

On behalf of:



**EKARI
FOUNDATION**

Education for Students • Sustainable Livelihoods for their Communities

Sustainable Livelihood Programme

Preliminary Field Research



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INTRODUCTION

The sustainable livelihood field report is the result of a four months field research, July to October 2013, in the rural communities of Phalombe. This research was mandated by Ekari Foundation in order to prepare the field for the launch of the program in 2014.

Education for Students. Sustainable livelihoods for their Communities.

Much more than just a baseline, this represents the mission and vision of Ekari Foundation. The objective of *Education for Students* is a never ending struggle to give bright young students the opportunity to pursue and complete their education. The NGO strongly believes education is key in breaking the cycle of poverty and supports therefore, poor families from rural villages in Phalombe district by paying for the school fees of their children.

The research that has been done and thus also this report focuses more on the second part of that baseline; *sustainable livelihoods for their communities*. Through the Sustainable Livelihoods Programme, Ekari Foundation strives to provide empowering and self-sustaining businesses for the student's families and their communities. The aim is to decrease the dependency of the targeted families on external aid by giving them the opportunity to launch alternative income generating activities.

But is there room for such a program in the rural communities of Phalombe District? Is Ekari Foundation the right actor to launch this type of activities? Are the families of the Ekari Foundation ready to change their life and work conditions in order to acquire independence? What would be the content of that program and how would it be implemented?

This is what the field research was meant to discover.

Research area

The research was conducted in the area of Phalombe District and its starting point was the 40 students currently supported by Ekari Foundation. As the student's houses are very much spread out, we can say that the research covered a very important part of the Phalombe District Territory: 4 out of 5 Traditional Authorities to be precise. Only the Chiwalo T/A doesn't contain any Ekari beneficiary. A map containing the locations of the houses and communities can be found in Annex 1.

Phalombe Trading Center has been the central point from where the research was conducted, because of its role as administrative capital of the district and the presence of the governmental offices, but also because Phalombe Trading Center hosts the Ekari office and the Ekari house and because of the high concentration of Ekari beneficiaries in a radius of 15km. The Nkhumba T/A is therefore the most represented in this research.

Objectives and methodology

The objectives of the field research were to acquire a profound understanding of the work & life conditions of the families of the Ekari beneficiaries. More specifically, to discover challenges and opportunities faced by the rural communities of Phalombe District. And finally, to assess the feasibility of the Sustainable Livelihood Programme launched by Ekari Foundation targeting these families.

In order to do so, we launched a four months field research containing three main phases;

In a first phase, the research brought us to meet 40 families in the rural communities of Phalombe, sometimes in the most remote villages. Our objective during these visits was double: a garden analysis on one hand and a deep dive into the community on the other. To achieve that goal, we used a questionnaire containing 20 questions ranging from very specific questions; such as the number of households or the size of the garden, to more open questions; such as the type of business they would launch if they had the means and the opportunity. This questionnaire served as a guideline not to lose track of the essence and make sure we would have a view, as complete as possible on their living and working conditions. The questionnaire can be found in Annex 2.

The second phase of the project led us to 6 of the main markets of Phalombe District. Our objective here was to get a better view on the products, the prices and the life standards of the shopkeepers in order to discover opportunities in terms of marketing of products (similar or innovating). Here again, we worked with a questionnaire in order to create a full market analysis and comparative market price tables.

The third and final phase of the research brought us to meet with important players in the Phalombe area: Non-governmental organizations, lodges and tourist places, but also governmental instances and business initiatives. The aim here was double: understand what programs are already in place in the targeted area - Ekari Foundation doesn't want to reinvent the wheel - and define any areas of potential partnerships for the future sustainable livelihood project. A list of all the contacts is available in Annex 3.

We wrote a report of every family, market and organization we visited. These individual reports are available on request from Ekari Foundation. (*Cfr. Contact list in Annex 3*)

The results of the field research are contained in this field report that attempts to describe as precisely as possible the outcomes of our visits and interviews in the hope to allow anyone that goes through it, to come to the same level of understanding of the subject as we have after four months.

- ❖ The *Context & framework* places this research into its context by drawing a theoretical framework.
- ❖ In the *Field observations*, we'll take you with us on our field trips in two parts; a garden analysis and a community analysis.
- ❖ The chapter *Opportunities* contains what we have defined as areas of possible development in terms of garden productivity as well as alternative income generating activities.

- ❖ *Challenges and implementation tips* digs into the possible difficulties one can be faced with when launching community projects in the area and proposes different approaches and implementation strategies.
- ❖ The *Conclusions* summarize this report and attempt to answer the main questions stated earlier.

We hope this report will bring the reader to a new level of understanding and that it will as well allow Ekari Foundation to take the right decisions concerning the implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood Programme in 2014 in the rural communities of Phalombe District.

I. CONTEXT & FRAMEWORK

In order to fully understand the field observations and recommendations present in this report and to be able to link it to future challenges and opportunities on a more global scale, it is crucial to have a basic knowledge of the social and economical status of Malawi as a country district. We therefore dedicate this chapter to contextualizing the field res country information.

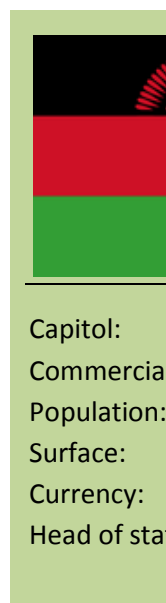
Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world

Malawi is a least developed country with few natural resources to benefit from. It is among the world's ten poorest nations. According to UNDP, Malawi ranks 170 among 187 countries for Human Development Indices that measures development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income.¹

- ❖ Life expectancy: 54 years
- ❖ Schooling of adults: 4.2 Years
- ❖ Income: 90 percent of the population lives under US\$2 a day

The Malawian government depends heavily on outside aid to meet development needs, although this need (and the aid offered) has decreased since 2000.

The whole country has been hit by a very important famine in 2002 where 30 needed food assistance. World Food Program estimates that in 2013, 1.4 million population!) will need food assistance and this number will most probably grow



Climate and geography³

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeastern Africa, bordered by Zambia to the west, Tanzania to the northeast and Mozambique to the south, southwest and south. Malawi can be found in annex 4.

The Great Rift Valley runs through the country from north to south, and to the east of Lake Malawi (also called Lake Nyasa), making up over three-quarters of Malawi. The Shire River flows from the south end of the lake and joins the Zambezi River further south in Mozambique.

¹ UNDP, Human Development Reports, Malawi. Country profile: Human Development Indicators

² Report *World Food Programme*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

³ WIKIPEDIA, *Malawi*; INTER AIDE, *Analysis diagnosis of an agricultural region of Southern Malawi*

Malawi's capital is Lilongwe, and its commercial centre is Blantyre. Malawi has two sites listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Lake Malawi National Park was first listed in 1984 and the Chongoni Rock Art Area was listed in 2006.

The Southern Region of Malawi is relatively flat, but it contains the shire highlands (hills) and is, of course dominated by the Zomba plateau and the Mount Mulanje Massive, which is also the highest point of Malawi with the Sapitwa summit culminating at more than 3000m above the sea level. The region also has a few lakes, the main one being lake Chilwa.

Malawi's sub-tropical climate is hot in the low-lying areas in the south of the country and temperate in the northern highlands and has 2 main seasons: one cold-dry season from May to mid October, and one hot-wet season from mid October to mid or late April. Most Malawians, particularly the smallholder farmers, are vulnerable to environmental hazards such as droughts (one in every 3 to 5 years), floods (every year) and storms (every year).

An economy dominated by agriculture

As mentioned before, Malawi is amongst the world's least-developed countries. The economy is heavily based on agriculture, with a largely rural population and more than one-third of GDP and 90% of export revenues coming from agriculture.

Percentage of GDP⁴:

Industry: 16% - Agriculture: 30% - Services: 53%

Malawi has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world with over 6,000,000 of Malawians living on \$1 a day⁵. The overwhelming majority of the people are subsistence farmers.

In the Inter Aide research⁶, we can read about Malawi's bipolar agricultural model, based on cash crop estates on one hand and subsistence smallholders on the other.

"Estates growing tobacco (60% of estate land area), tea (20%) and sugarcane (18%), account for 90% of foreign exchange earnings. The country's export trade is dominated by tobacco, tea, cotton, coffee, and sugar. Commercial estates occupy about 20% of arable land. Major export partners are South Africa, US, Germany, Netherlands, and Japan. Those main cash crops are mainly grown in plantations, but tobacco is also grown by smallholders."

"Smallholder agriculture accounts for 80% of Malawi's food production but only 65% of agricultural GDP. Main agricultural products are: maize, tobacco, sugarcane, cassava, sorghum, millet, rice, pulses, tea, cotton, sweet potatoes, cattle, goats and chickens."

⁴ GLOBAL FINANCE MAGAZINE, Data country reports, *Malawi Country Report*

⁵ EKARI FOUNDATION, *Ekari Standard Offer*

⁶ INTER AIDE, *Analysis diagnosis of an agricultural region of Southern Malawi*

Tobacco, Malawi's largest cash crop

Tobacco production in Malawi is one of the nation's largest sources of income. As of 2005, Malawi was the 12th largest producer of tobacco leaves. As of 2010, Malawi was the world's leading producer of burley leaf tobacco. With the decline of tobacco farms in the West, interest in Malawi's low-grade, high-nicotine tobacco has increased. Today, Malawian tobacco is found in blends of nearly every cigarette smoked in industrialized nations including the popular and ubiquitous Camel and Marlboro brands⁷. According to FAO⁸, Tobacco accounted for more than one third of total revenue from agriculture in 1999 and about 15 percent of GDP in the same year. It is the world's most tobacco dependent economy!

We can find a number of small-scale growers (average size of 1ha garden) in tobacco production, but overall tobacco estates (concentrated in the central plateaus of the country) still dominate the market with about 68% of the total sales in the year 2000⁸. For small farms with less than 0.1ha in tobacco cultivation, four out of five farms have a negative income.

During our field visits, only one family uses a full plot to grow tobacco. It is located in the Thunga village at about 25km from Ekari Foundation. Out of four gardens, one is used to grow tobacco. The rest is used to grow food crops for their own consumption. The soil type is gray loam and tobacco is planted with the first rains in November. The tobacco they produce is sold at the Limbe Auction Floors. Dickson's family is part of a tobacco collective and because of the fact that they are growing tobacco, they receive the visit of extension worker more regularly⁹.



Visit to Lilongwe Tobacco Auction floors.

On good days, more than 10,000 tobacco bells (around 100kg) are sold on these auction floors. Sellers are small-scale farmers, cooperatives or big size producers. There are 2 types of sales. The first one is auction sales. This one is the most advantageous for the

because prices can rise very fast up to 3\$ per kg. The second one is the unique sales at fixed price: one unique buyer takes all the bells of one or more farmers, at a fixed price. The selling price is much lower, but it is the buyer that supplies the seller with farm input: tools, fertilizer and tobacco seeds.

⁷ WIKIPEDIA, *Tobacco industry in Malawi*

⁸ Report FAO, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁹ Report *Dickson Buala*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Tobacco is either sold to local traders or sent to auction floor. Tobacco market is regulated in Malawi. In the Southern region there is only one auction floor in Limbe (Blantyre). To sell their tobacco, farmers have to open an account at the auction floor. A margin is kept for “tobacco investment” and “auction fee”, and there is a minimal required quantity of tobacco. So farmers gather in groups of at least ten members. The production is individual but is sold by the group¹⁰.

Population density and land issues

Malawi has a population of over 15 million, with a growth rate of 2.75%, according to 2009 estimates¹¹. The population is forecast to grow to over 45 million people by 2050, nearly tripling the estimated 16 million in 2010.

“Most rural farmers in Malawi own very small land, and the average size has halved since 1970. Land pressure is an ongoing problem. Many farmers have to cultivate on steep hillsides and other marginal lands, often with inadequate soil and water conservation, creating problems such as soil erosion and declining soil fertility. Many smallholders are looking for other sources of income. Local markets have been growing and small businesses exploded in both rural and urban areas.”

- The World Factbook – CIA¹¹

Malawi’s rapid population growth is driven by a high fertility rate (5.7 children born per woman). *“The combined effects of rapid population growth and climate change are increasing food insecurity, environmental degradation, and poverty levels in Malawi and Kenya,”*

- Clive Mutunga, a senior research associate, Population Action International (PAI) (Cfr. Article in Annex 5)

Phalombe district

The Phalombe district is located in the Southern Region of Malawi, which contains 45 percent of the total population and also has the highest population density. The district covers an estimated 1380km² and has a population of about 313,227 with a population density of 227 people per km² ¹⁰. It contains 98 villages in total, spread out over the 5 Traditional Authorities: Mkumba, Nazombe, Kaduya, Jenala and Chiwalo. A map of the T/As can be found in annex 6.

In 1998, Phalombe district split off from Mulanje district, with Phalombe being its capital. Due to this independence, many district offices and ministries have been installed at his center as well as an important trading center, hospital, schools, a bank and a filling station. Phalombe center is connected with Mulanje and with Zomba with two dirt roads and to Migowi and Chiringa with a tarmac road.

¹⁰ INTER AIDE, *Analysis diagnosis of an agricultural region of Southern Malawi*

¹¹ CIA, *The World Factbook, Malawi*

Phalombe district is also a way through to neighboring Mozambique with an important flux of people going from Malawi to Mozambique for work and trade as well as an important flux of goods and products entering Malawi through Mozambique.

In terms of geography, Phalombe district is mainly flat with some hills and also spreads on the slopes of the Mulanje Mountain.

Considering the difficult climate and geographical conditions, combined with a high population density, agriculture is made difficult in Phalombe District, considered by the World Food Program, as a **deficit district**¹², where farmers do not manage to harvest enough to feed them throughout the year.

These facts will be confirmed in the following community research report.

¹² Report *World Food Programme*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

II. FIELD OBSERVATIONS

A. Community research

Introduction

The first phase of the Ekari Field research for sustainable livelihoods brought us in the field, into the communities. This part of the report describes as precisely as possible the findings and observations made during the community research, more precisely the life and work conditions of communities (broadly) and families (strictly) in Phalombe District.

The community research does not concern all the communities of Phalombe District. The starting point of this research is the 40 students currently supported by Ekari Foundation. As these are spread all over, the research covers an important part of the Phalombe District territory: 4 out of 5 Traditional Authorities to be precise. Only the Chiwalo T/A doesn't contain any Ekari beneficiaries.

Phalombe Trading Center has been the central point from where the research was conducted, because of its role as administrative capital of the district and the presence of the governmental offices, but also because Phalombe Trading Center hosts the Ekari Office and the Ekari house and because of the high concentration of Ekari beneficiaries in a radius of 15km. The Nkhumba T/A is the therefore the most represented in this research.

Our visits to the communities aimed at discovering the life and work conditions of the communities and discover challenges and opportunities in the field. A questionnaire of about 20 questions (*Cfr. Questionnaire in Annex 2*), brought us to the garden, through the village and ending at the house of the Ekari beneficiary in two distinct part: a garden analysis and a community analysis.

The coming paragraphs are based on the observations made while visiting the communities of 40 Ekari beneficiaries. Please note that the description underneath is strongly dependent of the period and season of visit. All of them have been visited the same year between the 8th of July 2013 and the 15th of August 2013.

The garden analysis takes a deeper look into the agricultural habits, types of crops and harvest of the farmers in Phalombe District.

Garden analysis

1. Main garden characteristics

Every visited family has its own garden; from small pieces and plots around the house¹³ to a well defined and optimized garden at a certain distance from the house, every one of them is having an agricultural activity.

¹³ Report *Lazarus James*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

- ❖ **Location of the garden:** even though the gardens are not always located adjacent to the house, they are mostly at reasonable walking distance, with an average distance of 1.2km from the house. Best case scenario is of course to have the garden located just next to the house (less than 50m). Not only does this allow you to save a lot of time, but it also opens a large scale of opportunities for irrigation and transport of goods is made easier. This is the case for 15% of the visited families.

Worst case is the case of Iness Makina in the Nkhulambe village, who has to walk for about 3 hours on the slopes of the mountain to get to her garden. This distance has a major impact on her life quality: going back and forth from the garden takes her 6 hours, meaning she needs to wake up in the middle of the night to make sure she gets to the garden by the early morning.

That doesn't leave a lot of time for other professional and social activities. But it also has a serious impact on her harvest and so on her food security: she can't go to the garden every day and she has no ways of irrigating the plot (imagine carrying buckets filled with water for 3 hours), even harvesting can only be done in small quantities in order to be able to carry it back to the house. As a consequence, she only cultivates a small part of her garden and has to rent a garden somewhere else to be able to have some food.

- *Cfr. Report Iness Makina,
Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports*

- ❖ **Number of gardens:** about 25% of the visited families have more than one garden (one plot divided into smaller pieces is considered as one single garden) and when it is the case, the second garden is often far from the first one and/or from the house (1-6km). The advantage is of course the possibility to grow different crops because of different soil and water conditions.
- ❖ **The average size** of the visited gardens is 3,742m² (*Cfr. Table in Annex 7*). All the gardens cover a surface of less than 1ha, except the ones of Charles Liwonde and Philimon Muleke¹⁴, both exceeding 10,000m² and located in neighboring villages (Namita and Mmeza) near Chitekesa. But all of the visited families are small to medium land holder farmers (between 0.4 ha and 1.4 ha).
- ❖ Phalombe district has different **soil types** according to the location (river banks, mountain and hill slopes or grass fields). The different soil types that we have observed vary but can be grouped in 3 categories: sandy clay, clay loam and sandy loam.

