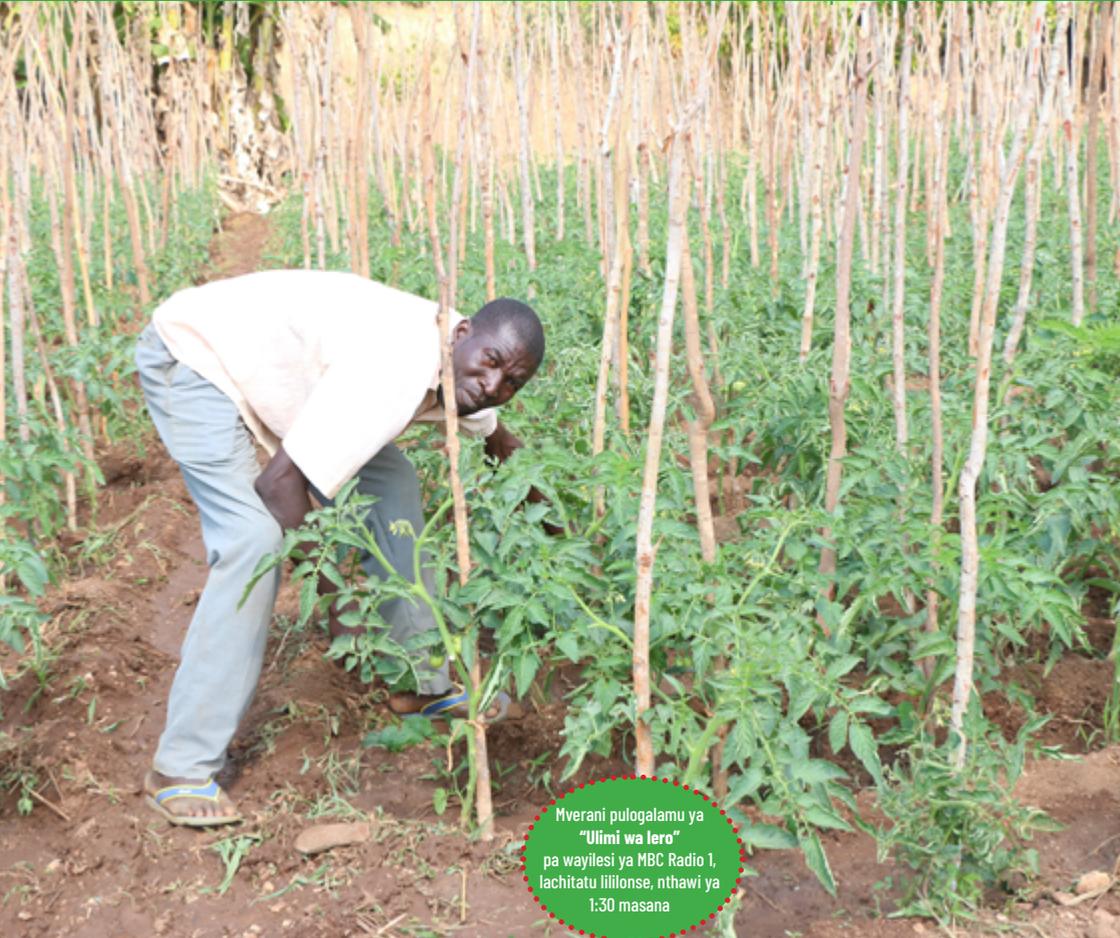


SAPP



Investing in rural people

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION PROGRAMME | Issue 4



Mverani pulogalamu ya
"Ulimi wa lero"
pa wayilesi ya MBC Radio 1,
lachitatu lililonse, nthawi ya
1:30 masana

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SAPP-Malawi

SUCCESS STORIES | CASE STUDIES

Promoting Sustainable Good Agriculture Practices

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Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme

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Editor's Note

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In this Fourth Edition of the Sustainable Agriculture Production Program (SAPP) Success Stories, we present achievements of Smallholder Farmers who have adopted various Sustainable Good Agriculture Practices with the support from SAPP.

SAPP is being implemented in six districts in Malawi namely; Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Balaka, Lilongwe, Nkhotakota and Chitipa. In all those districts the Programme has made significant differences in farmer's lives in the areas of Farmer Adoption of Sustainable Good Agriculture Practices as well as in Adaptive Research and Seed Certification.

In this Fourth Edition, you will get a picture of how farmer's lives have changed since the introduction of the Programme. Topical areas that have been covered include; Seed Multiplication, Livestock

Production, Goat Pass-on Programme, Agribusiness, Conservation Agriculture and Household Approach.

We hope our selection of success stories will inspire you to adopt and Practice Sustainable Good Agriculture Practices which will in turn improve the Country's Economic Growth. Lastly, we would like to acknowledge all the subject matter specialists who contributed to the compilation of the Case Studies, SAPP Desk Officers from Departments of Extension, Crops, Livestock, Land resources and Agriculture Research. We would also like to thank the following writers and editors from Ministry of Agriculture; McLean Mafubza, Cynthia Mahata, Tuchitechi Hawonga, Maxwell Kupatsa, Khalani Makunje, Harriet Kakhobwe, Christopher Joseph and Zodwa Munthali.

From the National Programme Coordinator



Rex Baluwa

National Programme Coordinator

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this fourth edition of the Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP) success stories which has been consolidated from beneficiaries of the programme. SAPP is being implemented in Chitipa, Nkhosha, Lilongwe, Balaka, Chiradzulu and Blantyre.

