

The Extent and Nature of Witchcraft-Based Violence against Children, Women and the Elderly in Malawi,

A Research Study FINAL REPORT

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Operational Definition of Terms

- Child:** a person aged under 18 years.
- Child witch:** a person under the age of 18 who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do evil things.
- Household head:** a person or his or her representative who has a final say on matters affecting his or her household.
- Suspected witch:** a person who is suspected to have magic powers, especially to do evil things.
- Middle-aged people:** people aged 30 < 60 years.
- The elderly:** people aged 60 years and over.
- Violence:** behaviour that is intended to hurt or kill another person. Violence need not be physical. It may be economic, social, psychological or sexual.
- Witch:** a person (irrespective of their sex) who is believed to have magic powers, especially to do evil things.
- Witchcraft:** the use of magic powers, especially evil ones.
- Witchdoctor:** a person who is believed to have magic powers that can be used to heal people, cleanse or exorcise witches, use charms to protect people and their property from witchcraft. Some of them are also witch-hunters.
- Youth:** people aged 18 < 30 years.
- Witch-hunter:** a person who identifies witches and their charms, using his “claimed” magic powers.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASH	Association for Secular Humanism
DC	District Commissioner
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GVH	Group Village Headman
JCE	Junior Certificate of Education
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MK	Malawi Kwacha
MPs	Members of Parliament
NSO	National Statistical Office
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
RNE	Royal Norwegian Embassy
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
STA	Sub-Traditional Authority
T/A	Traditional Authority
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
VH	Village Headman/woman
VSU	Victim Support Unit of the Malawi Police
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

The belief in witchcraft in Malawi permeates all sectors. Most Malawians regardless of age, education or social position hold the belief that witchcraft exists and that witches are real. In a study by NSO (2008), 76% of sampled Malawian households said that they know of witches in their community, and 62% said they know someone accused of witchcraft.

Legal regime on witchcraft

The Constitution of Malawi does not mention the word witchcraft in any of its provisions. However, it provides for the fundamental right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought and belief (Section 33, Constitution of Malawi). While the Constitution allows the right to belief, it prohibits any criminal activity or harm to anyone as a result of belief.

In order to protect people from harm, the Witchcraft Act of 1911, prohibits witchcraft accusations towards anyone and the calling of witch finders by chiefs and individuals for witch hunts and cleansing. It calls upon DCs to summon chiefs that allow witch hunts. It is a crime to participate in witch hunts and to pretend witchcraft, which in effect, is not in tandem with the Constitutional right to a 'belief'. The Act is, however, being reviewed by the Law Commission

Problem

Many people observe that witchcraft is widely practiced in Malawi and that suspected witches are subjected to acts of violence. However, no systematic research study has been conducted to determine the extent and nature of witchcraft-based violence against children, women, and the elderly who are the most vulnerable groups. Previous reports have often been based on hearsay, and there has been no systematic analysis of the reports.

It is impossible to design appropriate programs to eradicate witchcraft-based violence against people accused of witchcraft if we do not first study the forms that the violence takes, and if we do not have data. This systematic, evidence-based, empirical study is the first of its kind in Malawi.

Study aims and objectives

The overall aim of the study was to find out the extent of witchcraft-based violence toward women, the elderly and children so that remedial measures could be prescribed.

Goal of the study

The study goal is: Children, women and the elderly are free from witchcraft accusations so that the human rights of this vulnerable group¹ are promoted and protected in Malawi.

¹ The vulnerable group in Malawi includes children, women and the elderly

Specific objective of the study

The following is the specific objective of this study:

Knowledge of the prevalence of witchcraft practices and the forms of witchcraft-based violence meted out to victims in Malawi is available and shared with stakeholders the results of the study report.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study was both quantitative and qualitative because of the nature of witchcraft and in order for it to achieve its objectives.

Study sites

The study was conducted in 8 districts, namely Karonga and Mzimba in the Northern Region, Ntchisi and Dedza in the Central Region, and Machinga, Thyolo, Blantyre City, and Mwanza in the Southern Region. These sites were sampled purposively because according to NSO (2008), the percentage of household heads who reported that at least one member of their household experienced bad things due to witchcraft was highest in these districts, with the exception of Karonga. Karonga reported the second lowest percentage but it was included in order to have a more representative sample with respect to ethnicity. In Blantyre, only the urban area was covered in order to add an urban dimension to the study.

Data collection methods

Data was collected through a document review, a household survey, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collection tools namely a household questionnaire, a key informant interview guide, and an FGD guide were pre-tested.

Sampling

The participants in the study included 1193 household heads, 94 key informants, and 310 FGD participants.

Households were sampled using systematic random sampling method. They included male-headed, female-headed and child-headed households from rural and urban areas.

Key Informants were sampled purposively to ensure a fair representation of females. They included parents and guardians of children who were suspected of practicing witchcraft; suspected witches; persons claiming to have been bewitched; witchdoctors; traditional and religious leaders; Social Welfare Officers, magistrates, police officers; the police and District Commissioners.

FGD participants comprising children, the youth, the middle-aged, and the elderly were sampled purposively. They participated in 29 FGDs each of which had both males and females. The smallest FGD had 8 participants while the largest had 17.

Data analysis

Quantitative data from the household questionnaire was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Preliminary processing of qualitative data was done in the field where enumerators wrote key informant and FGD reports. Deeper analysis of this data was carried out manually soon after completion of filed data collection.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS

Knowledge of the Witchcraft Act

Most Malawians do not know what the law (the Witchcraft Act) says about witchcraft. Many of them have never even heard about it. Only 33% (394) of the 1193 household heads said they know what it says. However, from their responses to what the law says, it was clear that at least 50% of these actually did not know what the law said.

All participants in 20 (69%) of the 29 FGDs admitted that they do not know what the law says about witchcraft. The youth and the middle-aged seemed to have slightly more knowledge than children and the elderly. The youth and middle-aged persons have better access to source of information such as the radio and newspapers than children and the elderly.

Even though they handle witchcraft cases, many traditional leaders and religious are not conversant with the Witchcraft Act. Most (85%) of them leaders admitted that they do not handle witchcraft cases according to the law because “There are no laws that can be used to handle cases of witchcraft” (Traditional leader, Thyolo), and “because sometimes we are afraid of our people. They say that we protect suspected witches may be because we too are witches” (Traditional leader, Karonga).

People’s ignorance of the Witchcraft Act is an indication that the general public has not been adequately sensitised. Most of the key informants said that witchcraft should be recognised by law because witchcraft exists and that this will help to reduce cases of witchcraft-based violence. It is assumed that ‘witches’ would be arrested and people will be protected from the evil acts of the ‘witches.’

Witchcraft and human rights

Most (73%) of the household heads did not regard witchcraft as a human rights issue. Of the rest of the household, 21% rest said it is a human rights issue, while 3% said they did not know, and 2% said they were not sure (2%). Participants in 19 (66%) of the 29 FGDs, said that there is no relationship between witchcraft and human rights. This suggests that many people do not understand what human rights means.

Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices

Some 87% of the household heads reported that witchcraft is widely practiced in their communities and that the number of cases of witchcraft has been increasing. The increase was attributed mostly to rising incidents of jealousy arising from increased gaps between the poor and the better off, and more people wanting to get rich often times through killing other people. None of the study participants claimed that he or she is a witch.

Identification of 'witches'

The most frequently mentioned ways by which people identify witches were child and adult witches' own revelations; the behaviour of the person; witchdoctors' diagnosis; and suspicion and rumours. Sometimes suspected 'witches' admit under duress that they are 'witches' when they are not, to avoid being subjected to more violence. Most study participants observed that often, people invite a witch-hunter to identify the witch.

Witch-hunting

Some 44% of heads of household reported that witch-hunting takes place in their areas. The percentage was highest in Karonga (78%) where the belief is second lowest in Malawi, and lowest in Dedza (17%). According to the findings of this study, how common witch-hunting is depends, in part, on the strength of people's views against the practice of witchcraft in their community. Witch-hunters are invited by traditional leaders, community members, and the victims of witchcraft or parents/guardians of children who are allegedly trained in witchcraft.

Some 18% of the household heads said they had ever participated in witch-hunting. The percentage was highest in Machinga (22%) and lowest in Mzimba (7%). Some 11% of the household heads reported that at least one other member of their household participated in witch-hunting by inviting a witchdoctor, undergoing the cleansing process, escorting the witch-hunter to the chief's compound, assaulting the suspected witch, donating food and money to the witch-hunter, and assisting the witch-hunter in other ways.

Beliefs about who practices witchcraft

Most (55%) of both sampled household heads and FGD participants said that women practice witchcraft much more than men; the elderly much more than the middle-age, the youth, and children; the poor much more than the rich; and old settlers much more than new arrivals in a community. Except in the case of old settlers, the social groups mentioned are the weaker, less powerful and more vulnerable ones. More and more children are claimed to being trained in witchcraft apparently because they are easy to threaten and they tend to obey orders. Old settlers were said to practice witchcraft because they know the community members well and can easily target their victim. The profile of a suspected "witch" is that of an elderly woman.

Children and witchcraft

Of the 18 children who were allegedly taught witchcraft, 53% were female. The children's mean age at the time it was first discovered that they had been taught witchcraft was 8.5 years. Their ages ranged from 2 to 13 years. None of the children were orphans, suggesting that orphans are not targeted by witchcraft teachers. This supports people's view that children are taught witchcraft for the purpose of using them to harm, including to kill, their parents.

Experiences of people who claim to have been bewitched

Out of the 94 key informants, 10 (6 females and 4 males) were people who claimed to have ever been bewitched. All of them said that they knew or suspected that they had been bewitched after some strange or bad things had happened to them. Nine of them reported that they had been bewitched in the 2 years prior to the study. When they became suspicious that they had been bewitched, 7 of the 10 said they were able to

identify the 'witch.' Five of the 7 said a witchdoctor identified the 'witch' while 1 said it was a pastor and another reported that it was herself who identified the 'witch.'

When approached by a person suspected to have been bewitched, a witchdoctor almost always confirmed that the person had indeed been bewitched, and in nearly all cases, the witchdoctor identified the 'witch.' Six of the people who knew the person who bewitched them did not take any action against the 'witch' either because the 'witch' was a close relative or friend, or for fear of being victimised further. Often, when the witchdoctor failed to exorcise the victim, the victim went to a religious leader for prayers and counselling

Forms of violence against suspected witches

This study found that some suspected witches are subjected to acts of violence. For example, 11 (73%) of the 15 sampled suspects, reported that they were beaten up.

In this study, 28% (176) of the 638 household heads who answered the relevant question, said that suspects are subjected to violence, while 70% said they are not, and 2% reported that they did not know. The majority (49%) of the 176 household heads who said that suspects are subjected to acts of violence, reported that suspected witches are beaten; 43% said they are insulted; 26% reported that they are evicted from the village; 21% said that their property is vandalised or looted; 20% said they are stoned; 15% reported that their property (such as houses) is burnt or destroyed in other ways; 9% said they are tortured; and 6% said they are murdered.²

None of the 18 parents/guardians of children suspected of practicing witchcraft reported that the community committed any acts of violence against the children. However, evidence from heads of household suggests that sometimes acts of violence against the children take place within the family. For example, 7%, 6%, and 3% of the 95 household heads who suspected that their children were practicing witchcraft, reported that they beat the children up, scolded them, and isolated them from other children, respectively.

A suspect tends to experience all or some of these forms of violence at once. Sometimes, one form of violence such as severe beating of the suspect or confiscation of their land makes it hard for the suspect to be economically active or to sustain their livelihood, which, over time, can result in the suspect becoming mentally disturbed.

Physical violence

The most common form of violence suspected witches are subjected to, is beatings. This was mentioned by the majority (49%) of the 176 household heads who reported that suspected witches are subjected to violence. Sometimes the beatings result in the death of the suspect. As many as 20%, 9%, and 6% of the 176 household heads said that the suspects are stoned, tortured, and murdered, respectively.

A traditional leader from Machinga narrated that, "A few weeks ago people gathered at the house of a woman who was suspected of practicing witchcraft and started beating her. Some people beat her with sticks while others stoned her till she died," while an 18 year old Standard 6 girl said during an FGD for the youth in Dedza, that "I witnessed the burning of a suspected witch." Some of the victims of physical violence are children. One of them, a 12 year old Standard 5 girl from Karonga who was suspected to be a witch said that some people in her area were saying, "You witch! You killed our relatives, so we will make sure that you are also killed."

² The total of the percentages is greater than 100% because of multiple responses.

Exorcism was described by many FGD participants and key informants as a very painful experience for suspected witches. Many of them said that suspects feel excruciating pain as incisions are made over their body. Some suspects die after drinking concoctions. A Police Officer from Mwanza referred to a specific case: "We had a case whereby a witchdoctor gave a suspected witch traditional medicine to drink. Unfortunately, the suspect died after drinking the medicine."

Economic violence

Economic violence is another form of violence people, accused of witchcraft experience. Some 21% and 15% of the heads of household reported that the property of the accused is vandalised and burnt, respectively. Economic violence also occurs in other ways: some employers dismiss the accused from work or bar them from employment; traditional leaders and community members deny them access to jobs and other sources of livelihood such as capital, land and labour; traditional leaders and witchdoctors impose heavy fines on them; and the suspects property is confiscated.

Economic violence experienced by accused persons may also be a consequence of their being evicted from their community. It is very hard for people who are already poor to secure new land for settlement and cultivation and to start life all over again. A 41 year old businessman from Karonga explained that "The witch-hunter came ... with his followers (and) destroyed my business. They broke my pool table; they broke windows of my bottle-store, restaurant and house; they damaged iron sheets as they tried to remove them from the roof; they broke my ox-cart, and stole my money."

Social violence

People fear and hate suspected witches so much that they isolate and ignore them. Relationships, including marriages, with them are severed abruptly. Once labelled, the stigma lasts for a life time. Some suspects are excommunicated from their religion or denomination. Suspects are discriminated against in all social spheres including the family, religion, education, and employment. Participants in an FGD for middle-aged people in Machinga observed that "People do not allow the suspect even to light a cigarette at other people's houses because they become suspicious." One major reason why people do not associate with suspected witches is that, as indicated by a 56 year old woman during an FGD for the elderly in Mzimba, "they want to avoid being labelled 'witch' through association."

Psychological violence

Psychological violence includes insults and mockery meant to humiliate the victim, threats including threats of death, and other acts that negatively affect the feelings of the victim. Insults were mentioned by 43% of the household heads. Of the 10 people who were suspected of practicing witchcraft, 7 (70%) said they were showered with insults.

Insults tend to accompany all other forms of violence the suspects experience. A 25 year old female student from Karonga, who was a suspected witch said, "People in the community were talking a lot of things like, "You witch, you killed our relatives. So we will make sure that you are also killed." The insults or mockery can be more painful than physical harm, and even if the threats of death and other forms of violence are not effected, the suspect lives in constant fear that one day the threats will be effected.

Vulnerability to Sexual violence or abuse

This study did not find concrete evidence that in the study sites children and adults accused of witchcraft are subjected to sexual violence or abuse. However, from what

some key informants and FGD participants said, some suspected witches, especially girls and women are vulnerable to sexual abuse by witchdoctors and the general public. Key informants observed that suspected witches are paraded undressed in the streets or other public places.

During an FGD for middle-aged people in Mzimba, a 42 year old man noted that “When witch-hunters come to our villages they have multiple sex partners mostly with married women because these women get carried away with the wealth the witch-hunters accumulate during witch-hunting,” while participants in an FGD for middle-aged people in Mwanza said that female victims are undressed.

Suspected witches who undergo exorcism carried out by witchdoctors are at high risk of contracting diseases including HIV/AIDS. In Ntchisi, a 37 year old man observed during an FGD for middle-aged people, noted that “They cannot tell if the razor blade was used on other suspected witches. So, it’s not safe because the suspect can contract any blood-borne communicable diseases.”

Life of the victims of Witchcraft-Based Violence

As a result of the physical, economic, social, and psychological violence they experience, and their vulnerability to sexual abuse, suspected witches do not lead normal lives like other community members. This observation was made by as many as 66% of the household heads. By far the two most frequently mentioned reasons why, according to the household heads, suspects do not lead normal lives were that they are mocked and that they are isolated. A 10 year old school girl from Thyolo, who was in Standard 1 at the time she was suspected to be a witch, said that she was not paying attention to her teachers in class, and she was always rude to her parents, friends and to other people because, as she put it, “in witchcraft there is nothing like, ‘This is an adult and this is a child.’”

Protection of and support to suspects

The police reported that through its VSU in some police stations, they conduct sensitisation campaigns on witchcraft issues so that people should be aware that the law does not recognise witchcraft and that accusing a person of being a witch and subjecting them to any form of violence, is a crime. They also reported that they provide suspects with protection when their life and or their property are under threat, and that they counsel victims of witchcraft-based violence and sometimes provides them with temporary shelter especially when the victims have been evicted from their area.

A Coordinator at a Victim Support Unit said that sometimes they provide legal advice to the victims so that they can sue the culprits, while another said that they send to hospital victims who have been beaten, and charge the culprits. The majority of the police interviewed in this study admitted that the services they provide are generally inadequate because of shortage of human and material resources such as vehicles.

Key informants from the City and District Assemblies, who included DCs and Social Welfare Officers pointed out that they do not provide protection services as this is the work of the police. They offer counselling services and act as an arbitrator when the accused and the accuser approach them. They said that they refer to the police cases of witchcraft in general and of witchcraft-based violence, in particular. A District Social Welfare Officer admitted that they mostly depend on chiefs to help the victims and sensitise their people on the rights of the people suspected of practicing witchcraft.

Some religious organisations assist victims by conducting exorcism through prayers while NGOs such as ASH in various ways assist by freeing them from prisons; counselling; providing them with very short-term temporary shelter and food.

Most FGD participants and key informants including people suspected of practicing witchcraft observed that suspected witches do not receive protection and support from community members and organisations. Key informants who had ever been suspected of witchcraft pointed out that they received some protection from the police and a few very close relatives. However, many of them observed that the police protection came late as the suspects had already been abused, physically assaulted, and some of their property destroyed. They noted that often, police come to protect them when their lives are in serious danger or either during or after the destruction of their property.

Sometimes victims of witchcraft-based violence are not assisted by the authorities and NGOs because the victims do not seek the assistance. Sometimes this is because they do not know where to seek assistance. A 65 year old widow from Ntchisi said that she did not seek protection or assistance because she did not know what to do, while participants in FGD for middle-aged people in Karonga explained that “We (community members) do not lend a helping hand because the moment others see you doing that they conclude that you too are a witch.”

The police have a difficult task to protect suspected witches since most people including some policemen have very strong beliefs in witchcraft, and many do not want suspects to be protected and assisted. Participants in an FGD for the youth in Mwanza observed that, “It’s impossible to support witches. They are bad people. They just have to be killed and punished for their sins.”

Most of the study participants said that support from the police, NGOs, and Social Welfare Offices is either non-existent or inadequate. Some of them participants noted that NGOs such as ASH provide material support including shelter and food, and they provide civic education on the rights of suspected witches.

The sad thing is that the chiefs to whom the ‘clients’ are referred to, do not have better knowledge of the Act than them. Indeed, most traditional leaders who preside over witchcraft cases admitted that they do not handle witchcraft cases according to the law. One traditional leader from Thyolo admitted that: “Sometimes we are afraid of our people because they ask why we protect a witch and suggest that we are witches also. So that’s why we fail to handle witchcraft cases according to the law.”

Strategies to eliminate Violence against Suspects

Some study participants noted that if witchcraft-based violence is to be eradicated and if victims are to lead normal lives, human rights organisations should actively participate in the protection of suspects; the general public should be civic educated on the Witchcraft Act and human rights; people who accuse others of practicing witchcraft should be arrested and prosecuted; counselling services and spiritual guidance should be made available to suspected witches; and suspected witches should not be isolated.

However, there were other study participants with a strong view that ‘witches’ must be punished by harming them physically, destroying their property, evicting them from their communities, or by jailing them in order to stop them from practicing witchcraft.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Belief in witchcraft is strong and widespread in Malawi. The number of witchcraft cases appears to rise mostly due to increasing jealousy in a society where a few individuals and families are seen to be prospering. There is a lot of superstition in the Malawian society, which fuels witchcraft suspicion. The typical witch is an elderly woman. However, the better-off in a poor community are vulnerable to accusations, and children are increasingly identified as child witches.

The means by which witches are identified are very dubious and questionable since they cannot be subjected to scientific scrutiny or testing. Revelations by 'witches' and children can be misleading since admissions by the accused are sometimes made under duress.

Ignorance among most Malawians including traditional leaders such as chiefs and religious leaders and the police on what the law says about witchcraft and what human rights are about, explains in part, why witchcraft-based violence against suspects is allowed to happen in the Malawian society.

Many children are said to be trained in witchcraft. They, like women, the elderly and the poor, are vulnerable people who are easy targets for suspicion and violence. These vulnerable groups need protection and support.

According to the findings of this study, some people who are suspected of practicing witchcraft are subjected to physical, economic, social, and psychological violence. Some of the suspected witches, particularly women and girls, are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Generally, a suspect is subjected to a combination of these forms of violence, the extreme of which is death. The rights of the individual suspect as well as of his or her family are violated.