¹⁴ Reports Charles Liwonde & Philimon Muleke, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

- ❖ **Tree cover:** most of the visited houses and gardens count a small number of trees in or around the garden or the house. Eucalyptus (gum tree) is the most frequent tree, used by the community members to protect them, their house and their garden from stormy weather and heavy winds, but also for construction/consolidation and firewood. Besides the Eucalyptus tree, we can also find a variety of fruit trees in and around the gardens, mainly banana and mango trees as well as a number of Acacias and occasionally some more exotic or local trees: Malaina (Beechwood, *gmelina arborea*), sendrella (red cedar, *toona ciliate*), India, Nsango, Ngoza, Chirowa. In none of the cases, trees were used in an agro forestry approach to increase soil fertility and optimize the garden productivity. Trees just grow wildly or are planted for protection, construction or firewood.

At this period of the year, the majority of the crops have been harvested, the temperatures are slowly rising and there have been no rain since about 2 months. So, the land is empty and dry with the exception of the irrigated plots of course.

2. Crop types and reasons for growing them

As mentioned before, Phalombe District is considered a deficit area, where farmers don't manage to grow sufficient amounts to be able to go to market. The main objective of the farming activities is to answer their basic needs and serve as main source of food. So, we can say that crops are mainly grown for their own consumption. In terms of types of crops we are considering here: **maize** (in 99% of the visited cases), **millet** and **peas** (in the majority of the cases) and sometimes completed by or mixed with other crops such as **cassava**, **sweet potatoes** and **pumpkins**.

Exceptionally when the season is considerably good and the harvest is generous, a small percentage of the harvest is sold, mostly to consumers on the local market and rarely also to vendors (the easy but less advantageous way).

Besides the crops grown for own consumption, some families also grow crops to sell them on the markets. We are talking about specific types of crops grown in larger amounts and sold in 50kg bags. This only applies to those with more important gardens in terms of size or resources (water & fertilizer). We are looking at crops such as: **sunflower**, **groundnuts** or **rice**. An example of sunflower cultivation is the area of Maluha village¹⁵. Besides food crops, other cash crops are grown for that matter, the main ones being tobacco (*Cfr. Page 10: Tobacco, Malawi's largest cash crop*), and cotton. Concerning cotton, it's very rare in the area of research, none of the Ekari beneficiary families are growing cotton. We came across a few small cotton fields when crossing the Kaduya T/A by bike, coming from the Mumbo village where the houses of Laston Chipagala and Joseph Magona are located.

¹⁵ Report *Jenipher Macheso*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

In some cases, mostly when there is an easy or close access to water and available space next to the garden or the house, families create and manage small **kitchen gardens**: a well delimited piece of land of an average size of 8m² where vegetables are grown. This plot is protected from animals, climate and neighbors with reed fences and is irrigated at least once a day (sometimes twice) mostly with water from the tap when the garden is adjacent to the house, or with water from the river when the kitchen garden is part of their garden. The main items that can be observed in these kitchen gardens are: cabbages, sweet potatoes, mustard, tomatoes and cassava.



3. Agricultural practices and harvest

Because of the high population density and the constant demographic growth, there is a high pressure on environment and on the land. Combined with the difficult climate and geographical conditions, farming is more a survival activity than an important source of income for most Malawians of the southern region. It is very difficult in these conditions to apply modern, healthy and sustainable agricultural practices.

- ❖ Because they need the harvest to be able to feed them and their family and because of the limited availability of land. None of the families ever leave their land or even a piece of their land lie fallow, except in the low season. Low season is the season between the harvest and the first rains, from July to October, where most of the visited families don't work on their garden. Every piece of **arable land is used at 100%**, every year, since many generations.
- ❖ The number of families that practice crop rotation (in any form) are extremely limited. Most of the farmers practice **crop mixing**. Again, because of lack of land, they can't afford to rotate.
- ❖ **Ridge formation**: each of the visited gardens uses the 'ridge and furrow' technique. After the harvest, the land is manually plowed and crop residuals are buried under a layer of dirt/soil, systematically, forming ridges.

Farmers start ridging their fields after the harvest of pigeon peas (July) or cassava (August to September), with a large hoe. Half of the soil of each old ridge is gathered in the furrows to build a new one. It takes 30 days for one hectare... In addition to ridges, farmers build a ridge around the field, to delimitate boundaries between fields or control the running water in rainy season.

- INTER AIDE,

Analysis diagnosis of an agricultural region of Southern Malawi

These are also used to control the intentional fires, when the land is cleaned and crop residuals and weed are spread over the land and burned. In some cases, farmers divide their garden in smaller plots and build the ridges perpendicularly to each other (box ridges). This is done mainly for rainwater harvesting and to avoid soil erosion. The only garden where we could observe a similar technique is the one of Maxwell in the Njambalo village¹⁶.

Ridges are built perpendicularly to the slope, to prevent from soil erosion. Agricultural advisors worked on that direction since the 1992 flash floods which destroyed the crops around the hills and carried away the superficial part of the soil.

*- INTER AIDE,
Analysis diagnosis of an agricultural region of Southern Malawi*

- ❖ The work is done according to seasons and the agricultural **calendar**: Sowing in late October or early November, with the first rains; Weeding from late December to late February depending on the type of crops. Peak periods for harvesting are February to March for those who cultivate tobacco, March to May for maize, April for groundnuts, and July for pigeon peas. July and August are the months of the land preparations and ridge formation and September/October is the manure making and spreading.
- ❖ All the work is done **manually**. We didn't see any type of automated work or machinery in any of the visited families. The only tool used is the hoe. The harvest is done by handpicking.

4. Management of soil fertility

Agriculture in Malawi has been strongly dependent on chemical fertilizer since a very long time. There are different reasons for this:

- ❖ **General lack of soil fertility.** Malawi's soil is greatly depleted, like most of the soil in sub-Saharan Africa¹⁷.
- ❖ **Lack of land availability.** Because of demography, population density and importance of agricultural activity, there is insufficient amount of land. As a consequence, the same pieces of land are used every year, for 100%, since many generations which provoked soil degradation (soil erosion and loss of soil nutrients).
- ❖ The choice of **maize as main food crop.** Maize is the staple food and agricultural policies have encouraged its domination upon all other cropping systems.
- ❖ Political policies and **governmental input subsidy program.** This program, launched in 2005, distributes annually, tons of chemical fertilizer through a coupon-based distribution program to millions of households. These coupons, distributed to the farmers through the extension

¹⁶ Report *Maxwell Thom*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

¹⁷ INTER AIDE, *Analysis diagnosis of an agricultural region of Southern Malawi*

workers and village chiefs, give the farmers access to chemical fertilizer at reduced prices (50kg bag for 1,000MK instead of 16,000MK market price).

Although application of chemical fertilizer drastically increases the harvest on the short term (from one year to another), it also has multiple important negative effects:

- ❖ Not all small farmers have access to the coupons, creating inequalities amongst community members and increasing their sense of competition towards one another.
- ❖ They don't access it every year: their harvest will peak down and then up from one year to another provoking an unstable individual situation on the long term.
- ❖ When they do get access, it is often in insufficient quantities obliging them to use insufficient amounts on the full surface of their garden, or sufficient amounts on only part of their garden.
- ❖ The chemical fertilizer is distributed without any training, advice and follow up afterwards. Lots of farmers apply fertilizer inadequately or at the wrong time, according to Mister Brixio Phiri¹⁸ provoking only destruction of the soil and no enhancement of the harvest.¹⁹
- ❖ On the long term, chemical fertilizers destroy soil nutrients making it impossible to grow anything without the constantly increasing need of fertilizer.

The 2013 Malawi Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) would benefit almost 1.5 million underprivileged families across the country. (Cfr. Article in Annex 8)

To conclude, farmers strongly rely on chemical fertilizer for their agricultural activities and are also convinced they are not able to grow anything anymore without it.

Visited farmers all have similar habits, activities, crops and harvest, with of course some exceptions. Overall, we can say they all mainly just proceed with the activities in a rather traditional way with knowledge and information transmitted from one generation to the next and often without questioning these traditions and without trials or innovations.

5. Livestock rearing

Besides the farming activities on the garden, some families also keep animals around the house. Of course, keeping animals requires to have capital to invest and takes work and care. None of the families we visited has a sufficient number of animals to be really considering it as animal farm. It's more something they buy when they have enough money and that serves as a joker when the money or the food comes to an end.

Nevertheless, we came across a few examples of very small scale animal farming that could be developed in the future.

¹⁸ Mister Brixio Phiri, Extension Worker Supervisor, Naminjiwa Extension Planning Area

¹⁹ Report *Naminjiwa Extension Planning Area*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

- ❖ Most frequently, community members keep **chickens** because they are cheap and easy to take care of, but also of course for the eggs and the meat. Chickens run freely in the villages and every community member is able to recognize his chickens. Alternatively, we also met quite a lot of guinea fowl and turkeys in the field.
- ❖ **Goats** are also commonly seen in Phalombe villages. It's a lucrative business and goats are very resistant to diseases etc. But, as most of the families don't keep them in stables, they tend to have extensive meals in the communities gardens, which is, in an area where there is no food security, a very damageable and dangerous business. When they do build stables for the goats it's often a basic wooden construction at 1 or 2 meters above the ground.
- ❖ Once in a while, we saw 1 or 2 **pigs** sniffing around at the families' homes, but not as frequently as the goats. Pigs are expensive but also have a very good price on the market. It looks as though pigs are used for important events or as gifts. For what we know, families keep them as a source of income: when they have unexpected expenses to make or simply when they need money to survive, they sell the pig. Pigs are left free or sometimes kept in small stables.

- ❖ A somehow unusual practice when seen with a European mind is the **Pigeon** farming for consumption. Although not very common, we have seen a few families breeding pigeons, like Thomas Gray's family in Mpheni. A handful of pigeons are kept in a nice, small wooden birdhouse on pillars



- ❖ Keeping **cattle** is highly exceptional because of their price and the care they need (in terms of stable, food and health). On the 40 visited families, only one clearly keeps cattle once in a while. Monica's family, in the Thokole village, has a large stable next to their house. When we visited them, the stable was empty, the cows died from the foot and mouth disease²⁰.



This is probably the worst case scenario for this poor family that has invested money in these cows and lost everything. Besides diseases, cows are often source of conflicts in the communities. When not kept under control in stables or behind fences, not only do they eat the crops, but they also destroy everything in the fields. It is a reason of argument in Patuma Makande's community, Likaka²¹.

In the next chapter, we are looking at social and professional interactions between farmers as well as general living conditions in the visited communities.

²⁰ Report *Monica Mabuwa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

²¹ Report *Patuma Makande*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Community analysis

To acquire a better understanding of the social aspects and interactions occurring in the communities, we have spend some time with the families at their houses and tackled the second part of the questionnaire (*Cfr. Questionnaire in Annex 2*).

1. Main characteristics of the villages

As mentioned before, all of the visited villages host at least one Ekari beneficiary. They are all similar in size, structure and architecture as they are all rural villages, all more or less remote and all dominated by agriculture and lead by village chiefs.

- ❖ All the visited villages are **located** within the Phalombe District territory, covering four of the Traditional Authorities and with a higher concentration on Nkhumba T/A.
- ❖ **Structure** of the villages: small tracks connect the houses and small footpaths run into the fields. Every village has at least one borehole and a few schools. The majority of the houses we visited had a school in a distance of less than 1km and a market at an average distance of 3km. For the hospitals, most of the community members must walk further, around 5 to 8km on average, but it can go up to much more for the most remote houses in the most remote villages. Laston Chipagala and Jospeh Magona for example estimate the nearest hospital from Mumbo village at a distance of more than 20km²².
- ❖ The houses are built by the community members. They are made of mud bricks or burnt bricks (made with the clay soil and water). Their roof is made of grasses. Houses contain 2 or 3 rooms. The kitchen is most often outside or in a separate small building and sanitary is at a few meters from the houses in a brick construction or just surrounded by reed fences. Most houses also have a garbage pit nearby the kitchen where the remaining waste is dropped and burned.
- ❖ Each village spreads over a small territory of around 2 to 5km and counts on average 250 households (*Cfr. Table in Annex 7*). Some villages keep on developing and spreading out, but as land is lacking, the population density of these villages increases drastically. In these case, it can happen that a village becomes difficult to manage for the village chief and that social conflicts appear. It is the case for example in Phumduma, village of Rhoda and Ellena, that has naturally split into two communities, where one is being privileged and the other is being ignored²³.
- ❖ There is no running water and no electricity in the majority of the visited villages.



²² Report *Laston Chipagala*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

²³ Report *Rhoda Douglas*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

2. Water sources and water management

Water is an important problem, a daily challenge, but also an opportunity for development in these rural communities of Phalombe. A few confronting figures from Water Aid²⁴:

- ❖ 2.4 Million Malawians don't have access to safe water.
- ❖ Over 7 million Malawians (more than half of the population) don't have access to adequate sanitation.
- ❖ Over 3,000 children die every year from diarrhea caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation in Malawi.

In terms of households, the very big majority of them doesn't have running water. **Boreholes** are the main and often only water source for household activities. Women and children walk daily with buckets and containers to the boreholes where they sometimes need to wait a long time that other community members arrived before have finished filling their containers. It's a very social activity. It doesn't happen a lot to see only one person at a borehole, very often big groups of children, women or both come in group to chat while filling the buckets.



Other water sources are natural sources: **rivers and rainwater**. Main rivers in the visited area are the Phalombe River, Likubula River, Thuchila River, Nambid River. These rivers don't dry up during the dry season which is a crucial advantage for the farming activities in the area. Besides the rivers, rain is an important source of water. Of course, this is strongly seasonal and rains only come October and April. During this period, especially in December and January, farmers can count on lots of rain.

It's clear, water is a challenge and having too much, too few or just the perfect amounts can literally transform landscapes as well as lives in Phalombe: gardens, harvest, food security and life level depend on the access to water.

The government of Malawi has made access to safe water in rural Malawi a priority, building hundreds of boreholes in the communities. They are supported in this task by many NGOs working towards that objective and still today, what we can see in the field, in the communities of Phalombe is not very promising. The main problem is often that community members do not have the right information or the support to improve water conditions and water use in their everyday life and work in the garden.

²⁴ WATER AID, Website homepage

- 95% of the visited families doesn't practice any form of irrigation -

Speaking of gardens, an estimated 95% of the visited families doesn't practice any form of irrigation and rely purely on rainfall for their farming activities. And relying on rainfall has proven not to be a reliable and stable strategy in the past few years. Phalombe district has extreme climate conditions with important floods and storm during the rainy season and severe droughts during the dry season.

This year for example, the majority of the visited families couldn't harvest the peas. The reason for this is too much and too sudden rainfall causing floods in the gardens, destroying the crops before they even had a chance to get to adult size. This is hard to believe when visiting the gardens today, confronted with heavy drought as such that soil is cracked²⁵ and crops burn and dry in the sun.



It looks as though there is always too much or too few rainfall in Phalombe.

The other **5% of the families are lucky enough to have a water source** not too far from the garden: boreholes sometimes but mostly rivers and small pools are used to irrigate the fields. Irrigation is, in all visited cases, 100% manual: going back and forth from the field to the water source with buckets (sometimes watering cans if they are lucky). This must be done on a daily basis for it to be effective and that task requires a lot of energy and manpower.

In the case of Alice Matope's family in Mkhuna for example²⁶, her mother couldn't irrigate the garden this year, because she was the only one that could do it and she got sick... no irrigation this year has a direct drop in harvest as a consequence.

When irrigation is done properly, we can see an immediate difference in the gardens: much greener crops, healthier and bigger in size, but also simply: these families are still growing crops when everyone else has already stopped for this year. It was very striking when we visited the community of Lazarus James in Chaloulou: at first sight, drier than whatever we had seen before, very harsh life conditions and no real hope about finding solutions to improve it. But when we left, at a few kilometers from there, we crossed a real oasis where farmers were growing, maize, banana trees and even vegetables and tobacco²⁷.

²⁵ Report *Raphael Sakarani*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

²⁶ Report *Alice Matope*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

²⁷ Report *Lazarus James*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

When in the field, we had the chance to observe two exceptional irrigation practices. In both Ekari beneficiaries were somehow involved.

1. **Governmental irrigated field** – Nkhulambe – Iness Makina²⁸



In this area, there is a new irrigation project ongoing launched and managed by the government. The government puts pieces of land at disposal of the community for a low renting price and all these plots are irrigated. It's a whole different, new and green landscape we discover here. Well organized small pieces of plots all well irrigated and managed. It's clear here that water makes all the difference: all the fields are filled with beautifully grown green crops, mainly maize.

Currently, there is a downside at renting a plot there: as the land is considered ownership of the government some members of the community and outside of the community made a business out of buying the crops grown there from the renters and reselling them elsewhere. That leaves renters with no choice. Just as the maize is ready, business men are already harvesting it, then giving 100MK/kg to the renter of the land. It's a forced sale... The only way to go against this and use the maize for food and not for business is by hiring a security guard for every plot... this is of course not a possibility for most of the families.

This is a known problem and it is about to change as the government has put in place a committee for the management of these plots that will also take care of the sale.

2. **Community built irrigation scheme** – Ngandanga – Jenipher Chingwalu²⁹

Arriving by foot in the area of Jenipher's house, we started observing handmade channels build with bricks. Jenipher's father gave us more insights on that project. The ministry of agriculture is sponsoring an irrigation system for this community.

The community members have to build it themselves, but the government pays them 200MK per day and provides the necessary cement. They expect the construction to be done somewhere next year, 2014.

According to Jenipher's father, it should allow them to grow better crops like sweet potato, cassava and onions in larger quantities.



²⁸ Report *Iness Makina*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

²⁹ Report *Jenipher Chingwalu*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

3. Community Based Organizations and external support

When questioning community members about solidarity initiatives and the share of information as well as agricultural best practices between them, we quickly noticed that solidarity was not really one of their main qualities.

As all of the community members live and work in more or less the same difficult conditions, they fear the success of others. Nevertheless, we also observed one or two cases of solidarity where harvest of gardens is shared amongst neighbors or where the dung of the animals of one family is shared with the neighbors for the production of manure³⁰.

Besides individual solidarity, support in Phalombe District also comes from three other types of sources: Community Based Organizations, Non Governmental Organizations and Governmental Organizations.