I am delighted to be a part of the team that is changing lives under the programme. A lot has happened since the inception of the programme in 2012. To date, SAPP has disbursed MK825,054,597 million (USD 1,100,073) as grants under the window of the Village Challenge Fund (VCF) to deserving 386 farmer groups benefiting a total of 16,615 farmers (6,768 males, 9,847 females, 1,807 youth). Some of the enterprises that are being implemented include; seed multiplication, piggery, mushroom production, irrigation, bee keeping, dairy production and small stock production. I

request all SAPP implementing district councils to provide the necessary support to ensure transparency and accountability in utilisation of the VCF grants to its purpose.

I am also pleased to report that 227 Field Assistants (FAs) that were trained at Natural Resources College under Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) have so far finished their studies. The Malawi Government organised district specific interviews for the FAs so that successful candidates will be recruited as full time Agricultural Extension Development Officers (AEDOs). The programme continues supporting the training of 50 Assistant Veterinary Officers (AVOs) at Mikolongwe.

Throughout the period of implementation, two regional awards were won by the Programme, namely: (i) The 2017 Conservation Agriculture (CA) Model Farmer Award and Certificate for the Eastern and Southern Africa won by Mr. Oris Chikwati won and (ii) 2019 IFAD Gender Award for the Eastern and Southern Africa.

SAPP has registered great achievements in promoting adoption of Good Agricultural Practices as highlighted under the section of "Summary of Achievements" in this publication. Owing to that, IFAD would like to extend the Programme for two years from 2021 to 2023 with resources amounting to USD 13.8 million for scaling up activities.

I would like to thank all stakeholders that are participating in the Programme. It is my hope that they will continue providing the necessary support and attention in ensuring that the programme delivers according to its objectives. Let me also thank the team that compiled the case studies for the job well done.

SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS



Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP) is being implemented by the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Agriculture. This Programme is for nine years from 2012 to 2021. The goal is to contribute to reduction of poverty and improved food security among the rural population. The specific development objective is to achieve a viable and sustainable smallholder agricultural sector employing good agricultural practices (GAPs).

The total Programme costs is USD 51.1 million and IFAD finances about 89.3% of the total programme cost which comprises a loan of USD 22.85 million under highly-concessional terms and a grant of an equal amount. The Government of Malawi (GoM) finances USD 4.2 million (8.3%) of the total Programme cost through taxes and staff salaries and beneficiaries contribute with some inputs for around USD 1.2 million (2.4%) of total programme costs. As of 30th September, 2020 the Programme reached a cumulative disbursement of 99% of the IFAD funded resources.

The Programme has reached total of 203,687 farming households (106,147 MHH, 97,540 FHH and 8,973 youth) against a project target of

200,000 households (120,000 MHH and 80,000 FHH) representing 99% achievement. In addition, 10,059 lead farmers (5,372 males, 4,687 females and 1,850 youth) out of the project target of 10,000 (100%) were reached with training on different GAPs and they implemented specialised agricultural technologies.

A total of 77,445 farmers out of 17,070 were trained in dietary diversification representing 487%. Farmers are able to prepare different balanced and nutritious food using locally available foods. To complement this, the Annual Outcome Survey (AOS) of 2017 noted that of nutrition activities have resulted in increased dietary diversification; 65% of the beneficiary households against a baseline target of 50% practice food diversification. In addition, 48,364 households are involved in Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF) out of appraisal target of 16,900 households representing an achievement of 286%. The overachievement is a result of high demand by households to rear livestock, grow vegetables, grow fruits and even fish ponds within the surroundings.

The Programme has reached a total of 505,300HA of land under improved management

practices which is also referred to as area under GAPs. This area achieved is 62% of the total actual cultivable land and it represents 41% of the total potential cultivable land in the six districts. These GAPs which are implemented include: area under seed multiplication, area under pit planting, area under one-one planting, area under improved crop varieties, drought tolerant crops, area under fall army wormy control, area under intercropping, agroforestry, conservation agriculture, manure application.

On seed multiplication intervention, a total of 655MT of legume seed has been certified by Seed Services Unit (SSU) since the Programme started, representing 73% of Programme target of 900MT. This was represented by groundnuts (519MT), soybeans (82.4MT), pigeon peas (19MT), cowpeas (33.64MT) and beans (1.15MT).

Goats and chickens are procured and distributed to farmers on pass on arrangement, in efforts to broaden livestock ownership, improving nutrition on and household incomes as well as strengthening manure making. A total of 22,923 goats were distributed to farmers where every beneficiary got 5 goats; the population had increased to 50,027 goats. Besides, chickens had increased to 211,873 from initial injection of 47,871 representing a 343% increase.

Under the small stock pass-on scheme; the expected outcomes are 60% of targeted households own goats, against a baseline value of 36%; 80% of targeted households own chickens against a baseline value of 56%. According to a Household Approach Assessment which was undertaken in Chitipa, Lilongwe and Chiradzulu in 2018 showed increase in proportion of households that own goats and chickens by averages of 63% and 79.8% respectively. This

increase in the SAPP implementing districts is attributed to the small stock pass on scheme that is promoted by the Programme.