As a result of the violence, victims of witchcraft-based violence do not lead normal lives. They are cast off. They are discriminated and stigmatised throughout their lives. Generally, they do not receive adequate, if any, protection and support from other community members including family members, the police, government, and NGOs. The majority of the victims do not get counselling services. Children suspected of practicing witchcraft experience violence by family members, their friends, religious leaders, and witchdoctors.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations made based on the findings of this study, aimed at eliminating cases of witchcraft-based violence:

- *The Ministry of Local Government (in liaison with Ministries of Elderly and Women with relevant stakeholders) should take a proactive stance to sensitise on regular basis T/As and DCs regarding their responsibilities to enforce the witchcraft law.*
- *Other state institutions like the police should be reminded to enforce the law and apply it correctly without fear or favour.*
- *Conduct country-wide public awareness meetings to familiarise community and religious leaders and the general public with the provisions of the Witchcraft Act and to make people aware of human rights. Radio adverts are also recommended as the appeal to directly to the general public.*

- *Support initiatives aimed at building capacities for organisations that has shown leadership in the campaign against witchcraft based violence towards children, women and the elderly like ASH.*
- *Develop measures that ensure that those accused or mistreated in the name of witchcraft are able to report, come forward and speak out of injustices to police, DCs or relevant NGOs. Establishment of temporary shelter, hotline and legal support would be in order.*
- *Campaign for a new revised Witchcraft Act protects human rights by continuing to decriminalise witchcraft and criminalises accusations from all corners of society. It should ensure that Malawians are not harmed in the name of witchcraft accusations.*
- *Strengthen measures to protect and support victims of witchcraft-based violence by building the capacity of other offices such as Social Welfare Offices, the police especially Victim Support Unit, and relevant NGOs.*
- *Train people at village level in holistic counselling. The people to be trained must include traditional leaders, religious leaders, and teachers.*
- *Conduct a research study focusing on the violence that children suspected of practicing witchcraft are subjected to, and the impact of such violence on the children's health and socio-psychological life. This should also investigate sexual violence the children are subjected to by witchdoctors and religious leaders.*

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Witchcraft is the “practice” or “ability” to harm someone through the use of magical or mystical powers. Consequently, a witch is a person who is believed to cause harm under the influence of the force of witchcraft. Witchcraft is a real belief system for those who believe it and is much rooted in them. However in developed countries it is a harmless belief³. Studies show that the belief is widespread across sub-Saharan African (UNICEF-2010)⁴ including Malawi.

According to the ANPPCAN Malawi Chapter⁵, the belief in witchcraft in Malawi permeates all sectors. Most Malawians regardless of age, education or social position hold the belief in witchcraft and that witches are real. In a study by NSO (2008)⁶, 76% of sampled Malawian households said that they know of witches in their community, 62% said they know someone accused of witchcraft, 36% reported that they have a member who experienced bad things due to witchcraft, and 28% said that they had taken steps to protect themselves against witchcraft.

In the past, witchcraft was limited to women and the elderly. However, the current dimension to the belief is that there are “child witches”. These are mainly being taught witchcraft by the elderly, it is alleged. Once taught, the “child witches” cause harm such as murder, diseases, infertility or accidents. There have been numerous occasions where children claim of being taught witchcraft have resulted into people being prosecuted at informal chiefs courts, the police, courts and eventually being imprisoned⁷.

1.1 Witchcraft accusations, violence and injustices towards victims

Malawians have the Constitutional⁸, right to believe in witchcraft. But the Constitution does not allow for actions arising from beliefs that result in criminal activity. Thus, in order to protect Malawians from the harm arising from the belief

³ Developed countries passed the stage of prosecuting witches.

⁴ UNICEF(2010), Children Accused of Witchcraft: An Anthropological Study of Contemporary Practices in Africa, Wcardo, Dakar

⁵ ANPPCAN study with University of Caroline, 2007, in a study by Madise on witchcraft in Malawi.

⁶ NSO (2008), Welfare Monitoring Survey, Zomba

⁷ Prison records and ASH reports- over 100 women and the elderly were convicted between 2007-2010 on allegation of teaching children witchcraft.

⁸ Constitution of Malawi-Section 33 states that “everyone has right to freedom of thought.....”belief”

through accusations and by witch finders, the Witchcraft Act of 1911 makes it an offence for anyone to accuse anyone of being a witch or practicing witchcraft (Section 4), prohibits chiefs from allowing witch-hunts and individuals from employing witch finders (Sections 5 and 7). It is a crime to profess that one is a witch finder and to be present at witch hunts (Section 8 and 9). The Act is attached (see Appendix 2). The Act prescribes several penalties against any of these witchcraft offences. The witchcraft Act is being reviewed by the Law Commission. Witchcraft accusations are mainly directed at children, women, and the elderly. Accusations have been accompanied with violence, physically and dehumanizing. Records including media reports⁹ show that victims has been subjected to these forms of violence; murder, forced to vacate their homes, beatings, or chained or hacked to confess. Others have committed suicide. This type of mistreatment has left them economically deprived, psychologically disturbed, mentally distressed; their individual liberties restricted and they live a life of perpetual fear.

Accusations through witch hunting have also been on the increase of late particularly in the districts in the central region. Analysis of documents, media reports and interviews with key informants by ASH shows that about one witch-hunt is reported in a week with over 50 witch-hunts having been undertaken since June, 2011. Violence perpetuated to victims through witch-hunts and cleansing include, smearing of flour and being cut with razor blades on the face, being kept hostage at shrines for days, destruction of property and payment of heavy fines of money, a goat or cow and drinking harmful concoctions. Victims of witch-hunts are mainly women and the elderly. That a woman “witch” is the most dangerous is part of the Malawian belief; hence female witches are easily identified, prosecuted and treated harshly. The special Rapporteur¹⁰ on violence against women identified witchcraft beliefs as a cultural practice that is violent towards women. The elderly are also prone to accusations because, as two key informants observed:

The elderly are the weakest. Some elderly people have no support because of outliving their dependents, and they are helpless (Director of Administration, male, 41 years old).

Elderly females are the most hard-hearted people (District Coordinator for Policing, male, 45 years old).

Of late, the accusations of children have risen. According to Twea, witchcraft cases involving children are on the increase and putting a lot of psychological torture on them; thereby affecting their performance and growth.¹¹ UNICEF (2010) observes that in the African region, children accused of witchcraft are subject to psychological and physical violence, first by family members, friends, church pastors and traditional healers or witchdoctors. The reasons for the increase in

⁹ ASH has a record of violence as reported by the media for the past 3 years.

¹⁰ UN Commission on Human Rights-Cultural practices that are violent towards women- NGO-GCN Study, Witchcraft in Malawi.

¹¹ Malawi: Children accused of witchcraft, reported by Richard Chirombo available at [http://footdeguinee.africanews.com/site/Malawi children accused of witchcraft/listmessages/20782](http://footdeguinee.africanews.com/site/Malawi%20children%20accused%20of%20witchcraft/listmessages/20782)

witchcraft cases and violence include: support of persecution based culture and tradition, religious beliefs; the impact of Nigerian film industry (WLSA-2010); the increased influence of witch-hunters and healers; orphans due to HIV/AIDs staying with “host” family increasingly labelling them as witches; magistrates’ and police personal belief on witchcraft, general economic impoverishment; inadequate health services where sickness and death is due to witchcraft; inadequate civil society sensitization against witchcraft- based human rights violations. People have also resorted to witchcraft accusations to settle personal vendettas.

Witchcraft- inspired violence towards the alleged “witches” has reached alarming levels. Many “witches” have suffered in silence for fear of community reprisals, long distances or are too old to walk and report to police stations, and while some feel despondent about the whole episode. In some cases, when they have reported, state authorities particularly the police have not been helpful.

Witchcraft-based violence is an issue of concern and requires a response by civil society organizations, the judiciary, state institutions, politicians and human rights defenders. As one Malawi Government official said, “the problem of violence against the elderly is huge. There is need for civic education as most rural people associate the elderly with sorcery. Many of the elderly are killed annually.”¹² Also Hear (in UNICEF, 2010) states that “Killing of, or violence to, alleged witches violates the most basic right of every human being”¹³. Violence towards alleged witches is a human rights issue.

In this spirit of concern, this nation-wide, systematic, evidence-based, empirical study was proposed and launched in July 2011. It is the first of its kind in Malawi. The aim of the study was to find out about the extent of witchcraft- based violence toward children, women and the elderly so that remedial measures could be prescribed. To eradicate acts of violence against people accused of witchcraft, it is important to understand the socio-economic and political factors contributing to accusations. With reliable data, we can then design appropriate programs to eradicate witchcraft-based violence and to provide the appropriate assistance to victims.

This study has been carried out in all three regions of the country. It provides data on attitudes, beliefs, and witchcraft practices and on witchcraft-based violence. The study has made recommendations so that violence against children, women, and the elderly, is eradicated.

1.2 Aims and Goal of the study

The goal of this project is: Children, women and the elderly are free from accusations of witchcraft so that the human rights of this vulnerable group are promoted and protected in Malawi.

1.3 Specific objectives of the study

The following is the specific objective of this study:

¹² The Principal Secretary for the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities. The Nation in Dec, 2009

¹³UNICEF Report, Children Accused of Witchcraft, April 2010

Knowledge of the prevalence of witchcraft practices and the forms of witchcraft-based violence meted out to victims in Malawi is available and shared with stakeholders.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This section presents the methodology of the study, including the research design, sampled districts, data collection methods and sampling, data analysis, limitations of the study and challenges faced, and management of the research.

2.2 Research Design

The study was purposively both quantitative and qualitative because of the nature of witchcraft and in order for it to achieve its objectives. The quantitative component of the study focused on demographic and “objective” facts related to witchcraft in order to measure how widespread witchcraft is in Malawi. The qualitative component required much probing so that an in-depth understanding of the nature of witchcraft and the forms of violence inflicted on children, women, and the elderly in Malawi, could be gained.

2.3 Selected Districts

The research study was conducted in all three regions of Malawi. Eight districts, namely Karonga and Mzimba in the Northern Region, Ntchisi and Dedza in the Central Region, and Machinga, Thyolo, Blantyre City, and Mwanza in the Southern Region were sampled purposively because according to NSO (2008), the percentage of household heads who reported that at least one member of their household experienced bad things due to witchcraft was highest in these districts, with the exception of Karonga. Karonga reported the second lowest percentage but it was included in order to have a more representative sample with respect to ethnicity.

In Blantyre, only the urban area was covered in order to add an urban dimension to the study. A combination of the rural and urban areas ensured that all socio-economic groupings in Malawi were represented in the study.

2.4 Data Collection Methods and Sampling

Four main data collection methods were utilised. They are document review, a household survey, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Data collection tools were administered in Chichewa and Tumbuka, the two main languages understood by most people in the sampled districts.

2.4.1 Document review

The research team sourced relevant documents such as articles on witchcraft in journals, books and newspapers, and on the internet. Use was also made of the documents that ASH has compiled over the years, some of which were used to construct the three case studies presented in this report. Document review took place from the time of field data collection to the time this report was being written.

2.4.2 Household survey

A household survey using a pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 3) was conducted. Most of the data generated by the questionnaire was quantitative. Because of the sensitive nature of the study and to protect their identity, names of the respondents were not recorded.

A total of 1193 households were sampled randomly. They included male-headed, female-headed and child-headed households. In Blantyre City, 4 (2 high density, 1 medium density, and 1 low density) residential areas were sampled randomly.

In each of the rest of the 7 sampled districts, about 30 households at the *boma*, about 60 households from two randomly sampled villages neighbouring the *boma*, and about 60 households from two randomly sampled villages about 20 kms from the *boma*, were sampled using systematic random sampling technique.

In each sampled residential area and village, the first household was sampled randomly, and thereafter, every third household was sampled. Table 1 shows the number of households that were sampled per research site. Appendix 2 is a list of the names of TAs, villages and residential areas that were covered by this study.

Table 1: Number of sampled households per research site

Mzimba	KA	Ntchisi	Dedza	MHG	Blantyre City	Thyolo	MN	Total
151	150	150	150	155	150	149	138	1193

Note: KA=Karonga; MHG=Machinga; MN=Mwanza.

2.4.3 Key informant interviews

A pre-tested key informant interview guide (see Appendix 4) was used to interview 94 key informants. It generated qualitative data including data on the personal experiences of victims. Information was collected on how cases of witchcraft are handled by traditional and religious leaders as well as by the general public, and on the forms of violence perpetrated against people suspected of practicing witchcraft. Names of key informants were not recorded to protect their identity.

The key informants were sampled purposively to ensure a fair representation of females (at least 35%) and that the key informants had reliable information about witchcraft-based violence against children, women, and the elderly.

Table 2 shows the number and type of key informants who were interviewed.¹⁴ Of the 94 key informants, 15 were from Karonga, 15 from Mzimba, 15 from Ntchisi, 15 from Dedza, 10 from Machinga, 7 from Blantyre, 9 from Thyolo, and 8 from Mwanza.

Table 2: Number and type of key informants

Type of Key Informant	Number
Parents/guardians claiming that their children were taught witchcraft	18
Persons suspected of practicing witchcraft	15
Persons claiming to have ever been bewitched	10
Witchdoctors/Witch-hunters/Traditional healers	4
TAs/GVHs/Village heads	14
DC/Deputy DC/Directors of Administration/Assistant Human Resource Officer, at District or City Assembly	6
District Welfare Officers	3
Child Protection Officers	3
Victim Support Unit Coordinators/Police Officers	8
Magistrates/Senior Registry clerk/Court clerks	7
Religious leaders	6
Total	94

2.4.4 Focus group discussions (FGDs)

A total of 29 FGDs were conducted with children (<18 years old), the youth (18 – 29 years old), the middle-aged (30 < 60 years old), and the elderly (at least 60 years old). A total of 310 people participated in the FGDs. Table 3 shows the number of FGD participants per target group in each sampled site.

Table 3: Number of FGD participants per target group, by district

Research Site	Target Group				Total
	Children	Youth	Middle-aged	The Elderly	
Karonga	12	13	10	12	47
Mzimba	12	12	11	9	44
Ntchisi	12	9	12	13	46
Dedza	8	9	8	12	37
Machinga	10	9	12	8	39
Blantyre City	8	13	0 ¹⁵	0 ¹⁶	21
Thyolo	20 ¹⁷	0 ¹⁸	8	0 ¹⁹	28

¹⁴ None of the enumerators came across a person who claimed to be a witch.

¹⁵ It was impossible to conduct an FGD with middle-aged men and women in Blantyre City because the people were demanding payment for their participation. Participation was supposed to be voluntary.

¹⁶ Efforts to gather the elderly in one place in Blantyre City failed. They were afraid of being labelled witches.

¹⁷ The 20 represents the number of participants in 2 FGDs: one with 12 and the other with 8 participants.

¹⁸ Enumerators wrongly recorded one children's FGD as a youth FGD.

¹⁹ Only two participants turned up and efforts to hold the FGD on other days were unsuccessful.

Mwanza	11	8	12	17	48
Total	85	81	73	71	310

FGDs were useful in clearly bringing out issues about witchcraft that people have consensus or divergent views on. FGDs gave people the opportunity to discuss their views with others in similar or dissimilar situations as themselves. They also offered an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences and explore together as a group, possible ways of addressing violence against people suspected of practicing witchcraft.

The photograph below depicts 8 FGD participants (sitting) and 2 Research Assistants (standing) at Kaporo, Karonga in the Northern Region. This was soon after the FGD had been conducted.

Photo: FGD participants and research assistants, Karonga



The smallest FGD had 8 participants while the largest had 17. Each FGD was facilitated by a moderator and a note-taker. The participants were sampled purposively with guidance from key informants in order to get the target groups and to have about an equal representation of males and females. A pre-tested FGD guide (see Appendix 5) was used. To protect their identity, FGD participants' names were not recorded. Also, a tape was not used due to the sensitive nature of the topic of witchcraft.

2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Preliminary processing of qualitative data was done in the field where enumerators wrote key informant and FGD reports on the same day, or a day after, they conducted the interviews or FGDs. Deeper analysis of this data was carried out soon after completion of field work.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The household heads, key informants and FGD participants participated in the study voluntarily. All information they gave was treated with utmost confidentiality.

Participants' names have not been used in the study to protect the participants' identity. Also, where the title or position of a key informant has been mentioned, the district where he or she was interviewed has not been disclosed. All this has been done to protect the participants' identity.

2.7 Limitations of the Study and Challenges Faced

This research study has the following three limitations worth noting:

1. Due to financial and time constraints, the research team could not stay in a community long enough to be able to observe how people suspected of practicing witchcraft are treated. Therefore, much of the data collected was based on what people said rather than on what they did.
2. At the time this study was being conducted, information on violence against persons suspected of practicing witchcraft in Malawi was scanty. Therefore, documents that were relied on including newspapers articles that had been collected by ASH. Most of the newspaper articles on witchcraft lack scientific rigour.
3. Due to the sensitive nature of sexual violence and abuse, the study did not investigate in detail if people suspected of practicing witchcraft are subjected to sexual violence and abuse. A study on this would require a much longer period of time and more resources than were available for this current study.

Five main challenges were faced during data collection, namely:

1. In some areas villages were small and far apart. Therefore, finding respondents took longer than expected.
2. In many areas it was hard to gather the elderly in one place for an FGD. Many elderly people were afraid that, by gathering them together to discuss witchcraft, people would conclude that they were admitting that they were witches.
3. In a few cases, it was a challenge to establish the ages of participants. As a result, some participants who said they were, or appeared to be, of a particular age or age-group, may have been younger or older than their actual age.²⁰
4. A few potential participants were asking for upfront payment to participate in the study. Some of them refused to grant an interview or to participate in FGDs.
5. The study was conducted when there was shortage of fuel in the country. Consequently, in some cases the research team had to drive far to fetch fuel.

²⁰ This is why, for example, some children aged under 18 years participated in FGDs meant for the youth, and some middle-aged people participated in FGDs meant for the youth. However, this happened in only a few cases.

Despite these limitations and challenges, the research team collected very reliable and valuable data from the people who participated in the research study.

2.8 The Research Team

The field research team consisted of 2 Principal Researchers, namely Dr Charles Chilimampunga who was the Team Leader and Mr George Thindwa, 2 Supervisors, 10 Enumerators, and 2 Drivers. The Supervisors and Enumerators underwent a 5-day training which included doing a pilot study. The field data collection took 30 days beginning from July 26, 2011 and ending on August 23, 2011.

CHAPTER 3

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings of the study that are relevant to the objectives of the study. It starts with a presentation of the demographic characteristics of the sample, before presenting and discussing beliefs in witchcraft, the teaching of witchcraft to children, forms of violence perpetrated against children, women, and the elderly, and strategies to address the problem of violence against people suspected of practicing witchcraft.

3.2 Demographics

A total of 1193 household heads and 94 key informants were interviewed. In addition, 310 people participated in 29 FGDS.

3.2.1 Sex, age, marital status, and household size

Of the 1193 household heads, 67% were males and the rest (33%) were females, while males and females accounted for 63% and 37% of the key informants respectively. Females and males accounted for 52% and 48% of the FGD participants respectively, which is a general reflection of how males and females are represented in the national population.

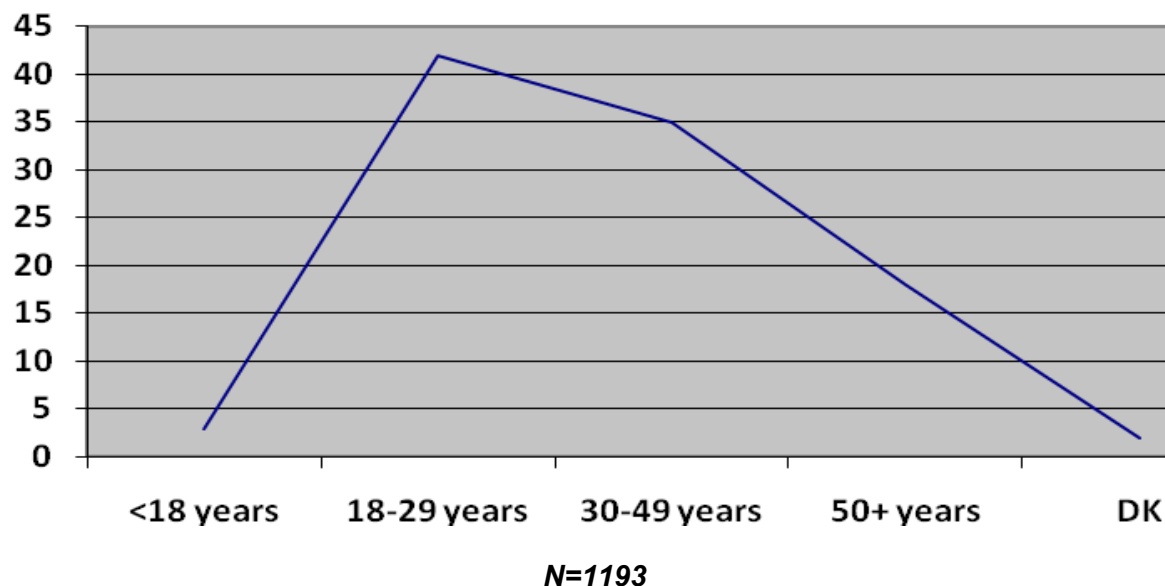
As Figure 1 shows, most (42%) of the household heads were youths (18-29 years). Middle-aged persons (30-49 years) accounted for 35% of the household heads, while the elderly (50+ years) and children (<18 years) accounted for 18% and 3% of them respectively. The age range for the key informants was from 10 to 90 years²¹, while that for FGD participants was from 5 to 87 years.²²

Some 72% of the household heads were married at the time of the survey. The rest were never married (11%), widowed (9%), divorced (5%), and separated (3%). Most (53%) of the households had 5 – 10 members, while 44% and 3% had 1 – 4 and more than 10 members, respectively.

²¹ The 10 year old was a girl who has been suspected of practicing witchcraft.

²² Although enumerators had been instructed to have 10 year old children as the youngest participants in the study, a few younger children were allowed to participate because they were very clever.