1. Inside communities, solidarity is expressed through the CBOs or Community Based Organizations. We could observe different types of CBOs in the visited villages:

- ❖ **Women clubs.** Communities in the rural areas of Malawi are very matriarchal and women are often key in professional and agricultural activities. It's no surprise to hear that they form clubs in their villages. Mostly, one club contains around 20 women of the village. The idea is that every one of them contributes a monthly fee (from 50MK to much more depending on the club).

The money collected can be used in different ways; most often, the money is placed in a fund and managed by the clubs' treasurer. Members (and sometimes also non-members from the same community) can then access low interest loans (20%) to start up a small business or to be able to invest in tools they would not be able to buy without loan. In other clubs, like the one in Thunga village³¹, they use the money to buy crops or tools for the garden (collectively or individually).

- ❖ **Farmers groups.** There are no farmers groups as such, except in very specific cases, such as the tobacco collective in Thunga village, where farmers growing tobacco group together for the transport and the sales of tobacco at the auction floors. Only when strictly needed and necessary, will they form farmer groups.
- ❖ **Other CBOs.** Other **Community Based Organizations** are created for all kinds of purposes, one of them is the fish farming collective of Lomoliwa. One committee composed with community members, a chairman, vice chairman, secretary & vice secretary, treasurer, etc. These CBO tries to maintain and develop a fish farming activity. The revenue of this will be used to support the needy in the community.³²

³⁰ Report *Gift Mapondo and Blessings Tchavi*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

³¹ Report of *Dickson Buala*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

³² Report *Fish Farming Lomoliwa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

- ❖ And finally, it is worth mentioning the community based **micro-credit initiatives**, where community members can come and ask for a small interest loan similar to the women group, loans at around 20% interest rate. Training CBOs in business and financial management can give an important boost to the entire community giving poor community members access to capital and so opening a wide range of opportunities for them to launch business initiatives. Other Micro Financing initiatives exist in the area but are meant for business loans and are not delivering individual loans anymore. We came across one of these initiatives several times when visiting the communities. It's called CUMO and was initially launched by Concern Universal³³.

These CBOs are, in general, most functional when there is an external NGO or governmental institution behind it for advice, financial follows up and general management. We have seen a series of initiatives phasing out or being completely abandoned after the initiating NGO or institution left. They need at least regular input in information, training and technical support.

These initiatives also tend to fail if they are not the result of a community idea, will and request. Ownership and involvement are key to the success of community projects in the long term.

A good example of an important community project failing because of lack of ownership of the community AND because of withdrawal of the initiating NGO is the Bakery project launched jointly by ADRA and WFP with Japanese funding: they created CBOs, build the bakeries (brick constructions with oven) and gave selected members of the CBO a short training and a start package. Then, they left. As a result, this bakery was NEVER active, the building is degrading and is now used by a family to store their crops.³⁴

2. Besides the CBOs, there are also a number of NGOs supporting rural communities in Phalombe. NGOs with offices in Phalombe Trading Center: Action Aid, World Vision, Concern Universal and Inter Aide. Each of them currently has active projects in Phalombe, focusing on different aspects. Mulanje is also the base for some NGOs active in the communities on and around Mulanje Mountain: MMCT and MuREA have active projects in the Phalombe area. Of course, other important institutions are also active in the area but don't have an office in Phalombe or Mulanje, for example UN Institutions such as World Food Program and FAO. All the contact details can be found in Annex 3.
3. And finally, governmental instances are also active in the area. In this field research, we focused on the actions of the Ministry of Agriculture through extension workers and supported by the District Council Officers. As opposed to the CBOs and the NGOs that focus on a limited number of community members or communities, the Ministry is the only institution aiming at supporting each and every one of the villages, communities and T/As.

The district is divided into Extension Planning Areas. These areas each contain multiple sections and each section contains a number of villages (around 5) and has one extension

³³ Report *Concern Universal*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

³⁴ Report *Bwanaissa bakery club*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

worker allocated. Extension workers are governmental employees with broad and deep expertise in all agricultural fields that work and live in the rural communities in order to advice, support and inform farmers on agricultural best practices.

According to the meetings and contacts we had with, not only the officers of the ministry, but also the extension workers in the field and according to UN institutions working hand in hand with these extension workers, we can say that their intentions are very positive and that they are as effective as they can possible be in the field, taking in to consideration that they are understaffed. We strongly recommend working hand in hand with them and include them in the project launched in their communities. More information about the Ministry of Agriculture as well as the extension workers can be received by request.³⁵

4. Work conditions and Ganyu

All of the visited families have farming as main ‘professional’ activity. As mentioned before, agriculture is in most cases, more a source of food than an actual source of income.

During the year, the community members **work in their garden**: preparing the land, applying fertilizer, sowing, weeding, harvesting, ... and the cycle restarts. Each of these tasks requires a lot of work and manpower. Of course, the bigger the garden, the more resources needed.

All of this work results in the annual **harvest**. For the families, this harvest is insufficient to feed the members of the family and also to purchase basic products needed in the everyday life, such as soap or cooking oil. The visited families claim their harvest brings them, on average, to the month of October. That means they can feed themselves and their families for about six months. In the worse cases, it was only three or four months. Of course, this also strongly depends on other elements, such as, climate, size of the garden and number of dependent family members.

We came across only one exception to this scenario: Aubrey Banda in the Chingwalu village. He lives with his 5 sisters and his grand-mother on a plot with 3 houses that they share like neighbors. With their 3 gardens, the nearby river and “only” 6 mouths to feed, they manage to have sufficient food throughout the year, answer their basic needs and even earned an estimated 40,000MK. Sometimes when times are a little harder, mainly because of bad weather, lack of rain, they only have enough for 11 month, but they seem to manage their land and household very well.

- *Cfr. Report Aubrey Banda,
Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports*

³⁵ Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

In order to fill the gap and earn an extra income, the majority of the community members do some **piecework** or **ganyu**. The term 'Ganyu' is widely used in Malawi and covers a wide range of short-term rural labor relationships or small jobs on someone else's farm (neighbor, relatives, smallholders or estates). It covers a period of days or weeks. Remuneration is made in cash or in buckets of food (most often maize, cassava or groundnuts). The work is relatively unskilled and agriculturally based.

According to a network paper of the Agricultural Research and Extension Network¹ Ganyu is a crucial poverty issue in Malawi because:

- ❖ Ganyu is the most important source of livelihood for most poor households – for some it is becoming even more important than own-farm production.
- ❖ The need to do ganyu to obtain an immediate supply of food may conflict with own farm production and therefore, while addressing an immediate crisis, can lock some households into a vicious cycle of food insecurity.
- ❖ Low ganyu wage rates mean agricultural labourers do not earn sufficient incomes to invest in sustainable livelihood development.

In all of the families we've met at least one member does ganyu during the 'low' season, sometimes even outside of the country (mostly Mozambique). In the most extreme cases, all the family members are sent to work, including the elderly, but also the children!

It is the case of Rhoda's family in Phunduma. Their two gardens do not produce enough. With 14 mouths to feed, they estimate having enough food for about four months, because of a lack of resources (fertilizer and manpower) and difficult weather conditions. Rhoda's auntie is forced to send the children for small jobs all over the country, but she claims it's only during the holidays or in the early hours before school!

- *Cfr. Report of Rhoda Douglas, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports*

Another activity that is done in order to generate small income is **firewood fetching**. This activity is strictly reserved to women: several times in a week, they leave in the early morning to fetch some firewood in the mountain. Happiness's family for example, walks 2 or 3 times per week to the mountain to fetch firewood and sell it. When they have an order, they can sell one big bundle at 800MK. If there is no order, they split the big bundle into smaller bundles and present it in front of their house for sale for 100MK each³⁶.



³⁶ Report *Happiness Majawa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

5. Business opportunities according to community members

These sometimes very remote and always very rural villages don't always seem like the perfect place to talk about business opportunities. In villages with no running water and no electricity, no tarmac road and no money, 'business opportunity' might seem like an utopia, a far away dream or at least something very difficult to achieve. But difficult is not impossible, so went out there and asked the community members themselves, what business they would like to launch, if they had a chance.

- ❖ Most of them stick to the agricultural sector. **Buying and selling crops** is the absolute number one answer. It's a very logical answer from the point of view of farmers that don't manage to cultivate even enough to feed themselves, because those who can produce a surplus and have a way to stock it, can sell it at very high price when the communities are facing their most difficult months and the demand for food crops surpasses by far the offer.
- ❖ The **grocery shop** comes in second position of the most wanted businesses, mainly because if you are the owner of a grocery shop, it means you can afford to buy things others can't buy. Anyway, it is indeed a good opportunity and it brings goods and products closer to the people of the most remote areas. In the same category, the family of Elizabeth Kavala, claims a hardware shop would be a very profitable business, with spare parts for bikes and so on.³⁷
- ❖ **Buying and selling second hand clothes** comes in third position. Clothes are bought in Limbe in bundles. One piece of clothes is sold at a 100MK which makes it accessible for almost anyone to buy, but we suspect the profit is quite low too.
- ❖ A less common, but still frequent and more questionable business is **beer brewing**. Of course, when they talk about 'beer brewing', they actually mean home made strong alcohol (30°). It's a profitable business, according to Cathreen's family in the Lomoliwa village. And they know what they are talking about as they are themselves, brewing beer and serving it to customers in the small place foreseen for this purpose. They are brewing around 4 liters of beer on a weekly basis, depending on the amount of sugar they have and they can basically do it with whatever is available, mostly with millet. They are selling the beer at 130MK/bottle and one bottle is 35cl.³⁸



³⁷ Report *Elizabeth Kavala*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

³⁸ Report *Cathreen Davison*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

- ❖ **Livestock rearing.** The most common answer given in terms of livestock is chicken farms. The problem with livestock rearing is that it requires a lot of input capital, is labor intensive and needs to be tightly followed up. Not only must the animals be contained in a place foreseen for that purpose (fence or stable), but farmers must also be able to resist to the temptation of selling the animals in times of crisis. (Cfr. Page 40: Livestock rearing)
- ❖ **Fish selling or fish farming.** Fish appears to be a good and profitable business. Both options were mentioned as interesting by at least one of the visited families: first option is to buy and sell fish that comes from lake Chilwa, lake Malawi or bordering countries such as Tanzania and Mozambique (Cfr. Page 31: Side effects and individual stories). The second is to start a fish farming pond collectively and sell the production³⁹.

B. Market research

Introduction

In a second phase, we made an analysis of the surrounding markets. Phalombe district holds too many markets and trading centers for us to visit them all. In order to have a representative analysis of the markets, we made a selection of 6 important markets, different in size and location:

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Phalombe | 4. Chiringa |
| 2. Kambenje | 5. Njambalo |
| 3. Migowi | 6. Dzenje |

The location of these markets can be found on the map in Annex 1 and each separate market report can be acquired on request from Ekari Foundation.⁴⁰

General Description

Most of the markets have two specific market days per week. Only the market in Migowi takes place every day, although we noticed that some days it is more crowded than other. On every market, each vendor has to pay 50MK/day market fee to sell his/her products.

The bigger, more important markets stretch over an area of about 25,000m², where the smaller ones only cover about 500 to 2,000m². Despite this difference in size, most of the products reoccur in both markets. They are clearly grouped together in sections, with small grocery shops being spread all over the market.



³⁹ Report *Fish Farming Lomoliwa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁴⁰ Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

The center of the market is always filled with nice, wooden stands to present their products. Around this center, vendors are just presenting the products on a sheet or some plastic or don't even bother to take it out of the bag.

In general, most of the products are oversold. An estimation of the number of vendors of each product can be found in every market report.

Products

A large variety of products can be found on these markets. We can talk about the following categories:

- ❖ Fruit & Vegetables
- ❖ Shoes, clothing and fabric
- ❖ Slaughter and butchery
- ❖ Fish
- ❖ Other (from pesticides to metal, pots & pans, bicycle parts,...)

Most represented are the vegetables and the second hand clothes, followed by the shoes and the fabric. Very often, there were so many of these products that we wondered how they could get it all sold. If we look at Chiringa, for example, we counted about more than 100 vendors of second hand clothing⁴¹. Of course, this is non-organic so it doesn't go bad, but we saw the same phenomenon with more than 30 tomato vendors at Kambenje market⁴², all lined up next to each other.

Prices can vary a lot from one market to another. This depends on where the product is coming from and how often it has been resold already. 1kg of maize will cost you 200MK in Phalombe⁴³, but if you buy it at Chiringa, you will pay this same kg 250MK⁴⁰ and it can go up to 400MK when you buy it at Kambenje⁴¹.

Most of the organic products are produced locally: Vegetables are grown in irrigated fields around the district and the fish come from Lake Chilwa or Lake Malawi. But sometimes, we found these same products being imported from Mozambique or Tanzania.

Although most of the products were present on every market, some markets can have more of a specific product than other markets. The second hand clothes of Chiringa market⁴⁰ is a good example of this.

Occasionally, we found a product we never saw on other markets, f.e. the clay pots on Dzenje market⁴⁴. These cases are clear examples of possible income generating activities on other markets. This will be further treated at a later stage.

⁴¹ Report *Chiringa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁴² Report *Kambenje*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁴³ Report *Phalombe Trading Center*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁴⁴ Report *Dzenje*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Side Effects and individual stories

Each market brings life to its region. People come from miles away by foot or on a bike to get their supplies. This mass also brings extra revenue to the permanent shops, barbers, tailors and many other shop owners as well as bars and restaurants.

“Pigs made me rich!”

- Butcher, Migowi market

For some market vendors, this is a full time job, often travelling from one market to another on a daily base, some two or three per week but many even six different markets per week. They also need one day a week to go to Limbe, Blantyre or wherever they get their supplies from. For others, this is just a way of gaining an extra income for the family. In that case, lots of them choose to sell part of their own grown/made products, others just go to the market once a week as an extra source of income.

Unfortunately, the market is also a place for youngsters to earn some extra money for the family which prohibits them of going to school. In a case like this, we met two young boys on the Kambenje market⁴⁵ selling bread. They were doing this almost every day on different markets in the region. Like these young boys, too many teenagers are forced to help their family survive.



But we also encountered some success stories. For example, the lady that gave up her housekeeping job to start her own fish selling business⁴⁶. She started with a small capital and now, she’s selling fish every day on the Migowi market. She claims to earn enough money now to feed herself, her child, to buy necessary groceries and even to pay other people to work in her garden.

Another nice example is the case of the butcher in Chiringa⁴⁷. He was proud to tell us his story of how he started with selling only little pieces of pig and how he now sells 1 or 2 pigs every day. Apparently, this is a very lucrative business, because according to this butcher, it allowed him to buy 3 houses and a nice car. Could be interesting to start a pig farm, so it seems... (Cfr. Page 40: Livestock rearing)

⁴⁵ Report *Kambenje*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁴⁶ Report *Migowi*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁴⁷ Report *Chiringa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

C. Partner research

Introduction

In the third and last phase of our research, we met with governmental institutions, NGOs and other pertinent organizations that are active in Phalombe district or that could serve as an example to us. The questions we wanted to get answered were:

- ❖ Which organizations are running agricultural projects?
- ❖ Is there already a project active, similar to the Sustainable Livelihood Programme?
- ❖ Are there any partnerships possible?
- ❖ What challenges do others face in the field?
- ❖ How can we learn from their experiences?

Governmental Institutions

In 1998, Phalombe district split off from Mulanje district, with Phalombe being its capital. Due to this independence, many district offices and ministries have been installed at no more than 100m from the Ekari Foundation office.

One of the ministries is the office of the DADO, or District Agriculture Development Officer, currently Mister Osmund Chapotoka. Out of this office, the Extension Workers⁴⁸, also known as *agricultural advisors*, are being managed. The Extension Worker goes into the communities to share best practices on how to manage and optimize their land. They mainly advice on land preparations but also on production of manure and harvesting.

- *The Ministry of Agriculture is advocating for more partnerships and agreements between de different stakeholders.* -

Next to the DADO, the Phalombe office of the Ministry of Agriculture is divided in specialized departments: irrigation, agro-forestry, fish farming, manure making, livestock, ... Each department has built up an expertise on the subject and is running many projects around the district.

It's been strongly recommended by several other organizations, like MMCT, WFP and FAO⁴⁹, to always keep the Ministry of Agriculture in the loop and to work closely with the relevant department. They can assist with any project implementation or trainings, not only by sharing know-how and manpower, but also by providing tools and facilities.

⁴⁸ Report *Naminjiwa Extension Planning Area*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁴⁹ Corresponding reports, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

NGOs

A few NGOs are active in this area and with offices in Phalombe Trading Center: Action Aid, World Vision, Concern Universal and Inter Aide. Each of them currently has active projects in Phalombe, focusing on different aspects.

- ❖ Action Aid Phalombe focuses on the right to education and food security with a focus on girls and women. They have created CBOs, all women groups, they partner with for the work in the field. Unfortunately, it would not be possible for them to start working with a newly created CBO, but the Ekari-families are free to contact any of the existing CBOs.
- ❖ Concern Universal has an active program in Phalombe focusing on health and sanitation, sensitizing the rural villages on the dangers of defecation in the open and the importance to have a good basic daily health care. This might not be the most interesting program for Ekari Foundation, but they run a whole set of other programs that are interesting, like the Fuel Efficient Stoves in Balaka, which could be used as a source of inspiration. They also might be interested to support new Sustainable Livelihood Programmes when presented the opportunity.
- ❖ World Vision mainly acts after disasters (floods and storms) and comes in at that time with financial and material support for the victims. We don't really see any possible collaboration for the Sustainable Livelihood Programme.
- ❖ Inter Aide has projects focusing on agricultural development. They are active in 2 T/As where they have created CBOs and work with them on the following topics: irrigation, manure, tree nurseries, soil conservation, livestock keeping,... by offering them trainings and technical as well as material support.
We could certainly learn from their experiences and it would be possible to work with them on several levels: providing trainings, good practice examples, putting Ekari families in contact with their CBOs and maybe they might be interested in setting up a new CBO with one of the Ekari families. They're also looking into the possibility of promoting fuel efficient stoves, together with MuREA, which could be another area of collaboration.