The Annual Outcome Survey (AOS) that was conducted in 2017 revealed the following Programme Outcomes: **(i) Increased average yield;** 71% of the programme beneficiaries (against a baseline of 50%) reported that their average yield was increasing. **(ii) Increased mean annual incomes:** 62% beneficiaries reported that their annual incomes over the past four years (2013-2016) were increasing unlike non-beneficiaries (37.9%). Beneficiaries are able to accumulate some household assets and are able to purchase farm inputs, pay school fees, and afford improved nutrition. **(iii) Increased adoption of some GAPs;** there is high adoption of good agricultural practices since farmers are able to learn from demonstrations that are being mounted by lead farmers in their locality. For example, in 2016/17 growing season, majority of SAPP beneficiaries participated in conservation agriculture (75%) and manure making and application (72%). About 81% of the Programme beneficiaries were satisfied with their participation in SAPP activities and the agricultural advisory services rendered by the Programme.

To complement the above, the Midline Impact Assessment which was conducted by IFAD in 2018, results indicated that SAPP has had a significant positive impact on the adoption of a number of GAPs. Specifically, results show a positive impact on adoption of minimum tillage, crop rotation, permanent organic cover, legumes cultivation as either sole stand or intercropped, legume intercropping, and box and contour ridges.

INSPIRING FARMERS IN MALAWI AND BEYOND, ORIS CHIKWATI THE GIANT



Oris stoking maize harvest in his field

I was a bit skeptical of Conservation Agriculture because it went against how I have always grown crops and how my parents and their parents have always done it, but now I wish I had adopted this technology earlier

-Oris.

When Oris Chikwati of Usigala Village Traditional Authority Msamala in Balaka district was chosen as a lead farmer in 2012, all he knew was that his job was to inspire other farmers to adopt recommended agricultural practices in his village. He had no idea that someday, he was going to inspire farmers in the whole of Southern Africa and beyond.

Oris was among a group of farmers who were selected to be lead farmers and trained in Conservation



Oris Chikwati proudly showing his symbolic awards

Agriculture in Balaka Extension Planning Area (EPA). He grows maize and pigeon peas. Before he started practicing conservation agriculture, he used to harvest about 30 bags of maize weighing 50 kilograms each, but now his maize yield has tripled.

"I was a bit skeptical of Conservation Agriculture because it went against how I have always grown crops and how my parents and their parents have always done it, but now I wish I had adopted this technology earlier", said Oris. He added that he is expecting to harvest 90 bags of maize.

The Ministry of Agriculture, through the Sustainable Agriculture Production Program (SAPP) is promoting Conservation Agriculture amongst farmers as one way of mitigating the effects of climate change. Oreen Mtambo, Agriculture Extension Development Officer

(AEDO) for Balaka section said that farmers in the area have been greatly affected by drought as Balaka is one of the rainfall deprived districts in the country. She said this has led to low levels of production and farmers have been

struggling to harvest enough for food or marketing, hence the decision to champion Conservation Agriculture through lead farmers. Mtambo went ahead to attribute the successful adoption of Conservation Agriculture in the area to the great work done by lead farmers championing the technology, especially Oris Chikwati.

To date, Oris has 15 follower farmers; 10 females and 5 males. Looking at all that he has achieved, it is no wonder that a number of farmers are adopting recommended Good Agricultural Practices. "My family's livelihood has tremendously changed as we now harvest enough for food and surplus to sell", said Oris. Apart from Conservation Agriculture, he has also diversified into small stock farming to further improve his family's chances of surviving natural shocks such as prolonged droughts.

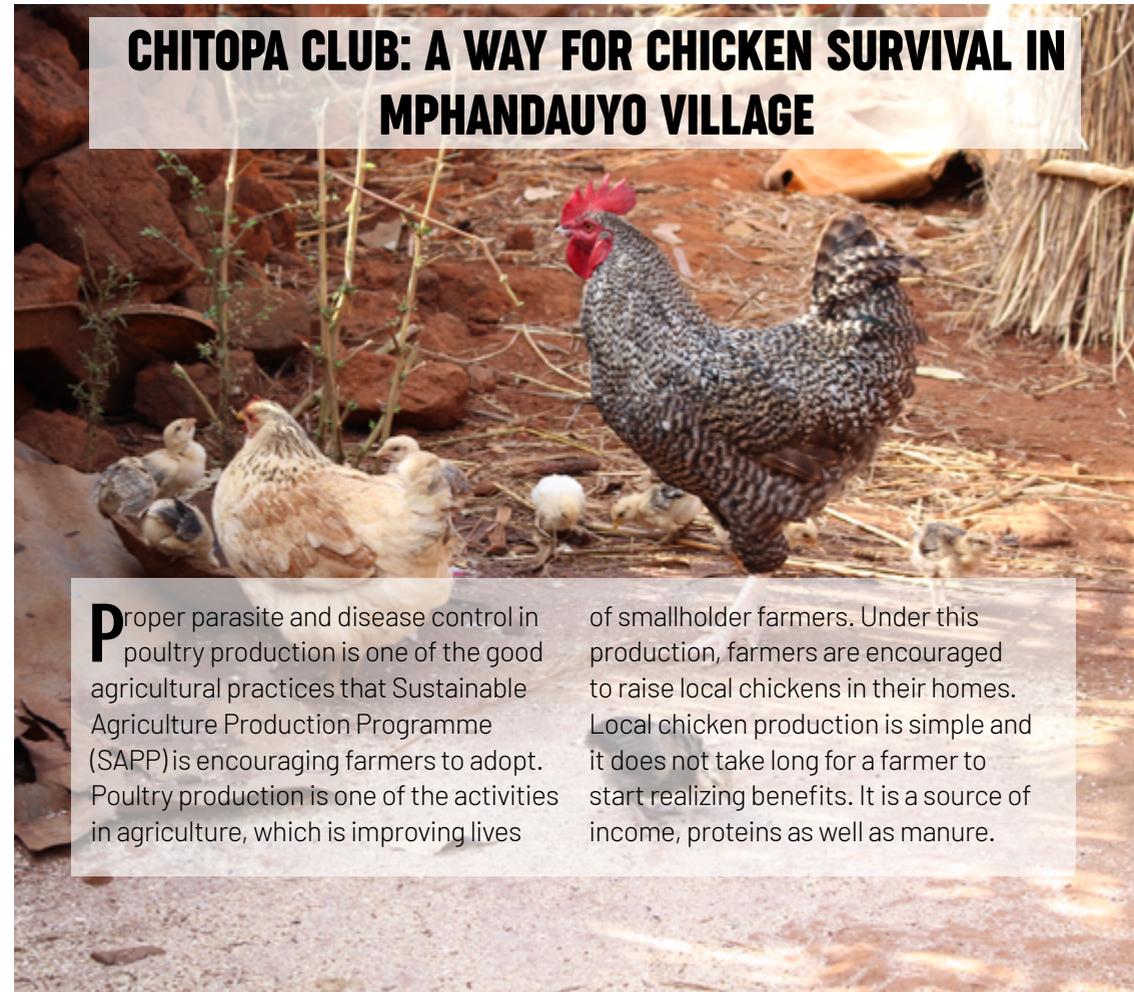
Using proceeds from selling maize and other crops, he bought two goats, chickens and five pigeons which he has managed to multiply into seven, 30 and 20 respectively. His agro business has also grown as he has now ventured into buying and selling maize. In 2017, he made MK1,500,000.00 revenue from farming.

