



# ENHANCING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE OF VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS IN MALAWI

Malawi is perennially susceptible to various natural and economic shocks, including prolonged dry spells, floods, pests and diseases, and high food price volatility. These have eroded the resilience of most poor and vulnerable households, and compromised their ability to sustain their livelihoods. The project aimed to increase the capacity of the most vulnerable households in two Traditional Authorities of Chiwalo and Jenala in Phalombe district to meet their basic needs and withstand climatic and economic shocks. This was to be achieved by building community/livelihood assets by targeted households and communities; supporting and implementing resilience programmes in coordination with humanitarian assistance; strengthening the capacity of agricultural extension service providers, vulnerable households and communities; and implementing community-based nutrition education and communication programmes.



## WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The project involved participatory understanding of the different shocks and hazards specific to the targeted villages, using the Farmer Field School approach; as well as the identification and implementation of practical and developmental actions required to mitigate the problems through an integrated resilience approach at community level. The project helped to create linkages and synergies among the different social support interventions implemented by the Government and other partners, such as Non-governmental Organizations in the district. These interventions, like the Public Works Programme and Village Savings and Loans scheme, were vital to improving the quality of life, nutrition, well-being, safety and self-sufficiency of target beneficiaries. The project was delivered as a joint UN action, bringing together three UN agencies (FAO, UNICEF and WFP), in partnership with the Malawi Government through the Department of Economic Planning and Development and Phalombe District Council. In order to contribute to acceptable behavioural change among the beneficiary groups and the wider community, the project developed a customized Communication and Visibility Strategy that was used to guide the development and dissemination of messages, as well as the sharing of information on food preparation, antenatal care attendance for pregnant women, and optimal complementary feeding.

## IMPACT

Through the implementation of different, but well integrated interventions, the project made significant contributions to building the resilience of the targeted communities and households; registering key achievements at household, community and district levels. Key impacts included farmers' skills development through hands-on learning, and the adoption of climate change adaptive and sustainable agriculture practices and technologies; increased and diversified crop production; livelihoods diversification through engagement in both farm and off-farm businesses; reduced culture of dependency on external assistance; increased culture of saving and assets accumulation; instruction on appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene practices, resulting in increased sanitation coverage; and improved nutrition practices for participating households, culminating in increased resilience to climatic shocks among the beneficiary families. In addition, the project acted as a showcase of the farmer field school approach, and is now being replicated in ten districts through a EUR 66 million investment made by the European Union to FAO.

## KEY FACTS

### Contribution

USD 2 000 000

### Duration

May 2014 - November 2016

### Resource Partners

Africa Solidarity Trust Fund (ASTF)

### Partners

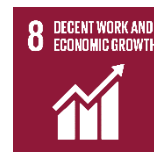
Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development; Local Government Authorities through the District Council, Adventist Relief Agency in Malawi, Catholic Development Commission in Malawi, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP)

### Beneficiaries

Disaster-affected and most vulnerable households

## ACTIVITIES

- Development of 18 Village Action Plans (VAPs), aimed at identifying specific geographic areas with severe environmental degradation and requiring urgent rehabilitation measures.
- Facilitation of hands-on learning on different climate smart and sustainable agriculture practices, blending together technical, financial and social aspects for 56 Farmer Field School groups as the main community outreach approach.
- Piloting of the district Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR) with a view to ensuring linkages amongst the Social Support Programmes in Malawi, targeting different people within the same community. They included the School Meals Programme, Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP), Public Works Programmes (PWP), Microfinance and Village Savings and Loans (VSL) schemes.
- Implementation of training activities, and other capacity-building actions both for community institutions and individual beneficiaries, and promotion of sustainable management of forestry resources at community level.
- Training of individual farmers on various adaptive and sustainable production practices, land and water management, nutrition and life skills, farming as a business, and rural savings, using the FFS approach.
- Deployment of a communication strategy used to guide the dissemination of messages and sharing of information. The messages developed were disseminated to communities in the targeted areas, reaching a total of 56 435 people (22 715 male and 33 720 female).



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



### Project Code

FAO: GCP/MLW/064/MUL

### Project Title

Building the capacity of most vulnerable households to meet their basic needs and withstand shocks (by resisting or adapting their livelihoods)

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