology (on their own efforts, and secondly not in Nkhoma Synod college) and these women are not guaranteed to be leaders in the church but teach in school.

### **Observation:**

- Both views from men and women drew their relevance from the Bible example that God used Deborah, a woman, and the likes of Barak were her followers because God had pointed His finger on her. Even today, God can use a woman to minister if she is strong and courageous enough. She should be strong in her Christian faith and stay united to her family *“the church should recognize us as important people and that we are God’s creation and He has a purpose for us.....”* (Women FGD.5)
- Some people see no challenge in a woman being ordained since the country has a woman president and feels this is the highest office in the society and no excuses will work.

### **Findings:**

- The Dutch missionaries who brought in male dominated theology at that time have now changed women are holding positions of ministers, elders, and deacons in the church established church traditional challenge but Nkhoma Synod has not changed, still claim to be Dutch’s, and the Dutch are male dominated people. Therefore, the church also took part in terms of influencing men to say that leadership is for men and not women. This brought in a paradigm shift in the Chewa tradition and culture.
- It seems to be relevant for a woman to lead in some position in Nkhoma Synod and not in other position, with church doctrine as a primary factor of denying women these positions. Women can only be in eldership and church deacon position. The relevant thing for a woman to do in Nkhoma Synod is teach in schools. However, there are some ideas that women can lead if ordained, which is denied by some male ministers.

### 5.4.3. PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHURCH FOR EFFECTIVE WOMEN LEADERSHIP

#### a) Livingstonia Synod

This is what people said :-

- Women are majority, and their participation draw more women in the church. Secondly, when a thing is assigned to a woman, one is assured that it will be done, if women put their hands off then there is no success and no development. Women contribute more to the development than men do.
- Women are good managers; she cannot arrive home late as men do attending the session up to late hours. Women are ever caring, hospitable than the men though sometimes women are emotional and can make things flop.
- There is success in doing things together, in as much as women are a majority they will also contribute to church growth as they share the gospel with friends. Moreover, women have a caring heart; women are hospitable and participate in charitable works.

#### b) Blantyre Synod

This is what people said :-

- Women are good financial managers “*the levels of honesty are high in women than men*” (Min.L 2) and because of that, they would handle issues of finances at a congregation.
- People trust women even on issues of daily social life like not having an extra marital affair like men do. With women, the church can have a clean ministry without scandals. Women have a caring and forgiving spirit, which make it easier for them to handle people.
- Women are sometimes timid; they fail to face the tough side of life especially when some influential people have drugged them, they go by their decisions, this will be the disadvantage, even though some women cannot do that because they have gone through

training and know the constitution, so it is about applying what women have learnt to the situation.

- Women can lead today in Blantyre Synod, just as Priscilla did in the New Testament, and Deborah who led the army in the Old Testament. They understand that God created a woman as a helper of man meaning the jobs done by man a woman can also do. It is just *“that in times of ignorance man was doing it alone”* (Min.W. 2a).
- *“Women should be given a chance and do not be judged as failures”* (Min.L 2). A woman can do any job, and because some jobs need one to be elected, that is why the church should encourage women to work together with men so that those who choose will not do it for the sake of gap-filling to accomplish the intended 50-50. In addition to this, during elections men should remember to add women leaders. This shows that women are being recognized as important vessels to do God’s work, and that brings transformation in women.
- It was noted that equality is applied to all and in all fields, in Blantyre Synod, in addition, the people are for the view that when God calls a woman to serve him man has no mandate to stop the woman from serving God. God loves everybody, though some Bible interpretations have caused problems on women issues

### c) Nkhoma Synod

This is what people said :-

- Some ministers think women do not complete the responsibilities they already have in Nkhoma Synod under women’s guild. Minister feels women have a good vision and need to intensify the vision. An example was given that they have a role to cheer the lonely in their areas, but they do not manage, like visiting someone who does not go to church, they can find out what she needs, do it for her and at least bring her to church, but they fail.
- On the contrary, other ministers think women should be allowed at every level of leadership in the church. *“... we cannot do any job without involving women”* (Min.L 3)



Women are missing in the decision-making process at a higher level “*May be in the future women shall be involved more*” (Min.L 3), as the world is changing the ministers hope for the Synod is that one day it will change to be women inclusive and not exclusive.