With these achievements, Oris has grabbed the attention of authorities in the agriculture sector and he has won a number of accolades for his

achievements. On the local scene, he was at one time awarded the best Conservation Agriculture lead farmer of the year for Machinga Agricultural Development Division (ADD) while on the international scene; he won the best Conservation Agriculture Model Farmer Southern Africa Award.

Apart from supporting training for lead farmers in the area, SAPP ensures continuity of the benefits by supporting refresher courses for the lead farmers and extension staff.

CHITOPA CLUB: A WAY FOR CHICKEN SURVIVAL IN MPHANDAUYO VILLAGE



Proper parasite and disease control in poultry production is one of the good agricultural practices that Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP) is encouraging farmers to adopt. Poultry production is one of the activities in agriculture, which is improving lives

of smallholder farmers. Under this production, farmers are encouraged to raise local chickens in their homes. Local chicken production is simple and it does not take long for a farmer to start realizing benefits. It is a source of income, proteins as well as manure.

Although farmers are encouraged to keep chicken to aid in meeting their daily needs easily, farmers meet many challenges in raising local chickens. One of the challenges includes different diseases that attack chickens as they grow. One of the most common diseases is coccidiosis that kills both chicks and fully grown chickens if left untreated. The disease is caused by a virus and it spread easily among the chickens. It is very important to protect chickens from coccidiosis and treat infected ones if a farmer wishes to make progress and benefit from chicken production. It is advisable to separate healthy chicken from sick ones to avoid the spread of this disease.

Chitopa club from Mphandaoyo village, Traditional Authority Kabudula in Ukwe Extension Planning Area (EPA) in Lilongwe district is working tirelessly to combat coccidiosis in chickens. The club started in 2017 with the aim of vaccinating chickens against coccidiosis in the village. The club has 10 members, four females and six males. The chairperson of Chitopa club takes lead in buying and vaccinating chickens in the village. He was trained on how to vaccinate chickens. All villagers who have chickens in this village are asked to pay the agreed sum of money based on the amount of vaccine required in order for their chickens to be vaccinated.

Before the club started, many farmers did not have interest in local chicken production because chickens were just

dying from the disease such that the number of chickens in Mphandaoyo village could not go beyond 300, now the farmers have smiles on their faces as they can keep chickens with no fear of losing them. The number of chickens now has increased to 4000 and almost every household has chickens. Thanks to Chitopa club.

Farmers from Mphandaoyo are now reaping the fruits of local chicken production. Catherine Mtambo is one of the farmers who has benefited from Chitopa club. She started with one chicken but now her chickens have increased to 35. She is now making manure from chicken droppings and her farm produce has increased over the past two years. This year she is expecting to harvest 25 bags of maize weighing 50 kg each on a space of 0.5 hectares where she used to harvest 10 bags. Her life and family has greatly improved financially and health-wise. The chickens are now the source of income and proteins for the family. She is able to pay school fees and other expenses for her children through chicken production. Catherine managed to buy a goat after selling some of her chickens. Her vision is to build a house using the money she is going to raise from chicken production.

Anthony Kabwana is another farmer who has benefited from Chitopa club. Before, he had 45 chickens that later died from coccidiosis. After the club

started, he went back to keeping chickens. As of now, the number of his chickens has increased to 35. He also makes manure from chicken droppings known as Chinkhuzi that he applies in his 2 hectares' maize farm. Before the use of this manure, Kabwana used to harvest about 30 bags of maize on this farm but now he produces 60 bags weighing 50 kg each on the same farm. The chickens are now the source of income and proteins for his family. He has managed to buy two

goats with the money he had raised from the chicken production.