Mulanje is also the base for some NGOs active in the communities on and around Mulanje Mountain: MMCT and MuREA have active projects in the Phalombe area.

- ❖ MMCT works on biodiversity conservation of the Mulanje Mountain, but also on sustainable livelihood projects for the communities bordering the mountain, which includes three communities in Phalombe. This might increase as they will move their office to Phalombe Trading Center in the 'near' future. MMCT is always interested by new sustainable livelihood projects to support or to partner with.
- ❖ MuREA, or Mulanje Renewable Energy Agency, is a governmental agency working on the promotion and development of sustainable, alternative and renewable energy. They are working on promoting Fuel Efficient Cooking Stoves and are very interested in developing their activities in Phalombe.

Other initiatives

Of course, other NGOs and international institutions are also active in the area but don't have an office in Phalombe or Mulanje.

- ❖ WFP has, in Phalombe and South Region, mainly food distribution programs.
- ❖ FAO is active through CBOs and with the help of the ministry of agriculture in training and supporting communities to use sustainable agricultural techniques aiming at increasing their harvest. They can provide trainings and technical assistance to our farmers or find other contacts to do so.
- ❖ NASME, or National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, is supporting SME in linking them with markets and banks. Their aim is to increase business and profit. In exchange of an annual fee of 50,000MK, NASME can help Ekari Foundation in setting up different types of small scale enterprises, especially the mushroom production and the soap making might be interesting businesses to launch in the communities. NASME can train community members at every stage of the business creation.
- ❖ Phalombe Skills Training Center is located just outside Phalombe center, towards Migowi. It offers training for community members in various technical and vocational skills: plumbing, brick Laying, carpentry & joinery, motor cycle mechanics, welding and fabrication, ...
Two opportunities need to be considered in terms of a collaboration between Ekari and Phalombe skills training centre:
 1. Offer training to Ekari students while they are waiting for a spot at college or university, or between university and their first job.
 2. Gather interested community members into a collective and offer them a specific training.
- ❖ The Fisherman's Rest is much more than a lodge and a tearoom. It is managed by Wiktor Chichlowski who has more than 20 years of experience in developing small scale as well as more important community projects. He can bring Ekari Foundation an added value in offering a very critical point of view on community and development projects. Field visits to a few of his successful projects can be organized.

There are a large number of organizations and initiatives active in Phalombe district and each of these potential partners are interested in working together in one way or another. They can all be contacted (*Cfr. Contact list in Annex 3*). For more information on their missions and values, individual reports can be obtained on demand.

III. OPPORTUNITIES

Introduction

None of the visited families could survive on their harvest for the whole year. The families with the best harvest have enough to get through eight to ten months, the less fortunate have only enough for about three to four months.

To get through the rest of the year, they look for small jobs on other fields, called *piecework*, sell some of their livestock or choose to eat only once every two days. To improve their situation we believe that there are two approaches:

1. Garden productivity: work with what they have and improve it. They all have one or more gardens which they are cultivating, using traditional techniques that have been passed on from one generation to the next for too many years. By **increasing the productivity of the gardens**, using modern techniques of sustainable agriculture, adapted to their situation and climate resilient, their living situation could drastically improve.
2. Not all of the gardens have the capacity to supply enough harvest for the whole year because of the particularly challenging conditions of Phalombe District. For these families, **new income generating activities** can complete this deficit, alternative activities that will decrease their dependency on the garden.

A. Garden productivity

Irrigation

Every visited family wasn't cultivating anything during the dry season, because of lack of water. On top of that, in many cases, the harvest of the previous season was bad because of too few or too many rains. Only one family could show us beautiful green maize on their garden, thanks to a nice looking irrigation system, installed and supported by the Ministry of Agriculture⁵⁰.

Too many farmers rely too heavily on fertilizer that they forget the most important basic nutrition: water. Very often, we found a river or a pond next to or close to the garden and still, they didn't use this precious water to irrigate the land. It is clear to us that the productivity of many gardens could simply be improved by raising the awareness on this issue. Deviating a stream, digging a well, using a treadle pump or irrigating the land manually will definitely make a huge difference and could allow them to grow crops during dry periods. The only downside is that irrigation requires time, effort and manpower, which could be the reason why they don't do it in the first place.

⁵⁰ Report *Iness Makina*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

We encountered a new irrigation project which is the result of collaboration between the ministry of agriculture and a specially created CBO (Community Based Organization). As described earlier, community members build the irrigation system themselves, but the ministry pays them 200MK per day and provides the necessary cement. They expect the construction to be done somewhere next year.

- *Cfr. Report Jenipher Chingwalu,
Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports*

Rainwater harvesting is also a modern and cost-efficient technique to irrigate the fields. It is definitely an opportunity to look into: low cost technologies such as box ridges, mark ridges, infiltration pits and moisture content in farming fields allow small holder farmers to have a better water management in their garden.

“There is steady progress in the adoption of low cost technologies of harvesting and storing rain-water by farmers compared to the use of water tanks”, says Rainwater Harvesting Association of Malawi (RHAM). RHAM’s Secretary General Mac Pherson Nthala said: “Most farmers easily take up and adopt field technologies like small farm ponds, infiltration pits because their cost is low compared to the construction of water tanks,” Nthala, who is also Chief Land Resource Officer for the Lilongwe Agriculture Development Division (LADD).

The Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in conjunction with the Ministry of Water Development and Irrigation is promoting harvesting rain-water in both underground and above surfaces for agricultural use.

- *Cfr. Full article in Annex 13*

Access to fertilizer

The government is subsidizing the use of chemical fertilizer by giving out vouchers through the extension workers. With these vouchers, the farmers can get a 50kg bag, worth 16,000MK, for only 1,000MK. Unfortunately for the farmers, the vouchers are very scarce and so only a few of them can get their hands on 25kg of fertilizer, if they’re lucky. According to them, this is sufficient for only a very small part of their garden.

Facilitating the farmer’s access to subsidized fertilizer can be an opportunity. Although we are not in favor of this, it is true that the garden productivity could be increased, at least on the short term, by applying more fertilizer on the garden. A more advisable, eco-logical and sustainable solution would be the use of green manure.

Green manure & composting

The use of chemical fertilizer the past years have made the soil addicted and the farmers dependant. Most of the farmers blame lack of fertilizer to be the reason of the low harvest. It is obvious that the subsidies cannot be removed from one day to another, but it should be completed and gradually be replaced by the use of green manure. This is also the vision of the ministry of agriculture⁵¹, the extension workers⁵² as well as the FAO⁵³.

According to the extension workers, it is a real challenge to get this implemented. Many farmers are reluctant to this change, don't implement it properly or use the wrong seeds (f.e. seeds that require chemical fertilizer). In addition to this, results of sustainable agriculture techniques are always observable after a few years. It's even possible that the harvest will decline the first year. As a result, they will be disappointed with the harvest, discouraged to use modern techniques and return to their old methods.

The manure is made out of ash, dung, maize stocks, water and green matter. When the quality and quantity of produced manure is sufficient, it increases results in the garden and has a very positive impact on the harvest.

The problem is twofold:

1. Making manure requires a lot of work. Farmers give priority to other activities and therefore often produce small amounts of manure. Usually, enough manure to cover $\frac{1}{4}$ of the garden.
2. The components are essential in order to have quality manure. The biggest problem here is animal dung. As a lot of farmers can't afford animals, the dung is scarce. Consequence is that the manure they are producing isn't good enough, so farmers give it up after observing disappointing results

Inter Aide came up with manure that can be easily produced and has proven results. They should be a good source of information on that level. (*Cfr. Contact list in Annex 3*)

Crop diversification

The soil has been degraded because of years and years cultivating the same crops on the same land. Farmers must be encouraged to choose alternative crops to cultivate on their gardens. This crop diversification will lead to better harvest results and will allow the soil to recover easier as different crops absorb different nutrients. It should still be combined with leaving the land lie fallow which is practically impossible for the Malawian farmers.

⁵¹ Report *Ministry of Agriculture and Food security*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁵² Report *Naminjiwa Extension Planning Area*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁵³ Report *FAO*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports



Cassava is also believed to have huge potential as a driver of rural development. Governments started to recognise cassava's high nutritious value – it is the second most important source of carbohydrate on the continent – and the plant's resilience to climate change. Yet the real change is driven by the realisation of cassava's

industrial potential. Its root starch can be used in food products, textiles, plywood or paper while the plant is also a feedstock for the production of ethanol biofuel.

- *Cfr. Article in Annex 9*

A successful example of crop diversification is the “orange flesh sweet potatoes project” of MMCT and Mobi+lise⁵⁴. This crop is drought resistant and very nutritive, thanks to its high vitamin A,K and C value. With this project, Mobi+lise was able to improve the food security of over 5,000 households.

Agroforestry



Agroforestry combines the benefits from trees and crops and/or livestock. It combines agricultural and forestry technologies to create more diverse, productive, profitable, healthy, and sustainable land-use systems.

The crops will benefit because of the protection from the trees against wind and sun, but also the soil will benefit because of less erosion and nutrition when the fruits drop and decay on the ground. Trees planted on arable land have been proven to be of better quality and to grow faster (+80% over 6 years in experimental cases)⁵⁵. The owner of the land will be able to enjoy the fruits but also to sell the higher quality wood for a better price.

As a side note: the development of tree nurseries, especially fruit tree cultivation, is worth looking at as an opportunity. Here again, Inter Aide has a successful project of tree nurseries in the communities (*Cfr. Contact list in Annex 3*). It would also be worth digging into the advantages and disadvantages of the Eucalyptus tree in order to make sure they are not provoking more harm than well.

⁵⁴ Report *MMCT, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports*

⁵⁵ INRA Montpellier, *Agroforestry introduction*

Modern agricultural techniques

Most farmers are using techniques that were being used by their forefathers and that have been passed on from one generation to the next. Because they are so used of cultivating their land this way, they are very reluctant to any change or other techniques, although there are many “modern” techniques that don’t require machinery or other tools than those that they already use. A few examples are box ridges, 75cm between ridges, 1 seed per station, ...

Modern agricultural techniques also focus on long term results and climate resilient agriculture, cultivating the land in a modified and sustainable way, adapted to its environment. On that level, we would support the extension workers network as much as possible, working hand in hand with them. Trainings on modern agriculture practices can be provided by them or the FAO.⁵⁶

Conclusion

According to the extension worker⁵⁷, by implementing all the possible improvement, garden productivity could be increased by up to 150% and the harvest would be less impacted by climate change, drought and floods. Unfortunately, with the increasing population, land is becoming scarcer and the average size of the garden is decreasing. As a result, even with optimizing the farming techniques, the garden cannot provide enough harvest for the whole year. Other sources of income will be needed to get around.

Next paragraph brings some insights to these alternatives to farming.

B. Alternative income generating activities

Introduction

As mentioned, even when increasing the garden productivity, it might not be sufficient for food security and certainly not sufficient to generate an extra income. As a consequence, we need to be looking at alternative income generating activities; activities that are not directly linked with farming on the garden and so allow the families to acquire more independence towards climate, garden and harvest. In the following paragraphs we will be looking at different alternative activities and their potential for income generation.

⁵⁶ Report *FAO*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁵⁷ Report *Naminjiwa Extension Planning Area*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Livestock rearing

Animals are kept for many reasons, the main one being as a solution for a temporary and sudden crisis: when there is no money and the harvest is diminishing, farm animals are sold and generate an immediate income. Keeping animals is also advantageous for the production of dung and so green manure, but livestock rearing can also be a profitable business.

As mentioned in the garden analysis, none of the Ekari supported families have enough capital to keep animals in sufficient amounts for it to be income generating. But it would be a real opportunity that is worth looking at. Livestock farming can be: cattle, goats, birds, rabbits and many more. We would particularly look into the poultry farm and the pig farm as 2 promising opportunities for income generation.

1. A **poultry farm** can have a double objective: egg production and meat production. Chickens are cheaper, require less care and because the other types of meat are so expensive, they are also the preferred choice of many community members. Of course, if we're talking of business, we are not talking about acquiring 5 chickens and let them run freely. A profitable poultry farm counts an important number of chickens and these are contained in a specially adapted building. They must be taken care of and fed correctly.

For a success story of a poultry farm, please refer to Fisherman's Rest: one of the farmers supported by them started with a few chickens and today, he is at the head of a profitable business with a number of employees. He now helps other community members in launching their business⁵⁸.

2. The **pig farm** is another lucrative business. Pig business can, according to the butcher we met in Chiringa market, make a man very rich. He started selling only pieces of pigs and now sells 1 or 2 pigs every day. A full grown pig costs up to 70,000MK and can generate more than 100,000MK on revenue. This means, this man's daily profit can reach around 50,000MK-60,000MK!⁵⁹



Pigs are a very good income generating activity according to the FAO. "They have a high fertility and have a stable market in Phalombe District. A family with a small pig farm can evolve to higher standards within 2 years".⁶⁰

For alternatives and deeper understanding of livestock farming activities, please address FAO. (Cfr. Contact list in Annex 3)

⁵⁸ Report *Fisherman's Rest*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁵⁹ Report *Chiringa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁶⁰ Report *FAO*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Bakeries and bread production

In terms of pastries or bakeries, the products that are now available on the market are quite restricted and can be grouped in two categories:

1. Small pastries sold by women in the streets and on markets for 10 to 50MK according to type and size. We're talking about donut like pastries made of dough, sugar and water and baked in boiling cooking oil. These pastries are cheap in production and cheap at sales because they are homemade, aren't composed of expensive ingredients and don't require specific material or machinery to be made. Of course, this also means that the possible profit is never very important and that it becomes significant only after having sold full buckets.

"For 10kg of flower, 1kg of sugar and some yeast, the cost is about 5,450MK and they can make about 240 pastries. This will give about 8,450MK revenue"

- One of the pastries selling ladies on the Chiringa market⁵⁸

This means her profit on the total of 240 pastries will be 3000MK, which makes about 10-12MK per sold pastry. Selling on the market is more efficient than in the streets or in front of the house, because of the affluence of people. But selling on the market means paying the 50MK market fee and starting to make profit only after selling a minimum of 5 pastries. These pastries are made by community members for community members and are not meant for bigger developments in size or markets.

2. Bread and other bakeries sold in grocery stores like People's shop. Packed bread and biscuits are 'imported' from the main cities to Phalombe. An important majority of these products comes from Limbe/Blantyre. They are transported in trucks to Phalombe and distributed in the People's shop and other grocery shops in the trading center. No bread of this kind is currently made or produced in Phalombe. Considering the frequency of the bread delivery and the 'freshness' of the bread, we can conclude that bread sells well and so it seems as though there is a market for this in Phalombe.

There has been a bakery project in the area already, launched jointly by ADRA and the WFP with funding from Japan. The project aimed at building bakeries spread out in the different communities of Phalombe District, giving the opportunity to community members, through predefined Community Based Organizations, to start an income generating activity and so improve livelihood and food security in the area.

Bakeries were built (clean brick constructions containing an oven) and selected members from every CBO were trained and offered a starting package (with flower, yeast and other ingredients).



One of these bakeries, the Bwanaissa Bakery⁶¹, is located next to the house of Thomas Grey⁶², Ekari beneficiary and after paying a visit to his family we learned that not only this bakery was not functional as we speak, but that it had never been functional! Thomas' family uses it today to store their crops. A lack of ownership of the CBOs and a lack of follow up from the initiating NGOs made the project fail.

Now, this bakery has only suffered a little from not being maintained and would only need to be freshened up in order to be reactivated. Both ADRA and WFP have given their consent for any NGO willing to reactivate this specific bakery or even the complete chain of bakeries⁶⁰. This might be an important opportunity for the Mpheni community and maybe the other communities where a bakery has been installed.

The question is of course: ***if these bakeries are reactivated, will there be a market for their products?*** Bread is considered by the average farmer of Phalombe as a luxury product, as most of them only eat nsima twice a day and can't afford to buy any food. On the other hand, if trucks full of bread come from the city to Phalombe weekly or even more often, we could conclude that, at least in Phalombe Trading Center, there are enough buyers.

Opportunities & challenges for launching bakeries as alternative income generating activity:

- ❖ Ekari Foundation could launch a bakery activity based on an existing infrastructure: buildings and ovens are still there and previously created CBOs can be reactivated. This means the implementation phase would already be highly facilitated, starting with the Bwanaissa Bakery Club.
- ❖ There is an immediate opportunity for development of the business as there are more bakeries similar as the first one in the nearby area. We have seen 2 others: one, on the way to Njambalo and one on the road to Zomba (Mpasa bakery club).
- ❖ The training and delivery of basic supplies can be done by Ekari Foundation and might even be supported by WFP and/or ADRA, as they have been through this process in the past.
- ❖ On the long term, production costs would be reduced, after the initial implementation and reactivation costs: ingredients for bread are cheap and the production doesn't require expensive machinery. Of course, ovens and infrastructure need to be well maintained.
- ❖ In terms of selling price, it goes without saying, it should be as cheap as possible when aiming at being sold in the Phalombe community. Considering the low production costs, as well as the reduced transport costs (transport stays inside of Phalombe district), we should be able to offer a competitive price compared to the packed bread imported from Limbe, sold at 250MK in the People's shop of Phalombe Trading Center.

⁶¹ Report *Bwanaissa bakery club*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁶² Report *Thomas Grey*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Food for thought:

If the produced bread has a reasonable price and a stable market, an additional service could be implemented which would bring an important added value for community members: bread could be delivered in small amounts, with motorcycles or even bikes, to the neighboring communities. This type of service already exists in villages and small towns in other countries of Africa. We have observed it in Buea, Cameroon, where small grocery shops were supplied daily with more or less fresh bread by motorcycles.

Bee Keeping

During our field research, we came across the Bee Keeping, simply by stopping at a signboard on the side of the main road. There is much more behind it then we could imagine just by driving by.