- Women are naturally organized, secondly, are transparent and accountable than men.
- “.. *if you teach a woman or girl you have educated a nation but if you educate a man you have educated an individual*” (Women FGD.3). Women will always share what they have whilst men always want to blame women on all the failures.
- A church lead by a woman would grow than a church lead by a man. Church members will not be afraid to contribute ideas since a woman is more open than a man.
- Some ministers believe they belong to a church, which is standing on reformed doctrine and women should be behind men, giving advice to them. Church should not be driven by the outside world but should teach the world what to do. In 1Timothy 2:8-15, the Bible talks of women responsibilities. “*According to the teaching of Nkhoma Synod and the Bible, a woman should not be a Reverend unless called by God,*” (Women FGD.1) citing that women have places where they can be preaching like, Sunday School, Class, Women’s Guild which sometimes lacks preachers and if women fail to do this, how can they preach in church?
- On the contrary, the other ministers believe Paul’s texts, which indicate that women should be quiet in church, was talking about specific issues, and specific congregations like the Hebrew culture and the cultures that were there during that time. As the same Paul is saying, we are all equal before God. There is no woman, no man, no Greek, no Jew, and so forth. “*The problem is that we follow constitution, but if we can do together it can work*” (Women FGD.3). Therefore, these would give the Nkhoma Synod a good stand to talk of equality in church and to teach members to work together.

### **Observation**

- However, women have only been in leadership for four years now as deacon and elders in both urban and rural areas. In addition, women have not been fully granted the chance to lead, but there are chances that if women are given a chance they are organized and

women are good managers of finances. This can help in edify the church. Secondly, women have a good network in the society it is easy for them to reach out to people as they do their charitable works.

## **5.5 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF CCAP MALAWI**

From the presentation above, the researchers draw a general view for CCAP Malawi as a whole.

### **A. Gender issues**

- Gender issues are communicated at a low pace in CCAP Malawi and have negative connotations in some Synods. They are understood as issues to do with women to have power over men, some think talking about gender then it is feminism, or liberal theology. Therefore, church does not take gender issues at the center stage.
- Gender issues are mostly advocated from church and society department, whose agenda is rights based, through sensitization meetings that are held in different levels of the church. This has paved way for women involvement in some churches. It is now with the woman president in Malawi that people are trying to understand gender issues.
- In Blantyre Synod, they have their own campaign on gender equality they call it 'Fifty-fifty campaign' as a way of demonstrating equality in all committees at all levels of the Synod.

### **Finding:**

- There is need for gender issues to be advocated in the church set up, and with a biblical view. Barring women is because of both cultural prejudice and how the missionaries introduced their teaching to early members of the church.

### **B. Relevance of a woman leading the church**

- From the beginning women were to remain silent in the church, and after a long discussion in CCAP Malawi, women were accepted to be leaders in the church and

participating in decision-making position. However, this met opposition from some male ministers, did not second the policy, considering the tradition and culture the people have lived ever since the church was introduced in Malawi. In addition, Nkhoma Synod did not fully accept the new policy until today women are not allowed to be ordained.

- The Bible is the basis, a measure, for involving or not involving women. The way the Bible is interpreted, and how the words are emphasized matters most to the church members. Women are holding positions of church elder and deacon in CCAP Malawi as a whole and church minister position is done in all except for Nkhoma Synod, which until now has not agreed to allow any woman to become a minister. These women from the other synods are leading both men and women.