Chitopa club wishes to have more training on chicken vaccination so that every member knows how to vaccinate chickens. With the benefits that members of the club are getting, they are advising fellow farmers to create clubs to combat coccidiosis in their areas in order to improve chicken production in Malawi.

SAPP PASS-ON PROGRAMME GAME CHANGER TO FARMERS' LIVELIHOODS



Mgundo feeding some of his goats

A long time poverty struck Henry Mgundo is a contemporary successful farmer. From Nambazo village, Traditional Authority Samala, in Balaka district, he shares good news of how Goat pass-on Programme introduced by Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP) has contributed to changing from poverty to prosperity.

“Had this been in the past, you would have already seen drama by now. In the shortest period you have been here you would have already witnessed a quarrel between me and those I owed huge amounts of money”, Mgundo explains how loan

burden made his life hell on earth. He used to harvest little every season due to lack of access to fertilizer and manure. Consequently, hunger and other needs deficiency crept into his household year in year out. Being a father of five, paying school fees for all children was even a much bigger challenge. The family’s situation left him with no choice but to fall into the trap of borrowing money with exorbitant interest rates. Failure to pay back the loans always landed him into fights and confiscation of the little possession he had. Mgundo admits that he completely saw no exit door from his abject poverty.



Mgundo letting his goats out to feed

Mgundo is now able to see a bright future for his family. Thanks to SAPP’s pass-on programme. He harvests enough for his family from his fields because of manure produced by goats he received from SAPP in 2016 and fertilizer he purchases using money from the goat sales. He uses remains from field harvests as goat feed. He has bought land where he intends to build business houses and the project is in progress. He has also bought 30 iron sheets. His family enjoys proper diet. He consumes meat and milk produced by the goats. He is able and comfortably pays school fees for his children at secondary school level. Mgundo has enough food throughout the year.

The secret of Mgundo’s drastic

“ This pass-on programme is a game changer for farmers. It is a big push for us; the capital we need.

improvement at his household is five goats he received from SAPP in 2016. In 2015, SAPP officials promised a group of 15 farmers to which Mgundo is a member that they would give each farmer five goats. According to their agreement, each farmer was to pass on five goats to another farmer after the goats they received bred. The agreement came to pass in 2016. Mgundo received his five goats. He passed on five goats to another farmer in 2017 as a way of honoring the agreement with SAPP. At present, he has 27 goats after selling and slaughtering many others to support his family.

After attending various trainings from SAPP on how to take care of the goats, Mgundo feeds the goats and cleans the goats’ khola regularly. He does not tether his goats. Instead, he looks after them as they feed in the bush. He removes dung from the khola on a regular basis and gives them proper medication to protect them from parasites and diseases.

Mgundo hails SAPP for reaching out to poor people in the rural areas. “This pass-on programme is a game changer for farmers. It is a big push for us; the capital we need”, he explains as he commends SAPP to keep up the good work.

MULAMBE CLUSTER CROWNS VILLAGE CHALLENGE FUND KING WEAPON IN POVERTY REDUCTION



Zione Valaiye and husband show off their children's bicycles in front of their house

In Chiradzulu district, Traditional Authority Ntchena, Likhomo village, a group of passionate farmers paint a picture of how Village Challenge Fund (VCF) transformed households of individual members of a farmer group called Mlambe Cluster.

VCF simply refers to money the cluster received from Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP) as a matching grant to help the group carry out its profitable farming activities effectively and efficiently.

I used to harvest a maximum of 10 bags of maize of 50 Kilograms each from my 1-acre field. With the coming of VCF, I am able to buy enough fertilizer for my field. I now harvest around 40 bags of 50 Kilograms each from the same piece of land

-Zione Valaiye



Black posing with her cow as it feeds

After experiencing the benefits of the fund, through fertilizers and dairy cows bought with the money they received, cluster members unanimously utter that the significance of VCF in hunger and poverty reduction is too big to be ignored.

"I used to harvest a maximum of 10 bags of maize of 50 Kilograms each from my 1-acre field. With the coming of VCF, I am able to buy enough fertilizer for my field. I now harvest around 40 bags of 50 Kilograms each from the same piece of land," says a member and chairperson of Mlambe Cluster, Zione Valaiye.

The increase in yield is because Valaiye has changed her approach to farming. Unlike in the past, the

fund has enabled her to buy and apply enough fertilizer on her field. She also applies manure produced by the cows obtained through Mlambe Cluster. Valaiye adds that the increase is also attributed to Conservation Agriculture which she adopted after receiving information on the same from SAPP.

The Mlambe Cluster chairperson says she has realized multiple benefits through the VCF. She bought land where she is constructing seven business houses. Her children used to walk a long distance to school, but now she has managed to buy a bicycle for each of them through VCF initiative. She has also bought furniture. "I no longer sleep on a mat as I used to. I have a bed now" said Zione.



Malita Black poses in front of her house

Another member, Malita Black shares a similar experience. She used to wrestle with hunger year in year out, but now she harvests more each year. Opposed to a dilapidated grass-thatched mud house she lived in, she now enjoys the luxury of a brick iron sheet-roofed house she has built through VCF. "I want to buy a motorbike, and with VCF I have no doubt, I will," Black utters.