Figure 1: Age groups of the household heads, by percent



3.2.2 District of birth and length of stay in the area

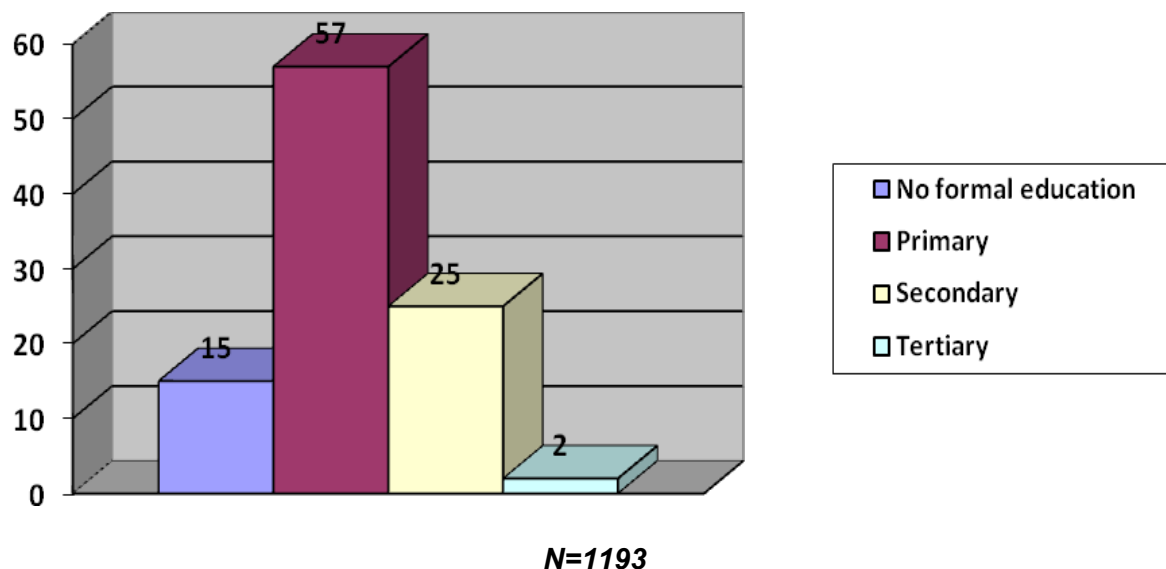
Most of the household heads were born in the district where they were interviewed. The percentage ranged from 36% in Blantyre City and 96% in Karonga. About 73% of them lived for at least 10 years in the area where they were interviewed. Only 12% lived in the area for less than 4 years. This implies that most of the interviewed household heads were familiar with the communities they lived in.

3.2.3 Education and occupation

The education attainment of the FGD participants, and household heads reflects that of the general population in Malawi. For example, Figure 2 shows that most (57%) of them had primary education, and only 2% had tertiary education. It is important to note that as many as 15% of them had no formal education. The representation of people with secondary and tertiary education among key informants was slightly higher than among the other two categories of research subjects. The main occupation of the majority of the household heads was subsistence farming (46%) and small-scale business (32%). The pattern was similar among FGD participants. The percentage of employed persons was slightly higher among key informants than among the household heads and FGD participants.²³

²³ This was mainly because 29% of the key informants were senior and junior staff working at the District Assemblies, magistrate courts, and police stations.

Figure 2: Education of household heads



3.2.4 Religion and ethnicity

Most (85%) of the household heads were Christians. The rest said they were Muslims (12%); they did not belong to any religion (2%); or their religion was traditional. The pattern was similar among key informants and FGD participants.

The ethnic groups of the household heads were Chewa (25%), Ngoni (18%), Tumbuka (17%), Yao (14%), Lhomwe (13%), Mang'anja (4%), Nkhonde (4%), Sena (2%), Tonga (1%), Senga (1%), and 4 other smaller ethnic groups (1%). The pattern was similar among key informants and FGD participants. This shows that virtually all major ethnic groups in Malawi participated in the study.

3.3 Knowledge of the Witchcraft Act

Since the Witchcraft Act of 1911 was enacted, one would assume that the majority of Malawians know at least some of the provisions presented in Section 1.1 above or Appendix 2 below.

Data from FGDs, key informants, and household heads shows that most of the people do not know what the law (the Witchcraft Act) says about witchcraft. Many of them have never even heard about it. A few FGD participants said they heard from the radio. Only 394 (33%) of the 1193 household heads said they know what it says. The percentage was highest in Karonga (44%), followed by Blantyre (38%), Ntchisi (36%), Dedza and Mwanza (33% each), Thyolo (30%), Machinga (25%), and Mzimba (23%).

When the 394 household heads who said they knew what the law says on witchcraft were asked what it says, 173 (44%) said that it says nobody should be arrested for practicing witchcraft while 29% said suspects should be arrested and prosecuted. Table 4 shows the responses.

Table 4: What the law says about witchcraft, by percentage of household heads

Responses	#	%
No one should be arrested and prosecuted for being suspected of practicing witchcraft	173	44
Suspects should be arrested and prosecuted	115	29
People who are caught practicing witchcraft should be reported to police	43	11
Witchcraft is bad	12	3
There is no evidence that witchcraft exists	12	3
Those who teach children witchcraft should be killed	8	2
Witchcraft is a human rights issue	4	1
Those who teach children witchcraft, must teach their own children	4	1
Do not kill or burn suspects	4	1
Not sure	7	2
Other responses	12	3
Total number of responses	394	

Note: The percentages should not be totalled because of multiple responses.

It was in 20 (69%) of the 29 FGDs that participants said they do not know what the law says about witchcraft. Some of the participants in the rest (31%) of the FGDs said that they know what it says. Not surprisingly, the youth and the middle-aged seemed to have slightly more knowledge than children and the elderly. The youth and middle-aged persons have better access to information and sources of information such as the radio and newspapers than children and the elderly.

When asked about what the law says, FGD participants gave responses which were similar to the following sample of responses:

The Act says that all witches should be arrested (All participants, FGD for children, Thyolo).

If you call somebody a witch you can be summoned to court to answer charges (54 year old man, Form 2,²⁴ FGD for middle-aged people, Karonga).

A person caught practicing witchcraft should be killed (13 year old secondary school girl, FGD for children, Blantyre).

If you say someone is a witch without having evidence, you are supposed to be arrested (All participants, FGD for the elderly, Mwanza).

²⁴ For each key informant or FGD participant who is quoted, any education reported is the highest level of education attained.

Do not accuse our grandparents if you do not want to be arrested (15 year old Standard 3 boy, FGD for children, Dedza).

The rights of the witches should not be violated (25 year old woman, primary education, FGD for youth, Mwanza).

There is no proof that witchcraft is practiced (Participants, FGD for children, Mzimba).

It was clear from interviews with traditional leaders on whether they handle witchcraft cases according to the law, that even though they handle many witchcraft cases, many traditional leaders are not conversant with the Witchcraft Act. They do not know, for example, that by calling a witch-hunter to identify 'witches' in their area or evicting a suspected witch from their area, they are committing a crime.

Most (85%) of the traditional and religious leaders who participated in the study and have ever presided over witchcraft cases, do not handle the cases according to the law. The two most frequently mentioned reasons were that, from their point of view, there is no law addressing witchcraft in Malawi, and that most people do not know anything about the law. The following are statements from five traditional and religious leaders, which indicate that they do not handle witchcraft cases according to the law:

There are no laws that can be used to handle cases of witchcraft (Traditional leader, Standard 8, Thyolo).

We don't follow the law. As a church we have our own way (of doing things), that's through the Bible. We follow what the Bible says and not what the government says. For example, the Bible tells us to pray for those who do evil things and not to punish them (Christian religious leader, Dedza).

We don't really handle cases according to the law because sometimes we are afraid of our people. They say that we protect suspected witches may be because we too are witches (Traditional leader, Form 2, Karonga).

I have never heard about what the law says on witchcraft. I invite witchdoctors to my area to identify witches so that justice must prevail (Traditional leader, Form 2, Machinga).

When there is proof beyond reasonable doubt that a villager is practicing witchcraft, the villager is evicted from the village (Traditional leader, J.C.E, Ntchisi).

Judging from the study participants' responses, it can be concluded that knowledge of the Witchcraft Act among Malawians is low despite the fact that it was enacted in 1911 and inherited wholesale by government since 1964. People's ignorance of what the Witchcraft Act states explains in part, why violence against suspects is accepted by many people. This ignorance is an indication that the general public has not been adequately sensitised.

The key informants were asked if witchcraft should be recognised by law. Most of them said that it should be recognised because this will help to reduce cases of witchcraft-based violence. For example, four key informants made the following statements:

Witchcraft should be recognised so that incidences of witchcraft-based violence should reduce (Magistrate, Dedza).

Witchcraft should be recognised by law for people's rights to be preserved (Traditional leader, Ntchisi).

Witchcraft should be recognised by law because it exists even though one cannot provide tangible proof. Witches are not seen by our naked eyes because people choose to go to witchdoctors. If they choose to consult God through prayers, witches can be seen physically because God exposes unseen things to be seen (Christian religious leader, Dedza).

There should be laws specifically for witchcraft because most traditional leaders are biased in their judgements. The courts should be responsible for cases of witchcraft (Christian religious leader, Thyolo).

The few who said that witchcraft should not be recognised by law said that there is no evidence that witchcraft exists and that its recognition will result in continued killings of suspected witches. The following are examples of key informants' views:

Witchcraft should not be recognised by law because it is difficult to prove it in a government court. It is difficult to produce concrete evidence to support the accusation (Muslim religious leader, Machinga).

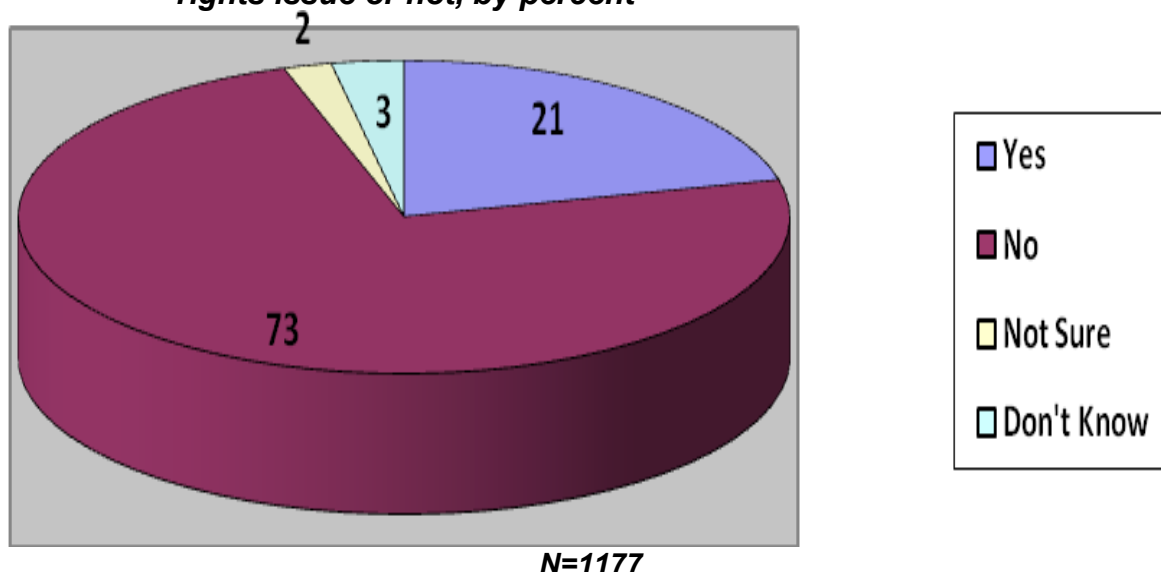
No, because people will be killing each other because of accusations or suspicions (Traditional leader, Ntchisi).

Even if it is recognised, nothing will change (Traditional leader, Mzimba).

3.3.1 Witchcraft and human rights

The household heads and FGD participants were asked if witchcraft is a human rights issue. Figure 3 indicates that most (73%) of the household heads did not regard witchcraft as a human rights issue.

Figure 3: Household heads' responses on whether witchcraft is a human rights issue or not, by percent



FGD participants held views similar to those held by the household heads. All participants in 19 (66%) of the 29 FGDs, said that there is no relationship between witchcraft and human rights. There were mixed reactions among participants in 9 (31%) of the FGDs, while all participants in 1 (3%) of them. The following are reasons given by a sample of FGD participants to explain why they felt that there is no relationship:

Because witchcraft is not included in the Constitution (of the Republic of Malawi) in which human rights are expressed (35 year old married woman whose education level is Standard 2 and is a subsistence farmer, FGD for youth, Karonga).

Because witchcraft is learnt after one is born (while human rights are in-born) (27 year old married businesswoman, secondary education, FGD for middle-aged people, Thyolo).

Because witches infringe upon the rights of the people they bewitch (13 year Standard 5 boy, FGD for youth, Machinga).

Because in witchcraft, there are no rights. It is only people who have rights (witches are not people) (26 year old businessman, primary education, FGD for the youth, Mwanza).

Because witchcraft is all about killing each other (21 year old man university/college student, FGD for the youth, Blantyre).

Because children cannot enjoy their rights when they are taught witchcraft (61 year old married man, Standard 8, subsistence farmer, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

Because when one practices witchcraft, whether one likes it or not, his or her rights will be violated by people who are his victims (65 year old married man, Standard 6, FGD for the elderly, Dedza).

Because some people practice witchcraft for fun. They do not kill other people (14 year old Standard 7 boy, FGD for children, Thyolo).

These explanations show that most FGD participants had little knowledge of what human rights is about. In fact, a magistrate pointed out that people do not understand what human rights means. The following is a sample of the reasons why some FGD participants felt that there is a relationship between witchcraft and human rights:

Because teaching children witchcraft violates the rights of the children (19 year old single businesswoman, primary education, FGD for middle-aged people, Thyolo)

Because witches breach our peace (11 year old Standard 6 boy, FGD for children, Mzimba).

Because even witches have rights as persons (17 year old secondary school boy, FGD for the youth, Blantyre).

Because people quarrel over witchcraft, therefore it violates the rights of some people (36 year old married man, Form 4, FGD for middle-aged people, Machinga).

Because whenever a witch kills someone that means he or she has violated the victim's right to life (15 year old Standard 7 boy, FGD for children, Thyolo)

Of the 10 FGDs whose participants either had mixed reactions or all of them felt that witchcraft is a human rights issue, none was for the elderly, and 4 were for middle-aged people; 3 for the youth, and another 3 for children. This shows that the elderly, who are the most likely to be victims of witchcraft-based violence, are the least likely to know that witchcraft is a human rights issue.

3.4 Witchcraft Beliefs and Practices

The majority of FGD participants understand witchcraft as behaviour and action which is beyond human nature. It is associated with evil acts. From the people's point of view, there is a thin line between witchcraft and magic. According to the FGD participants, the major difference between the two is that the purpose for practicing witchcraft is to bring about bad among people while magic may be performed to bring about good or bad. Witchcraft is commonly associated with killing, eating dead bodies, flying at night, using a broom and 'lichero' (a woven basin) as an aeroplane, and using charms for protection or harming other people.

The following are statements by a sample of FGD participants describing what they understood by witchcraft:

Witchcraft is evil things that some people do invisibly like strangling enemies at night, eating dead bodies at graveyards, dancing naked around one's house at

night and slapping enemies while they are asleep at night (49 year old married woman, Form 2, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

Witchcraft is magical things that people practice (21 year old male youth, tertiary education, FGD for the youth, Blantyre).

Doing evil things even during the day, like killing a person and speaking words of hatred (42 year old married woman, Standard 4, FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

Witchcraft is an evil practice which is achieved in a magical way and it is done in two ways: (i) killing or a person or bringing problems to other people in such a way that the culprit cannot be traced; (ii) protecting one's body so that it is not tampered with by other people (Participants, FGD for the youth, Karonga).

Witchcraft is the act of demons who command a person to do mysterious things to others (38 married businessman, Standard 7, FGD for middle-aged people, Machinga).

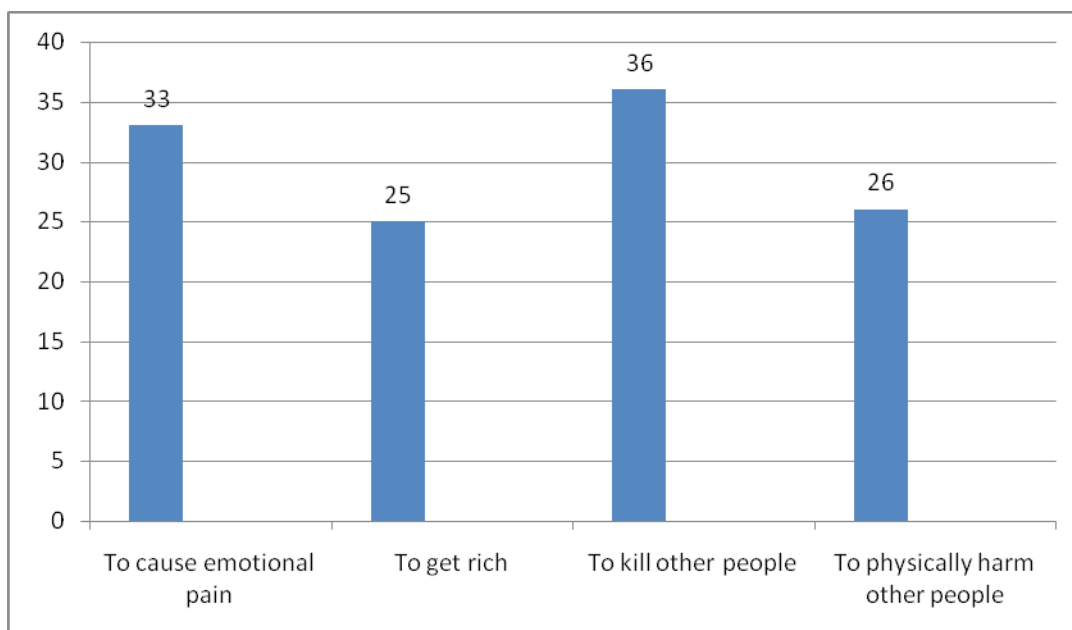
Witchcraft is something influenced by evil spirits, for example, charms and herbs (20 year old married young woman, Standard 6, FGD for the youth, Karonga).

Witchcraft is the magic that a person uses in order to cause harm to innocent people (36 year old married man, Form 4, FGD for middle-aged people, Machinga).

Witchcraft is the act of using a woven basin as an aeroplane that flies at night (14 year old Standard 7 boy, FGD for children, Thyolo).

Given the people's understanding of witchcraft, it is hardly surprising that the view of as many as 97% of the household heads was that practicing witchcraft is not acceptable. The view is based upon the purposes for which witchcraft is said to be practiced. The four most frequently mentioned purposes are presented in Figure 4. Three of these four purposes are meant to have very serious consequences for the victim. The highest percentage (36%) of the household heads mentioned that the purpose is to kill other people.

Figure 4: Household heads' views on the purpose for which witchcraft is practiced



N=1193

Views of key informants supported the findings from the household heads. Most of them suggested in their narrations that the main purpose of practicing witchcraft is to kill other people. The following is a sample of what key informants said:

The child started confessing that he was instructed to hammer his dad on the head so that he should die (33 year old married father of a 3 year old boy who was allegedly trained in witchcraft, Dedza).

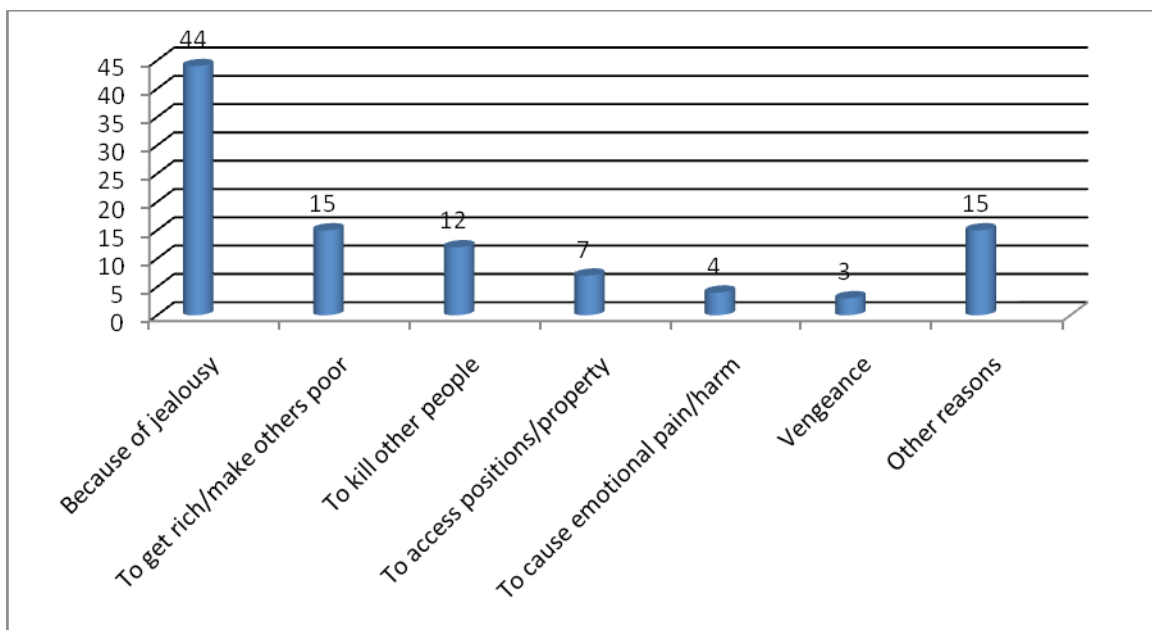
A father was caught using a cloth used by her biological daughter during her monthly period. When asked why, he said he wanted to kill somebody so that he should get rich (Traditional leader, Mwanza).

There were two neighbouring families in a village and in one family, a child was seriously ill and one child revealed that his mother told him to kill his sick friend through witchcraft (Crime Prevention and Partnership Officer, Police, Mwanza).

The witches usually use children to kill their own parents (Christian religious leader, Thyolo).

FGD participants were asked why some people bewitch others. Participants in virtually all 29 FGDs mentioned jealousy as the main reason. As Figure 5 indicates, the most frequently mentioned reason was jealousy.

Figure 5: Reasons given by FGD participants as to why some people bewitch other people, by percent of reasons



The following is a sample of what FGD participants said on the reasons why some people bewitch other people:

When a child is highly educated, witches want to kill him or her (42 year old married man, FGD for middle-aged people, Thyolo)

Many people are jealous of the rich people in the village (42 year old married woman, Standard 4, FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

People are just jealous of their friend who is progressing in life (15 year old Form 2 girl, FGD for children, Thyolo).

Sometimes people implicate others due to jealousy (Traditional leader, Mwanza).

Some people bewitch their friends because of fighting over land. So, in order to get the land, they kill the owners of the land or make them become very sick or weak (Unidentified child, FGD for children, Thyolo).

