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# ECRP NEWSLETTER



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## EDITORIAL NOTE



Dear ActionAiders,

It is reported that climate change will continue to affect all aspects of food security, especially in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, where more than 1 billion young men and women live. This is why ActionAid Malawi has been involved in interventions to mitigate the effects of climate change on food security in Malawi through the Enhancing Community Resilience Programme (ECRP).

The project was implemented in Nsanje in district as it is a district that is prone to climate change related disasters. The goal of this project was to change the lives of people by equipping them with tools to acquire and maintain food security.

This newsletter will give you a peek into the lives of people and families that were forever changed due to interventions under the ECRP programme. The interventions that changed their lives include but are not limited to; small scale irrigation schemes, marketing crop enterprise, catchment conservations, and energy cooking stoves.

This september as ECRP comes to an end we would like to announce that we met all our targets with flying colors. We are also very grateful to all ActionAiders who were directly or indirectly part of this project.

Zealous ActionAider,

Chikondi Chabvuta, Regional and Thematic Manager-South-Food Security, Emergencies, and Resilience Building





## **ActionAid brings hope to the hopeless communities in Nsanje district**

Nsanje is one of the districts in the country that continue to experience disasters that are caused by climate change effects. For the past decades, the district is characterized with either floods or droughts leaving the community members in helpless situations. For the past six years ActionAid Malawi has been working in Nsanje district through the “Enhanced Community Reliance Programme” (ECRP). Through the programme, ActionAid has been working with communities in Nsanje to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) into a tried and tested package of interventions aimed at improving the livelihoods and enhancing the resilience of vulnerable rural communities with funding from Department for International Development (DFID). The programme has enabled people to move beyond survival and subsistence, to enjoy thriving and dignified lives. This means enough food, steady income, safe conditions and confidence to embrace new opportunities and manage risks that's threaten them.

The goal of ECRP was to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and increase vulnerable communities' resilience to shocks such as floods. We aimed to help people earn a living in a sustainable, profitable way, incorporating natural resource management and risk reduction and increasing their ability to adapt, as well as to have a voice in decisions affecting them.

The change in the lives of marginalized and vulnerable people from the ECRP work is documented and being shared for learning purposes.



## Mlolo communities graced with a MK221 Million Irrigation Scheme



Peter Chavi, chairman of Irrigation scheme

Peter Chavi, 46 years, of Traditional Authority Mlolo in Nsanje district has been a farmer for over 25 years now. In 20 years Peter used to farm but hunger never left his household. As a subsistent farmer, Peter used to depend on growing maize for food. However with the disasters that disturb Nsanje every year, Peter would in most cases have no harvests because of either the floods or the dry spells that characterize the weather pattern in Nsanje.

“For so many years I struggled to make ends meet, I used to go fishing and sell the little fish I could harvest as a coping mechanism but this was not enough to supply all the needs of my family”

“My family’s income and welfare have now changed for the better since I joined the irrigation scheme three years ago which ActionAid constructed for the communities. I have access to two hectares of land where I grow a different types of crops ranging from maize, rice, beans and vegetable. Through the scheme, I am able to have access to agricultural information through the farmers groups, access to better markets for my crops and I have access to water throughout the year. I grow crops three times a year on this plot and this year I have harvested 34 bags of rice which I have sold and have earned K478,000. which I will use to buy iron sheets for my third house that I have constructed using proceeds from irrigation farming,” said Peter.

But Peter is not the only man whose life has transformed due to establishment of the irrigation scheme which covers 62 hectares of land and has 1768 farmers who are benefiting from this magnificent irrigation scheme. The scheme is helping farmers to address hunger and poverty.

## Small Scale Irrigation & VSL Improving Gladys Mathenga's



### Standard Of Living

An important continued trend within ECRP as a programme is the increasing number of people involved in three or more of its interventions. The programme learnt that households will be able to bounce back if they are involved in at least three climate-smart practices or disaster risk reduction transformative strategies.

Gladys Mathenga from GVH Chapinga, Nsambo Kulira Village, joined ECRP in 2013. The 43 year old, Gladys is involved in 3 interventions namely; small scale irrigation, goat pass-on and village savings and loans.

She joined Zilibwino VSL group (comprised of 16 members; 2 males, 14 females) in 2013 and then used that years' savings to buy a cow at MK165, 000.00(currently pregnant). In 2014 she bought a bicycle and bricks to build



Gladys joined small scale irrigation intervention in 2016. She feels that crop yield is high when she plants at the irrigation site than in other areas. In 2016/17 she managed to produce 10 bags of maize and 17.5kgs of beans. Income realized from the agricultural products was used to buy uniforms and other school items for her five children.

She pointed out that every technology and knowledge gained through the ECRP project will be used to develop her household. Though the project is phasing out, the VSL groups will always be there.

In a nutshell, the ECRP project has made a lasting change in this woman's life. She has been economically empowered in a way that will affect her children positively, thus changing the narrative.