Mlambe Cluster is a millionaire group. Its members equally enjoy easy access to farm inputs at the beginning of each rainy season because of the millions the cluster possesses. The genesis of the group's success is a 6.8 million Village Challenge Fund they received from SAPP after a successful proposal. "We noticed that our group was not making progress because we were not following modern farming practices. So, we sought advice from

the Extension worker in our Extension Planning Area (EPA) who advised us to write a proposal," Funny Kukongola, the group's secretary explains.

After a positive response on their proposal, adherence to a

clear vision and proper budgeting has also been key in ensuring the cluster's success. The group has recently bought 10 dairy cows and one bull using the fund. They bought poles, iron sheets and cement together with other materials necessary for constructing cattle kraals. At present, manure produced by the cows is being used in the fields and on their irrigated vegetables as well as other crops in their dimba fields. "The benefit of money and milk from the cows is inevitable," says Charles Jumbe, former chairperson of the cluster.

Mlambe cluster is subtle in the way it maintains and increases the amount of money it possesses. Its money is kept in the group's account at the bank. When rainy season is nigh, some money is withdrawn from the account to buy farm inputs. The inputs are shared among members.

After harvest, each member pays back to the group the value of materials he/she collected.

The benefits members of Mlambe Cluster have experienced have coerced them to coin VCF a major tool in the fight against hunger and poverty among rural farmers.

"We thank SAPP for introducing this fund. It is our wish that it reaches out to more people," says Charles Jumbe. The group wants each member to have a vehicle and furniture with the passing of time. "We also want to start taming layers very soon," explains the former chairperson of the group.

FROM PENURY TO PROSPERITY: A FARMER GIVES CREDIT TO HOUSEHOLD APPROACH



Natumumbwa Farmer Group holding a meeting

"The loan has not only assisted our families financially, the interest has increased our capital"

-Eliam Kalinga.

Farmers of Mweneiyela village, Traditional Authority Mwaulambia in Chitipa district were miserable and hopeless as they harvested little and hardly sustained their families. They lived in dilapidated houses and failed to send their children to school. Village Challenge Fund (VCF) has been the turning point. Come 2021, the farmers plan to plant a maize mill within their village as they realize more and more profits from their farming businesses.

Established in March 2016 with only 8 males and 12 females, Natumumbwa Farmer Group comprises 43 members (18

males and 25 females). Hunger, malnutrition and low income levels were some of the reasons that prompted the establishment of the group.

With an aim of mitigating the challenges faced, the group identified a plot where they produced maize under irrigation. They contributed MK200.00 per person every month and managed to buy agricultural inputs for their maize enterprise whose produce was shared among themselves. Later, agriculture experts introduced farming business concept to them. The group harvested more, kept enough and sold surplus.

Natumumbwa group became more focused, dedicated and organized such that in 2017 they were given a grant worthy MK1,055,000.00

(One million and fifty-five thousand kwacha) under Sustainable Agriculture Production Programme (SAPP) through Village Challenge Fund (VCF).

The group diversified its production after receiving the grant. They grew different types of crops and reared chickens and pigs. The group had five acres for maize and one acre for rice production among other crops for a start. They were into real business but never forgot their own wellbeing. They used to buy agricultural inputs which they shared among themselves to aid production in their individual fields.

“After we were taken through farming business concept by our agriculture extension officers, we decided to diversify. Currently, we grow a variety of crops, keep

poultry and rear livestock,” explained John Siyeni, the Secretary for the group.

Among other interventions, members of the group make manure, adopted pit planting technology and conservation agriculture such that the fertility



Alfred Chiwona sits in front of his house

of the soils in their community has been restored.

In December 2019, Natumumbwa group realized about MK2,700,000.00 from their sales. They are optimistic to realize even more profits in the 2019/2020 growing season.

The group plans to plant a maize mill by 2021 within their village. Currently, there is no maize mill within the community despite having access to electricity. So, they travel a long distance to reach one. The site for the maize mill has been already identified. This year (2020), the group will mould bricks and construct a structure where the maize mill will be planted.

As one way of ensuring that the individual farmers are able to support their families financially, each year the group puts aside a reasonable amount of money which is shared among themselves in form of village savings loan which attracts 10% interest.

“The loan has not only assisted our families financially, the interest has increased our capital”, added the Chairperson of the group, EIAM Kalinga.

After getting the loan, Alfred Chiwona, a member of the group, started a small business. He used to buy local chickens and sold them at a good price in Chitipa boma council market. He has been able to construct a good house.

Anna Namwambi who is a member of the group did not only learn and venture into production of tomatoes and other horticultural crops; she also makes juices, bread and cakes from her farm produce. She has seen the importance of working in a group and value addition.

“There is power in cooperation, I used to hear of ‘pakhomo pa mwana alilenji’, I am like them today, my family has six food groups all year round, my family is healthy,” emphasized Namwambi. Anna also ably pays school fees for one of her children at Yamba Secondary School in Chitipa district.

John Siyeni produces tobacco among other crops. In his production, he mostly uses Chinadango manure which he makes by himself. Since he started using Chinadango, the cost of production has been low and this has made him realize a lot of returns. He also managed to construct a house.

Village Challenge Fund (VCF) is an open financing instrument/mechanism for channeling funds in a one off non-reimbursable arrangement to eligible groups in the rural areas/village for a particular development objective. VCF aims to promote widespread adoption of good agricultural practices leading to improved agricultural productivity, incomes and nutrition of smallholder farmers.