### ***Challenges of leading a church in CCAP Malawi***

- To lead a church in a Malawian set up is not an easy job. The minister is placed at a congregation; in addition, the congregation has small churches, which are called ‘prayer houses’ these are located in different places from the main congregation (also called Station). The distances vary from five kilometers to thirty kilometers. One congregation can have a minimum of three and a maximum of thirty prayer houses. These places are difficult to reach, and a minister has to circle if he/she has access to bicycle, sometimes to walk these distances to conduct funeral services, Holy Communion, Sunday service that are occasionally done by the minister, confirmation of new members and baptism.
- Culture and tradition, tendency of men being leaders and not women especially in the patriarchy lineage tradition, people do not want women to be in leadership position. When the minister is single, he/she is not given the same respect given to the married ministers.
- Church tradition, specifically for Nkhoma Synod where people still claim that they are ‘Dutch’ meaning male dominated people, when actually the Dutch Reformed Church Missionaries in South Africa, where Nkhoma claim its originality has women as ministers, elders and deacons in their congregations.

- If the congregation is not happy with the character of the church minister, they plan behind the back to remove the minister. This is referred to as 'church politics' the church elders plan to do bad things to frustrate ministers. When the minister is a woman, they want to make her a failure for them to prove that women cannot deliver. There are challenges of integrity and honesty
- Financial challenge, on how to get resources and how to manage them, in terms of development, especially for those ministering in the rural areas they have limited access to most necessities. Secondly, social welfare in some congregation is not offered the same, some preferences are made on the male minister, and when it is the woman minister the cost is cut.
- The challenge of belittling; people overlook both young male ministers and women ministers as not able to deliver the message. In addition, women sometimes do not support each other; some women are used to see men as leaders and not fellow women.
- Challenge of faith, it is not easy to deal with duo beliefs in God and in witchdoctors in addition, to uniting other churches with different beliefs and liturgy in the society to work together lastly, backsliding of male leaders in position of church elders and deacons.

### ***Motivation for women and empowerment***

- The teaching and preaching of equality is another motivation the church should remember. Bible stories of women like Deborah who led the army and was successful. There is no difference before God we are all equal, this helps women to develop their self-esteem.
- Women who are in leadership positions acts as role models and motivates fellow women as they carry out their duties
- The calling and willingness to serve God are a motivation because God through the Holy Spirit empowers the women. God use anyone he wants.
- The church should encourage women participation in decision-making and leadership position, like for women who are studying theology if they want to be ministers should be

given the chance. However, some men think women are already empowered and just need to be encouraged to do what they are doing.

### **C Opportunities in the church for effective women leadership**

- Women and their participation draw more people in the church; women contribute more in terms of development than men do.
- Women are organized in what they are doing; they are a bit more careful and manage their time well.
- Women are ever caring, forgiving, and hospitable this makes it easier for them to handle people than men do, although women are emotional and this can make things flop.
- Women are honest, women are good financial managers, and women are transparent and accountable than men. Women are trust worthy in terms of social issues, the rates of marital scandals are low in women than men, although timidity can make a woman fail to face the tough side of life, and they can go by other people's decisions.
- God created a woman as a helper of man meaning she can do any job a man can do. Women have a good vision in the women's guild ministry. Therefore, should be given the chance and do not be looked up as failures.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

The marginalization of women is influenced by the patriarchy of the Bible, the way the missionaries brought in Christianity in the Chewa region on top of other patriarchy tribes who settle in the Chewa society. As Phiri put it that Genesis 3:16 is interpreted as saying "*woman was made out of man, after man, for the advantage of man*" (Phiri 2007:55) and Paul's letters like 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

"Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about

something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church” (NIV)

In addition, in one Timothy 2:11-12, which says, “*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.*”

From the current findings, it seems to be relevant to have women leading a church in different positions in CCAP Malawi even though there is some difficulty in Nkhoma Synod that a woman would not be allowed to lead as a church minister. All leaders face challenges though some are specifically for women considering tradition and culture of the society on how a woman is viewed. If a woman claims, her humanity is labeled with the stigma of feminism.