There is a strong belief among Malawians that witchcraft is practiced in the country. Most FGD participants, key informants and 87% of the household heads said that witchcraft is practiced in their community. The percentage ranged from 80% in Blantyre City to 94% in Karonga. All 6 religious leaders said that witchcraft is practiced in their community. As a key informant noted:

Witchcraft is part of our culture. Hence, it cannot be stopped (Traditional leader, Mwanza).

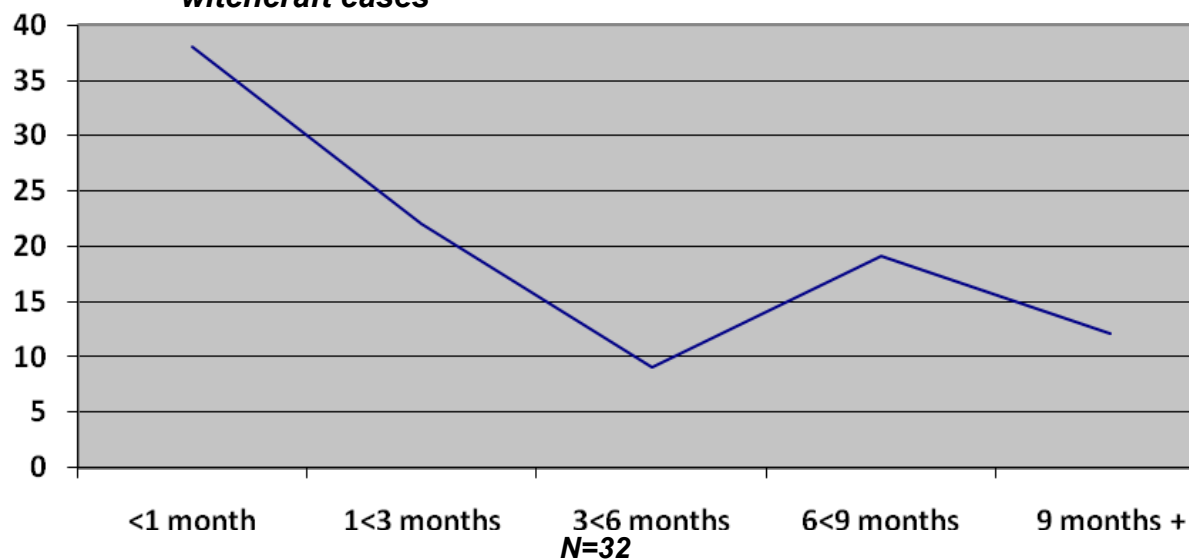
One of the 32 key informants comprising magistrates, the police, traditional leaders, religious leaders, DCs, Social Welfare Officers and other key informants working at the City or District Assemblies who had presided over or heard about a witchcraft case said that he was presiding over a case at the time the survey was being conducted. All 6 religious leaders and 10 of the 14 traditional leaders said that they have ever handled witchcraft cases. The three most recent witchcraft cases that were handled by traditional and religious leaders occurred within 3 weeks prior to the study.

As Figure 6 shows, 38% of the key informants presided over or heard about a witchcraft case less than a month prior to the day they were interviewed.

During the entire data collection period, the research team never came across a person who claimed that he or she is a witch. This study could not establish whether there were no ‘witches’ in the study sites, or that ‘witches’ were afraid to disclose their identity for whatever reasons, or further that none of the sampled study participants was a ‘witch.’ However, in agreement with some key informants and FGD participants, a key informant observed that:

There are some people who confess that they are witches (District Policing Coordinator).

Figure 6: The most recent time key informants presided over or heard about witchcraft cases



Most key informants and FGD participants as well as 55% of the household heads observed that cases of witchcraft have been on the rise over the past 10 years. Only 25% of the household heads said that cases of witchcraft have been declining, 4% said there has been no change, 10% said they were not sure, and 6% said they did not know. Out of 41 key informants who arguably have reliable information on witchcraft, 66% said that witchcraft is widespread and that cases of witchcraft have been on the rise in the past 10 years.²⁵ Two key informants said:

²⁵ These key informants were 14 traditional leaders, 6 religious leaders, 3 magistrates, 2 court clerks, 1 registry clerk, 11 police officers, and 4 witchdoctors.

Almost every month cases of witchcraft are recorded (Community Child Protection officer, Police VSU).

Witchcraft practices increased between 2008 and 2010 and the number of cases reported to our station was almost 30 per day. People come from different areas to complain about these practices (Police officer, Police VSU).

On the reasons why witchcraft cases are increasing, most participants noted that it is because many children are being taught witchcraft; that disputes over land are becoming more common as population increases while arable land is becoming scarce; and that with rising poverty more people are jealous of the better off. The following two key informants' observations are examples participants' views:

Adults who practice witchcraft are now teaching children who are not related to them either by blood or marriage. This is very different from the past when adults used to teach only those children who were related to them (Witchdoctor, Machinga).

Witchcraft cases have been increasing so much over the past 10 years because people these days are becoming jealous of one another due to differences in wealth (District Policing Coordinator).

Some cases of witchcraft are not reported to the police and other authorities such as traditional and religious leaders. The following is what a sample of key informants said on some of the reasons why sometimes witchcraft cases are not reported to the authorities:

I did not tell anyone about this (that her 9 year old daughter was trained in witchcraft) for fear that I might break the law and be arrested (39 year old mother of a child who was allegedly trained in witchcraft, Machinga).

We discussed the matter among ourselves (family members) and we agreed that children should never be trained in witchcraft again. We did not inform or invite a witch-hunter. We did not want people outside the family to hear about it (30 year old father of 12 year old boy who was allegedly trained in witchcraft by his grandparents, Dedza).

3.4.1 Identification of 'witches'

People identify 'witches' through various ways. A District Policing Coordinator gave the following as examples of the ways in which 'witches' are identified:

- When one is caught red-handed practicing witchcraft such as when one is found at the graveyard at the wrong time;
- When one confesses that he or she practices witchcraft;
- When a child reveals a person who taught him or her witchcraft;
- When a witchdoctor names a person who is a 'witch'; and
- When people who claim to be fortified are able to see 'witches' in their visions.

As Table 5 indicates, the three most common ways were through children's revelations, the behaviour of the person, and revelations from people who claim to practice witchcraft.

Table 5: Means by which 'witches' are identified

Response	%
Children's revelations	28
The behaviour/actions of the person	16
Witches' own revelations	14
Witchdoctors'/witch-hunters' diagnoses	13
Suspicion and rumours	11
Witches being caught in the act	3
Through dreams and prayers	2
Other ways	7
Don't know	6
Total	100

N=493 household heads

Since the training of children in witchcraft was said to be on the increase, many study participants noted that they rely on what children say. Apparently, their view is that children do not lie.

The following is how two parents arrived at the conclusion that their daughters were trained in witchcraft:

I saw my 9 year old daughter repeatedly chewing her teeth at night, and when I tried to stop her she could not respond. One day my neighbour told me that she had been hearing from her children that my daughter was practicing witchcraft with her children. She said they go to other countries like South Africa and Zambia where they eat and drink blood and play soccer. I was so disturbed that I decided to ask my daughter about her. Initially she refused but later, on July 16, 2011, she admitted that she practices witchcraft together with the neighbour's children (44 year old mother of a child suspected of practicing witchcraft, Ntchisi).

Very late one night, my daughter who was 9 years old then, started crying. When I asked her why she had woken up in the middle of the night, she lied that she was hungry. I gave her food but she continued crying. Later, she revealed that some people had come to take her for a flight. She said she was crying because she was tired and she needed to rest but the people started threatening her (39 year old mother of a child suspected of practicing witchcraft, Machinga).

Although 97% of the household heads said they were Christians or Muslims, and despite the fact that the religious leaders said that witchcraft is practiced in their areas, none of the household heads mentioned that it is their religious leaders who identified the witches.

In fact, most religious leaders did not indicate that they are able to identify witches but that people bring suspects to them for prayers and counselling, and that most of the suspects are children who are brought to them by their parents and

guardians. However, a religious leader and a woman who claimed that she had ever been bewitched pointed out that:

Witches are identified during deliverance in the middle of our services when all those who possess evil spirits are exposed by the power of God. For example, witches confess and sometimes they behave the way they behave at night (24 year old pastor, Dedza).

During testimony time at our church, a lot of people claim to be victims of witchcraft. During repentance time, a good number of people confess that they are witches and wizards. (29 year old Christian married businesswoman who claimed to have ever been bewitched, Mzimba).

Most household heads, FGD participants and key informants observed that it is common for people to ask a witch-hunter to identify the witch. People suspect a community member to be a witch based on factors such as one's longevity and appearance. Two key informants complained that:

I don't know how they identified me. Maybe because of the way I look. They say elderly people like me are witches because we are not dying, yet the young ones are dying. So we are the ones eating them. They did not invite a witch-hunter. They just suspect me (69 year old married woman, Standard 2, who was suspected of being a witch, Dedza).

I know that people accuse me of witchcraft because I am ugly. I don't have teeth (69 year old married woman, Standard 2, subsistence farmer, Dedza).

Much of the evidence is questionable and cannot be proved scientifically. Like some of the earlier statements, the following observations from an FGD participant and a key informant lend support to this point:

If a person threatens you and says, "You will see!" and you die within a week, people know that the one who made the threat is a witch (Participants, FGD for middle-aged people, Thyolo)

People began suspecting that I was a witch after I had three consecutive miscarriages (35 year old married businesswoman, Ntchisi).

3.4.2 Witch-hunting

Despite being illegal, witch-hunts continue to be conducted at an alarming rate. As suggested above, some 'witches' are identified by witch-hunters. When asked if witch-hunting takes place in their area, 53% of the household heads responded negatively while 44% responded affirmatively.

The percentage of those who responded affirmatively was highest in Karonga (78%), followed by Machinga (62%), Ntchisi (47%), Mzimba and Thyolo (41% each), Mwanza (39%), and Dedza (17%). Only 3% said they did not know if witch-hunting takes place in their area.

Table 6 indicates that traditional leaders and the victims of witchcraft were mentioned by most household heads as the ones who invite witch-hunters. Key informants and FGD participants also shared this view.

Table 6: Percentage of household heads mentioning the entity that invites witch-hunters

Entity that invites witch-hunters	%
Traditional leaders	73
Concerned community members	64
Religious leaders	16
Accusers	6
People suspected of practicing witchcraft	5
Political leaders	3
Traditional healers	2

Note: the percentages should not be totalled because of multiple responses.

N=367 household heads

Observations made by two FGD participants point out that there are two main channels through which a person who suspects that he or she has been bewitched identifies the 'witch.' The first one is the more common one:

The person goes to the chief to complain about inexplicable problems at his or her home. The chief grants the person permission to bring a witchdoctor to his or her home to perform rituals. The witchdoctor asks the person who he or she suspects is the cause of the problems. When he or she mentions a suspect, the witchdoctor's next step is to perform rituals to find out if whether the suspect is indeed the 'witch' causing the problems or not (62 year old married man, no formal education, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

The person experiencing strange things approaches a witchdoctor. The witchdoctor performs ritual and identifies the name of the 'culprit' and where he or she stays. The person believes the witchdoctor since he comes from far away and mentions a 'culprit' that the person knows very well (43 year old married man, Standard 3, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

A review of documents, records and media reports done by ASH shows that the other method is by witch-hunts. Witch-hunts are common in the districts of Lilongwe, Dowa, Salima, Nchitsi, Kasungu, Nkhotakota, Dedza, Karonga, Nkatabay and Mangochi. Some chiefs allow witch-hunters to undertake witch-hunts and cleansing in their communities. According to ASH's findings through victims and participants of witch hunts, the following is what happens:

- *The chief is approached by a few aggrieved people to call for a witch-hunter and the Chief authorises the collection of money per house in a village to pay as fees*

for calling the witch finder. Those that refuse are branded as witches straight away.

- *In addition to the fees, the villagers provide food and accommodation to the witch-hunter and his assistants.*
- *The witch-hunter sets a camp where those he identifies as witches are detained. Witches and their houses are smeared with flour; they are shackled, and forced to drink concoctions to be cleansed of witchcraft.*
- *The witch finder goes around the houses or graveyards bringing out the so the “witchcraft charms” from these places.*
- *Those identified as witches are further subjected to beatings, have their property damaged; houses or maize barns demolished; facial incisions with razor blades. They are asked to pay fines of goats or cattle and money.*
- *The chief threatens people not to report witch-hunt to the state authorities otherwise they risk eviction from the village.*
- *Sometimes the villagers are cheated that the authority to conduct the witch-hunt has already been received from the police or the T/A of the area.*
- *This leads to many victims to suffer in silence. However, some courageous victims have reported witch hunts to the police. Police have taken action in arresting chiefs and witch hunters or stopping witch hunts in some cases and not in others.*

Witch-hunters have found witch-hunts to be a very lucrative business and great economic incentive for witch-hunters. It is reported that chiefs do get a cut from the fines imposed on suspected witches. Some witch-hunters boast of being rich and amassing reasonable wealth at the village level.

A Community Policing Coordinator confirmed that concerned community members invite witch-hunters with permission from the village heads. For some village heads, rejecting a request to invite a witch-hunter is tantamount to not only protecting ‘witches’ but also to suggesting that the village heads themselves are witches. That is a major reason why many village heads bow down to the demands of concerned villagers. As a traditional leader observed:

Some chiefs have been arrested for inviting witch-hunters to their villages to identify witches (Traditional leader, Machinga).

However, there are some traditional leaders who do not invite witch-hunters. This is probably due to greater awareness among traditional leaders and the general public that there is no hard evidence that witch-hunters are able to identify witches. A key informant said:

We didn’t invite the witch-hunter to search my house because our village head man doesn’t allow people inviting witch-hunters (28 year old male subsistence farmer, Dedza).

However, many village headmen are pressured by their subjects to invite a witch-hunter to their village, especially when sudden or unexplained calamities including illness and deaths occur in the village.

Many key informants and FGD participants felt that some witch-hunters or witchdoctors are not genuine and others are bribed to implicate particular individuals, yet others make mistakes, as the following key informants observed:

The witchdoctors sometimes make mistakes by identifying a 'witch' or 'wizard' wrongly and this can bring about disagreements (16 year old Standard 7 boy, FGD for children, Thyolo).

Witchdoctors are corrupt people and just divide people in the villages (57 year old married male carpenter, Form 4, FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

A significant percentage (18%) of the household heads said they had ever participated in witch-hunting. The percentage was highest in Machinga (22%), followed by Mwanza (22%), Blantyre City (20%), Thyolo and Ntchisi (17% each), Dedza (8%) and Mzimba (7%).

Some 11% of the household heads reported that at least one other member of their household participated in witch-hunting. Many community members participated by inviting a witchdoctor, undergoing the cleansing process, escorting the witch-hunter to the chief's compound, assaulting the suspected witch, donating food and money to the witch-hunter, and assisting the witch-hunter in various ways. However, most (54%) of the household heads said they merely watched the proceedings. They did not come to the rescue of the suspected witch. In addition, key informants observed that much of the action by 'witches' is driven by jealousy. Two key informants explained:

My brother used to bring me goods and cash he stole in Lilongwe. Many people including my relatives who were led by my aunt became jealousy because my brother did not give them anything (35 year old married businesswoman suspected of practicing witchcraft, Ntchisi).

Witchcraft is spread all over Malawi. The number of witchcraft cases has been increasing because many people are becoming jealousy of one another (29 year old male witchdoctor, JCE, Ntchisi).

The majority (48%) of the household heads said that witches never achieve their goal, while 26% said sometimes they do, 15% said they always do, and 11% did not know. Nevertheless, suspected witches are feared in their communities. This is partly because many people feel vulnerable in the face of witchcraft.

Nearly 30% of the household heads said that a person cannot protect him/herself from witchcraft, while 59% felt it is possible to protect oneself. The former feel vulnerable to witchcraft while the latter tend to use charms to protect themselves from witchcraft. NSO (2008) found that 28% of the households in Malawi had taken steps to protect members against witchcraft. Irrespective of whether they

feel that one can or cannot protect themselves from witchcraft, most people are gripped with fear at the sight of someone labelled a witch.

3.4.2.1 Witchdoctors' activities

Among the key informants were four witchdoctors one of whom was female. One of them was interviewed in Ntchisi, two in Machinga, and one in Mwanza. Their ages ranged from 29 to 58 years. One of them had no formal education; two had primary education, and one had secondary education. At the time of the interview, they had been witchdoctors for 3 to 20 years.

Three of the witchdoctors had ever hunted witches. One of them said that he had stopped witch-hunting after learning that it is a crime to suspect or accuse someone of practicing witchcraft.

A female witchdoctor reported that to identify a witch she depends on her pulse rate. If the pulse rate is fast, she said, she knows the suspected witch is indeed a witch. The witchdoctor said that if there is a witch or someone who keeps charms for witchcraft in or around their house, she uses what she referred to as a 'cell-phone' to locate where a witch is. The 'cell-phone's network' helps her to know where the witch's charms are and she once found, the witch is then handed over to the community elders or those who invited her to the village. She said that her 'cell-phone' is very reliable and it has never lied about the location of a witch.

Two of the witchdoctors said that it possible to wrongly identify someone as witch while the other two said that it is not possible. One of them (from Mwanza) said, "It is impossible to witch because when a child mentions someone as a witch that person is indeed a witch. We ask ourselves how come the child mentioned that person of all people. He must be a witch"

A witchdoctor from Machinga pointed out that "My job is to identify and protect victims of witchcraft, not giving any punishment to them." However, the view of most study participants was that witchdoctors commit acts of violence on 'witches.' One of the witchdoctors reported that nobody "can afford to do cleansing because witches are made by gods." Three of them said that they do carry out cleansing of witches. A witchdoctor from Ntchisi observed that:

Cleansing is the best way to remove witchcraft from the witches. I make incisions on the witch's body using a razor blade, to make them start a new life. I also give him or her some concoction to drink. I tell him or her that if he or she tries to practice witchcraft again he or she will die. The number of incisions on the body represents the number of years the person is supposed to not touch any 'juju' (charms). The number of incisions depends on the age of the person. A child is prescribed about 10 while a middle-aged person is prescribed about 40 incisions.

Two of the witchdoctors said that they do not know if the law allows them to conduct witchcraft cleansing; one said the law does not permit it; while the one from Ntchisi said:

May be it allows us because we are given letters from the police to allow us to conduct the cleansing. Sometimes the DC's office and the chiefs know about our activities.

In addition to cleansing, some witchdoctors said they remove strange objects from their clients. A witchdoctor explained that a man told him that he was tired of keeping and feeding something like a snake, and he wanted his life to be normal again. The witchdoctor gave him some charms to destroy the snake-like thing which later disappeared. He said he advised the client to not eat for 7 days so that the snake-like thing should not reappear.

It was reported that most witch-hunters in Nchitsi are no longer doing their job publicly for fear of being prosecuted. However, the female witchdoctor in Ntchisi said that she does witch-hunting secretly for many families who want help. She said she also does exorcism of those who no longer want to be witches.

The Case Study 1 below describes the experiences of a middle-aged man who was identified as a witch by a witch-hunter.

Case Study 1: Fred Kapha

District: Lilongwe; T.A.: Chimutu; Village: Chinoko; Age: 47 years; Sex: Male; Ethnicity: Chewa; Religion: Christian; Marital status: married; Education: primary; Occupation: Businessman.

On 1st June, 2011, I (George Thindwa) was at Chinoko Village, T/A Chimutu, Lilongwe. The chiefs at the village had called for a witch-hunter, called Bosto. Children at some school had complained that they were being taught witchcraft. Bosto as a witch-hunter claims to have expertise of fishing out witches and their witchcraft charms.

The witch-hunt was on the full swing on the day and the witch-hunter identified Mr. Fred Kapha as a witch. He told the crowd that had gathered at the ceremony that Fred had his charm hidden at the graveyard. The witch-hunter then detained Mr Kapha at his camp: at an open ground, having smeared him with flour all over his body and face. During the time of looking for his charm at the graveyard, Mr Kapha was dragged along by village vigilantes who act as security for the witch-hunter. At the graveyard, Mr Kapha was told to sit down with his hands tied. Then the witch-hunter set out digging at the graveyard to bring out Mr Kapha's witchcraft charm. After 20 minutes, the witch-hunter reported that he had found the charm. It was a small piece of root, but the witch-hunter said it was a rat that Mr Kapha used to steal money from other people's businesses in the village.

After that, Mr Kapha was dragged back to the camp, being mocked, harassed, and constantly booed as a witch, whose charm had been found. At the camp, he was told to sit on the floor once again to await his verdict; of being fined and exorcism or cleansing. There were many people drumming and singing at the grave site and at the camp.

I took pictures of the whole drama. I called the police to come and stop this illegal practice. As I was calling the police, the security vigilantes took notice of my presence and reported me to the chiefs. The chiefs summoned me to their court and charged me MK5, 000 for being at the witch-hunt place without their permission.

However, I continued to liaise with the police to come. The police from Kanengo, Lilongwe responded and came to the venue of the hunt. They managed to arrest 5 chiefs and 5 assistants of the witch-hunter. The witch-hunter himself ran away. The next day, Mr. Kapha was summoned to the police for a statement against those arrested because witch-hunting and assisting in witch-hunting is illegal and for subjecting Mr Kapha to a witch hunt. Those arrested were charged accordingly. After three days on remand, they were released on bail on Friday, 3rd June, 2011.

3.4.3 Beliefs about who practices witchcraft

Figures 7, 8, 11, and 12 indicate that household heads believe that women practice witchcraft much more than men; the elderly much more than the middle-age, the youth, and children; the poor much more than the rich; and old settlers much more than new arrivals in a community. While WLSA (2010) found that, typically, a suspected witch is an elderly woman who is a bit better off than many other people in the community. In contrast, this study found that the profile of a person suspected of practicing witchcraft is that of an elderly poor woman. In this study, there were some but few participants whose view agreed with WLSA's finding but the majority had a different view. The difference in the findings between this study and WLSA's could be due to differences in coverage of the two studies. A Director of Administration at a District Assembly pointed out that the elderly are weak and some of them have no support, and they are helpless. In a society where the younger generation is dying in large numbers, a person who lives longer than expected is said to be a witch. Generally, it is the marginalised that are said to practice witchcraft. However, in a community where most people are poor, a relatively well-off member of the community risks being labelled a witch. The following statements from two key informants who were suspected witches and one FGD participant confirm this point:

It seems anybody who becomes rich is a witch these days (41 year old businessman, Karonga).