CHIRADZULU FARMER HAILS SEED MULTIPLICATION FOR BRINGING CHANGE



Gertrude Chikonga and her husband posing in front of their iron sheet-roofed house

Gertrude Chikonga is a Lead farmer of Nkonga village, Traditional Authority Likoswe in Chiradzulu district. She hails seed multiplication program for bringing a ray of happiness to her family.

Gertrude used to grow maize on her 0.2-hectare piece of land from where she usually harvested three bags weighing 50kgs each. As compared to the needs of her family, the maize harvest was not enough to meet them all.

I am not employed, but I can assure you that at my house we never say we are poor. This is because we have embraced farming as a business through seed multiplication

-Gertrude.

In 2013, she joined a soya bean seed multiplication group called 'Titukuke'. The group started the same year the Sustainable Agriculture Production Program (SAPP) was introduced in the village with training on Good Agriculture Practices. Farmers were trained on concepts of one-one planting, farming as a business, and seed multiplication among others. The farmers were empowered to form the seed multiplication group after receiving the training and soya bean seed from SAPP. The group started with 10 members; seven females and three males.

In 2013/2014 growing season, Titukuke seed multiplication group started realizing benefits of seed multiplication after selling 10 bags of soya bean seed weighing 50kgs each at MK200/kg. However, this was not very satisfying to the group because they sold at a low price.

In 2018, the group took an initiative to search for markets that would offer better prices for their produce. They found a promising market for their seed with Multi Seeds Company Limited (MUSECO) which promised to buy their seed at MK600/kg. In 2019, they sold 1, 417kgs of soya bean seed to MUSECO from which they realized MK850, 200.00. The money was shared among the group members.

Little by little, using proceeds from seed multiplication and

maize harvest, Gertrude and her husband managed to construct a house roofed with iron sheets, thus making a shift from a grass-thatched house they used to live in. They are also able to pay school fees for their children who are in secondary school.

Gertrude says much of the change that she has seen in her family's wellbeing is as a result of what she has been realizing through the seed multiplication group.

"I am not employed, but I can assure you that at my house we never say we are poor. This is because we have embraced farming as a business through seed multiplication," says Gertrude.

In 2019/2020 growing season, the group is expecting to harvest more seed than before. They have grown soya bean on four fields of 0.4 hectares each and another four fields of 0.2 hectares each.

Gertrude is thankful to SAPP for bringing change to her family. She is not only benefiting from SAPP through seed multiplication, but she is also able to harvest 10 bags of maize weighing 50kgs each from the same 0.2-hectare field where she used to harvest three bags. This is all because she is following the principles of Good Agricultural Practices that she learned through SAPP.

USING LOCAL INCUBATORS TO MULTIPLY LOCAL CHICKENS



Local incubator for Kambwiri and family

Small stock farming has evidently proved to be one way of promoting food, income and nutrition security. Chicken production particularly local chicken is not only cheaper and easier but also profitable. Local chickens provide another source of household income in addition to crops and other agriculture commodities. Local chickens fetch higher prices compared to hybrid chickens on the market as the demand for local chicken is generally greater due to a higher client preference of their taste. Local chickens are also an easy and affordable source of protein in rural

areas from their eggs and meat.

In an effort to improve their income and nutrition status, farmers in Mzungu village, Chilaza EPA in Lilongwe are using local incubators (Kangaroo) as a way of multiplying local chickens with support from Sustainable Agriculture Production Program (SAPP).

Due to reduced population of livestock in the area, in 2018 the project distributed 250 local chickens to 25 farmers on pass-on program to help solve the problem. Before receiving the chickens, these farmers of Mkunkhumwala club,

went through a capacity building workshop in livestock farming which was organized by SAPP in conjunction with Ministry of Agriculture. It was from this training that these farmers learnt how to construct local chicken incubators using locally available materials with the aim of protecting but also multiplying chickens.

“For a start, each member in our group received 10 chickens to multiply and later on pass on to another farmer in order to increase number of beneficiaries as well as the number chickens in our area”. Said Fausita Kalipande, a beneficiary of the program.

Kalipande explained that after a chicken has hatched in a nest, the chicks are taken from the mother and are placed into an incubator also known as “kangaroo” which is built using mud and bricks. It is always warm inside the incubator. The chicks are kept in the incubators for six weeks to protect but also to help them grow faster. Meanwhile the hen is let free to begin another cycle of reproduction which helps to multiply the chickens faster. After six weeks the chicks are removed from the incubator and are taken to a bamboo basket known as “Mlezi” in Chichewa. The chicks are kept in this final stage till they are old enough to search for food and run away from predators.

From 2018, Kalipande alone, has multiplied over 250 chickens which

are helping her to solve various problems in her family. She said the chickens are helping in improving their diet because they are able to eat meat and eggs whenever they want to. In addition to the nutrition element, the proceeds realized from selling the chickens are used to buy farm inputs such as fertilizer. Foster Kambwiri, husband to Kalipande, also takes part in caring for the chickens and explained that in addition to chicken production they also learnt how to make manure known as “Chinkhudzi” using chicken and goat droppings.

“Under the pass-on program members of Mkunkhumwala received five goats each last year. These goats and chickens are giving us enough manure for our farm and are helping us to save money that goes to purchase of fertilizer.” Said Kambwiri.

Kambwiri explained that to make chinkhudzi manure, 2 bags of fertilizer is mixed with chicken or goat droppings which makes about 5 bags of manure which is able to cover their one and a half acres of land where they grow Maize and Soya.