Gender issues should be viewed with equality and not only for men to be empowered and women fit in as helpers who do what men don't want to do or what men want women to do. Women too should be seen as creatures with a will. As very little is communicated in the church, it creates the insensitiveness and inequality within the church circles. However, some ministers think women should not be empowered or motivated to be in decision-making positions, women play an important part in the church.

The Synod has not agreed to have a woman leading a church as a minister, citing that the Bible is the basis that women should not be given leading roles. Despite the debates that have been there about the women issues and roles it was only in 2005 that women were allowed to preach in church. In addition, in 2007, women were allowed to be deacons and elders, and in 2009, some churches implemented it where as some did because of the doctrinal problem and women are still discriminated in these roles. With practical reasons both physical and socially attributed in addition to biblical reasons. Women are seen as need more empowerment for them to be in a leadership position when some male leaders within the church feels women need less empowerment because they will be overloaded if they are given the leadership role. However, women are good managers, they are well organized, and women are transparent and accountable when handling finances. Women are caring always and help in development in the church and outside church.

This affirms the assumption of women with needed skills feeling not acknowledged in the church and the synod as a whole. The next is analysis chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS

#### 6.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the focus of this study is to evaluate critically the role of women in Nkhoma Synod, having in mind diakonia, as being of the church, and gender and power as the social area dealing with people's rights, the researcher shall now analyze the findings in chapter 5. A church is involved in all kinds of experiences and plays an influential role in a society, often a positive role but not always. It is essential to analyze all different components, conditions, methods, and strategies used by the church in changing gender inequality, i.e. empowering women within its circles and see areas that need change or maintenance.

The table below shows the figures and responses in percentage with the year the survey was done, and the number of participants comparing the findings of Phiri (1992) and Gondwe (2009) with the current findings. The researcher assumes the percentages in the table below would help explain better on the relevance of having a woman leading a church as a minister. With particular to question seven, section B of the interview guide in chapter 3; what is your position regarding women ministers in the church?

Leading position	1992 interv. with 40		2009 interv. with 144		2012 interv. with 14	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Yes</b>	2 (10%)	18 (90%)	36 (50%)	57 (79%)	3(75%)	9(90%)
<b>No</b>	18 (90%)	2 (10%)	36(50%)	15(21%)	1(25%)	1(10%)
<b>Total</b>	20(100%)	20(100%)	72(100%)	72 (100%)	4(100%)	10(100%)



***What kind of developments is this table?***

From the 1992, when Phiri did her survey women were not allowed to be in any leadership position or to preach or teach in the presence of men this contributed to the 90% negative response from the men. After the Synod had announced women acceptance in teaching and preaching, in a church service, people started changing their minds accepting women to work alongside men in preaching. No wonder in 2009 when Gondwe did his survey there were changes that only 50% of the men had a negative response. Now that some women have been church elders and deacons for five years it has affected the current changes too, only 25% of men had a negative response.

Having the woman president in office, no participant from the individual interviews mentioned culture and tradition as a barrier for women to be in leadership position. Those who gave the negative answer their reason was, there is no verse in the Bible that talks about women being leaders in position of church ministers.

Below, the researcher analyzes the findings using the two tools stated in chapter 4 with SWOT analysis.

## **6.1 SWOT ANALYSIS**

It is a powerful tool for assessing and analyzing institutions. It involves evaluation of an institution by analyzing its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT), a technique, which enables an institution to move from everyday problems and traditional strategies to a new perspective. *Strength* is any potential resource or capability within an institution. *Weakness* is any existing force that serves as a barrier within an institution to achieve or maintain the intended goal. *Opportunity* is any existing external force to an institution. Lastly, *threat* is any potential external force that could wear down an institution. The first two deal with internal force whilst the last two deals with external forces respectively.