What started as a one man initiative is now the officially recognized 'Phalombe Bee Keeping Association', but also a very lucrative business for Mister Menyani. He was the first community member to launch this activity after a training⁶³. Today, he is at the head of a business of 93 members, 86 hives, 1 million bees, an annual production of around 550 liters honey at 2,200 MK per liter, it means a seasonal (5 months) revenue of 1,210,000 MK.



Mister Menyani's story is a success story and so we started digging into the bee keeping as an opportunity for income generation. Bee keeping doesn't require important investment: you need trees and a hive. If you are well trained, it can quite quickly produce honey and become an additional source of income or food.



Bee keeping is very much supported by NGOs⁶⁴ and often launched in the rural communities of Malawi and other African countries because of its double benefit: one, it generates an income for smallholder farmers without unbearable initial investments and two, it has important environmental benefits.

Bee keeping activities are ideally combined with tree nurseries or tree planting activities as well as with trainings and information session on environment and climate change. As the bee keeping season starts in May and ends in September, the remaining seven months can be used for the development of other initiatives and bee keeping and forest

⁶³ Report *Phalombe Beekeeping Association*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁶⁴ Report *MMCT & Concern Universal*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

conservation are strongly bound with one another. The Phalombe Beekeeping Association is very active in tree conservation and tree nurseries and also cultivates and sells tree seedlings to any interested organization. An idea for the development of tree nurseries, fruit trees or agroforestry?

So, no need to reinvent the wheel if a bee keeping activity was to be launched within the Ekari beneficiaries. Mister Menyani's business is a perfect learning platform and the Phalombe Beekeeping Association is open to accept any farmer of the area willing to launch a beekeeping activity, whether it is with small or large scale development objectives in mind. The farmer is trained and can go home to start his own hive straight afterwards.

- This sounds like a winning combination for a successful new income generating activity -

If the project needs financial or technical support, it can be presented to Concern Universal. Not only are they, together with MMCT, the initiator of the project that made Mr. Menyani a big man, but they also have experience with launching and maintaining similar projects in the South and Central Region of Malawi. And if combined with conservation and environmental activities, we might catch the attention of the MMCT team with which we could find areas of collaboration.

MMCT and Concern Universal have worked together on different sustainable livelihood projects in the area in the past and or both open to renew their partnership. Ekari could be the 3rd player.



So, there is an existing infrastructure; training can be taken care of and support could easily be found through partnerships. The challenge here again would be the marketing of the honey: community members don't have the means to buy honey and Mister Menyani is already present in the area with 550 liters of his 'Phalombe honey' branded product.

But, we believe there is a real opportunity to market the product in the lodges and tourist places in the nearby cities: Mulanje, Blantyre, but also Zomba where tourists are increasing and so are the number of hotels and lodges. And as the small bottles of honey are easily transported by bus, motorcycle or even bicycle, any farmer can move to sell his product.

An existing infrastructure, a low investment, possible partnerships and a marketable product... this sounds like a winning combination for a successful new income generating activity. Now, all we need is driven community members with interest, motivation and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Arts & Crafts

Arts & crafts is a category covering a wide range of products. The type of product is therefore strongly dependent of individual skills and interests, but they can be grouped in the following types:

- ❖ Woodcraft. Take a good look around when driving through Malawi: from small wooden animal sculptures in the areas of the national parks, to artistic wooden chairs, we would not be the first ever to launch this on the market.
- ❖ Textile based items. Fabrics are everywhere to be found, from the cheapest to the most exclusive. They open therefore a range of opportunities: not only clothes of course, but also bags, purses, pillowcases, curtains... all you need is a sewing machine and knowing how to use it.
- ❖ Carving and pottery. With some regions of Phalombe being composed of clay soil, there is a natural source of income.
- ❖ Bao game board. By far, the most popular game, bao, also spelled “bawo,” is one variant of the classic African pit-and-pebble game. A product that has as much success amongst locals as amongst tourists.
- ❖ Other: jewelry, drums , paintings

In terms of training, we discussed the possibility with Phalombe Skills Training Center. It offers trainings for community members in various technical and vocational skills. Currently: plumbing, mechanics, carpentry... but they are open to other suggestions as long as there is financial support⁶⁵.

In terms of marketing, it gets tricky. All of these products are sold, sometimes oversold, in all the cities and touristic places all over Malawi. In or around Phalombe, we have only seen this at the entrance gate of Likhubula Forest lodge and honestly, we don't think of any other places it could be presented. Because, when talking about Arts & Crafts, we are immediately targeting a specific market: tourists and high standard Malawians and this market is almost non existing in Phalombe district. The Heast lodge has a more local business customer base and Tchuchila lodge is not considered as a reliable business partner.

So then we need to be looking at neighboring cities, such as Mulanje and Zomba, but here again, there is already quite some competition:

Zomba has an African Heritage shop as well as an entire market dedicated to this category of products, it's small but it's in a key location. The same situation can be observed on the Zomba Plateau, where tens of arts and crafts shops are aligned on the way to Kuchawe Inn.

A potential partner for selling these products could be the Pakachere, backpackers & creative center. The place is run by a Dutch NGO working with volunteers in the rural communities around Zomba.

⁶⁵ Report *Phalombe Skills Training Center*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

The target group of this place is volunteers, backpackers and local artistic and youth groups, so the budget is limited, but if an Arts and Crafts activity is launched, this would definitely be an opportunity to look into. Another option, on the Zomba plateau is the Zomba Forest Lodge. They are already selling some items in their lodge but might be open to new suppliers.

Mulanje has less Arts & crafts shops, we have only seen it at the Kara O'Mula lodge, so it might be worth looking at the other options. We are thinking at the Info Tourist Office as well as the Mulanje Pepper Restaurant underneath it which is always full of foreigners and tourist coming to hike up the mountain.

So, Arts & Crafts, maybe, but first try to establish a market, then we would advice to launch this on an individual base if, of course, one of the targeted community members has some artistic talent.

Pottery

When we speak about pottery, we don't talk about the artistic pottery, but about cooking items that can be used by the community members in their everyday life and that are made of clay.

The only place where we have seen this type of pottery for sale is the Dzenje Market. The lady selling them makes them herself and sells the smallest ones at 65MK and the biggest ones at 950MK. According to one of the neighboring shopkeepers on the market, this pottery represents a lucrative business and this business is being more developed in Mulanje, where they are made in a more industrialized way⁶⁶.



For what we know about the subject, the only input required would be a sustainable source of clay. As mentioned, we have never seen pottery sold in any other place in Phalombe District, but what we do have seen, is women carrying similar made pots on their heads along the road. So, without having dug deeper, we might think there is a market for it and the competition is scarce.

It is an activity that is worth taking a deeper look at, starting with a new visit to the lady on the Dzenje market and trying to meet with the community members involved in pottery in Mulanje.

Fish Farming

The fish we found on the visited markets was dried fish, coming from Lake Malawi, Lake Chilwa or abroad (Tanzania, Mozambique). Every market holds many fish vendors, presenting a wide variety of dried fish in heaps of a handful of fish. The only fresh fish can be found closer to the lakes.

⁶⁶ Report *Dzenje*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports



Fish farming is something we came across quite a lot during our field research, but we haven't seen a successful, sustainable case, although people are interested in this activity. In Lomoliwa⁶⁷, for example, the community created its own fish farming CBO in 2003. After 3 years, their cry for help was heard by the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) that provided training on how to create a fish pond. The agriculture office (through the extension workers) lent them

tools and once the pond was done, they also donated fish. The problem is that they received no training on how to manage, maintain and breed the fish and so, they never really started their fish farming activity.

Although fish farming is being promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and despite the many initiatives of NGOs like Concern Universal and MMCT, fish stocks are declining in Malawi (*Cfr. Article in Annex 10*).

According to FAO, aquaculture can make an important contribution to poverty alleviation, food security and social well-being, and already does so in many developing countries. (*Cfr. Article in Annex 11*) Fish presents the most alternative source of the much need protein for normal body growth and development. Aquaculture therefore is one way of getting protein-rich relish close to rural households but also as a major source of livelihood for the local populace. (*Cfr. Article in Annex 12*).

When starting up a fish farming activity, we believe two objectives are possible: Or the fish production is to feed the community, or to be sold on local markets. Both objectives have their challenges. When using the fish to feed the community, with an average of about 250 households per community, there are just too many mouths to feed from one pond. When selling the fish on the local markets, the challenge will be to get everything sold the same day as it is impossible for the communities to conserve the fish in any way.

It's clear that there is no more space for dried fish on markets, but there is a good chance that fresh fish would find its customers. It will have to compete with dried fish vendors and butchers, but with the right price setting this new source of proteins will get sold.

The necessary input to create a new fish farming initiative should not be underestimated. It needs know-how, maintenance, training, tools like hoes and nets, fish, water, a good location, motivated people to manage it and of course, the necessary follow-up until the project is running independently in a sustainable way.

⁶⁷ Report *Fish Farming Lomoliwa*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports



Before launching a project from scratch, the half-way project of Lomoliwa should be reactivated. Despite the lack of support to their initiative, this CBO stayed together and is still trying to get this activity of the ground. This shows high motivation. With the money made of the fish business, they strive to help the needy and less fortunate of their community.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Environment has its own department of Fishery with a representative in the Phalombe District offices. They have already supported fish farming initiatives in the past and will certainly be glad to help when launching a new fish farming activity. Also the FAO has expressed their interest in supporting this kind of projects.

Soap

Soap bars are the most popular commodity. You can find them in big numbers everywhere you go, from the famous People's shop to the smallest grocery shop. The most common, is the one that vendors buy in carton boxes with 72 pieces of soap, like the Sunshine soap. They pay about 3,200 to 3,500MK per box, or 44 to 48MK per piece, and sell the soap at 50MK each. The better looking, individually packed, nice smelling soap can be found in Shoprite or Game stores for about 170MK.



When thinking of starting a soap producing activity, one has to define its target group. You can choose to target the richer layers of the population and the tourists, which means you'll have to produce this good looking, individually packed and nice smelling bar of soap that will be sold in big supermarkets or used in lodges. If you choose to compete with the cheap Sunshine soap bars, price will be of utmost importance. You will have to produce at very low cost so your price goes no higher than 50MK.

While talking to William Mwale from NASME, we discovered that William used to be a soap maker himself. He knows all about it and could easily support Ekari Foundation in launching this activity around Phalombe. According to him, it is relatively easy to set up this kind of business and with an

interesting, fast ROI. He has worked with women groups producing soap in the past. “There is a soap for every category of people”, he says, “and I can help with the marketing of it.”⁶⁸

We also wondered if the ever present eucalyptus trees could be used to give a nice flavor to the soap. Eucalyptus can be found all around the district (*Cfr. Page 13: Garden analysis*). Its wood is used for construction or fire wood, but they don’t do anything with the aromatic leaves.

The necessary input of setting up a soap making activity should not be underestimated. It requires much more than just ingredients. You need a considerable starting capital and machinery, but also facilities to stock these ingredients, machinery and the finalized products.

Fuel efficient stoves

MuREA is having wide campaigns in the communities to promote the use of clay fuel efficient cooking stoves. They already launched 15 community groups, each counting over 20 members, with the production of cooking stoves that are sold on the local markets for 500MK each.

These stoves consume up to 40% less firewood and thus, produce up to 40% less CO₂. It’s not only an environmental advantage. It will also give women some extra time they can spend on their fields instead of going up the mountain to search for firewood.

The production of these stoves is quite easy to set up. They’re easy to manufacture and don’t need any financial capital to get started. You only need a reliable and sustainable source of clay.

MuREA is currently running clay stoves activities in 15 different community groups, whereby three are located in Phalombe and all the rest in Mulanje. The reason why they are not more active in Phalombe is a lack of manpower and financial support.

If Ekari can provide support, MuREA is more than happy to launch new clay stoves groups in Phalombe district. Of course, before launching a group, the technical officers make an assessment in the field and most importantly, a sustainable clay source is required. Maybe this support can be provided through student internships? By placing students, graduated in environmental studies, as interns, they support this project and gain some professional experience at the same time.

Inter Aide is also talking to MuREA about their fuel efficient stoves. Possibly, Inter Aide would be interested in launching the project in Phalombe in collaboration with Ekari Foundation. Also John Mthandi from DAPP is interested. He used to work at MuREA and is now working with DAPP on similar projects in Chiradzulu and Mulanje. They’re looking to expand it to Phalombe. (*Cfr. Contact list in Annex 3*)

⁶⁸ Report *NASME*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Sewing & knitting

At the request of Ekari Foundation, we asked every visited family if they would be interested in a sewing or knitting activity if this would be launched by Ekari Foundation. The majority chose for sewing to be the most interesting. But actually, we could sense that there wasn't a real interest in either of them. As a result, we cannot recommend starting this as an income generating activity.

Reed mats and baskets



This is something that can be found in every house and family. The reed mats are used to sit on and the baskets are multifunctional, but especially to sort out the dirt from rice, peas or maize. According to the reed mat vendor we met on the Kambenje market⁶⁹, they are very much used and bought during the harvesting season.

We haven't seen many vendors but this can be because we're out of season. Because it's a commodity, used by almost everybody, it's quite sure that there is a market for it. Producing costs lie low and it's easy to manufacture. Elizabeth Kavala's father is already doing this to gain an extra income⁷⁰ so he might be interested in sharing his experience to set up a new cooperative.

Although the production cost is low, these reed mats are not cheap. The vendor at Kambenje market was buying them from Mariro market for 950MK each and is selling them for 1,950MK each. He also told us that he sells up to 8 mats on peak days.

Buying & selling crops

Every visit of an Ekari-family was concluded by asking the question which business they would start in their community if they had the necessary capital. In over 80% of the cases, they answered "buying & selling crops".

At first sight, this seems quite logic. You buy and stock some crops and sell them a few months later in times of scarcity when crop prices have increased.

But there is more to it than it seems. To buy these crops, you need a considerable capital that can be "missed" during a few months. You also need a warehouse or storage where you can stock the



⁶⁹ Report *Kambenje*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

⁷⁰ Report *Elizabeth Kavala*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

goods. You'll probably need to secure this with a guard since these are valuable goods. And don't forget the inflation of the Malawian Kwacha.

In addition to that, when low season arrives and community faces hunger, it is certain that they will eat the crops meant for sales or sell it at the wrong time which is a natural human reflex but also an obstacle for it to become a business.

If Ekari Foundation would choose to get involved in this activity, more research is needed on crop price fluctuations over the year, but it's sure that it would need substantial financial means and infrastructure.

IV. CHALLENGES & IMPLEMENTATION TIPS

The previous chapters were mainly descriptive and objective; we have been through a contextualization of the project, followed by the garden & community analysis and a description of opportunities in the garden as well as alternative means of livelihoods. These descriptions all resulted of observations in the field and interviews with the community members as well as decision makers in Phalombe District.

The following chapter presents the challenges and difficulties anyone could be facing when launching activities in the rural communities of Phalombe District. But we'll also suggest an implementation methodology. This part is more subjective and contains our own opinions of priorities and methodologies after having been in the field for four months. There is nothing scientific about what's coming, nor are we pretending that this is the only way to go. These are suggestions and tips in the hope to facilitate the choices Ekari Foundation will be making and the decisions that will need to be taken for the sustainable livelihood project as well as any other project implemented in these same communities in the future.

A. Garden productivity

Introduction

In terms of garden productivity, it appeared very clearly to us that any improvement, as important as it could be, would probably not be sufficient to provide food security as well as a source of income for the farmers. Working on the garden productivity should only be done with one objective: optimizing it for food security or optimizing it for income generation. This choice should be made based on every individual situation, according to garden size, presence of water, number of family members relying on the harvest for food, soil type and human resources.

The most important challenge in Phalombe District is the difficult climate conditions, combined with a poor soil composition and water issues, as it appeared clearly in the field. So before launching any project linked with garden productivity, estimations must be made to see if the expected results are worth the effort and investment.

As climate conditions are the main obstacle for improvement of livelihood, we would strongly suggest starting to inform and train the community members to climate change and to climate friendly crops and agricultural techniques. This can be done with the help of MMCT, but we also recommend contacting Mister Matekenya from Action Aid⁷¹ about the possibility to provide Ekari students, members or families with the training in 'Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture'⁷² (Cfr. *Contact list in Annex 3*).

This being said, if the decision is made to improve garden productivity, we would give priority to irrigation and green manure making.

⁷¹ Mister Matekenya, Regional Coordinator for Southern Region, Action Aid

⁷² Report *Action Aid*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Irrigation

When talking about irrigation, we're not only talking about small scale irrigation schemes requiring engineering, construction work and considerable financial means, but also simple manual irrigation solutions; offering start packages to community members with watering cans for example and above all providing them with information and training about the impact of irrigation on their harvest.

Anyway, it would require assessing every single situation with experts in irrigation. It is essential to spend time in the field with every one of them in order to involve them in the assessments of the needs and the implementation of the solutions.

In terms of small scale irrigation schemes, we recommend contacting Miss Rose Bell from RIDP⁷³ (*Cfr. Contact list in Annex 3*). She has a lot of field experience and expertise on that level. If Ekari Foundation would like to provide direct support to any Ekari beneficiary on that level, we recommend looking at the Ngandanga community in how to support their already launched irrigation project. For any irrigation project Ekari Foundation would launch, we strongly encourage to involve Mister Limbani Mzembe, District Irrigation Officer even before starting the implementation.

Green manure

Production of green manure is an absolute priority in long term sustainable agriculture. Sensitizing and training on manure making and the impact on the soil nutrients as well as on the harvest should certainly be a priority. It is considered to be a priority on a global level, for soil conservation, but on an individual level too, because our farmers don't have the means to buy chemical fertilizer.

On a practical level, we would be looking at the Naminjiwa Extension Planning Area⁷⁴ where the extension workers have already started the sensitization and implementation work in terms of green manure. It goes without saying that production of green manure is strongly dependant of livestock activities.