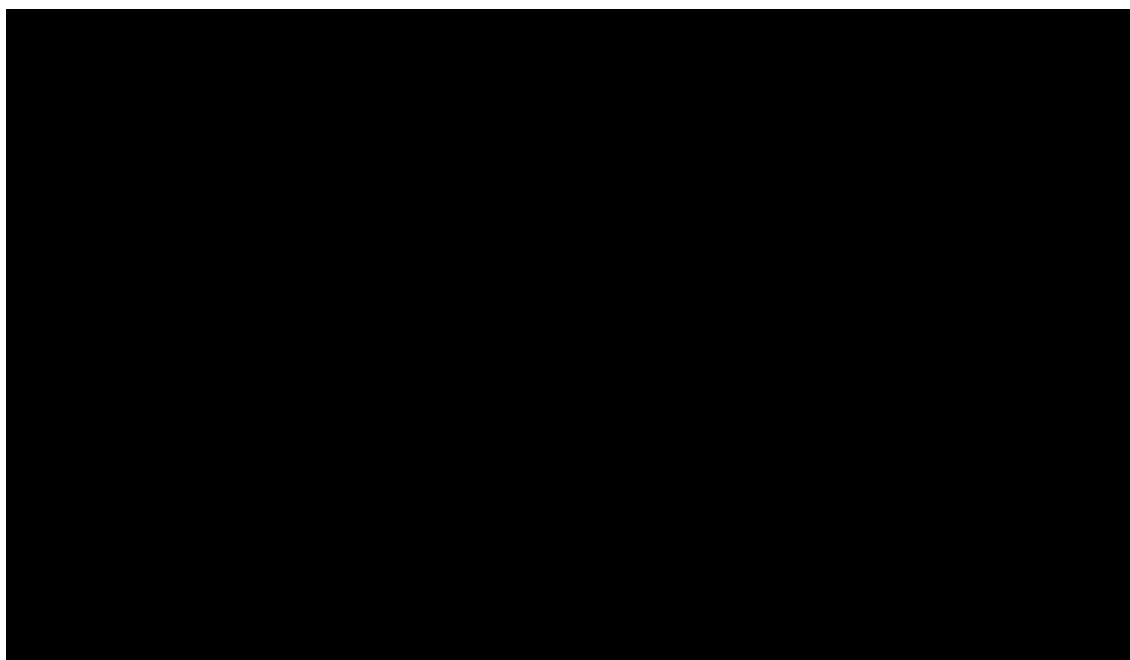
My accusers (my relatives) came to suspect me of practicing witchcraft because I work hard in my garden and I have a lot of food. My relatives accuse me of magically transferring agricultural produce from their gardens to mine (28 year old male farmer, Dedza).

It is jealousy. When someone has wealth people want that wealth to be theirs (16 year old boy, Standard 8 pupil, FGD for children, Karonga).

3.4.3.1 Women and men

As Figure 7 shows, the majority (55%) of the household heads said that females practice witchcraft more than males, while 10% and 30% said males and both males and females equally, respectively.

Figure 7: Percentage of household heads mentioning the gender that practices witchcraft more than the other



The views of the household heads were supported by FGD participants and key informants and by the finding that in this study all 18 persons suspected of practicing witchcraft were female. Participants in 55% of the FGDs agreed that women are suspected more than men. Many of them pointed out that elderly women are suspected more than younger women. The following are examples of reasons given by FGD participants and key informants as to why women are suspected more than men:

Women do not show mercy on others (17 year old girl, Standard 8 pupil, FGD for the youth, Mzimba).

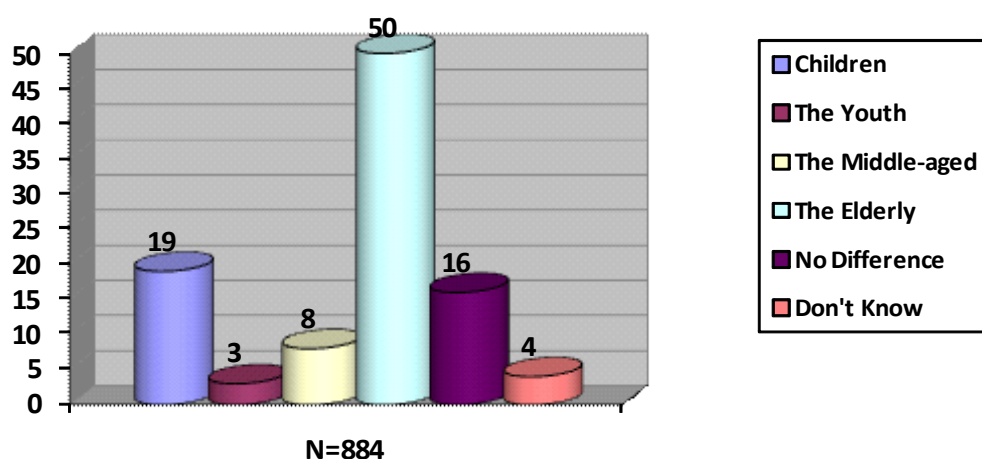
Women are cruel (Christian religious leader, Thyolo).

The percentage of household heads that mentioned women was highest in Thyolo (77%), followed by Blantyre City (75%), Dedza (66%), Machinga (61%), Mwanza (55%), Ntchisi (42%), Karonga (32%) and Mzimba (31%).

3.4.3.2 Children, the youth, the middle-aged and the elderly

Figure 8 shows that 50% of the household heads mentioned the elderly as the people who practice witchcraft more than other age groups. Some 19%, of the household heads mentioned children. FGD participants held similar views.

Figure 8: Percentage of household heads mentioning the age group that practices witchcraft more than other age-groups



As Table 7 shows, the elderly were mentioned by 13 of the 21 focus groups. However, none of them mentioned the youth and middle-aged people. Interestingly, none of the focus groups except three for the elderly mentioned its own age group as the one that practices witchcraft more than other age groups. This supports the view expressed by many people that people tend to point fingers at others as ‘witches.’

Table 7: Number of focus groups mentioning category of people that practices witchcraft most

FGD Target Group	Target Group Said to Practice Witchcraft Most						Total
	Children	The youth	Middle-aged people	The Elderly	Children and the elderly	All age groups	
Children	0	0	0	4	0	1	5
The youth	3	0	0	2	1	0	6
Middle-aged	1	0	0	4	1	0	6
The elderly	0	0	0	3	0	1	4
Total	4	0	0	13	2	2	21²⁶

A magistrate said that the most recent time that he handled a case of witchcraft accusation was two years prior to the survey. He reported that a group of elders were accused of going to a graveyard and eating fresh corpses. The accusations were made because of the deaths of children and a man, which happened within a

²⁶ In 8 of the 29 FGDs, the question asking about who among children, middle-aged people and the elderly practices witchcraft most, was either not asked or the participants’ responses were not clearly recorded.

short period of time. He said that the elderly were accused because they have no teeth.

As the key informant observed:

The elderly are the weakest of social group, and some of them do not have support. It is also because they live longer than expected. They are helpless (Director of Administration).

Key informants gave the reasons why children are involved in witchcraft. Two of them said:

Children are targeted for witchcraft-training because they are easily threatened to not tell anyone (Police officer, Mzimba).

My son was warned by the elders who taught him witchcraft not to tell anybody, otherwise he would go mad (The father of a child who was allegedly trained in witchcraft, Dedza).

3.4.3.2.1 Children and witchcraft

Significant numbers of Malawians believe that children are taught witchcraft and that the numbers of these children are increasing. As a Sheikh from Machinga observed, "In the past witchcraft was more common among the elderly than among children."

This study found that 38% of the household heads were of the view that this is common in their area. The rest either said that it is rare (49%), it never happens in their area (7%), or that they did not know (6%).

From what the following two key informants and other study participants suggest, the belief that children are taught witchcraft may be more widespread than the percentages above indicate since family members tend to keep the matter to themselves for whatever reasons:

We agreed among the relatives that this is a family matter. We advised each other that the teaching of witchcraft to our children should never happen again. We neither reported to the village head nor invited a witchdoctor (30 year old father whose son was allegedly taught witchcraft, Dedza).

The community did not do anything because I never told them about what happened to my child (44 year old married mother whose child was trained in witchcraft, Ntchisi)

Table 8 shows that the percentage of household heads who believe that it is common practice for children to be taught witchcraft in their area was highest in Karonga (51%) and lowest in Ntchisi.

A 24 year old mother from Ntchisi whose son she claimed was trained witchcraft alleged that "It is difficult to train an adult." Most of people base their belief on what

the children themselves, who may be as young as 3 years old, say or on what witchdoctors or witch-hunters say.

Table 8: Percentage of household heads reporting that it is common in their area for children to be taught witchcraft

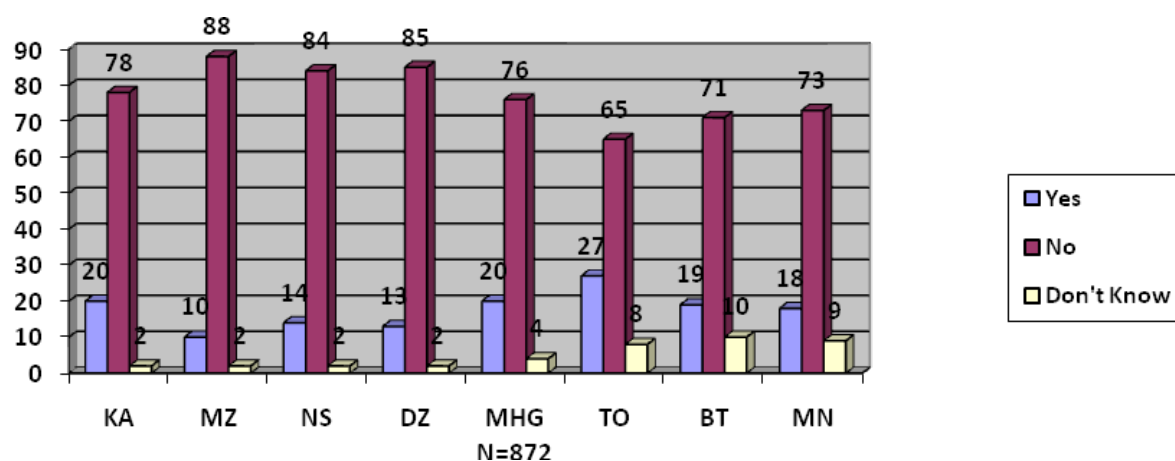
KA	Mzimba	Ntchisi	Dedza	MHG	Blantyre City	Thyolo	Mwanza
51%	22%	20%	26%	45%	34%	48%	49%

Note: KA=Karonga; MHG=Machinga

In an FGD in Karonga, children said that many elders believe that if they die after they have trained children in witchcraft; their souls will be at peace.

When asked if any children in their household were taught witchcraft, 18% of the household heads responded affirmatively. Figure 9 indicates that Thyolo reported the highest percentage (27%) while Mzimba reported the lowest (10%).

Figure 9: Percentage of households with children who were allegedly taught witchcraft, research site



Note: KA=Karonga; MZ=Mzimba; NS=Ntchisi; DZ=Dedza; MHG=Machinga; TO=Thyolo; BT=Blantyre; MN=Mwanza

Of the 18 children who were allegedly taught witchcraft, 53% were girls. The children's mean age at the time it was first discovered that they had been taught witchcraft was 8.5 years. Their ages ranged from 2 years to 13 years.

The findings of this study do not show any evidence that orphans, troublesome children, children with disability, or specially-gifted children are targeted for witchcraft training. None of the children were orphans, suggesting that orphans are not targeted by witchcraft teachers. This supports the view of some of this study's participants that children are taught witchcraft, often by strangers, for the purpose of using them to harm, including killing, their parents. The following observations by a key informant and an FGD participant are in agreement with this view:

Witches usually use children to kill their own parents (24 year old Christian religious leader, Thyolo).

A person cannot use witchcraft to kill you unless he or she is related to you. So, a stranger who hates you teaches your children witchcraft which they use to kill you (A 57 year old married woman, Standard 3, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

Generally, key informants and FGD participants agreed with WLSA's (2010) observation that teaching children witchcraft is much more associated with women than men. It is probably because of their nurturing tendencies and their closeness with children, that women are the prime suspects.

However, findings from FGDs and key informant interviews indicate that, generally, witchcraft teachers advise the children to not reveal their (the witchcraft teachers') identity. Some children are threatened with death or some other bad consequences. The following is an example:

My 10 year old daughter had been warned that if she mentioned the elderly person who trained her in witchcraft, definitely she would die (35 year old mother of a child who was allegedly trained in witchcraft, Ntchisi).

Data from key informants suggests that it is not uncommon for parents to take their children to both religious leaders and witchdoctors particularly when either appears to have failed to bring the children back to 'normalcy.' The key informants observed that the prayers and exorcism are not always effective in terminating the alleged witchcraft.

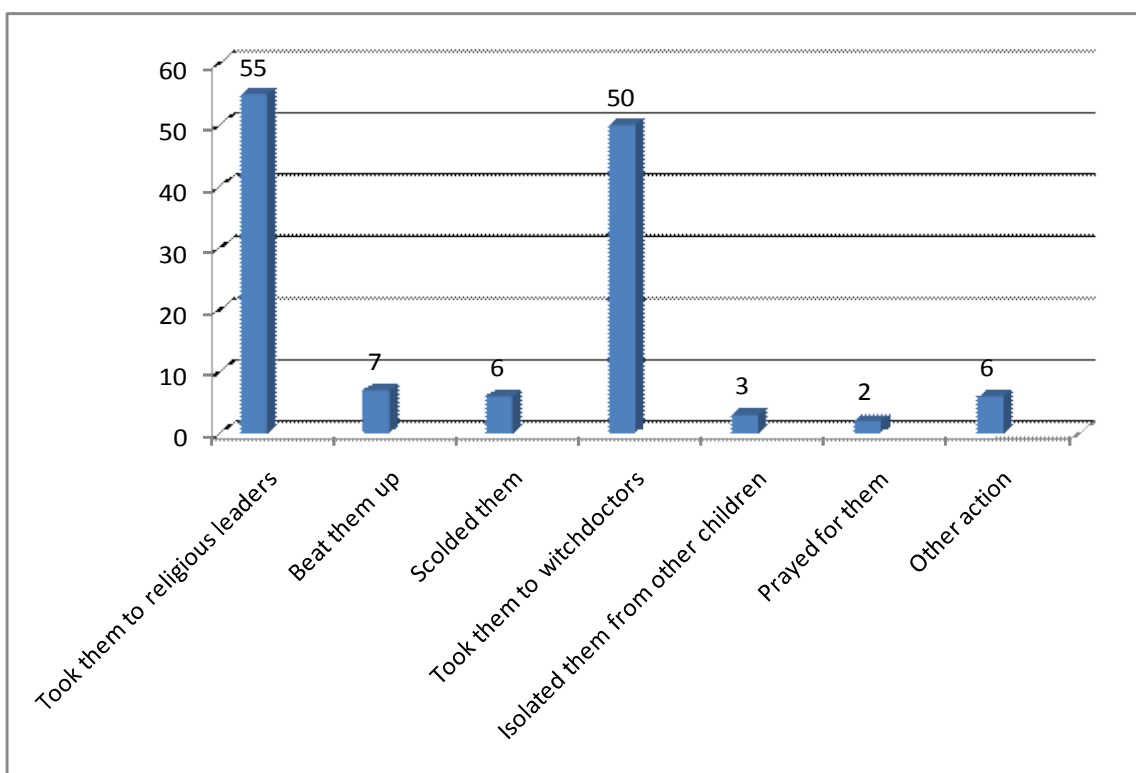
When parents and guardians suspect that their children are practicing witchcraft, many of them take some action, suggesting that they are against the practice. As Figure 10 shows, the two most frequently mentioned action taken by the 95 household heads was to take the children to religious leaders for advice, counselling and prayers (55%), followed by taking the children to witchdoctors for exorcism (50%).

Among the 18 parents and guardians of children allegedly taught witchcraft, the percentages were 28% and 44% respectively. The rest (28%) reported that they did nothing. This study did not investigate if the religious leaders were trained in counselling or not, and whether the kind of counselling is holistic or not.

Figure 10: Action taken by household heads upon suspecting that their children were taught witchcraft²⁷

²⁷

The percentages should not be added because of multiple responses.



N=95

Although none of the children, who resumed practicing witchcraft after he or she had been cleansed by a witchdoctor, was reported to have died, there is a strong belief that when a person resumes witchcraft practices after being cleansed by a witchdoctor, the person dies.

The following FGD participants explained that:

They are told that if they do that again they will die (Participants, FGD for the elderly, Mwanza)

Most of the suspected witches die mysterious deaths when they try to practice witchcraft again (62 year old married man with no formal education, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

The action taken by at least 20% of the households was a violation of the rights of the children. The action included beating the children up (7%), scolding them (6%), isolating them from other children (3%), denying them food for days (1%), banishing them from home (1%), stopping interacting with them (1%), and sending them away to live with other relatives (1%). Others prayed for the children (2%), gave them herbs for protection against further witchcraft (1%), and sent them to the chief for further action (1%).

Children accused of witchcraft are vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and to abuse by authorities. Case studies 2 and 3 below describe the experiences of an elderly woman who was suspected of teaching children witchcraft and a child who was suspected to be a witch.

This study did not venture into finding out the impact of accusations and violence on children suspected of practicing witchcraft. Nevertheless, what the following girl narrated indicates that the impact can be serious:

The government should help us so that we should live life like anyone who has not been accused of witchcraft.We always fail in class because when wake up I am always tired and when I am in class I fail to concentrate. (10 year old Standard 1 girl who was suspected of practicing witchcraft, Thyolo).

Case study 2: Nellie Salimantara

District: Salima; T.A. Khombedza; Age: 70; Sex: Female; Ethnicity: Chewa; Religion: Christian; Marital Status: Single; Education: Primary; Occupation: Subsistence farmer.

Nellie was accused and convicted of teaching children witchcraft. During the night of 30th Nov. 2010, a child aged 6 years had a nose bleeding and his mother inquired what the problem was. The child stated that the bleeding was as a result of a slap from a "witch". The boy claimed that they were in a witchcraft plane during the night and the plane crashed at a graveyard. He said that when it crashed, Nellie demanded keys from him. But he could not produce the keys of the plane and then Nellie slapped him on the nose, hence the nose bleeding. The boy's mother got furious on hearing the news. She reported the matter to the chief and Nellie was summoned to the chiefs' court.

As she went to the chief, the story had already spread in the village. Then people started mocking her that she was a witch. She was pushed around till she reached the chiefs' court. At the chief, the mob had already assembled and demanded that she should be dealt with immediately, that is, that she should be killed. At the chiefs' court, a confession was demanded and Nellie refused. This infuriated the mob. The chief could not resolve the matter and called the police at Mvera station who told the chief to dispatch her to the station as they had no transport.

A lift was found and Nellie was sent to the Mvera police station. On the way, the mob followed, mocking and booing at her. Some people even slapped her for being a witch. When she reached the police station, some 5 kms away from the village, Nellie was not freed by the police in line with the law. Nellie stayed at the police station for 3 days where life was not easy either. She continued to be made fun of. She also could not take adequate food. Her blood pressure increased and her health deteriorated.

After three days, she was taken to court and charged with the offence of Pretending witchcraft. She denied and pleaded not guilty. Her accuser (who effectively had committed an offence himself) was called to testify against her. The magistrate found her guilty and sentenced her to 12 months imprisonment with hard labour, with an option of a fine of MK6,000(\$37). She did not have money because she is poor. Instead she went to serve her sentence at Maula prison in Lilongwe, which is some 40 kilometres away from her village. ASH heard about her predicament in January, 2011. ASH raised the MK6,000 and paid the fine. She was released and transported to take her to her village.

As this was not enough, three months later, the GVH in her village called a witch-hunter to catch witches in the area. The witch-hunter picked on her again. This time she was fined MK10, 000 (\$60) or 2 goats. She borrowed the money and paid the fine. When ASH visited her in June, 2011 as a follow up to an earlier visit, we were shocked to hear that this is what had happened to her again. She was so low and she felt that life was not worth living. Her daughter, who is physically challenged, was the reason that was holding her back; otherwise she said she could already have taken her life. ASH asked her if the chief could be prosecuted for subjecting her to witch-hunt which is illegal. She refused. She also refused to sue government for wrongful imprisonment.

Case Study 3: Chifuniro Liralira

(sourced from Tikondane Care for Children, Lilongwe)

District: Zomba; Age: 15 years; Sex: Male; Ethnicity: Yao; Religion: Muslim;
Status: Orphan; Occupation: Pupil.

Chifuniro was picked by Police officers of the VSU on the street and was taken to Tikondane. This was in 2008. By that time, the boy was 12 years old, and he behaved in ways which made people think he was a witch. He developed this way of behaviour over a long period of time. He was unpredictable, violent, noisy and uncontrollable. He didn't trust anyone.

Chifuniro confessed that he was a witch. His father complained that he was a bad boy and a witch. The father was afraid of his son and did not want to see him. When Chifuniro lived with him, his step-mother and half-brother, conflicts grew between the step-mother and the boy. After a while, they took him to his paternal grandmother who claimed that she tried her best with him but the boy showed very strange behaviour. She came to the conclusion that he must be a witch.

Chifuniro was taken back to his father and step-mother. The parents concluded that the maternal grandmother had taught him witchcraft. Shortly afterwards his young half-brother died, and immediately he was suspected of having killed him. By that time Chifuniro, believed that he must be a witch. At the funeral, he "confessed" that he had killed his brother. Chifuniro's mother died when he was five years old. After the burial his father took him to his maternal grandmother and left him for good. Four years later, the father reappeared and took him to live with his step-mother and his half-brother in a village far away from his grandmother. The stepmother didn't want the boy and conflicts grew between the two.