See SWOT analysis table below:-

<b>Strengths of Nkhoma</b>	<b>Weaknesses of Nkhoma</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More women membership and active</li> <li>• Schools for girls/women</li> <li>• Women's guild</li> <li>• Women access to lower leadership positions</li> <li>• Gender issues being communicated and partially accepted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women subordination</li> <li>• No access to theological education</li> <li>• Church tradition</li> <li>• No women access to higher leadership positions</li> <li>• Bible interpretation</li> <li>• Opposition from other leaders</li> <li>• Gender issues lacks support among some leaders</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities of Nkhoma</b>	<b>Threats of Nkhoma</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative processes will be possible</li> <li>• Having women theologians</li> <li>• Society influence</li> <li>• Ecumenical network and impulses from ecumenical theology</li> <li>• A focus on diakonia as a theme in order to promote women inclusiveness and empowerment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaction from conservative leaders</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Bad experiences</li> </ul>

## **STRENGTHS**

As pointed out earlier on in chapter two, women membership is more in Nkhoma Synod. In addition, these women are active and involved in different areas like the women's guild already discussed in chapter five. Accepting women to preach during church service and letting women hold some leadership positions i.e. church deacons and elders.

Nkhoma synod has transformed the lives of many girls/women by offering education just as boys as discussed on page 35 in chapter five, not only with the church members but also with the whole society.

Nkhoma Synod has addressed the gender imbalance that was there in school long time ago and in some church leadership position by giving women the chance to lead as church elders and deacons thereby participating in decision-making in the church.

Looking at the theory of ecumenical diakonia Nkhoma Synod has transformed, empowered, and included women in some areas of the church. Women were seen with some abilities hence the introduction of schools of both girls and boys.

Gender issues are communicated in Nkhoma Synod though partial hence, partial equality message advocacy.

## **WEAKNESSES**

Excluding women in some leadership positions like church minister, in the process of keeping the originality of the Bible and its leading roles. However, the Synod accepted women to be in other leadership position this met opposition in some congregations. Leaders have not implemented it feeling pressurized to contemplate policies they have neither formulated nor committed to and during their leadership time, gender inclusiveness is lost since they hold positions of decision-making power. Lutheran World Foundation (LWF) describes this group, as men who feel privileged and are afraid of losing their authority and power through gender equality. Fear and lack of understanding brings opposition and traditionalism, hence male leaders who support gender equality are seen as weak and unable to exercise their manhood power (2009:10).

Women under Nkhoma synod are currently not offered theological training. Studying theology is linked with ordination and not knowledge purpose, hence men only. Women who study theology do with their own efforts. Here again, we see the lack of women empowerment and participation in decision making in the church hierarchy. In this case, women are denied power within themselves and power is not equally shared and makes it difficult to guarantee justice for all people, as in chapter 4.

***Observation on strengths versus weaknesses***

The internal weaknesses on women involvement still out weight the internal strengths of the Synod. There are some points that are both strengths and weaknesses for example, education, women leadership, and gender issues. The researcher sees some tendencies that this may change if will be in line with what follows below if Nkhoma synod considers the gender issues more, these weaknesses will no longer be weaknesses but strength of the church. As Msangaambe has put it that the church as practical mission ecclesiology, the intended outcome of the church's activities in the society should bring transformation to all humanities in the society to which the church exist (2011:161).

**OPPORTUNITIES**

It will be a new thing if women are involved and the Synod will have more women theologians as active members of the church and influential at society level as women always share what they have learnt. Women who acquire the theological knowledge their impact will be different with those not trained. Women will experience the within power discussed in chapter 4. They will influence society more as discussed in chapter 5. This will create a focus in diakonia of promoting women inclusiveness and empowerment, thereby transforming societies in a long run.

Nkhoma Synod will be able to follow what is happening in the world about women networks like World Council of Churches (WCC) and other ecumenical links and to desire ecumenical theology. The opportunity of promoting women rights is women are ensured of full participation in both the church and community.

## **THREATS**

If women are involved, there are some threats also like reaction from some leaders there can be some disagreement as presented in chapter five, which can lead to conflicts among leaders and some people as they want to keep the patriarchy, as change is not easily accepted. In addition, challenges experienced by the other synod during women involvement cannot be ruled out.