Change management

When implementing new agricultural techniques, one of the main challenges will be change management. The farmers Ekari will be working with are cultivating the soil with traditional techniques since generations: same land, same crops, same techniques and they are very reluctant to change⁷³.

Hence, application of modern techniques or changes in their garden management will have to go together with 'deep diving' training sessions and will need to be strictly followed up. Visits of best practices and discussions with successful farmers could be helpful tools in trying to achieve change. Even these farmers can see the changes in climate and in harvest, year after year, so it's mainly a question of understanding and connection making.

⁷³ Miss Rose Bell, Small Scale Irrigation Infrastructure Manager, RIDP

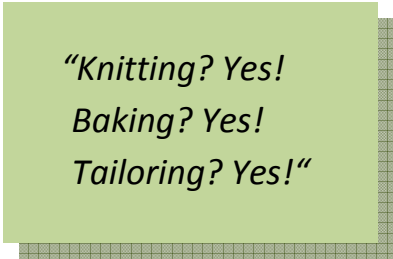
⁷⁴ Report *Naminjiwa Extension Planning Area*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Globally, when working on projects linked with garden productivity, Inter Aide can be an interesting partner for practical cases in the field and FAO would be the best partner to access updated information, but also for trainings and technical support in the field. (Cfr. *Contact list in Annex 3*)

B. Income generating activities

Introduction

When setting up new income generation activities, a clearly defined focus is indispensable, whether it is by targeting very specific communities, CBOs or individuals or by focusing on one specific activity or action area. Having a very clear and predefined framework for the project and sharing it with the communities, the target groups as well as local governmental instances is essential.



*“Knitting? Yes!
Baking? Yes!
Tailoring? Yes!”*

The main challenge in the realization of these projects is the personal involvement and motivation of the community members that are targeted by the activities. The starting point of every project should be a request from them or at least a proven interest.

The level of personal motivation or involvement is difficult to measure. There will always be an interest when you propose your support to communities with so many needs and facing so many difficulties. Poverty causes people to accept anything that is offered to them. Why would they refuse help?

We came across that issue quite a lot in the beginning of the field research. When we asked “Would you be interested in launching a sewing activity?” the answer was only very exceptionally negative and the same answer reappeared for all kinds of other suggestions: knitting? Yes! Baking? Yes! Tailoring? Yes! With the experience, we have learned to always avoid direct questions and always keep the questions as open as possible. “If you had the chance, what business would you like to have?”

This is just a simple example to illustrate how hard it can be to measure someone’s personal interest. That is why very often a motivated request coming from the community members themselves is considered as the best sign of personal interest and so, as a starting point for any important community project. If the request doesn’t come from them, it will be harder to get to a decent level of individual motivation. Without motivation, there can’t be ownership and without ownership, activities are doomed to phase out on the long term⁷⁵.

This brings us to an important question on the methodology: should a community project target individuals or groups? This has been, and still is, a very controversial topic where advices strongly differ from one contact to another.

⁷⁵ Report *Bwanaissa bakery club*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

The group approach: more reach, less results?

Main governmental instances believe in the CBO based approach. Other organizations such as MMCT or Concern Universal share this opinion. “The first step of every community project should be the village committees. Concern Universal first meets with the Village Development Committees to talk and discuss possible opportunities. Together, they define a valuable activity. Then, a community group is created and the project is launched.”⁷⁶

A major advantage of the group approach is of course to be able to reach a larger number of community members. Choosing to target groups is going for the large reach approach. This is also the strategy used by the extension workers in the field, especially since they are understaffed. They encourage farmers to group in farmer collectives. Another reason for this is also to allow farmers to be stronger facing competition on the markets.

One of the main disadvantages is that groups are much harder to manage and follow up on the long term: people are replaced by others, new members come in and internal conflicts of interest emerge as well as hierarchical conflicts (village chief and CBO chairman are not, de facto, the same person). But most of all, there is no individual ownership which can cause members to think “someone else will take care of it” or “It’s not my problem”. This might be avoided by assigning very clear tasks and responsibilities to each and every one of the members. But there is no guarantee that a strong group today won’t be dysfunctional tomorrow.

“In every area and all sectors, community projects always follow this same strategy to start by creating a community group. The start of a project is essential for the sustainability of it”

Mister Chapotoka, District
Agricultural Development Officer
(Cfr. Report Ministry of Agriculture,
Sustainable Livelihood Programme
Individual Field Reports)

Individual needs, individual successes

Others would say that targeting individuals is much more efficient. You can’t apply the same strategies, activities or rules to all the communities of Phalombe District.

We have seen this in the field as well: you need a sustainable source of clay to start a cook stove project for example. Bee keeping requires trees, a poultry farm requires space. Every situation is unique and therefore, needs a unique approach.

“You need to find these individuals that take initiative, show motivation and are determined.”

- Wiktor Chichlowski,
Fisherman’s Rest

The one to one approach is also much more personal and thus, it has better chances to succeed, because it’s adapted to one person’s needs, skills and wishes.

⁷⁶ Report *Concern Universal*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

After more than 20 years of experience in the field, Wiktor Chichlowski, director of Fisherman’s Rest became a heavy defender of the individual approach. *“Every project is built on an individual story. You need to find these individuals that take initiative, show motivation and are determined. Look at what they are doing, what they can do and support that.”*⁷⁷

The fact that you can choose individuals with a personal drive and an entrepreneurial spirit is a clear and significant advantage of targeting individuals.

More than one correct answer

There are advantages to both approaches and both of them are not flawless. We believe in the efficiency of both and we believe it’s highly case dependent. For the fish farming, we would strongly recommend the group approach, because it is already existing and has proven its engagement. For the bee keeping, the individual approach might work too as we learnt from Mister Menyani’s success story.

Whether you choose one approach or the other, is of no importance. As long as there is a will, energy, an investment and motivation from the targeted groups or individuals, the project has all the chances to success.

Another important tip we can share in terms of implementation strategies is to build on existing structures instead of starting new initiatives from scratch. That is what we have learned from our multiple discussions with other NGOs.

An example at Concern Universal, where Joe Thomas shared his experience on the Phalombe Bee Keeping Association:

“For a livelihood project or any other community project to be successful, you need to build on activities and skills that already exist. It was the case for the bee keeping in Phalombe, there was a structure already in place. We just helped the project to develop further on”.

It doesn’t need to be associations or full projects. You can also build on individuals or small scale initiatives, as long as there is something to build on.

⁷⁷ Report *Fisherman’s Rest*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

Practical priorities

When looking at the different ideas proposed as income generating activities, some are more complex as other, require more capital or need different implementation phases. This is why we would give the following activities a priority.

1. A project where a clear request has been formulated by the community members, with a main objective of solidarity and where a structure is already in place: the **Lomoliwa fish farming activity** definitely deserves some attention. The investment would consist of providing them with a good training in fish farming and management which should be done by an expert organization. The investment in maintenance and harvesting tools would be shared by Ekari Foundation and the committee itself that has shown motivation to gather as many tools as they can.
2. Support activities where a structure and network are already in place: the **Bee Keeping** and the **Clay Stoves** project are both excellent candidates for income generating activities. We already made contacts that are willing to work with us and potential partner organizations can share their field experience. Both products don't require a large investment and both product are marketable. For contact details of the managers of these projects, consult the list in Annex 3.
3. Activities that have an easy setup and a low investment: **reed mats and baskets**. The production price is very low and the demand on the market is quite high, as this is a commodity. This means, the activity could quickly and easily become profitable when well organized and supported. We would suggest addressing to Elizabeth Kavala's family⁷⁸. This activity can be supported individually or by creating a new CBO according to interest of other community members.

The other options are all more or less feasible but require more investment, setup & know-how. From the remaining ideas, bakeries have the most chance for success, because here again, there is an existing structure, but also because we believe in the marketing of the product.

⁷⁸ Report *Elizabeth Kavala*, Sustainable Livelihood Programme Individual Field Reports

V. CONCLUSIONS

Final recommendations

Based on the observations and interviews conducted during these four months in the communities of Phalombe District, we are now able to formulate final recommendations regarding the launch of a Sustainable Livelihood Programme in the area. As stated earlier, there is nothing scientific about what's coming, nor are we pretending that this is the only way to go. These recommendations should be considered nothing more than a guideline.

We would like to start these final recommendations by questioning the very existence of a Sustainable Livelihood Programme launched by Ekari Foundation and targeting the families of the Ekari Students. There are many reasons for this.

- ❖ The first reason would be the **motivation and intentions of community members**. *Is there a real demand from the targeted community members to change their life and/or work conditions?* We understand the idea of finding income generating activities for the families of the Ekari Students in order to achieve financial independence and increase their life quality. It would be a major improvement in life standard for them and for the entire region in the end. But is it something they themselves are asking for and are willing to engage in? How can one expect them to change their lives in order to pay for school fees that are already been taken care of by a third party?
- ❖ The second reason would be the **loss of focus on Education**. Ekari Foundation invests in education for the youth in Phalombe district and the future of the country, because they profoundly believe that Education is key in breaking the cycle of poverty. The starting point of all the work done by Ekari in the field is this youth. Offering them access to education is giving them a chance to improve their life and overall, to form a generation of responsible and innovative citizens that can bring a country to a higher level. Why lose that focus? There are sufficient bright young Malawians in need of help to access education. And if programs are to be broaden, why not keep this development within the same field, investing for example in the further development of the Computer Program or the launch of a professional coaching and internship Program? We believe it is the best way of making a difference as Ekari Foundation.
- ❖ Third reason is Ekari's geographical zone. The targeted families are spread out over the entire Phalombe District. This means the work area for the Sustainable Livelihood Programme would not be well defined, making project developments and implementations very difficult, if the group approach is chosen.
- ❖ And finally, the launch of a Sustainable Livelihood Programme would require important resources. Not only financial, but also material and human resources: initial investment costs, machinery or constructions in some cases, but also experts for the trainings and field officers/project managers for the follow up of the different activities.

Taking these reasons into consideration, we are convinced that Ekari Foundation is not the right player to launch such an important program. At least not on its own, in such a spread out area and in projects that are not part of its core activities.

This brings us logically to the idea of launching the program in partnership with other organizations. This would allow Ekari Foundation to outsource parts of the program to institutions that have experience and skills to manage it and this way solving part of the focus and resources issues. Through our field research and the multiple meetings with other important players in the area, we noticed that pretty much all of them are interested in working hand in hand towards the reduction of poverty and the increase of life quality in the area. The will to work together and share experiences is very present.

The main challenge here is that each of these organizations has their own focus areas, in terms of targeted communities, as well as sectors and objectives. We would then be looking at collaborating with an entire network of partners instead of one preferred partner and that requires important management and resources. Partnerships are good for sharing information and experiences, joint training sessions or even field trips, but it doesn't appear to be the way to go for the Sustainable Livelihood Programme.

Nevertheless, we would like to stress the quality of the other organizations in place (NGOs and governmental institutions) and we have already put the basis for future collaborations. We believe it might be interesting to group members of all these organizations together to discuss the challenges and difficulties faced by the community and work towards concrete solutions, in a joint effort to eradicate poverty. Ekari Foundation could be initiating the creation of a new forum or collective action group where the discrepancies would become a strength instead of a weakness tackling the problems from all perspectives at once.

Another possible way to go for Ekari Foundation would be to focus on training and information of the community members and leaving them the choice of using this new knowledge to improve their livelihoods.

The advantages of the training strategy are numerous and meaningful:

- ❖ Training and information is education. Ekari Foundation would not lose the focus on education, but enlarge the concept to adult education and professional education.
- ❖ The personal motivation issue would be solved, because only the community members with the will to change and the spirit to work towards it will make something out of it and those can be supported in a later stage.
- ❖ Ekari Foundation will avoid spending large amounts of time, energy and money into projects that are not wanted by the community or that will phase out in the long term.
- ❖ Every Ekari Student, family or community receives equal treatment. How else would you explain to one why the other received support? Why would you support the Lomoliwa fish farming, but not the farmer making a reed mat once in a while at his house?

Investing in trainings is transforming community members into responsible actors of their own life, with the necessary tools and opportunities to improve its quality and with a trusted organization they can rely on for advice and support.

Concretely, training sessions can be organized at the newly built community center. The content of these trainings would be focusing on both areas of opportunities: increase of garden productivity and launching of new alternative income generating activities. They would be provided by experts from partner organizations or community members that changed their lives through a new activity and can also be combined with field trips to best practices when possible.

Great idea for the community members, but what's in it for Ekari Foundation?

Every project requires a return on investment and organizing these trainings will cost Ekari Foundation money, time and energy. A way to secure this investment could be by only providing trainings on demand and in exchange of a clear sign of motivation or a business intention.

Each request has to be highly motivated with a detailed description of objectives and submitted for approval to the decision makers. The request will also be linked with a proof of engagement and personal investment of the community member or group.

An example for a training in bee keeping:

"Our objective would be to start up a small scale honey production in the community. Our engagement is to create a CBO containing at least a chairman, a secretary and a treasurer, but also find the place to install the bee hives and to provide the wood for the construction of these."

In exchange, Ekari Foundation could provide the training and technical support with the launch of the activity and the marketing of the product in a later stage.

This way, Ekari Foundation will be able to assess the needs, plan the allocation of resources in advance and calculate the projects return on investment.

Opting for this training approach doesn't put the Sustainable Livelihood Programme on the side, but moves the program to a second stage, investing only in community projects that have been previously assessed and where the community members have proven motivation and long term intentions.

Conclusion

The objectives of the field research were to acquire a profound understanding of the work & life conditions of the families of the Ekari beneficiaries. More specifically, to discover challenges and opportunities faced by the rural communities of Phalombe District. And finally, to assess the feasibility of a Sustainable Livelihood Programme launched by Ekari Foundation targeting these families.

In a first stage, the research brought us to meet 40 families in the rural communities of Phalombe, sometimes in the most remote villages, to visit the garden, observe the life conditions and discover strengths and difficulties faced by the communities. This experience was rather confronting and allowed us to acquire a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the launch of a Sustainable Livelihood Programme: the harsh climatic conditions, the insufficient harvest and the impact of lacking food security on life quality. Increasing the garden productivity will definitely increase the life quality of the farmers, but it will never get to a level where it can offer them food security and offer them a source of income at the same time.

A second phase of the project led us to six of the main markets of Phalombe District in order to discover the products, the prices, the life standard of the shopkeepers and the missed opportunities. What we observed is the high number of shops selling the same products at the same price just next to each other. As we speak, we did not find the gap in the market, so we have more faith in the marketing of products in lodges and tourist attraction points or more important cities.

The third part of the research brought us to meet with important players in the Phalombe area: Non-governmental organizations, lodges and tourist places, but also governmental instances and other business initiatives. We have learned from these meetings that Ekari's objective to eradicate poverty is shared by many. Not all try to achieve that objective through education. Many work on human rights or on agricultural development, but the aim is the same: to bring the rural communities of Phalombe to higher life standards.

All of this brings us to conclude that, although there is room for a Sustainable Livelihood Programme in the rural communities of Phalombe, Ekari Foundation might not be the right player to launch it. Our advice is to keep the focus on education through the further development of the sponsoring program, enlarging the number of beneficiary students as well as through the creation of new projects within the education field, such as the freshly initiated computer program or a professional coaching and internship program.

In terms of sustainable livelihoods objectives, we strongly encourage Ekari to take action in 2 ways: the implementation of a vocational and professional training program for community members on one hand and the creation of an Action Group for sustainable livelihoods, containing all key players of the area, on the other.

Following this approach, Ekari Foundation will continue making a difference in the lives of many in the rural communities of Phalombe District by investing in education, generating opportunities and building Malawi's future, honoring its baseline of *"Education for Students - Sustainable Livelihoods for their Communities"* in a responsible, community driven and sustainable way.