It happened that the step brother of Chifuniro passed away. During the time of burial Chifuniro confessed that he was a witch and that he killed his brother. After the burial and the declaration of Chifuniro, his father put him into a big bag, tied it up and threw it into the river. Fortunately a fisherman pulled the bag out of the water, and Chifuniro survived and ran away.

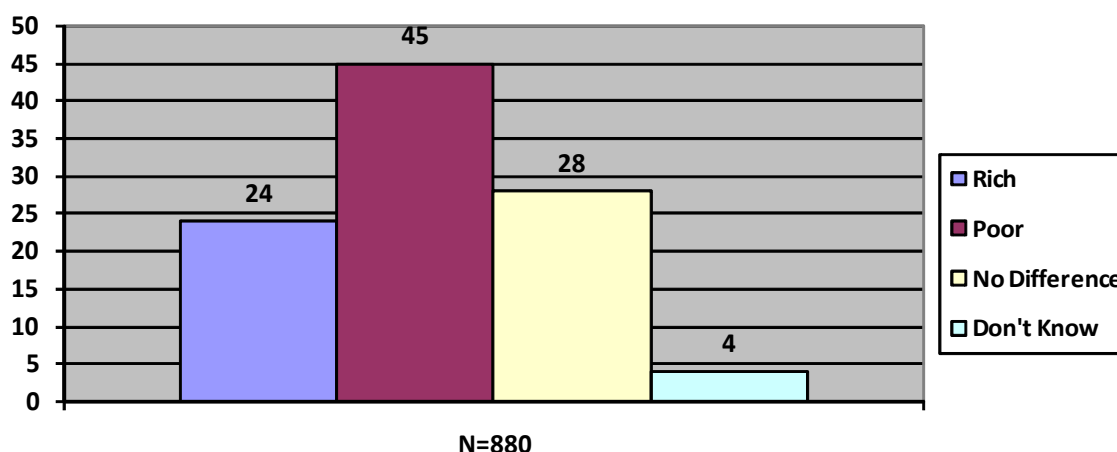
Chifuniro stayed at Tikondane for 8 months. In the beginning, he showed some strange behaviour. But at times, he could scream for hours without any apparent reason, use obscene language, and always cry. As it turned out, Chifuniro was very sick and he went through a major surgical operation. After the medical intervention, the boy stopped screaming. He needed intensive, individual professional support. Little by little, he was helped to discover his potential. Fortunately, his maternal grandmother welcomed him back into her home. The boy is back at school and developing as a normal child.

3.4.3.3 The poor and the non-poor

Figure 11 indicates that the majority (45%) of the household heads said the poor practice witchcraft more than the non-poor. The poor were mentioned more frequently in Karonga (60%), followed by Dedza (51%), Thyolo (50%), Blantyre City (44%), Mwanza (42%), Mzimba (39%), Machinga (38%) and Ntchisi (30%).

However, the majority (10) of the 29 focus groups said that the non-poor practice witchcraft more than poor people, while 7 said had the opposite view, and 4 said the two socio-economic groups practice witchcraft to the same extent. The rest of the focus groups were not sure or the responses given were difficult to interpret. Of the 33 key informants who were asked the relevant question, 25 (75%) observed that the poor practice witchcraft more than the non-poor, while 25 (21%) said that the poor and the non-poor practice witchcraft to the same extent and 1 (4%) said the non-poor practice more than the poor.

Figure 11: Percentage of household heads mentioning socio-economic group that practices witchcraft more than the other



The main explanations given by FGD participants and key informants as to why the poor were said to practice witchcraft more than the rich were the following:

The poor are powerless in society and they cannot defend themselves (Police officer, Karonga).

The poor are full of jealousy (Traditional leader, Group village headman).

The poor are usually jealous of the rich. So they practice witchcraft to kill the rich or educated children in order to make their families suffer (District officer, District Assembly).

Because of the way poor people look (Child Protection Officer, Police).

Many key informants and FGD participants mentioned jealousy as being the root cause of witchcraft. Much of this jealousy stems from poverty and widening gaps between the poor masses and the few who are better-off.

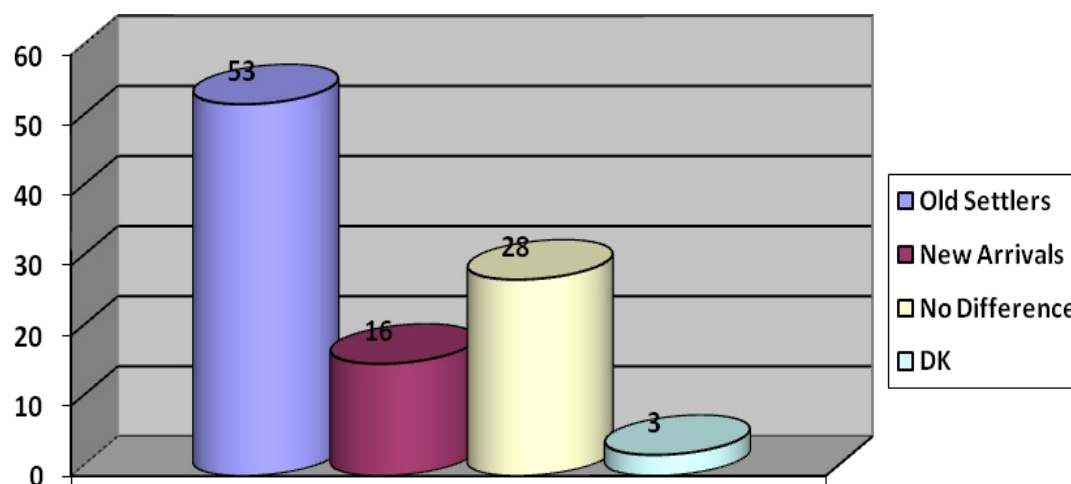
3.4.3.4 Old settlers and new arrivals

As Figure 12 shows, most (53%) of the household heads observed that old settlers practice witchcraft more than new arrivals. Among key informants the percentage was 80%. The most common reason given by key informants as to why old settlers practice witchcraft more than new arrivals is the following:

Old settlers know all the corners of their community (Traditional leader, Mzimba)

What this suggests is that old settlers know where to find herbs and other necessary items required for them to practice witchcraft. They also know which people in the community are vulnerable and where they live so that they can victimise them.

Figure 12: Household heads' observations on whether old settlers practice witchcraft more than new arrivals or not



N=875

Old settlers were mentioned more frequently in Machinga (61%), followed by Mzimba (57%), Karonga and Blantyre City (55% each), Mwanza and Ntchisi (54% each), Machinga (48%), and Thyolo (43%). The majority of 'witches' and the people who accuse others of practicing witchcraft are not strangers to the suspect or to the bewitched persons.

The findings from 21 key informants who were suspected of practicing witchcraft and those who claimed to have been bewitched, are presented in Table 9. A victim or a witchdoctor rarely mentions strangers because it would be difficult for him or her to find a convincing explanation why the victim was bewitched or accused by the stranger. There is a belief in Malawi that 'witches' are unable to bewitch people who are not related to them by blood or marriage.

Table 9: Relationship of the victim to the suspected witch

Suspected witch	#	Suspected witch	#
Son in-law	1	My nephew	1
In-law	1	My relatives	2
Grandmother	1	My husband's relatives	2
Grandparents	2	Mother of my son's friend	1
Mother and father	1	People from one's community	5
Uncle	2	People from a neighbouring village	1
Aunt	1		
Total		21	

According to most key informants, women whose husbands die 'mysteriously' are sometimes accused of being witches. The view of most key informants is reflected in the following narrations from two female key informants who had been accused of being witches:

It started last year when my husband set off for South Africa to work. Before he reached South Africa, his young mother died. So these relatives of my husband started accusing me of causing the death. They said I wanted to use her as 'chizimba' (charms) for my husband to prosper in South Africa. Not only that, when my elder sister in marriage got very sick and almost got mad, they accused me of bewitching her so much so that my father-in-law decided to go to see the witchdoctor who told him that I am a witch but his relatives are the ones who bewitched her (22 year old married woman, Standard 8, Mzimba).

My husband and I were rich. We encouraged our children to go to school because we knew its importance. Now the children live in town where they work. They bring me food and clothes. Just because I don't lack food and clothes, people from this village say, "I am a witch. How can an old woman like always have food?" (65 year old widow, Standard 2, who was a suspected witch, Dedza).

It is not clear whether wives who live in their husbands' villages are at higher risk than those who live in their own villages with their husbands.

3.5 Experiences of people who claim to have been bewitched

Out of the key informants, 10 (6 females and 4 males) were people who claimed to have ever been bewitched. Nine of them said they had been bewitched in the 2 years prior to the study. All 10 of them said that they knew or suspected that they had been bewitched after some strange or bad things happened to them. When they became suspicious that they had been bewitched, 7 of the 10 said they were able to identify the 'witch.' Five of the 7 said a witchdoctor identified the 'witch' while 1 said it was a pastor and another reported that it was herself who identified the 'witch.' When approached by a person suspected to have been bewitched, a witchdoctor almost always confirmed that the person had indeed been bewitched, and in nearly all cases, the witchdoctor identified the 'witch.'

When the bewitched person went to a witchdoctor and the witchdoctor failed to exorcise the victim, often the victim went to a religious leader for prayers and counselling. The following is a sample of experiences of four key informants who claimed to have been bewitched:

All the babies I was giving birth to were dying before the age of one year. A Muslim woman told me that someone was eating my babies through witchcraft. She gave me some herbs to put in the baby's bath when the baby was born. I did and the child is alive today. When I became pregnant again and delivered a baby, I did not get the herbs from the Muslim woman because she had moved to another area. As usual, the baby died in April this year (30 year old married, Christian woman, Standard 8, Thyolo).

I was in the office working when, suddenly, I fell down. ... I could not stand up. My legs were paralysed like someone struck with stroke. But I was a strong man. People took me home. My neighbours and church members came to pray for me. Now I use crutches (70 year old married man, diploma, engineer, Mzimba).

In 2009 a small abscess ('katulutulu') developed on my finger but with time, the wound changed colour, from yellow to black and it affected my whole hand. One day I went to the hospital where I was given pain killers which did not help. My mum suggested that we go to a witchdoctor. The first witchdoctor told me that someone placed fish bones inside the finger. The witchdoctor gave me medicine which did not help. My mother then recommended another witchdoctor. This witchdoctor was successful as he removed five fish bones which were in the finger [He showed the enumerator the five fish bones he claimed the witchdoctor removed from the finger] (32 year old married fisherman, Standard 8, Karonga).

In my life I had never before experienced what I went through after completing the construction of my house. I built the house after selling my tobacco. For four months I would collapse every day around 1:00 in the morning. During the day I was fine. This made me visit some witchdoctors in Ntchisi, Kasungu, and Mzimba, but they failed to assist me. I then went to see a witchdoctor in Mozambique who assisted me (23 year old married man, subsistence farmer, Std 8, Ntchisi).

The study found that some people suspect others of bewitching them based merely on dreams, rumours, what they hear the 'witches' say, and how the 'witches' look at them. However, as pointed out earlier, witchdoctors are the ones that most often identify 'witches.' The following are examples of two key informants' description of how witchdoctors identify 'witches':

The witchdoctor poured water into a pot and told me to look straight into the pot. I saw a man who was trying to hide his face. The witchdoctor told me that the person was the one responsible for all my misfortunes (32 year old married fisherman, Standard 8, Karonga).

The witchdoctor showed me the person who bewitched me. He showed me a mirror where I saw everything (23 year old married man, farmer, Standard 8, Ntchisi).

In some cases, witchdoctors name the culprits while in others they do not. It is not clear on what basis the decision is made. However, some key informants reported that at times witchdoctors refuse to disclose the identity of the 'witch' to avoid creating tension among people, particularly among relatives. The 'witches' that were identified were the victim's parents, brother in-law, uncle, and friends. None was a total stranger.

When identified and told that they are witches, some 'witches' abandon their families to escape the wrath of the family, relatives, traditional leaders, and other community members. A 32 year old married woman from Dedza whose highest education was Standard 2 and religion was traditional, said that the man who bewitched her left the village when he was told about the witchdoctor's investigations. His wife and child were left to suffer the consequences.

Six of the 7 people who claimed to have been bewitched and knew the person who bewitched them did not take any action against the 'witches,' other than warning them to stop practicing witchcraft. The main reason for this was said to be that the 'witch' was a relative or friend or that they were afraid of being victimised further. A 37 year old married businessman from Mzimba said that even the chief advised him not to do anything because of fear of what might happen next to him. Key informants indicated that it is the general public, people not related to the victim and the suspected witch, who commit acts of violence against the suspected witch.

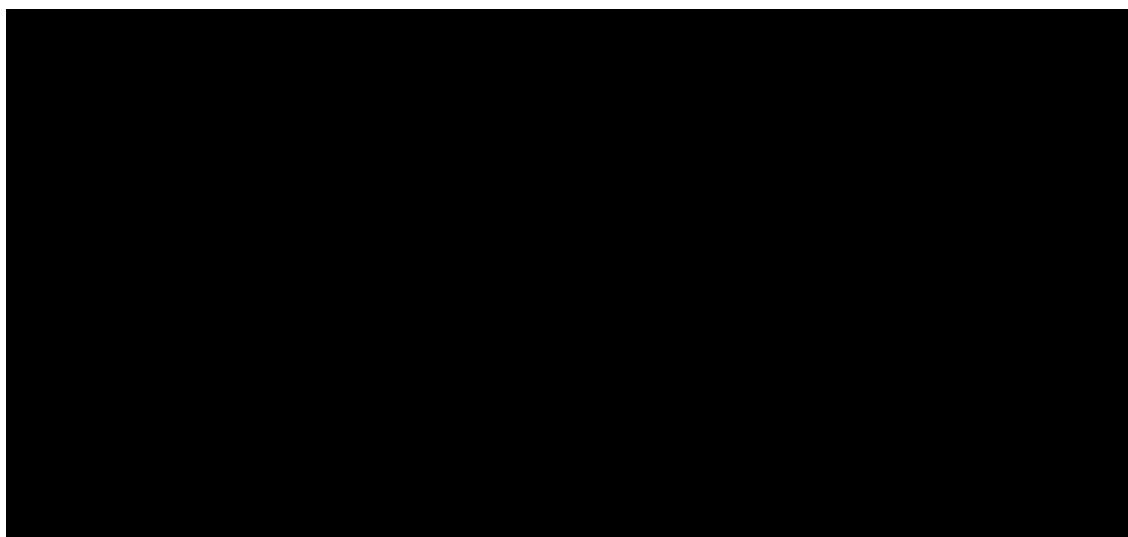
Forms of Violence Against Suspected Witches

Many people suspected of practicing witchcraft are subjected to all sorts of violence. Of the 15 persons who were suspected of practicing witchcraft, 11 (73%) reported that some form of violent acts were committed against them. The forms of violence included threats of death (reported by 2 victims), insults (8 victims), destruction of property (2); and isolation from and abandonment by family members (2 victims).

In this study, 28% (176) of the 638 household heads who answered the question on this said that suspects are subjected to violence, while 70% said they were not, and 2% did not know. This is an interesting result because the respondents are generally those that effect violence to victims.

Evidence from key informants and FGD participants suggests that, generally, suspects of witchcraft are more vulnerable to violence by the general public when their acts go beyond the family than when the witchcraft is confined within the family. Figure 13 shows the forms of violence mentioned by the 176 household heads.

Figure 13: Forms of violence experienced by suspected witches²⁸



²⁸ The percentages total more than 100% because of multiple responses.

Findings of the study suggest that the main perpetrators of witchcraft-based violence are the youth, middle-aged men, and the poor while the most common victims are women, the elderly, and the poor. The findings are inconclusive on whether the type of violence women and men on one hand, and the poor and the non-poor suspected of practicing witchcraft is the same or different.

However, among different age groups there is no difference with the exception of children who, in many cases get a less hostile reception from the community. In fact, none of the 18 parents and guardians of children who were allegedly trained in witchcraft reported that the community committed any acts of violence against the children. However, in many cases it was because the parents/guardians did not disclose their discovery to the community members. Acts of violence against the children were confined within the household.

As noted earlier, UNICEF (2010) points out that children accused of witchcraft are subjected to psychological and physical violence by family members and their circle of friends, then by religious leaders and traditional healers or witch doctors. Children accused of witchcraft are stigmatized and discriminated for life. They are often abandoned by their parents or even killed.

In most cases, a suspect tends to experience all or some of these forms of violence at once. Sometimes, one form of violence such as severe beating of the suspect or confiscation of their land, makes the suspect unable to be economically active or to sustain their livelihood, which, over time, can result in the suspect breaking down emotionally. There are overlaps among the four major forms of violence presented next.

3.5.1 Physical violence

As Figure 13 above indicates, the most common form of violence suspected witches are subjected to, is beatings. This was mentioned by 49% of the 176 household heads who reported that suspects are subjected to violence. Sometimes the beatings result in the death of the suspect. In fact, most of the forms of violence identified by the household heads were physical violence. Often, the suspected witches are beaten up and tortured, killed, and have their houses and other property burnt or destroyed in other ways. A witchdoctor from Machinga observed that suspects are beaten; they undergo exorcism and cleansing; their whole body is cut using knives; they are shaved using blunt knives; and sometimes they are even killed.

Like other key informants, a 48 year old pastor from Mwanza observed that some suspected witches are beaten up and even hacked. In an FGD for middle-aged people in Machinga, participants did not mince words. They said suspected witches are killed. Death of suspects is not only due to beatings, but also due to concoctions that witchdoctors give suspected witches to find out if they are indeed witches or not, or to cleanse the witches.

The following are examples of study participants' observations:

A few weeks ago people gathered at the house of a woman who was suspected of practicing witchcraft and started beating her. Some people beat her with sticks while others stoned her till she died (Traditional leader, Machinga).

I witnessed the burning of a suspected witch (18 year old girl, Standard 6 pupil, FGD for the youth, Dedza)

Persons suspected of practicing witchcraft are stoned to death (Participants, FGD for the youth, Karonga).

Some suspects die sometime later because of concoctions they are given (62 year old married man, Standard 2, FGD for the elderly, Dedza).

They are tied to a tree and left there over night so that they should learn a lesson (Participants, FGD for children, Mwanza);

A suspect loses a lot blood during the incision-making on his or her body. So if the person is innocent it means that he or she has lost a lot of blood for nothing (57 year old married woman, Standard 3, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

As a youth observed, in order to escape further beatings and other forms of physical violence, some suspects make the confession that they are witches even if they know that they are not witches:

They are beaten up to make them confess that they are witches (19 year old girl, Standard 6 pupil, FGD for the youth, Dedza).

A 41 year old Sheikh from Machinga said that community members are more lenient with children than with adults. He noted that sometimes adult suspects have their houses destroyed and they are evicted from the community together with their families, while children are sent to witchdoctors for exorcism. In agreement with the views of FGD participants and other key informants, a child key informant who was allegedly taught witchcraft explained why, apparently, children escape the wrath of community members:

No acts of violence were perpetrated against me because I am young and people in my village felt sorry for me because I did not choose to practice witchcraft but it was 'Anagama' (some woman) who taught me (10 year old girl, Standard 1 pupil, suspected to be a witch, Thyolo).

However, there is a significant number of children who are not spared violent attacks when they are suspected of practicing witchcraft. One of them said:

Some people in my area were saying, "You witch! You killed our relatives, so we will make sure that you are also killed (12 year old girl, Standard 5 pupil, suspected to be a witch, Karonga).

Although some FGD participants and key informants reported that children who are believed to have been taught witchcraft are only sent to witchdoctors or religious leaders for exorcism, there is some evidence that many child suspects experience some forms of physical violence particularly within their homes. In fact, as shown in Figure 10 above, 7% of the household heads whose child household members were allegedly taught witchcraft said they beat the children up.

Exorcism was described by many FGD participants and key informants as a very painful experience for suspected witches. Many of them said that suspects feel excruciating pain as incisions are made over their body. They also pointed out that some suspects die after drinking concoctions, as the following examples indicate:

We had a case whereby a witchdoctor gave a suspected witch traditional medicine to drink. Unfortunately, the suspect died after drinking the medicine (Police officer, Mwanza).

The alleged witch cries uncontrollably due to pain as his body heavily bleeds from the incisions (42 year old married male farmer, Standard 8, (FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

They force the suspect to drink some concoction and if he or she vomits it means he or she is a witch (14 year old Standard 8 boy, FGD for children, Karonga).

In agreement with many other FGD participants and key informants, a 10 year old Standard 2 boy from Karonga observed that some suspects vomit the concoction while others become ill because of it.

3.5.2 Economic violence

Economic violence is another form of violence suspected witches experience. As Figure 11 above indicates, 21% and 15% of the heads of household reported that the property of the accused is vandalised and burnt, respectively. This happens in a number of ways such as employers dismissing the accused from work or barring them from employment; traditional leaders and community members denying them access to jobs and other sources of livelihood such as capital, land and labour; imposing heavy fines on them; and confiscating or destroying their property.

Economic violence experienced by accused persons may be a consequence of their being evicted from their community. It is very hard for people who are already poor to secure new land for settlement and cultivation and to start life all over again since their property is confiscated, looted or destroyed and not many people are willing to welcome people who have been accused of witchcraft into their community. Moreover, arable land is fast becoming scarce due to population growth. The following narrations from study participants attest to this observation:

The witch-hunter came prepared with his followers who were singing stupid songs about me to convince people that I am a witch. These people destroyed my business. They broke my pool table, broke windows of his bottle-store, restaurant, and house, damaged iron sheets as they tried to remove them from the roof, broke

my ox-cart, and stole my money (41 year old married businessman, MSCE, Karonga).

The elderly are isolated from their relatives and they are not given food or any other support while rich people are ordered to pay heavy fines or their property is looted (43 year old married woman, Standard 2, FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

My cattle started dying. Almost each and every morning I found some of my cattle dead. I did not know the people behind that (65 year old widow who was accused of practicing witchcraft, Ntchisi).