## ECRP: Feeding, Sheltering and Educating Vulnerable Communities



Eliza Jampa from GVH chapinga (Khavala Village), T/A Mloro joined ECRP in 2014. 44 year old Eliza is involved in multiple ECRP interventions namely; small scale irrigation, village savings & loans and livestock pass-on. She has two children, two are in secondary school and three are in primary school.

She started small scale irrigation during the 2014/15 growing season and was able to produce twelve bags of maize and fourteen bags of maize in the 2015/16 harvest season. Before she joined the ECRP small scale irrigation intervention she used to produce five to six bags of maize per harvest on the same piece of land (0.1 hectares) because she had little to no knowledge on modern farming practices.

She joined the VSL intervention (Tayambako VSL group) in 2014 and saved 82,000 (2014/15) which was used to buy 34 iron sheets, in 2016 she saved 98,000 which was used to buy bricks, cement and pay labor for building a house. The remainder of the savings was used to pay school fees for her





two children. She also acquired a loan from the VSL group and invested in rice production and she expects to harvest at least thirty two bags of rice which will be used to feed her family as well as a source of income to pay school fees for her two children.

Eliza also received two goats from the ECRP goat pass-on intervention under the El Nino in 2015 and currently she has five goats, the goats provide manure which she uses in maize production.

At the end of the interview Eliza Jampa commented that before the project she had no proper house, livestock and could not produce enough food for her family. Though the ECRP project is phasing out, she is not worried since she has acquired a lot of knowledge and skills in the past three years and she feels that she is in a position to share her knowledge with other farmers who were not able to benefit from the project while it was still running.



## ECRP flips the script for Stanley Dick



Stanley Dick is one of the beneficiaries who hails from GVH Mbangu T/A Malemia, in Nsanje. He is married with four children; two boys and two girls. He is one of the lead farmers taking part in the small scale irrigation scheme. He was selected to be the chairperson of the scheme based on his hard work. The scheme holds about 200 farmers who are benefitting directly from the ECRP project. Dick farms on approximately 65m by 17m piece of land at the scheme and another piece of land in the upper area. Other interventions that he took part in under ECRP are the marketing crop enterprises, seed systems, catchment conservation, energy cooking stoves.

Since Dick started the program of ECRP in 2012 he says, “Life was hard at first before I had the opportunity of joining this program. I used to harvest

very little from the piece of land I own. I did not know how to farm with the environmental changes. I lacked seed and knowledge on climate resistant farming practices. Now things have changed for the better”.

I heard about the project in my village then other interested farmers and I formed a group. Through the ECRP project we were provided with cement, treadle pumps, hose pipes and seed. After the first thirty two wells were dug things changed for the better.



In 2013, when I planted cabbage I harvested 160 cabbage heads and made MK60, 000 from the sales. I used that money to buy my first cow. This encouraged me to work harder in 2014. I planted cabbage and tomatoes and made MK 300,000 when I sold the produce. Using that money, I bought two more cows and an ox-cart that I use at the farm and lend to other farmers at a fee. My family now has enough food and money because I now farm three times a year in both the rainy and winter season. As of 2017, I have nine cows and a house that cost me about MK 780,000. This would have not happened if I was not part of ECRP.



Stanley boldly states “ECRP has really made an impact not only to me but also to many people in T/A Malemia and Mgabu that they are working in, and it’s sad that you are leaving but again ECRP should come again to reach other people who are now keen to learn and make an impact in their lives”.

## MONTHLY UPDATE

1. Mzimba LRP conducted training for activists in Tax Justice in collaboration with KHOFEDE and TACO Community Based Organisations.
2. In Rumphi LRP, Chikulamayembe and Rumphi Women Forum brought their executives together to review and plan for 2018 to 2020.
3. Early this month NORAD project was under review to assess its performance as it refocuses its future funding. The project has since seen the increased budget allocation for education up to 18.1% due to advocacy for education financing and more teachers have been deployed to rural primary schools and are now on pay role.
4. Safe schools project called on its stakeholders for orientation of their role in the project in Lilongwe and Mzimba districts. Among the stakeholders were Police officers who among other things will be responsible for ensuring they create a conducive and safe environment for children in homes and on the way to school or home. In addition they will also be opening complaint boxes in the project’s targeted schools.
5. In the month, the education theme joined the rest of the world in commemorating International Day of the Girl Child. National events took place in Chitipa and Mangochi. Julie spoke on behalf of the Girls Not Brides and ActionAid calling on all duty bearers to ensure girls stay in school. She further called on girls to say No to early marriages. In Lilongwe ActionAid and GIZ visited the Adolescent Girls and Young Women project in to appreciate the changes the girls are experiencing. During the visit, the team visited a training in production of sanitary pads at Bwaila Secondary School and also an out—of-school girl club in Area 23.



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