List of abbreviations

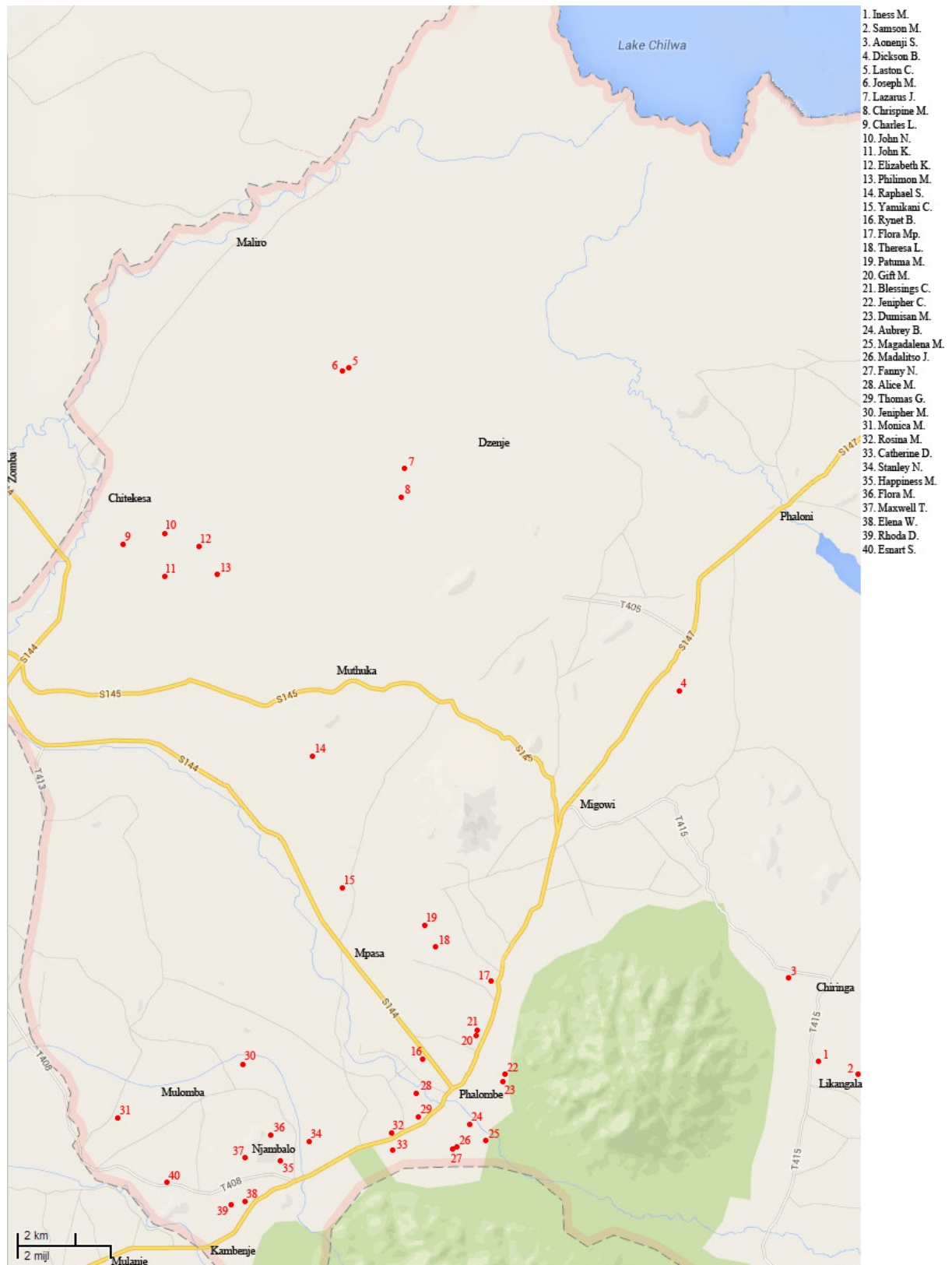
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CBO	Community Based Organization
DADO	District Agriculture Development Officer
DAPP	Development Aid from People to People
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HA	Hectare
KG	Kilogram
KM	Kilometer
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MK	Malawian Kwacha
MMCT	Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust
MuREA	Mulanje Renewable Energy Agency
NASME	National Agency for Small and Medium Enterprise
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
RIDP	Rural Infrastructure Development Programme
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
T/A	Traditional Authority
UN	United Nations
US	United States (of America)
WFP	World Food Programme

VI. ANNEX

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1. Map with Ekari Foundation beneficiaries



2. Questionnaire Field Research

Garden Research

Approximate size of garden

Is there any tree cover? Approximate tree count per acre

Tree types

Types of groundcover

What is the extent of ground cover, and are ground cover and crop residuals removed from the agricultural landscape for cooking fuel or do they remain in the agricultural landscape?

Soil type

Current crop types

Do they rotate crops?

Do they sell crops? If yes, who do they sell to?

Do they let their gardens ever lie fallow?

Is there current irrigation?

Is there a source for irrigation nearby? River, stream, spring, mountain runoff

If so, are water sources protected from contamination?

What are the sanitation practices (i.e. open defecation, use of latrines, protection of water sources)?

What is the general state of the gardens in the community?

Are farmers in cooperatives?

Do farmers share techniques amongst themselves?

How mechanized is farming, versus manual labor?

To what extent is natural resource management in place at the household level? If so, what types? Do other Phalombe NGOs assist with natural resources management in these communities? (Natural resource management refers to the management of natural resources such as land, water, soil, plants and animals, with a particular focus on how management affects the quality of life for both present and future generations (stewardship).)

Community Research

What type of sustainable livelihood would the communities be interested in?

What assets and capacities do communities have that could be used to start a sustainable livelihood?

What types of activities do they see do well in their community?

Propose the following:

Local: Livestock rearing? Selling produce or crafts at local market? Selling produce to local lodges? Bakery or other food for sale?

Global: Sewing? Knitting? Wood carving?

Market Research

What is sold at the local markets?

What items are oversold at the market?

What items are undersold at the market?

Is there a local market if we train cooperatives in sewing? Will they be able to sell items? Or tailor clothes?

Business Research

Meet with lodges in Phalombe, Mulange, and Zomba about partnering – communities grow and sell vegetables to lodges

NGO & Local Government Research

Meet with NGOs in Phalombe and local government to understand if they already work within our students' communities and have current sustainable livelihood or food security programs in place. Discuss partnerships.

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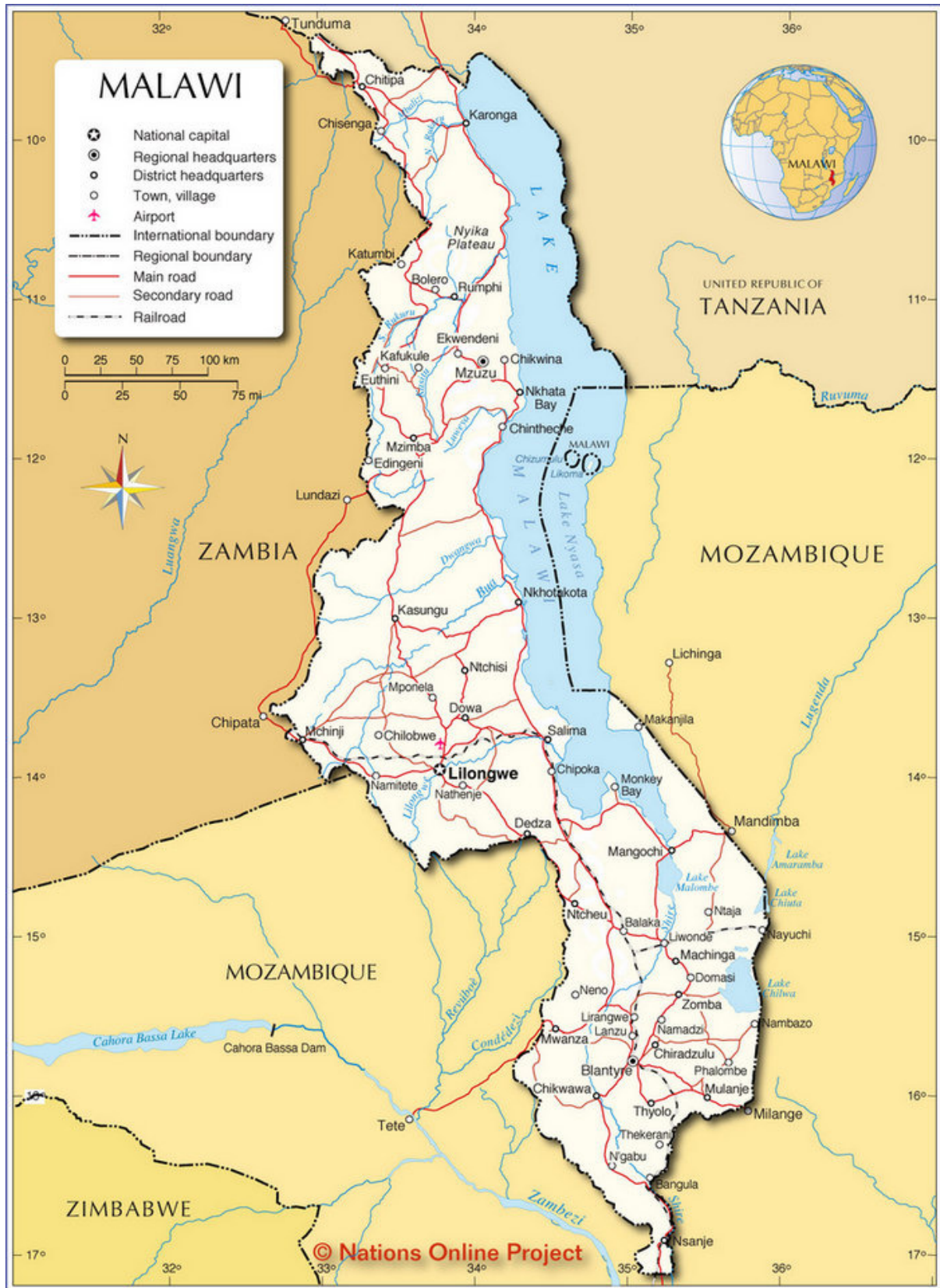
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4. Map of Malawi



5. Article newsecuritybeat.org: Lessons From Kenya and Malawi on Combining Climate Change, Development, and Population Policy

“The combined effects of rapid population growth and climate change are increasing food insecurity, environmental degradation, and poverty levels in Malawi and Kenya,” said Clive Mutunga, a senior research associate at Population Action International (PAI).

Mutunga spoke alongside Abigail Jones of Climate Advisers and Eliya Zulu of the African Institute of Development Policy at the Wilson Center about two new policy reports on incorporating population dynamics – mainly efforts to meet unmet demand for contraceptives – into climate change adaptation policies in Malawi and Kenya.

“This study tackles a critical question,” said Jones. “It asks how should policymakers in sub-Saharan Africa respond to the linkages between population and sustainable development, particularly climate change, to ensure the policy is mutually supportive and is more effective?”

Fast Growth, New Challenges

“Rapid population growth is seen as one of the main barriers to economic development,” said Zulu.

According to PAI, Malawi’s population of approximately 15 million is projected to increase by more than three times to 50 million by 2050. Malawi’s rapid population growth is driven by a high total fertility rate – the number of children born per woman – which was measured at 5.7 today. There is increasing demand for smaller families among Malawians, but access to contraceptives, especially among the poorest, is often limited. While the percentage of married women using contraceptives has jumped from 13 percent in 1992 to 46 percent in 2010, 26 percent of women who would like to postpone child bearing are not using a modern method of contraception, Mutunga said.

Kenya’s population of 41 million is projected to more than double to 97 million by 2050. In 1978, Kenya’s fertility rate was measured at 8.1 – the highest in the world at the time – and is currently projected to level off at 2.9 by 2050. But as in Malawi and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, socio-economic status and geographic location often determines access to contraceptives and reproductive healthcare; 26 percent of Kenyan women are still unable to access contraceptives.

Kenya’s large share of young people – 42 percent of the population is under 15 – presents social, environmental and economic challenges. Young people represent 64 percent of the country’s unemployed, according to the International Labor Organization. An excessively youthful age structure can also threaten national security as more than 90 percent of all societal conflicts from the 1970s to the 1990s occurred in countries with median ages under 25.

Most of the population growth in sub-Saharan Africa will occur in cities, Mutunga explained. This is both the result of urban-to-rural migration and natural population growth. Urbanization, though a good indicator of socio-economic progress, can be a development challenge, especially if it is not well planned for, he said. According to the report, 55 percent of urban-dwelling Kenyans live in “informal settlements,” such as slums and shantytowns. Slum-dwellers are particularly vulnerable to climate change, as they have limited access to housing, food, energy, and sanitation.

Climate Change Exacerbates Food Insecurity

The livelihoods of a majority of Malawians and Kenyans, like most Africans, depend on rain-fed small-scale farming, a practice that is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Currently, 85 percent of Malawians make their living through farming. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency of severe natural disasters such as droughts and flooding, resulting in more crop failures and food shortages. Already there has been an uptick in these natural disasters, including a flood in February of this year that displaced more than 33,000 people and an on-going drought that began in 2008. Malawi's population density is expected to increase by a six-fold by 2050, which will exacerbate competition for land and resources. And deforestation will contribute to stress as well, as more than 90 percent of Malawians are reliant on wood for cooking and heating. "Malawi is one of the least resilient countries to climate change," Mutunga warned.

Kenya faces many of the same challenges plus the added dimension of conflict: ethnic strife over land and water killed more than a hundred people just last year in Tana River County; militants and arms frequently cross the border from Somalia; and there continue to be tensions over national elections, the most recent of which was won by Uhuru Kenyatta this year, who is facing charges from the International Criminal Court for inciting violence in 2007 (though it should be noted that predictions of a return to violence of were proven wrong).

"Addressing population issues may help build resilience to climate change," said Zulu, by alleviating increasing pressure on land for agriculture.

To Scale-up, Build Independence

"Climate change is a cross-cutting issue that requires effective coordination to mainstream it in various development sectors," Zulu said. There have been some efforts to integrate population-focused policies and climate change responses, he said, but weak governance structures in the region and a lack of funding have hampered effectiveness. For example, various population, health, and environment (PHE) programs have been successful at combining these goals, but they are not easily scalable, he said. There is no specific policy framework in place to coordinate programs and multi-sectoral cooperation.

Zulu stressed the importance of strengthening local capacity and weaning governments off dependence on NGOs and other donors. Because of shrinking aid budgets brought on by the global recession, the "continuity and augmentation of these programs is going to depend on greater budgetary participation by African governments," said Jones.

"We need to have a much better strategic partnership with local partners," Zulu agreed, and he applauded Kenya for being the first African country to develop its own national climate change response strategy in 2010.

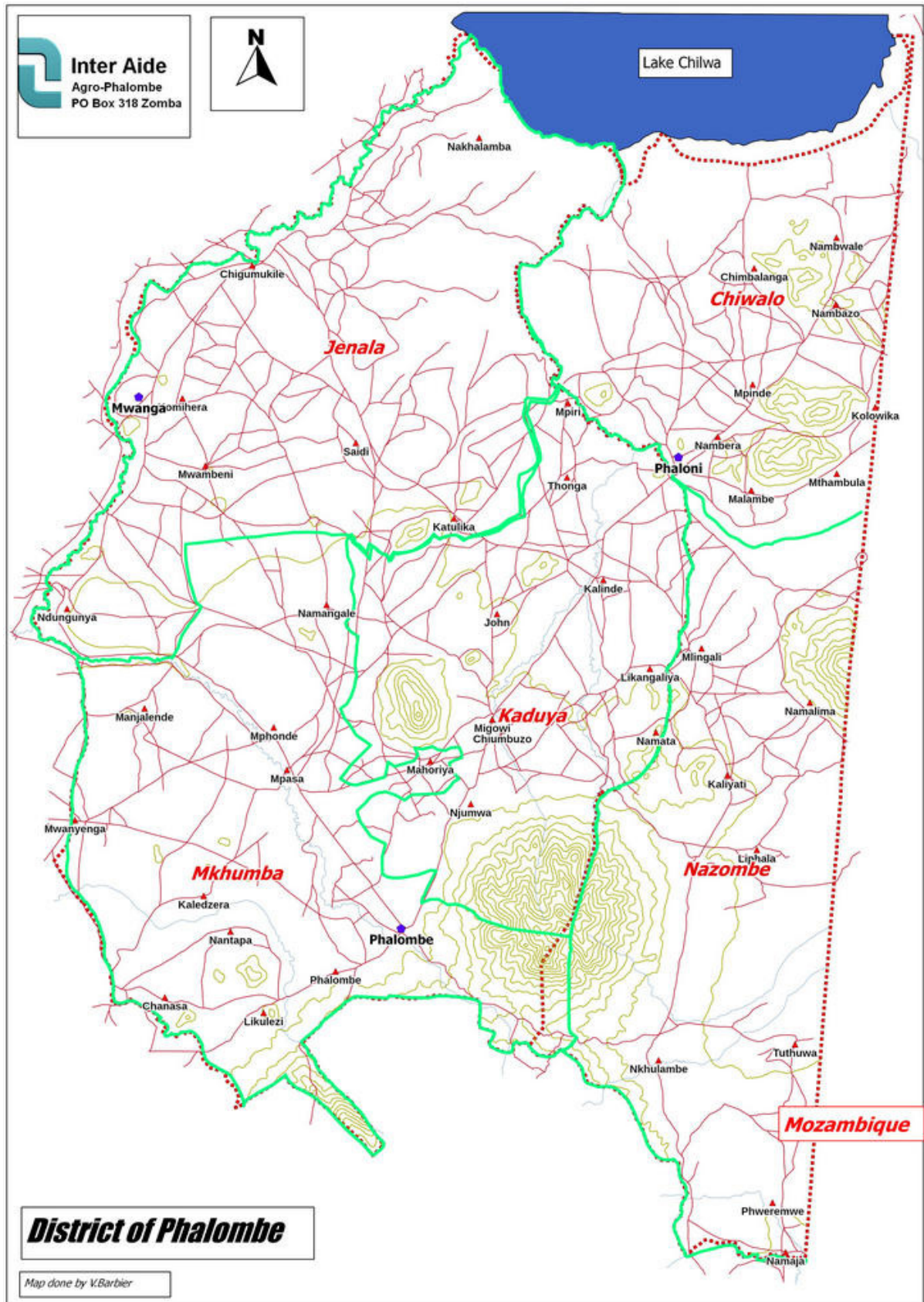
Both Mutunga and Zulu were emphatic that meeting unmet demand for family planning can produce a "triple win" for Africa. It will slow population growth and thereby reduce poverty by improving health, schooling, and economic opportunities; protect natural resources for more sustainable development; and create greater opportunities for social development.

However, population policies can also be a culturally sensitive issue. As Zulu emphasized, it is “not the duty of governments to tell women how many children to have.” Instead, he urged governments to reduce barriers to family planning and contraceptive use to expand access to those who want to use them, and invest in education, public health, and youth-focused development programs, as empowering and enabling large cohorts of young people can help lift a country out of poverty.

Updated: Current and future population data for Kenya and Malawi now comes from the PAI reports.

Source: <http://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2013/05/lessons-kenya-malawi-combining-climate-change-development-population-policy/#.UmfBaXB7Lpz>

6. Map of Phalombe with T/As



7. Student stats

Student	#Households	Garden size	Distance to garden
1		2000	500
2		2400	700
3		8400	400
4		5600	600
5	190	3000	500
6		6000	1500
7	500	9000	1500
8	200	9000	200
9	232	4500	15000
10	200	2500	50
11	1800	2000	1300
12	170	12000	500
13	170	2100	0
14	105	8700	0
15		6000	500
16		13200	0
17	250	2100	800
18	250	1200	800
19	135	1600	300
20	200	450	300
21	500	1050	2000
22	500	875	1000
23	110	1200	2500
24	110	1150	500
25	370	1200	400
26	150	1050	50
27	150	9000	800
28	72	2400	800
29	4000	800	400
30	275	2800	3000
31	325	6000	2000
32	400	2000	400
33	320	1500	400
34		2000	1500
35	100	1400	800
36		4800	1300
37	100	2500	2000
38	500	1250	5
39	400	1200	1000
TOT	6984	145925	46305
AVERAGE	249	3742	1187

8. Article starafrika.com: Malawi subsidy to benefit 1.5 million agric families

The 2013 Malawi Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) would benefit almost 1.5 million underprivileged families across the country.