They do not receive financial and other material or emotional support from their families (14 year old Standard 5 boy, FGD for the youth, Machinga).

My relatives told me to fend for myself. I stay on my own; I manage my own crop field; I search for food on my own; and they don't cook for me (69 year old married woman, Standard 2, who was suspected to be a witch, Dedza).

Rich suspects have their property confiscated (Participants, FGD for the youth, Blantyre).

The alleged witch is ordered to pay the witchdoctor K30, 000 or a cow (42 year old married male farmer with Standard 8 education (FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

Payment of cash, livestock or other property makes the suspects poorer (20 year old form 4 boy, FGD for the youth, Ntchisi).

3.5.3 Social violence

In all research sites, people fear and hate suspected witches so much that they isolate and ignore them. They do not interact with them the way they do with other people. Relationships with them are cut abruptly except for relationships between child suspects and their parents and other close family members. In many cases, this happens even after the 'witch' has been cleansed by a witchdoctor or a religious leader. In fact, some suspects are even excommunicated from their religion or denomination. There is clear evidence that suspected witches are discriminated against in all social spheres including the family, religion, education, and employment. They are people that are not respected in their communities. The following statements from key informants and FGD participants lend support to this observation:

People do not allow the suspect even to light a cigarette at other people's houses because they become suspicious (Participants, FGD for middle-aged people, Machinga).

We stop talking to them and we do not invite 'witches' to see a newly-born baby because we are afraid that the baby will 'contract' witchcraft from them (45 year old married man, no formal education, FGD for middle-aged people, Thyolo).

In most cases when one has been suspected of practicing witchcraft one is barred from attending funerals, weddings, and development activities (DC).

If they are children like us, we don't play with them (17 year old Form 2 girl, FGD for children, Karonga)

If the suspect is renting a house in the area, he or she is forced to move out, but if he or she is indigenous he or she is asked to stop practicing witchcraft (Participants, FGD for the youth, Ntchisi)

The landlord told us to move out of the house (33 year old father of a child who was trained in witchcraft, Dedza).

They are mostly treated as strangers (43 year old married woman, Standard 8, FGD for middle-aged people, Ntchisi).

We hide in our houses when the suspected witch comes near us (10 year old Standard 5 boy, FGD for children, Karonga).

One of the major reasons why people do not associate with suspected witches is that, as indicated by a 56 year old married woman during an FGD for the elderly in Mzimba, “they want to avoid being labelled ‘witch’ through association.” Otherwise they would face the same harsh treatment their associates receive.

When a married person or a person who is in a relationship is suspected of practicing witchcraft, his or her marriage or relationship is shaken or even broken by his or her partner. It is common for the partner to stop interacting with the suspect. Sometimes the partner's relatives put tremendous pressure on both partners to end the marriage or relationship. The wonder, “How come you are maintaining a relationship with a ‘witch.’” FGD participants and key informants observed that this happens more often when the suspect is a woman than when it is a man. This is because in the Malawian society, women are generally accorded less decision-making power than men.

Sometimes they are chased away from their marital home if they are women (55 year old never married woman, Form 2, FGD for the elderly Karonga).

If the suspect is a woman, marriage breaks (37 year old farmer, Standard 2, Thyolo).

It should be noted that suspected witches are stigmatised for the rest of their lives even when witchdoctors' diagnosis is that the person is not a witch or after the witchdoctor or religious leader performs exorcism on the person. It is impossible for such a person to enjoy his or her rights as a human being and to participate fully in his or her community in order to improve his or her socio-economic life.

3.5.4 Psychological violence

Psychological violence includes insults, mockery, threats, and other acts that negatively affect the feelings of the victim. Figure 11 above showed that insults were mentioned by 43% of the 176 household heads who reported that suspects are subjected to violence. Of the 10 people who were suspected of practicing witchcraft, 7 (70%) said they were showered with insults. Insults tend to accompany all other forms of violence the suspects experience. The insults include threats of death. The insults and other action taken by the perpetrators of violence are to humiliate the suspects and to make them change their behaviour and stop their witchcraft practices. The following is a sample of observations made by key informants and FGD participants:

People in the community were talking a lot of things like, "You witch, you killed our relatives. So we will make sure that you are also killed" (25 year old female student who was suspected of practicing witchcraft, Karonga).

They are painted white or maize flour is poured on them and they are placed on a makeshift platform so that people can see them. They are told to dance to drum beats. After incisions are made over their whole body so that if they repeat witchcraft they should fail to practice it or die (62 year old married man, no formal education, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

They are mocked through songs that they have been caught after eating a lot of people's flesh (52 year old never married woman, Standard 8, FGD for middle-aged people, Ntchisi).

It pains me when someone points at me and says I am a witch (77 year old man, FGD for the elderly, Dedza).

Some suspects become mentally ill after their charms have been removed and burnt (12 year old Standard 4 boy, FGD for children, Ntchisi).

Suspects become mentally confused (Participants, FGD for the youth, Blantyre).

Insults or mockery can be more painful than physical harm, and even if the threats of death and other forms of violence are not effected, the suspect lives in constant fear that one day the threats will be effected.

As shown in Figure 10, 50% of the children who are identified as witches undergo exorcism conducted by witchdoctors. Some adult suspects also undergo exorcism. A traditional leader in Machinga noted that exorcism is conducted irrespective of age or gender of the suspect (Traditional leader, Machinga). As described by some study participants, exorcism can be dehumanising to the suspect.

3.5.5 Vulnerability to Sexual violence

As noted earlier, UNICEF (2010) observes that children accused of witchcraft are vulnerable to sexual violence and to abuse by authorities. This study did not find concrete evidence that in the study areas children and adults suspected of practicing witchcraft are subjected to sexual violence or abuse. However, evidence from some key informants' and FGD participants' views support UNICEF's observation particularly with reference to girls and women, that suspects are vulnerable to sexual abuse and harassment. Key informants observed that suspected witches are paraded undressed in the streets or other public places.

FGD participants and a key informant noted that:

When witch-hunters come to our villages they have multiple sex partners mostly with married women because these women get carried away with the wealth the witch-hunters accumulate during witch-hunting (42 year old male subsistence farmer, Standard 8, FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

The witchdoctor makes incisions coupled with medicine, onto a fresh banana stem which is then placed between the alleged witch's legs (42 year old married male farmer, Standard 8, FGD for middle-aged people, Mzimba).

Females are undressed (Participants, FGD for middle-aged people, Mwanza)

They undress them (Christian religious leader, Thyolo).

As an FGD participant noted, suspected witches who undergo exorcism carried out by some witchdoctors are at high risk of contracting diseases including HIV and AIDS:

They cannot tell if the razor blade was used on other suspected witches. So, it's not safe because the suspect can contract any blood-borne communicable diseases (37 year old married man, Standard 8, FGD for middle-aged people, Ntchisi).

3.6 Life of the Victims of Witchcraft-Based Violence

In general, as a result of the physical, economic, social, psychological and sexual violence they experience, people suspected of practicing witchcraft do not lead normal lives like other community members.

This observation was made by as many as 66% of the household heads. Blantyre City recorded the highest percentage (77%), followed by Karonga (74%), Mzimba (73%), Mwanza (68%), Thyolo (63%), Machinga (59%), Dedza (54%) and Ntchisi (53%).

As Table 10 indicates, the two most frequently mentioned reasons why, according to the household heads, suspects do not lead normal lives were that they are mocked and that they are isolated.

Table 10: The consequences of being subjected to witchcraft-based violence

Consequence	%	Consequence	%
Children are expelled from school	9	They are excommunicated from their religious organisations	7
They are mocked	56	They lose their jobs	4
Their land is confiscated	8	They cannot be employed	5
They are barred from marrying in the village	4	They are barred from occupying positions of authority	3
They are divorced	8	They are isolated	43

Note: the percentages should not be totalled because of multiple responses.

N=362 household heads

In FGD for the elderly in Dedza, a 77 year old man said that “It pains me when someone points at me and says I am a witch.” Key informants and FDG participants also pointed out that sometimes adult suspects are evicted from their village. The lives of the suspects and their family members are severely disrupted and often they are completely shattered. The following are examples of statements from a sample of key informants and FGD participants detailing the impact of suspicion and violence on their lives:

In class I wasn't paying attention to my teachers. Also, I was always rude to my parents, my friends and to other people because in witchcraft there is nothing like, "This is an adult and this is a child" (10 year old Standard 1 girl, Thyolo).²⁹

3.7 Protection of and Support for Suspected Witches

All 8 of the district police offices visited in this study had a VSU. However, some police stations in the country do not have VSU. According to the police key informants, through the VSU, the police is supposed to conduct sensitisation campaigns on witchcraft issues so that people should be aware that the law does not recognise witchcraft and that accusing a person of being a witch and subjecting them to any form of violence, is a crime.

The police is also supposed to provide suspects with protection when their life and/or their property are under threat of violence from community members. Sometimes they patrol the victim's area. They also explained that they are supposed to counsel victims of witchcraft-based violence and provide them with temporary shelter especially when the victims have been evicted from their area. A Coordinator at a Victim Support Unit said that sometimes they provide legal advice to the victims so that they can sue the culprits, while another said that they send to hospital victims who have been beaten, and charge the culprits.

²⁹ The fact that this girl was in Standard 1 at the age of 10 years when she should have been in Standard 4 or 5, could be due to her lack of attention to her teachers and interaction with her friends.

The majority of the police key informants admitted that often they are unable provide these services because of shortage of human and material resources such as vehicles. The police's capacity to handle increasing numbers of witchcraft cases is under stress due to constraints on human, financial, and other resources, as well as the complication of some of the cases. It was also observed from the responses of some police key informants that some police officers arrest persons accused of practicing witchcraft. This is supported by WLSA (2010) findings. It is clear that not all police officers understand and enforce the Witchcraft Act.

Key informants from the City and District Assemblies, who included DCs and Social Welfare Officers pointed out that they do not provide protection services as this is the work of the police. They offer counselling services and act as an arbitrator when the accused and the accuser approach them. They said that they refer to the police cases of witchcraft in general and of witchcraft-based violence in particular. A District Welfare Officer admitted that they mostly depend on chiefs to help the victims and sensitise their people on the rights of the people suspected of practicing witchcraft.

Religious leaders said that they counsel the accused and accusers who are brought to them, and they conduct exorcism on the witches through prayers. In addition, some of them sensitise members of their religious leaders on the evil of committing acts of violence against suspected witches, and sometimes they offer accommodation to victims whose houses are burnt. Two of the religious leaders and a traditional leader reported that:

Many appreciate the help we offer. They come back to us and thank us saying that without our help they could have committed suicide or done something bad to the accusers (24 year old male Christian religious leader, Dedza).

The Roman Catholic Church provides civic education to its members to remind them to not harm a person a person accused of witchcraft (24 year old Christian religious leader, Thyolo).

I usually warn the people during hearing that the accused should not be exposed to any kind of violence. For example, some woman was threatened by some community members that they will kill her because she was a witch, but with my intervention the people reversed their decision to kill her (Traditional leader, Ntchisi).

Most FGD participants and key informants including people suspected of practicing witchcraft disagreed with the view of some of the key informants from the police. These study participants observed that suspected witches do not receive protection and support from community members and organisations. FGD participants said that:

The police do not take any action unless the suspect is beaten and their property is being destroyed (Participants, FGD for children, Ntchisi).

The police does not really help (18 year old Form 2 girl, Ntchisi).

NGOs and District Welfare Office do nothing (43 year old woman, no formal education, FGD for middle-aged people, Machinga).

Key informants who had ever been suspected of witchcraft pointed out that they received some protection from the police and a few very close relatives. However, many of them observed that the police protection came late as the suspects had already been abused, physically assaulted, and some of their property destroyed. They noted that often, police come to protect them when their lives are in serious danger or either during or after the destruction of the suspects' property. Otherwise, the suspects are at the mercy of their accusers. They can only rely on a few sympathisers who may be strangers since it is relatives who often make the accusations. A key informant narrated his experience as follows:

The community members did not come to help me, except only four friends. The police came later due to fuel shortage, to disperse the people who were vandalising and looting my property and to arrest the witchdoctor who had identified me as a witch. But they all went into hiding. The witchdoctor was arrested three weeks later when he resurfaced. The police even patrolled my area for one week (41 year old businessman, MSCE, who had been suspected of practicing witchcraft, Karonga).

It is common for strangers to step aside and say, "We cannot get involved because this is a family matter." The following statements by FGD participants and key informants show that, generally, persons suspected of practicing witchcraft are not protected by their own family members and the community.

It is important to note that some victims of witchcraft-based violence are not protected or assisted by the police or organisations because the victims do not seek the protection and assistance. Sometimes this is because they do not know where they can get assistance from. In other cases, the people do not report witchcraft cases to authorities. Some study participants suggested that suspected witches are helpless:

People do not know where to go for help (40 year old married man, Standard 8, FGD for middle-aged people, Ntchisi).

I did not seek protection or assistance because I did not know what to do (65 year old widow, primary education, who had been suspected of witchcraft, Ntchisi).

Nobody assists me. Where else can I go? God is the one who knows my problem (69 year old married woman, Standard 2, Dedza).

The suspects are not helped (Participants, FGD for youth, Blantyre).

We (community members) don't provide help because the moment others see you doing that they conclude that you too are a witch (Participants, FGD for middle-aged people, Karonga).

It's because people do not tell them [the police, NGOs, and Social Welfare Office] about what is happening in their villages (49 year old married businesswoman, Standard 8, FGD for the elderly, Karonga).

The police have a difficult task to protect suspects of witchcraft since the majority of the people have very strong beliefs in witchcraft, and many do not want suspects to be protected and assisted. In fact, in agreement with the following FGD participants' view, many study participants said that 'witches' should be killed and they should not be protected or given any support:

If the witch is caught he or she should be killed (21 year old secondary school boy, FGD for the youth, Blantyre).

It's impossible to support witches. They are bad people. They just have to be killed and punished for their sins (Participants, FGD for the youth, Mwanza).

The person who is accused of witchcraft should not be taken care of because he or she is a killer (45year old married man, no formal education, FGD for middle-aged people, Thyolo).

You cannot help someone who wants to kill people (21 year old young man, Form 1, FGD for the youth, Dedza).

If the witches are freed, then we shall know how to deal with them" (39 year old married man, Standard 7, Ntchisi).

While most of the study participants said that the police, NGOs, and Social Welfare Offices do not provide protection and support, a few observed that this protection and support is provided. They noted that NGOs such as ASH provide material support including shelter and food, and they provide civic education on the rights of suspected witches. The following are two examples of what some of them said:

Police provide security by arresting those who suspect others of being witches (Participants, middle-aged people, Karonga).

District Welfare Offices provide shelter to victims when such help is really needed at that moment (Participants, FGD for middle-aged people, Karonga).

A Community Policing Coordinator admitted that since, from his point of view, there are no laws on witchcraft, he often sends 'clients' back to the chiefs to handle the cases. This suggests that some of the police are not conversant with the Witchcraft Act and sometimes, as WLSA (2010) suggests, end up arresting the suspected witch rather than their accusers.

This explains why many suspected witches do not go to the police to seek protection and support. The sad thing is that the chiefs to whom the 'clients' are referred do not have better knowledge of the Act than them. Indeed, most traditional leaders who preside over witchcraft cases admitted that they do not handle witchcraft cases according to the law. One traditional leader admitted that:

Sometimes we are afraid of our people. They ask, "How come we are protecting a witch? May be you too are a witch." So that's why we fail to handle witchcraft cases according to the law (Traditional leader, Thyolo).

3.8 Window of Hope

Although 87% of the study participants said that witchcraft is practiced in their areas, there are some statistics that offer a window of hope for people who are suspected of practicing witchcraft. The following raises some hope:

- Some study participants argued that there is no evidence that some people are witches.
- The majority (53%) of the heads of household reported that witch-hunting does not take place in their area.
- People who are accused of witchcraft are counselled by police in some police stations which have a VSU and by some religious leaders.
- To some extent, the police protects the accused from violent attacks from the general public.
- Six of the 7 people who said they were bewitched and knew the identity of the person who bewitched them did not take any action such as committing acts of violence on them.
- Some 68% of the 76 key informants who said something on what needs to be done to reduce or eliminate violence against persons suspected of practicing witchcraft, argued that it is important that the law on witchcraft should be enforced; awareness campaigns are done on what the Witchcraft Act says and that the suspects should not be harmed; These key informants included traditional leaders who handle cases of witchcraft, religious leaders, children and the youth.

The following is a sample of what key informants and FGD participants said:

I do not believe the existence of witchcraft on earth (15 year old, Standard 7 boy, FGD for the youth, Machinga).

The government and NGOs should sensitise people and chiefs on witchcraft so that suspects should not be subjected to violence (Traditional leader, Thyolo).

Anyone who suspects or accuses other people of practicing witchcraft should be arrested (a Sheikh, Machinga).

Suspecting another person that he or she is a witch is a bad thing (Participants, FGD for the elderly, Ntchisi).

I plead with government to protect suspects who are victims of witchcraft-based violence through enforcement of the Witchcraft Act (38 year old businessman, Standard 7, Machinga).

Organisations should enforce the law so that people should abide by it (Participants, FGD for the youth, Blantyre).

There is no proof that witchcraft exists (Pastor, Mwanza).

In addition, according to a study by NSO (2008), 24% of the households reported not knowing that there were witches in their community, and in 64% of the sampled household, not a single member reported that they experienced bad things that could be attributed to witchcraft.

3.9 Strategies to Eliminate Violence Against Suspected Witches

Study participants were asked what needs to be done to prevent violence against people suspected of practicing witchcraft and to assist them to lead normal lives. Table 11 shows the main strategies suggested by the study participants:

Table 11: Strategies to prevent witchcraft-based violence and to help suspected witches to lead normal lives

Suspects should stop practicing witchcraft	Arrest and punish people who accuse others of practicing witchcraft
Human rights organisations should actively participate in the protection of suspects	Provide counselling and spiritual guidance to people suspected of practicing witchcraft
Pray for suspects so that they should not be victimised	Suspects must leave the area and settle in another place
Witchdoctors should cleanse people who practice witchcraft	Investigate both accusers' and suspects' claims to establish the truth
Civic educate both suspects and the general public	Implement laws to prevent people from practicing witchcraft
Punish people who commit acts of violence on suspects	Establish witchcraft courts specifically for witchcraft cases
Allow people to practice witchcraft	Do not isolate people who practice witchcraft
People should stop mocking suspects	Protect suspects
Government should set up a committee to look into witchcraft issues	People should stop visiting witchdoctors because they tell lies

N=590 household heads

In their own words, two FGD participants made the following suggestions:

Human rights organisations should actively participate in the protection of the accused (21 year old businessman, primary education, FGD for the youth, Mwanza).

The government should strengthen the protection of people who are suspected of practicing witchcraft (56 year old widow, no formal education, FGD for middle-aged people, Dedza).

This chapter showed that many people in Malawi have strong beliefs in witchcraft. It has also shown that suspected witches are mostly children, women, the elderly and poor people. They experience various forms of violence including physical, economic, social, and psychological violence and that they are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Generally, they do not receive adequate protection and support.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusion

This study found that beliefs in witchcraft are widespread in Malawi, as evidenced by as many as 87% of the household heads who reported that witchcraft is practiced in their area. This supports NSO's (2008) findings that about 76% of the households surveyed in Malawi know that there are witches in their community and that 62% knew someone accused of witchcraft. Many people have either suspected someone of practicing witchcraft or they have ever been suspected of practicing it. Witchcraft is used to explain virtually anything that is suspicious or difficult to explain such as sudden illness and death, failure to conceive.

The number of witchcraft cases is rising mostly due to increasing jealousy in a society where a few individuals and families are seen to be prospering. Poverty and increasing wealth gap in the Malawian society appears to be the underlying cause of witchcraft accusations. There is a lot of superstition in the Malawian society, which fuels witchcraft suspicion.

The means by which witches are identified are questionable since they cannot be proven scientifically that a person is a witch. Moreover, some of the stories narrated by study participants suggest that some of the children's revelations were what the children merely dreamt at night, and some of them probably had nightmares. As a youth pointed out, some confessions that one is a witch are made under duress. In other words, there is no concrete evidence that the people who are suspected of practicing witchcraft are witches.

The fact that many Malawians including traditional leaders such as chiefs and religious leaders and the police do not know what the law says about witchcraft and human rights is the cause of the acceptance of witchcraft-based violence against suspects.

The study found that many children are said to undergo witchcraft training. Children, women, the elderly, the poor, and the relatively better off in the community, are vulnerable to suspicion and violence. Generally, it is the marginalised social groups in the Malawian society that are victims of witchcraft-based violence, although the better off among poor communities are also vulnerable to accusations of practicing witchcraft.

A significant percentage of the people who are suspected of practicing witchcraft are said to be subjected to violence. The violence is perpetrated mostly by men and the youth. The violence is physical, economic, social and psychological. Generally, a suspect experiences a combination of these forms of violence, the extreme of which is death. The rights of the individual suspect as well as of his or her family are violated. Much of the violence that children trained in witchcraft is probably unreported since this is often regarded as a domestic affair. Such children are likely to suffer in silence behind closed doors.

In agreement with some of the observations of the UNICEF (2010) study, the findings of this study suggest that some children suspected of practicing witchcraft experience some form of violence and discrimination by family members, their circle of friends, and witchdoctors. Children accused of witchcraft are beaten up, scolded, and banished from their homes, and they are vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse by authorities, witchdoctors, and witch-hunters.

