AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

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Africa at COP21

CLIMATE CHANGE SUCCESS STORIES

MALAWI: COMMUNITY-BASED ADAPTATION HELPS DIVERSIFY INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES TO GUARD AGAINST EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS IN MALAWI

Project snapshot

Country: Malawi

Sector: Agriculture

AfDB related financing:
USD 3 million grant from Global Environmental Facility

Outputs:
As of March 2015, the greatest successes have been in livestock rearing, fish farming, fruit tree propagation, and irrigation enhancement, including:

- 681,383 trees transplanted
- 139 hectares of land irrigated
- 13 fish ponds constructed
- 710 hectares of soil and water conserved
- By 2014, the first set of beneficiaries received a total of 989 goats.
- 315 farmers trained in fruit tree planting and management
- By 2014, 615 farmers had received training on fruit tree propagation methods and practices, together with a number of different types of trees, including banana, papaya, orange, and mango trees.
- 200 hectares covered with drought tolerant crops
- 291 farmers sensitized in early maturing crop varieties
- 2.5 hectares of buffer strips conserved

Impact:

- Through the project named CARLA[1] irrigation activities, agricultural productivity increased from 1 ton per hectare to 3.5 tons per hectare, on average. This increase improved food stability by helping generate a surplus from irrigated crops. Because irrigation activities increase production and incomes, community members will be positioned to better absorb potential climate-related crop losses.

Situation

Malawi, like many Southern African countries, is experiencing increasing climate variability which results in poor crop yields or failures due to drought and floods. Certain districts across the country are experiencing changing rainfall patterns and higher temperatures that have shortened the growing season. Rainfall occurs from November to May and varies across the country—from less than 600 mm in the southern region to over 1,800 mm in the highlands. Frequent droughts and floods are eroding assets and knowledge, leaving people more vulnerable to disaster. An upsurge in malaria and cholera due to climate change requires smallholder farmers to spend more time caring for the sick and less time working in their fields.

Objective

Since 2012, AfDB in partnership with the Global Environmental Facility, has been working to improve resilience to current climate variability and future climate change by developing and implementing adaptation strategies and measures that will improve agricultural production and rural livelihoods for some 300,000 residents in the initial three target districts—Karonga, Dedza, and Chikwawa. It is also working to enhance national and district agency capacities to support community-based adaptation to climate change.

Unique Project Feature

This project was the first to address climate change adaptation in Malawi's agricultural sector.

*1 CARLA for the name of the project : climate adaptation for rural livelihood and agriculture

Lessons learned

Valuable lessons have been learned from the project:

• **Institutional arrangements are of utmost importance.** The project initially suffered because it was directly overseen by an institution that lacked agricultural knowledge and capacity. This could have been mitigated if there had been closer coordination between agencies with proper subject matter expertise in both climate change adaptation and agriculture

• **Designation of project implementation unit is important.** During the project, an independent project implementation unit was much more effective than its government counterpart, considering the fact that the latter did not have sufficient skills or human resources to disburse funding in a timely manner. Having the right administrative arrangements in place may therefore save a lot of time during implementation.

• **Ensure sustainability.** Development assistance is limited and it is a significant challenge to overcome the perception of ongoing project support. To prevent dependency, projects should emphasize that support is temporary, even if the challenges may increase in severity. Projects should stimulate beneficiaries to internalize new skills and training to become autonomous. Training programs should therefore be innovative, interactive, and constructed in a way that encourages autonomy and pro-active agency.

• **Use integrated strategies to maximize adaptation benefits.** Project personnel should not implement even successful activities as standalone initiatives. Integration among activities maximizes adaptation benefits. More thought should therefore go into which portfolio of activities, at individual and community levels, optimizes risks and rewards.

• **Broaden dialogue across sectors.** As a mitigating measure, instituting broader dialogue can potentially safeguard against risks that come with implementing the interventions of any project that may have been relatively low historically, but that may increase with climate change. For example, in the case of establishing fish ponds, more thought needs to go into which fish species are appropriate for farming given the risk of extreme flooding, or how the fish ponds, in combination with more frequently-occurring extreme weather, will alter the malaria dynamic in communities.

• **Time is of the essence.** With respect to adaptation efforts, the window of opportunity is narrow. For example, if trees planted along a river bank to reduce erosion during times of floods are not given ample time to take root ahead of the next severe weather occurrence, such intervention will not be successful.

Testimonials

"As you are aware, this area of Karonga District has continued to suffer from severe drought conditions this season. Thanks to CARLA, which has allowed me to plant my own orchard, I don't expect to feel the impact as much. I can sell bananas and paw paws to generate income to cover basic household needs. As a way of showing my appreciation to the project, I have so far established part of my garden as a nursery for providing seed materials to other interested farmers in the area for free. So far I have issued banana suckers to 15 farmers as planting materials for their own orchards. After providing the fruit trees, I follow up with training in their gardens using skills that officers from CARLA taught me. I have little doubt that within the next few years, most farmers in this area will have fruit trees in their homesteads" ***Mr. Abraham Simkonda, CARLA Lead Farmer, Karonga District.***

« Our family has been vulnerable to climate change variability, as we had no quick way of generating alternative income so as to adapt to the harsh realities of weather patterns. In our area, every year we experience droughts and floods which resulted in our family having food only three months in the year. We did not even have the financial capacity to buy maize, which is a staple in our meals, resulting in some family members seeking temporary labor; a reduction in the number of daily meals; and some even resorting to begging. This has often impacted our integrity and standing in the community and shamed us. Since the beginning of the CARLA project, we have received two goats and have already given the offspring to other members of the community – there are now seven goats in our community in Khola. By the end of the project, we expect to own at least 20 goats, which we will be able to sell in the case of an emergency and during rough times.» ***Anonymous beneficiary in Moses, Chikwawa District.***

« Ms. Nonkhonde received two female goats from the project's livestock committee; the goats have had three rounds of offspring. At the end of the program, Ms. Nankhonde had five goats and had given two to other beneficiaries: "I am so happy that I have received five goats, which I never dreamt of having, thanks to the CARLA project. With my goats, hunger will soon be a thing of the past – they will reproduce and give me more goats. I urge my friends who have received the goats to take good care of them so that they may also benefit from the project's activities." ***Ms. Eti Nankhonde, inhabitant, Karonga District.***

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