### ***Observation on opportunities versus threats***

The researcher observed that on the external force, again there are more opportunities than threats if Nkhoma Synod accepts the full use of women in leadership position. All the threats are issues that can be discussed, and measures can be identified to deal with them in a reconciliation process just as master Jesus did. Diakonia is unselfish Christian love and favors a special method of inclusion.

From the above survey table on the relevance of women leading the church, one can predict the future of Nkhoma that it will not continue much longer holding on as more people are allowing women, even with the biblical patriarchy. Even the women themselves are putting in efforts for example, studying theology and still work in some church activities with or without profit. This shows how powerful the words we communicate have an impact on the receiving end. Once the Synod said women would now preach though some men resisted but change on view of the women in the church started. The church should realize diakonia as being of the church and work towards justice and equality.

In view of this, the researcher seconds the idea Phiri indicates that women leadership in the Chewa religion renders the excuse of culture for not including women in the Nkhoma Synod leadership as unjustified (Phiri 2007). Traditionally women hold highest leadership position. Secondly, with the woman president in Malawi this is the highest office that Malawian culture and tradition has witnessed that a woman can lead nation, therefore, a woman cannot be held back.

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The above discussion has been developed with an effort of answering the research question. “*In particular with Nkhoma Synod, how can the role of women in CCAP Malawi be explained, and how have the CCAP Synods in Malawi acted in order to improve the role of women in the church, including in leadership positions?*” The research question reflects the diaconal and gender roles aspects of the problem concerned, with the following hypothesis to be discussed below if they are affirmed or not?

1. *Preaching and teaching*, the way the reformed missionaries introduced Christianity has contributed to the marginalization of women as they follow the patriarchy of the Bible.
2. *Prophetically*, the church has not lifted the women’s rights, and Gods’ liberating love incarnated in human reality.
3. *Culturally*, women church members with skills and gifts feel not acknowledge and they look for other opportunities.

#### 7.2 PREACHING AND TEACHING

Yes, this has been affirmed in that the way the reformed missionaries introduced Christianity it was male dominated religion. Until today, this church tradition is still practiced even though the mother church is ordaining women and offering them theological training Nkhoma cannot accept that, causing a paradigm shift in a Chewa society and culture on the view of women.

The way the Bible is interpreted in some passages like the creation story and Paul’s letter to the Corinthians about women keeping quiet in the church. This has been literal considered like that without context and historical consideration. Forgetting that Jesus was teaching people of different social levels and accepted all even amidst culture that did not accept women around men.

### **7.3 PROPHETIC**

Yes, this has been affirmed in that God created human as equal beings in Genesis that what the Bible say, prophetically Nkhoma Synod has not lifted up women's rights, and God liberating love personified in all human reality as women are seen as not having ruling power. Women injustice needs to be voiced out as women are denied equality in both the church and society. In Gods ministry, what men are doing women too can do, and God is the giver of gift and gives to all not according to gender. We are all human beings, and we are prone to error, we are not yet saints.

### **7.4 CULTURAL**

Yes, this has been affirmed in that women are valued culturally and are in leadership position in the societies. If the church does not acknowledge women skills and gifts in the church, women go for other opportunities a good example is Mary Chinkhwita who left because she was not approved to be equal with the other male theologians.

Considering the diakonia definition in chapter 4, the above hypothesizes prove that diakonia is only partially practiced in Nkhoma Synod the church does not lift up women issues for the sake of gender justice.

### **7.5 GENDER AND POWER**

The focus on gender perspective should be based on theological understanding of the purpose of God for all people, in which men and women participate; therefore, the church is the best agent to let society know of the equity placed by God. The '*Holy Catholic Church*,' which we recite in the apostle's creed, belongs to both men and women. Women and men are called to work for dignity and honest community based on love, accepting and right affiliation.