As a result of the violence, victims of witchcraft-based violence do not lead normal lives in their communities. They are cast off, discriminated and stigmatised throughout their lives. Generally, they do not receive adequate, if any, protection and support including counselling from other community members including family members, the police, government, and NGOs.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made with the view to reduce if not eliminate cases of witchcraft-based violence against people suspected of practicing witchcraft:

- 4.2.1 The Ministry of Local Government (in liaison with Ministries of Elderly and Women with relevant stakeholders) should take a proactive stance to sensitise on regular basis T/As and DCs regarding their responsibilities to enforce the witchcraft law.
- 4.2.2 State Institutions such as the Police, chiefs and courts should ensure that they enforce the provisions of the witchcraft act correctly and without fear or favour.
- 4.2.3 Conduct awareness meetings to familiarise community and religious leaders and the general public with Witchcraft Act. The meetings should also make people aware of human rights. The meetings should be conducted in all districts in the country.
- 4.2.4 Undertake public awareness of the witchcraft law through the private and public radio so that the public is aware of its existence and provisions. Radio adverts appear direct to the general public and more effective. Government should render support to such initiatives.
- 4.2.5 ASH has been is steadfast in campaigning against witchcraft- based violence and witch hunts towards women and elderly. Very few NGOs are involved in the witchcraft problem. ASH requires support to build its capacity to contribute to this noble cause.
- 4.2.6 Strengthen measures to protect and support victims of witchcraft-based violence by building the capacity of Social Welfare Offices, the police, and VSUs.

- 4.2.7 Develop mechanisms to ensure that the accused come forward, speak out on witchcraft-based injustices and report cases to state authorities and relevant NGOs, including provision of temporary shelter for injured victims, and assistance on legal services. Those living far away from the police or DCs offices need special attention.
- 4.2.8 Hasten the review of the Act so that it is sensitive to the realities of the country in the 21st century. The new Act need to positively address findings of this study; witchcraft should not be criminalised, but protect the vulnerable from harm, and prohibit accusations from all corners.
- 4.2.9 Train people at local level in holistic counselling. The people should include traditional leaders, religious leaders, and teachers.
- 4.2.10 Conduct a systematic study specifically focusing on the violence that children suspected of witchcraft are subjected to. The current study did not go deep enough to identify the impact of the violence on the children's right to life, education, and other rights. A component of the study should be an investigation into the sexual violence that child witches are subjected to during cleansing and exorcism by witchdoctors and religious leaders.

References

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Malawi Government, the Witchcraft Act.

Malawi Government, the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi.

Ng'ambi, F. Witchcraft among the Nkhonde people.

Appendix 1: List of districts, TAs, villages, residential areas and other research sites the study covered

District	TA	Village/Residential Area	# of Villages /Residential Areas
Karonga	Kyungu	<i>Kafikisira; Zindi; Mwamatope; Mwahimba</i>	
	Mwilang'ombe	<i>Muyeleka; Makonganya</i>	6
Mzimba	M'Mbelwa	<i>Zogodora; Engalaweni; Galamala; Kamanga</i>	4
Ntchisi	Kalomo	<i>Kachulu 1;</i>	
	Malenga	<i>Nkhalamo; Chunganilo; Ndenje</i>	
	Nthondo	<i>Chiyende</i>	5
Dedza	Kachere	<i>Kachere; Kapesi;</i>	
	Kasumba	<i>Kasumba</i>	3
Machinga	Sitola	<i>Mitondo; Mpotola; Lenard;</i>	
	Nkula	<i>(Machinga Boma)</i>	4
Blantyre	Somba	<i>Naperi; Chinyonga; Chiwembe; Bangwe³⁰</i>	
	Machinjiri	<i>(Blantyre City)</i>	5
Thyolo	Chimaliro	<i>Chimaliro; Zungu;</i>	
	Mchiramwela	<i>Thyolo Boma</i>	
	Bvumbwe	<i>Thyolo Boma</i>	4
Mwanza	Nthache	<i>Nthache; Chiwembu</i>	2
	Total Number of Villages/Residential Areas³¹		33

Appendix 2: The Witchcraft Act of 1911- CAP 7.02- Vol. 2

³⁰ These are not villages but residential areas.

³¹ The 33 villages and residential areas, there are 3 commercial and business areas at the *boma* (district headquarters) and in the city where some of the key informants were interviewed.

The Act

1. This Act may be cited as the Witchcraft Act.

Prohibitions

2. Trial by Mwabvi or any concoction that is likely to result in death or injury is prohibited.
 - i) Any person who directs and controls or presides at any trial by ordeal which is prohibited by this Act shall be liable to imprisonment.
 - ii) Any person who is present at or takes any part in any trial by ordeal which is prohibited by this Act shall be liable to imprisonment.
 - iii) Any person who sells, collects, makes or assists in any poison is liable to imprisonment.

Any African found in possession of Mwabvi or other poison commonly used for witchcraft trial shall have committed a crime.

Charging person with witchcraft

- Any person accusing any person with being a witch or with practicing witchcraft or names or indicates any person as being a witch or wizard will be imprisoned for 5 years or pay a fine of £25.

Employment of witch finder

- Any person who employs or solicits any other person to name or indicate by the use of non natural means any person as a perpetrator of any alleged crime or other act complained of shall be imprisoned for 5 years or be fined £25 .

Pretending witchcraft

- Any person who by his statement represents himself to the DC, police or authorities to be a wizard or a witch or having or exercising of the power of witchcraft shall be fined £50 pounds or imprisonment for 10 years

Chiefs, headmen permitting, etc, prohibited trials by ordeal

- Any chief and headmen who directly or indirectly permits, promotes, encourages or facilitates any trial by ordeal which is prohibited by this Act or intends trial and does not report the same to the District Commissioner of the district in which such trial has been and intends to be held shall be liable to imprisonment for 5 years or to a fine of £25.

Every chief or Headman within whose territory or village any prohibited trial by ordeal takes place shall be deemed to have committed an offence under this Section, unless he shall prove that as a matter of fact he was justifiably ignorant of such trial or intended trial.

Profession of witchcraft illegal

- The profession of calling of witch finder or witchdoctor or of professional maker and or mixer of poison is hereby declared to be illegal calling and every person exercising or pretending to exercise such calling or profession shall be guilty of felony and shall be liable to imprisonment for life.
- Any person who shall use or assist in using any lot or charm with a view to the commission of any unlawful act shall be liable to a fine of £5 or imprisonment of 1 year.
- Nothing in this Act shall affect the liability of the death penalty of any person who under a pretence trial by ordeal or of using any lot or charm commits wilful murder.
- The Minister shall have powers to make Rules for the better carrying into effect of this Act and such rules may impose fines not exceeding £5 or imprisonment exceeding one year.

Appendix 3: Household Questionnaire

Enumerator's #		Interview Date	
District		Interview Start Time	
T/A		Interview End Time	
Village/Res Area		Checked by	
Questionnaire #		Check Date	

No.	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	DATA																																																																				
SECTION 1: GENERAL SITE/INFORMATION																																																																						
1.1	Enumerator's code																																																																					
1.2	Date of Survey			11																																																																		
1.3	Village/Residential Area																																																																					
1.4	Traditional Authority																																																																					
1.5	District (Karonga=1; Mzimba=2; Ntchisi=3; Dedza=4; Machinga=5; Thyolo=6; Blantyre=7; Mwanza=8)																																																																					
SECTION 2: DEMOGRAPHICS																																																																						
2.1	Sex of head of household:	(Male=1; Female=2)																																																																				
2.2	How old are you? (<18 yrs=1; 18–24 yrs=2; 25–29 yrs=3; 30–49 yrs=4; 50–59 yrs=5; 60+ yrs=6)																																																																					
2.3	What is your marital status? (Never married=1; Married=2; Separated=3; Divorced=4; Widowed=5)																																																																					
2.4	What is your highest education attainment? (No formal education=1; Std 1–4=2; Std 5–8=3; Form 1–2=4; Form 3–4=5; Tertiary=6)																																																																					
2.5	What is your occupation? (None=1; Subsistence farmer=2; Commercial farmer=3; Businessperson=4; Salaried job=5; Piece work=6; Other=7 Specify)																																																																					
2.6	What is your religion? (None=1; Christian=2; Muslim=3; Traditional=4; Other=5 Specify:)																																																																					
2.7	What is your ethnicity? (Chewa=1; Lhomwe=2; Mang'anja=3; Ngoni=4; Nkhonde=5; Sena=6; Tonga=7; Tumbuka=8; Yao=9; Other=10 Specify)																																																																					
2.8	What is your original home district?	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">District</th> <th colspan="2">District</th> <th colspan="2">District</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Chitipa</td><td>1</td> <td>Kasungu</td><td>11</td> <td>Mulanje</td><td>21</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Karonga</td><td>2</td> <td>Mchinji</td><td>12</td> <td>Thyolo</td><td>22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rumphi</td><td>3</td> <td>Lilongwe</td><td>13</td> <td>Chiradzulu</td><td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nkhata Bay</td><td>4</td> <td>Dedza</td><td>14</td> <td>Blantyre</td><td>24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Likoma</td><td>5</td> <td>Ntcheu</td><td>15</td> <td>Neno</td><td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mzimba</td><td>6</td> <td>Balaka</td><td>16</td> <td>Mwanza</td><td>26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nkhota Kota</td><td>7</td> <td>Mangochi</td><td>17</td> <td>Chikwawa</td><td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Salima</td><td>8</td> <td>Machinga</td><td>18</td> <td>Nsanje</td><td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dowa</td><td>9</td> <td>Zomba</td><td>19</td> <td>Outside Malawi</td><td>29</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ntchisi</td><td>10</td> <td>Phalombe</td><td>20</td> <td></td><td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>			District		District		District		Chitipa	1	Kasungu	11	Mulanje	21	Karonga	2	Mchinji	12	Thyolo	22	Rumphi	3	Lilongwe	13	Chiradzulu	23	Nkhata Bay	4	Dedza	14	Blantyre	24	Likoma	5	Ntcheu	15	Neno	25	Mzimba	6	Balaka	16	Mwanza	26	Nkhota Kota	7	Mangochi	17	Chikwawa	27	Salima	8	Machinga	18	Nsanje	28	Dowa	9	Zomba	19	Outside Malawi	29	Ntchisi	10	Phalombe	20		
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2.9	How long have you lived in this area? (<1 yr=1; 1–3 yrs=2; 4–6 yrs=3; 7–9 yrs=4; 10+ yrs=5)																																																																					
2.10	How many members does your household have? (1=1; 2–4=2; 5–7=3; 8–10=4; >10=5)																																																																					

No.	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	DATA
SECTION 3: BELIEFS AND PRACTICES		
3.1	Do some people practice witchcraft? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3) IF NO SKIP TO Q. 5.1	
3.2	Is witchcraft practiced in this area? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3)	
3.3	How are people who practice witchcraft identified?	
3.4	Does witch-hunting take place in this area (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3) IF NO SKIP TO Q. 3.10	
3.5	Who invites the witch-hunters [Multiple Responses Possible Traditional/Community Leaders=1 Religious Leaders=2 Political Leaders=3 Concerned Community members=4 Traditional healers=5 Other people=6 Specify	
3.6	Have you ever participated in witch-hunting? (Yes=1; No=2)	
3.7	Has any member of your household participated in witch-hunting? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3)	
3.8	Who are the most common victims of witch hunting in this area [Multiple Responses Possible] (The poor=1; The rich=2; Children=3 Women=4 The elderly=5; New –comers to the area=6 Other people=7 Specify	
3.9	What happens to the People who have been identified as witches	
3.10	Is practicing witchcraft acceptable to you? (Yes=1; No=2)	
3.11	Can one protect oneself from witchcraft? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3)	
3.12	Who mostly practice witchcraft between men and women? (Men=1; Women=2; No difference=3; DK=4)	
3.13	Who mostly practice witchcraft among children, the youth, the middle-aged and the elderly? (Children=1; Youth=2; Middle-aged persons=3; The elderly=4; No difference=5; DK=6)	
3.14	Who mostly practice witchcraft between the poor and the non-poor? (The poor=1; The non-poor=2; No difference=3; DK=4)	
3.15	Who mostly practice witchcraft between old settlers and new arrivals? (Old settlers=1; New arrivals=2; No difference=3; DK=4)	
3.16	For what purpose(s) do people practice witchcraft? [Multiple Responses Possible] (DK=1; To kill others=2; To cause emotional pain=3; To get rich=4; To physically harm others=4; Other purposes=6 Specify)	
3.17	Do they always achieve their goals for practicing witchcraft? (Always=1; Sometimes=2; Never=3; DK=4)	
3.18	Have you or any member of your family ever accused someone of witchcraft? (Yes=1; No=2) IF NO SKI TO Q. 4.1	
3.19	How did you/they identify the witch (es)?	

No.	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	DATA			
SECTION 4: FORMS OF VIOLENCE					
4.1	Has anyone in this community ever been accused of practicing witchcraft? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3) IF NO OR DK SHIP TO Q. 4.7				
4.2	What is the sex of the most recent accused person? (Male=1; Female=2)				
4.3	What age group were they? (Child=1; Youth=2; Middle-aged=3; Elderly=4)				
4.4	What did the people do to the accused person(s)? [Multiple Responses Possible] (They did no harm them=1; Beat them up=2; Verbally insulted them=3; Burnt them=4; Handed them over to chief=5; Handed them over to police=6; Vandalised/looted their property=7; Evicted them from community=8; They murdered them=9; They paraded them naked in public=10; DK=11; Other action=12 Specify)				
4.5	Was violence perpetrated against you/them due to the accusation? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3) IF NO OR DK SKIP TO Q. 4.7				
4.6	What kind of violence did you/they experience? [Multiple Responses Possible] (Verbally insulted=1; Stoned=2; Beaten up=3; Torched=4; Burnt property=5; Vandalised/looted property=6; Murdered=7; Evicted from village/area=8; Other kinds of violence=9 Specify)				
4.7	How common is the teaching of witchcraft to children in this area? (Common=1; Rare=2; It has never happened in this area=3; DK=4)				
4.8	Were any of the children in your household taught witchcraft? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3) IF NO OR DK, SKIP TO Q.4.10				
4.9	What did your household do to the child(ren)? [Multiple Responses Possible] (Sent them to witchdoctor for exorcism=1; Beat them up=2; Scolded them=3; Denied them food for days=4; Sent them to religious leader prayed for=5; Banished them from home=6; Stopped interacting with them=7; Isolated them from others=8; Sent them away to live with other relative(s)=9; Other action=10 Specify)				
4.10	Do people accused of witchcraft lead normal lives in their communities? (Yes=1; No=2; DK=3) IF YES OR DK SKIP TO Q. 5.1				
4.11	What happens to them? [Multiple Responses Possible] Their children are expelled from school=1; They are mocked=2; They are isolated=3; They are barred from marrying in the area=4; They are divorced=5; Their land is confiscated=6; They lose their jobs=7; They are barred from holding leadership positions in the area=8; They are excommunicated from religious organization=9; They cannot be employed in the community=10; Other=11 Specify)				
SECTION 5: KNOWLEDGE OF THE WITCHCRAFT ACT					
5.1	Do you know what the law says about witchcraft? (Yes=1; No=2) IF NO SKIP TO Q. 5.3				
5.2	What does it say?				

No.	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	DATA
5.3	<i>Should people accused of witchcraft be sent to jail?</i>	(Yes=1; No=2; Not sure=3)
5.4	<i>Is witchcraft a human rights issue?</i>	(Yes=1; No=2; Not sure=3; DK=4)
SECTION 6: STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS WITCHCRAFT-BASED VIOLENCE		
6.1	<i>What should be done to prevent acts of violence against people accused of witchcraft?</i>	
6.2	<i>What should be done to improve the lives of victims of witchcraft-based violence?</i>	
6.3	<i>Has the number of cases of witchcraft-based violence in this area increased, decreased or not changed in the past 10 years?</i>	(Increased=1; Decreased=2; Not changed=3; Not sure=4; DK=5) IF NOT CHANGED, NOT SURE, OR DK, SKIP TO RESPONDENT'S COMMENTS
6.4	<i>Why explains this state of affairs?</i>	
RESPONDENT'S COMMENTS		

Appendix 4: Key Informant Interview Guide

Interviewer's ID		Village/Res. Area	
District		Interview Start Time	
T/A		Interview End Time	

A. Key Informant's Demographic Data

- 0) Organization
- 1) Sex
- 2) Age
- 3) Marital Status
- 4) Highest education qualification
- 5) Occupation
- 6) Position in their organization or community
- 7) Religion
- 8) Ethnic group

B. For Key Informants who have ever been accused of witchcraft

1. How long have you lived in this area?
2. Why did you move to this area?
3. Do you believe that some people practice witchcraft?
4. When were you accused of witchcraft?
5. Who accused you of practicing witchcraft?
6. How did your accusers come to suspect that you practice witchcraft? Did they administer any medicines/concoctions to you?
7. What, if any, acts of violence were perpetrated against you? By who?
8. Did the community or any organization come to protect and assist you? Which organization and what kind of protection and assistance did you receive? Was the protection and/or assistance you received adequate?
9. If you did not seek protection and/or assistance from anyone, why?
10. What needs to be done (a) to prevent violence against people accused of witchcraft, and (b) to provide adequate protection and help to them?

Ask if the Key Informant has questions/comments. Record the useful ones.

Thank you

C. Witchdoctors/ Witch-hunters/Witch –finders

1. How long have you been a witchdoctor

2. Have cases of witchcraft been increasing, decreasing or remained stable over the past 10 years? Why?
3. Describe how you identify people who practice witchcraft. Is it possible to wrongly identify someone as a witch?
4. Of the people you identify as witches, were the majority females or males; children, the youth, the middle-aged, or the elderly; the poor or the non-poor; new comers to an area or the indigenous? Why these people?
5. What punishment do you prescribe to people you identify as witches and wizards? What kind of punishment do you impose on (a) males, (b) females, (c) children, (d) the youth, (e), the middle-aged, (f) the elderly, (g) the poor, and (h) the non-poor?
6. What other factors influence the kind of punishment you impose?
7. What is the purpose of the punishment?
8. Do you carry out witchcraft cleansing? What do you do?
9. Do you think that the Law allows you to conduct these services of identifying those alleged to be practicing witchcraft? Explain or elaborate.

**Ask if the Key Informant has questions/comments. Record the useful ones.
Thank you**

D. People who claim to have ever been bewitched

1. How widespread is witchcraft in this community?
2. How did you know that you had been bewitched? What were the symptoms?
3. When is the most recent time you were bewitched?
4. How did you react when you suspected that you had been bewitched?
5. Were you able to identify the person/people who bewitched you? How?
6. What did you do to the person who bewitched you?
7. What needs to be done to eradicate witchcraft?

**Ask if the Key Informant has questions/ comments. Record the useful ones.
Thank you**

E. The police, magistrate courts, DC's office, traditional & religious leaders

1. How widespread are witchcraft practices in this area? How are witches identified? Are witch-hunters invited? Who invites them?
2. Have cases of witchcraft been increasing over the past 10 years? Why?
3. When is the most recent time you heard/handled a case of witchcraft accusation?

4. Do you handle witchcraft accusations according to the Law? Explain or elaborate
5. Which social grouping is more often accused of witchcraft: (a) males or females? (b) Children, the youth, the middle-aged, or the elderly? (c) the poor or the non-poor? In-migrants or the indigenous? Why? Are orphans the target of witchcraft trainers? Why?
6. What kind of punishment is meted out to people accused of witchcraft, by members of this community? Does the punishment vary with the social grouping?
7. Should witchcraft be recognized by law? Why?
8. What kind of protection and assistance is provided by your office to victims of witchcraft-based violence? Do you think the protection and help they receive is adequate?
9. What should be done to reduce the plight of people accused of witchcraft? How can violence against people accused of witchcraft be eradicated?

Ask if the Key Informant has questions/comments. Record the useful ones.

Thank you

F. Parents/Guardians of children ever trained in witchcraft

1. How widespread is witchcraft in this area?
2. How common is witchcraft training of children in this area?
3. How did you discover your child/children was/were trained in witchcraft? When was that?
4. How old was/were the child/children at the time of the discovery? What is the sex of the child/children? Is/are the child/children orphans? Do witchcraft trainers of children target particular children (e.g. orphans, children with disability, troublesome children)? Why?
5. Did you identify the person/people who were training your child/children? How?
6. What action did you take after you made that discovery (a) against the witchcraft trainer, and (b) the child/children?
7. What did other members of the community, do when they heard about this?
8. Did you seek assistance from (a) traditional leaders, (b) religious leaders, (c) the police, (d) the Social Welfare Office, or (e) a witchdoctor? Did you receive satisfactory help?
9. What needs to be done to eradicate violence against people accused of witchcraft?

Ask if the Key Informant has questions/comments. Record the useful ones.

Thank you

Appendix 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Moderator's ID		Target Group	
Note-taker's ID		FGD Date	
District		FGD Start Time	
T/A		FGD End Time	
Village/Res. Area		Checked By	
FGD Venue		Date Check	

A. FGD Participants' Profile

#	Age (yrs)	Sex	Marital Status	Education Level	Occupation	Religion
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

B. Prevalence of Witchcraft

1. What people in the community understand by "witchcraft."
2. Beliefs associated with witchcraft.
3. Attitudes towards witchcraft.
4. How widespread witchcraft (a) beliefs and (b) practices are in the community.
5. Categories of the population (by gender, age-group, socio-economic status, etc) that are often accused of practicing witchcraft.
6. Why people bewitch others? What are the most frequent reasons/factors?
7. The processes and activities carried out to identify witches.

C. Witchcraft-Based Violence.

1. The general process of punishing people accused of witchcraft from the time they are identified.
2. How does the community treat people who teach witchcraft to children?
3. The kind of violence perpetuated against people accused of witchcraft, by categories of gender, age-group, socio-economic status, etc.
4. The processes and activities carried out in witchcraft cleansing.
5. How harmful the witchcraft cleansing activities are or can be.
6. The community's reception of a person accused of witchcraft.
7. The kind of protection and assistance rendered to victims of witchcraft-based violence by (a) household members, (b) community members, (c) the police, (d) District Social Welfare Office, (e), NGOs, and (f) other institutions.

D. Witchcraft Act

1. Knowledge about human rights among the participants
2. Relationship between human rights and witchcraft.
3. Knowledge about the Witchcraft Act.
4. The participants, views about the review of the Witchcraft Act.
5. Strategies to prevent/ reduce witchcraft-based violence.
6. Practical ways of assisting the victims of witchcraft-based violence to lead normal lives.

Ask if the FGD Participants have questions/comments. Record the useful ones.

Thank you

.....**END OF REPORT**.....