The principal secretary at the ministry of agriculture Jeffrey Luhanga told journalists in the capital Lilongwe on Monday that the exercise starts on 10 September 2013.

He said contracts for suppliers and transporters have already been awarded to and distribution will commence soon.

“All is set for this year’s FISP distribution and we are still receiving and delivering fertilizers to public depots in all districts of the country,” he said.

About 150, 000 metric tons of fertilizer is set to be distributed across the country.

Source: <http://en.starafrika.com/news/malawi-subsidy-to-benefit-1-5-million-agric-families.html>

9. Article Daily Monitor: Cassava: A crop with potential for rural development

A new era of cassava production in Africa has arrived. Governments have finally started to realise the huge potential of the plant as a driver of rural development. Global cassava production has increased by 60 per cent since 2000, most markedly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the growth rate has been equal to that of maize. However, while west Africa is taking the lead, East Africa has yet to fully recognise the plant's nutritional, ecological and industrial potential.

Although African consumption of cassava is higher than that of any other staple crop, the plant, labelled as a poor man's crop, has been neglected in the past. Negative perception has been changing since the global food price crisis in 2008.

Governments started to recognise cassava's high nutritious value – it is the second most important source of carbohydrate on the continent – and the plant's resilience to climate change. Yet the real change is driven by the realisation of cassava's industrial potential. Its root starch can be used in food products, textiles, plywood or paper while the plant is also a feedstock for the production of ethanol biofuel.

West Africa has already seized the opportunity. To meet growing global demand, Nigeria has invested immensely in the crop. The government follows Thailand, where a cassava-driven starch industry generates billions of dollars, diversifying incomes of farmers and generating new jobs. Demand for ethanol derived from cassava is also growing, especially since China banned the use of cereals for biofuel production, although national strategies must guarantee that the industry does not pose a threat to the local cassava food resources.

More importantly, increasing local production and investment in cassava derivatives can reduce food and raw material imports, helping East African governments save in foreign exchange expenditure. In Nigeria, cassava has already replaced imported staples. As cassava is mainly grown by small-scale farmers in areas where soils are poor and unpredictable rainfall, new opportunities in cassava production could lift smallholders from this region, so often affected by chronic food shortages, out of poverty.

Two cassava diseases (mosaic and brown streak viruses) raging through the Central and East African fields, however, pose a huge threat to the crop's potential. Half of all the plants in Africa are infected by one or both of these diseases.

To halt the devastating effect of the viruses in the region, the European Union rolled out a programme to support vulnerable communities in their efforts to mitigate, manage and prevent the diseases, and build resilience among farmers. Seven countries – Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda – were involved in the four-year project, coordinated by FAO, which will come to an end in October 2013.

FAO and EU make a call for a new cassava revolution

Governments in East Africa need to identify cassava as a priority crop. National and regional policies should support efforts to further commercialise the plant without putting food security at risk.

Domestic use and value addition need to be explored and promoted. Resources should be allocated to fight cassava diseases. As a key agricultural commodity, a food security crop and a driver of development, cassava should be a priority of action for governments and donors in East Africa.

Alinovi is the acting senior emergency coordinator of FAO and Ridolfi is the head of the EU delegation to Uganda.

Source: http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/Farming/Cassava--A-crop-with-potential-for-rural-development/-/689860/2005548/-/1155v5bz/-/index.html?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social+media&utm_campaign=FAOnews&utm_content=qk

10. Article The Fish Site:

Finding Sustainable Ways to Address Lake Malawi's Declining Fish Stocks

MALAWI - Growth in fisheries and aquaculture in Lake Malawi needs to have a management plan that takes into consideration the environmental, social economic and governance objectives to ensure sustainable provision of fish for food and development, Assistant FAO Representative Dr Samuel Chingondole told delegates to the first-ever workshop on Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Aquaculture (EAFA) in Lake Malawi.

The three-day workshop convened from 15 to 17 July was supported by FAO in close collaboration with Bunda College of Agriculture and the Government of Malawi through its Department of Fisheries.

"The implementation of the ecosystem approach to fisheries and aquaculture will also facilitate the integration with other sectors using water and coastal ecosystems," said Chingondole.

The aim of the workshop was to review information and reach a consensus on the current fisheries and aquaculture and other issues external to the sector with all relevant stakeholders.

Further, it aimed at prioritizing issues in order to develop a management plan that improves the contribution of fisheries and aquaculture to food security and poverty alleviation while preserving environmental services and biodiversity.

"The EAFA is considered an excellent strategy to enhance adoption and implementation of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible fisheries (CCRF) at local level," Chingondole said.

"This approach is also in line with the international guidelines FAO and Members are creating on small scale fisheries, especially in regards to addressing fisheries management aspects, equity issues and the interactions with other sectors including aquaculture."

With grim reports of dwindling fish stocks in Lake Malawi accounting to 93% as of 1990 to 2010, the EAFA workshop presented an opportune time for experts to deliberate on how to preserve the fisheries and fish farming around the lake.

Fisheries contribution to the economy

In Malawi, the fisheries sector contributes approximately 4% to national GDP and is a significant source of jobs, directly employing about 60, 000 fishermen and indirectly about 350, 000 people who are involved in fish processing, fish marketing, net making, boat building and engine repair.

The lake is also source of 60% of the total animal protein supply in the country with over 70% of Malawi's population depending on Lake Malawi and its catchment for their daily survival needs and livelihoods.

Decreasing fish production on Lake Malawi, thus, presents a major threat to women too such as Winape Mponda, 34, a fish trader from Kela Village in Traditional Authority Mponda in the lakeshore district of Mangochi, who solely depend on fish for their livelihoods.

“I am concerned at the decreasing levels of fish in the lake because as a fish trader I rely on the fish business to feed my children,” said Mponda, who has five children.

“Our children eat because of my fish business and if this [decreasing fish stocks] continues, it can bring a lot of misery and poverty in our family,” she said, on the sidelines of the workshop.

According to a June 2013 Baseline Report on Lake Malawi produced by the Department of Fisheries, the estimated annual fish production from both small- and large-scale operators from Lake Malawi had 109,136 tones in 2012.

Source: <http://www.thefishsite.com/fishnews/20883/finding-sustainable-ways-to-address-lake-malawis-declining-fish-stocks>

11. Article FAO: Fish farming plays crucial role in boosting rural development and reducing poverty and hunger

FAO convenes first ever Global Intergovernmental Meeting in Beijing to discuss aquaculture

Beijing, 18 April 2002 - The role of aquaculture in fighting hunger and poverty and promoting rural development will be the main focus of an international meeting convened by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) opening in Beijing today.

According to FAO, aquaculture can make an important contribution to poverty alleviation, food security and social well-being, and already does so in many developing countries. In others, however, the potential has not yet been fully realized.

With an overall growth rate of 11 percent a year since 1984, aquaculture, including culture-based fisheries, has been the world's fastest growing food-producing sectors for nearly 20 years. In 1999, 42.77 million metric tons of aquatic products (including plants) valued at US\$ 53.5 billion were produced, and more than 300 species of aquatic organisms are today farmed globally. Approximately 90% of the total aquaculture production is produced in developing countries, and a large proportion of this is produced by small-scale producers particularly in Low Income Food Deficit Countries (LIFDCs).

While export-oriented, industrial and commercial aquaculture practices bring much needed foreign exchange, revenue and employment to a country, more extensive and integrated forms of aquaculture do not only make a significant, grass-roots, contribution to improving livelihoods among the poorer sectors of society but also promote efficient use of resources and environmental conservation, according to a paper prepared by FAO for the first session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. Representatives from governments, inter-governmental organizations, UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations will participate in the meeting, which takes place at the Beijing International Convention Centre, Beijing, China, from 18-22 April.

"The challenge for aquaculture is to help strengthen the assets available to rural households," says Mr Rohana Subasinghe, Secretary of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture and FAO's focal point for the meeting in Beijing. "Aquaculture provides food of high nutritional value for households, and when small-scale farmers combine agriculture and aquaculture they also improve their food supply, increase their income and become better able to withstand shocks. It decreases the risk to production, increases farm sustainability and in general boosts rural development".

Aquaculture contributes almost a third of global fisheries production. FAO's latest studies on future demand for, and supply of, fish and fishery products predict a sizeable increase in demand. The majority of this increase will result from expected economic development, population growth and changes in eating habits. Fish supply from marine capture fisheries in most countries is expected to remain constant or even to decline, since catches have either reached or are close to the maximum sustainable yield. Hence, aquaculture and fisheries in inland waters will play a major role in increasing future supplies of fish and fishery products. Global growth in aquaculture is forecast to continue in the future.

At the meeting in Beijing the participants are to discuss sustainable aquaculture development and the implementation of aquaculture-related provisions of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Addressing the recent public debate related to the negative environmental and social impact of aquaculture, Mr Ichiro Nomura, Assistant Director-General, of FAO's Fisheries Department said at the opening of the meeting:

"Historically, most aquaculture practices around the world have been pursued with significant social, economic and nutritional benefits, and with minimal environmental costs. However in certain parts of the world and in certain aquaculture sectors there have been some inadequately-planned and inappropriately managed forms of aquaculture that have created significant social and environmental problems. Typically, these impacts often arise from weak regulatory frameworks and the too rapid development associated with the great commercial potential of some high value species. It is our responsibility to take collective measures to improve our understanding of the real impacts and causes in order to make the sector more and more environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable."

Mr Subasinghe says: "There is enormous potential for aquaculture, and where the focus has mainly been on producing more food, earning higher incomes and improving economies, there now also is a growing awareness within the sector and among governments of using aquaculture to ensure food security, alleviate poverty, and promote social equity and prosperity," but he adds that unfortunately donor support for aquaculture development has declined in the past 10 years.

Promoting an environmentally sound and sustainable aquaculture development requires that "enabling environments" are created in particular aimed at ensuring human resource development, institutional strengthening and capacity building at all levels. Also improved cooperation among all stakeholders at the local, national, regional and inter-regional levels is also imperative. The establishment of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture is a step in the right direction.

The Sub-Committee on Aquaculture was established by the 24th meeting of FAO's Committee on Fisheries (COFI) in 2001. The aim is to provide a forum for consultation and discussion on aquaculture and to advise COFI on technical and policy matters related to aquaculture and on the work to be performed by the FAO in the subject matter field of aquaculture.

Source: <http://www.fao.org/english/newsroom/news/2002/3960-en.html>

12. Article onislam.net: Aquaculture Can Help in Feeding Malawi

LILONGWE - In Malawi's central region district of Dowa the terrain is so hilly that many have given up the possibility that the area is ideal for fish farming. However, pockets of potential areas that can be put to good use for aquaculture are present here and there. One fish farmer who has defied her gender status to engage in fish farming in this challenging terrain is Flora Mwase who is in her fifties and owns seven fish ponds that are fully stocked with Tilapia species.

Villagers in Action

Mwase and other fellow residents of Matchayasimbi Village in the area of traditional authority Chiwere are piloting an on farm fish program that they combine to supplement the usual annual rain feed agriculture. Technical expertise is offered by the Regional Fish Node, a scientific think-tank and Centre for Bio-sciences under the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) based at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR).

This is part of an initiative to achieve food security as most of the local subsistence farmers cannot afford to buy other sources of protein such as meat which are expensive compared to fish. As such, fish presents the most alternative source of the much need protein for normal body growth and development. Aquaculture therefore is one way of getting protein-rich relish close to rural households but also as a major source of livelihood for the local populace.

Food security says the Food and Agricultural Organisation exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. It has four main dimensions which are availability, access, utilization and stability.

The other reason for this program is to scale up research in order to replicate the technology to other parts of the country. This will ensure access to fish, a major source of the much needed protein for body building, is available to as many people as possible.

Coincidentally, both food security agricultural research components of this program are in line with the NEPAD's a Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) pillars aimed at spearheading national development through agricultural-driven economies on the African continent. The program thus kills two birds with one stone simultaneously.

Decline in Fish Numbers

Previously fish consumption in Malawi averaged 14 kilos per person per year in the mid-1970s, but today it is less than six kilos per person each year. This is way down the recommended 15 kilograms consumption threshold as demanded by the Food and Agricultural Organization.

This decline has come about because the fishery sector has been riddled by the violation of their closed breeding season. Fishermen have been illegally catching fish during the breeding season, resulting in loss of breeding fish, eggs and young fish, according to the fisheries department.

In the wake of such developments, and knowing the important role fish plays the Regional Fish Node and other concern, stakeholders have been working towards the conservation of selected fish species and also imparting scientific knowledge to rural subsistence farmers.

Spin Offs

Mwase's seven ponds have attracted local and international attention so much that her farm has turned into a model where people are flocking to learn from. She has since built a good house and is able to send her children to good schools, paying the fees without problems. She has since called the initiative a success story because of the tremendous progress so far registered.

Her ponds are a major source of proteins to the surrounding communities, who are far away from Lake Malawi. This makes fish which is a scarce commodity among most rural households away from the lake to be readily available as an important dietary component.

"I have managed to build a corrugated iron roof house. I also send my children to good secondary schools using financial gains from fish farming, but more importantly they are also nutritional benefits that are derived from fish consumption," said Mwase who has been visited by several regional experts from across southern Africa.

She adds that as part of fish management procedure being located in a relatively low temperature area because of the hilly terrain, experts have recommended the use of plastic sheeting that cover the ponds to provide the much needed high temperatures for the growth of Tilapia fish.

As a fish farmer together with experts she tests best technologies in fish management such as (clear plastic sheeting of ponds, formulated feed, feeding trays, and improved fish strains), market analysis and organizational development for increased fish production and income.

"This plastic sheeting provides an enabling warmer environment for the growth of Tilapia in the ponds being a hilly cool area and this is proving very effective in our pond management activities," says Mwase.

Integrated Farming

Other than aquaculture, Mwase is able to engage in integrated farming using water from the pond to grow fruits and vegetables such as bananas and beans during the winter season. This gives her edge over other farmers who simply rely on rain feed agriculture in the face of climate change which has altered rainfall patterns in recent years. In this way she is able to rake benefits through crop diversification and develop resilience in the face of climate shocks.

"I have been able to ripe fortune from fish farming and rain feed agriculture as well; I will be harvesting my next chunk of fish from the ponds next month (October)" says Mwase in a telephone interview interrupted by barriers due to the terrain at times from her area.

Welcome Development

Professor Emmanuel Kaunda, Regional Fish Node Coordinator, said that the initiative is part of the broader efforts to ensure fish is available to rural people despite being far away from major water bodies such as Lake Malawi. More importantly it was a welcome development, as it supplements local people initiatives to acquire benefits that are long term, while at the same time forging ahead with their normal farming activities.

In 2002, African leaders meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, made a commitment to increase funding to develop agriculture and increase food security on the continent. To do this, they agreed to increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10 per cent of their national budgets and to raise agricultural productivity by at least 6 per cent. In September 2013 over 150 experts met to take stock of the critical importance of that commitment and support for agricultural development.

Source: <http://www.onislam.net/english/health-and-science/science/464454-aquaculture-can-help-in-feeding-malawi.html>

13. Article Face of Malawi: Malawi farmers adopt rain-water harvesting technologies

There is steady progress in the adoption of low cost technologies of harvesting and storing rain-water by farmers compared to the use of water tanks, says Rainwater Harvesting Association of Malawi.

Rain-water harvesting is a method of inducing, collecting, storing and conserving rain-water.

RHAM's Secretary General Mac Pherson Nthala said: "Most farmers easily take up and adopt field technologies like small farm ponds, infiltration pits because their cost is low compared to the construction of water tanks," Nthala, who is also Chief Land Resource Officer for the Lilongwe Agriculture Development Division (LADD) said.

He further said the rising cost of construction materials like cement and other related materials is putting off many people from considering the construction of tanks for harvesting and storing rain water.

The Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in conjunction with the Ministry of Water Development and Irrigation is promoting harvesting rain-water in both underground and above surfaces for agricultural use.

According to Nthala, government and civil society's interest in rainwater harvesting stems from the '00/'01 growing season in which the country experienced one of its worst droughts in so many years.

However, much as there is a call to embrace and implement all the available technologies for harvesting rainwater, it is only the low cost field technologies that are being widely practiced by farmers.

"Farmers see immediate benefits from these low cost technologies compared to water tanks," said Edson Chagunda, Senior Assistant Land Resource Conservation Officer for Lilongwe District Agriculture Development Office (DADO).

The Lilongwe DADO's office with support from various NGOs like Total Land Care, Irrigation Rural Livelihood and Agriculture Development (IRLAD) and Concern Worldwide among others is fully engaged in the implementation of rainwater harvesting activities in the district.

Chagunda said the activities target more than 4,000 farmers in Lilongwe and are much focused on low cost technologies like the making of contour mark ridges, box ridges, infiltration pits to store water and moisture content in farming fields.

"There are some organisations that are interested in providing funds for the construction of underground and above tanks as well as train people in managing these structures," he said.

The Malawi Parliament in February, 2013 passed the Water Resources Bill which, among other things, seeks to address issues of water reservoirs, pollution and conservation of catchment areas.

Source: <http://www.faceofmalawi.com/2013/03/malawi-farmers-adopt-rain-water-harvesting-technologies/>

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Summary

Is there room for the Ekari Foundation Sustainable Livelihood Programme in the rural communities of Phalombe District? If yes, what is the feasibility of the project and the advised implementation approach? To answer these questions, a four months field research was mandated by Ekari Foundation.

This report shares the results of this research in terms of garden analysis, community analysis, challenges and opportunities to conclude in how Ekari Foundation can honor its baseline « Education for Students – Sustainable livelihoods for their Communities » in a responsible, sustainable way.



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