The understanding that all human beings are created in God's image is probably central to the theology of empowerment. God created humans, both male and female, to be different but equal.

## 7.6 CONCLUSION

Nkhoma Synod will not keep on refusing women as more women in Nkhoma are studying theology with their own efforts. Secondly, as African Women are no longer silent on many theological issues, ordination being one (Kanyoro 1997:151), the same is true for Malawian women in Nkhoma synod. We have some women who have written, and some are still writing about the women role on top of some men who have also been concerned with this injustice. Nkhoma Synod's policy and constitution concerning women should be revised, and work on addressing the inequalities by letting women be trained in theology and participate in all leadership positions, God gives us gifts according to our availability and not gender. The church should recognize women role, and that the Holy Spirit gives gifts on everyone despite gender differences (Blyth & Robins 1988:85) God is both just and righteous.

Women in general and members of the women's guild have supported the church for a long time in many ways. The absence of women in leadership position is characteristic of Nkhoma Synod. This is very different from the society attitudes and its structures. The ordination of women should be done on equality basis not on demand from other circles. The women should be allowed to apply just as men do to study theology as members who want to serve God. This is a major step as it raises the women social status (Omari 1997:156).

People in Malawi need to change the view of women especially now that Malawi has a woman president and effort to empower and motivate women should be encouraged so that women are not sidelined in the leadership position. There is a need for gender and power across Malawi because of poor quality of life, unequal distribution of wealth, abuse of children and women, nepotism, and other social ills.

Mary Chinkhwita is the first woman, and after her, Nkhoma Synod has never tried to train another woman to change the story from 1968 to date. Her case is unhealed wound in the Nkhoma Synod. Women who study theology do so at their own efforts and not in Nkhoma Synod theological college, because Mary Chinkhwita's case is regarded as a stumbling block for women advancement, yet in Nkhoma Synod, there have been cases of men behaving not to the standard of Nkhoma, who were just expelled and Nkhoma Synod continued training males.



Theologically women should be offered training for them to contribute positively in the church. This will make women contribute more in edifying the church, as they will be able to handle cases that relate to theological views. Women have strength but lack power.

Nkhoma Synod should be able to see the need for sharing, justice, and equality as a diaconal actor. It is now time for Nkhoma Synod men to act together with women and not about women. Secondly, empowerment is a process of offering the marginalized an opportunity for self-sufficiency, as well as to encourage them to develop skills to graduate from dependence.

It should be noted that Holy Spirit leads, guides, empowers, and enables people to serve with great effectiveness in the societies they live whether male or female. God still cares for women in the male dominated communities like Nkhoma Synod. In Leviticus 23:22, God instructs that the weak and the poor should be empowered in various ways.

People who are not empowered are usually oppressed psychologically and in this case women in Nkhoma Synod are psychologically oppressed as they cannot make any decision that involves them but wait for men to decide for them.

Women in Nkhoma Synod need to stand firm and get the courage from the women of the Bible who achieved much in biblical times of strong patriarchy. Today women can do a lot by offering their gifts of leadership hence promoting fundamental inclusiveness for all people. As the saying goes, justice delayed is justice denied it is better to consider gender issues now than when it is too late.

## Glossary

<i>Chichewa</i>	Malawian national language
<i>Chigwirizano cha Amai</i>	Women's Guild
<i>Kukhoma Msokhano</i>	Preliminary Meeting before Revival Meeting
<i>Makewana</i>	Mother of all
<i>Mawu A Mwezi Ndi Mwezi</i>	Monthly scripture devotion
<i>Mbumba</i>	Dependent
<i>Mkhalapakati</i>	Male Church Elder Coordinating Women's Guild and Church
<i>Mvera</i>	Obedience/ Listening
<i>Nembo</i>	Special tattoo marks
<i>Nyasaland</i>	Malawi's old name
<i>Nyau</i>	Secret societies
<i>Tsinde</i>	Root
<i>Zolamulira</i>	Nkhoma Synod guide book on regulations and rules

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