It is very easy for a farmer to manage and make profits from local chickens compared to hybrid chickens if they have the right skills and one way of doing so is by using the incubators. Chickens are an immediate answer when a household is in need of money or relish compared to other types of livestock like cattle.

FARMING AS BUSINESS BREAKS WOMEN FROM THE POVERTY COCOON



Esmery Chewonja feeding her cattle

Agriculture is the mainstay of the country's economy. Cash crops such as tobacco, tea, cotton and sugarcane contribute significantly to the country's foreign earnings. For centuries, a significant number of farmers in Malawi have been practicing subsistence farming which heavily affects the industry's contribution to the country's economy.

The story of some women in the area of Tradition Authority (T/A) Nsomba in Blantyre was not different. For decades the women have been

practicing subsistence farming which gave them very low or no income and in some cases not even enough food for their families.

"Our lives were heavily stricken by poverty. I usually harvested eight (8) bags of maize of 50kgs each from my 0.5 hectare field which were not enough for my family. I had nothing to sell so that I could have money for other household needs. Our lives were miserable", explained Maureen Khomba of Chunga Village in Group Village Headman Mwangate in the same area.

The rays of change and success flashed the women at the end of the poverty tunnel in 2016 when Agriculture Extension Development Officer (AEDO) provided them a Farm Business School training under the Sustainable Agriculture Production Program (SAPP).

The training offered them a new and different approach to farming. They were enlightened and encouraged to start farming as a business other than conventional and subsistence farming. Among other things the women were taught how to keep farm business records and its importance, how to conduct a market research and its importance, farm business diversification and other new farming technologies.

After the training, the women formed a group which they called Mtendere Farm Business School. The group has 11 women and one man.

Chairperson of the group Esmery Chewonja indicated that the lives of women participating in the farm business school including hers have miraculously changed.

"Before I started doing what we learnt from the training, things were not well in my life. But after the training so many things have changed. I have been planting maize and soya beans while following good agricultural practices. I have also a dairy cow which I received under pass on program. I am a member of a Village Challenge Fund which we have

formed to help us make some savings. All this was not possible before the training".

Esmery says in the 2018 -2019 growing season she managed to harvest 30 bags of maize of 50kgs each from her 0.4-hectare land, three times more than what she used to get in the past. The training also taught her how to feed dairy cow which she says has improved the milk output on daily basis. She also revealed that together with her friends, they never thought of doing two enterprises of crop and livestock at the same time but the training opened their eyes.

"It was until we received the training that we started doing crop and livestock production simultaneously. The advantage is that what we get from the field is used to feed the cow and the money we get after selling the milk is used to buy farm inputs such as seeds and supplementary fertilizer as we mainly rely on manure from the livestock kraal", she explained.

Esmery gets an average of 12 litres of milk every day which she sells at MK200.00 per litre. She saves part of the MK2,400.00 she gets every day in the Village Challenge Fund. The other money she says is used to buy other household needs, supplementary animal feed and veterinary treatments of the cow.

Commenting on their success, member of the group, Maureen Khomba said the SAPP training and support on Farm Business School



SAPP has transformed our lives - Maureen

initiative has really transformed their lives. In her case, Maureen has been able to buy furniture (sofa set) and is able to feed her house. She now has goats and grows maize and soya beans.

"Since I started implementing what we learnt, my life has changed. I am now able to provide food for my family all year long. My harvest has increased from 10 bags to 35 bags of maize of 50kgs each from a 0.5 hectare field", she said.

Maureen says her next plan is to roof her house with iron sheets and as a group, they are planning to buy a two-tonner truck which will be assisting them in carrying their harvests from the field going home and to the market.

The success of Mtendere Farm Business School's women cannot be undermined as it is in line with the policy of women empowerment which ensures that women are socially and economically empowered.

REAPING FROM LEADING BY EXAMPLE

"I sat down with my family – wife and children and set up a vision for our home. We planned and agreed to construct a burnt bricks house with iron sheets roof, pay for our children school fees, open a barber shop and buy goats and a car". The visioning has helped us to see our future on paper and develop actions that will lead to the realization of our desired future

- Jacob Moyali.

My tomorrow must be better than today, is the statement of hope which has kept him afloat amid abject poverty. The story of Jacob Moyali of Malula Village in Group Village of Malula Village in Group Village Headman Mtchirakwenda, Traditional Authority (T/A) Sawali in Balaka, best explains that there is indeed a thin line between failure and success.

Stricken by poverty for several years, Moyali has tremendously risen to better levels of success courtesy



Moyali and his wife holding a vision for their household

of initiatives implemented by the Sustainable Agriculture Production and Program (SAPP).

He explains that farming without extension services contributed to the low yields and income ushering him and his family a miserable life characterized by insufficient food, inadequate clothing and grass-thatched leaking house. Moyali says was alike a desperate paddler in a sinking boat.

"I have been farming without any help from extension workers. My produce and income have always been low. We could hardly eat as a family and the future of my children was uncertain", said Moyali with a voice of victory.

Despite several challenges he was going through, Moyali gathered his strength and hope of doing better in 2016 after attending a training of Household Approach which was

organized by SAPP. After the training he was chosen to be a local facilitator and was advised to find follower farmers.

His job as a local facilitator according to what he got from the training was to advocate among his follower farmers power relations among adult and youth household members in order to promote joint decision making and equitable access to and control over resources, assets and benefits. He was also helping household members to identify and address HIV/AIDS related issues such as home based care and prevention for improved livelihood of

all household members.

During the training, the local facilitators were also introduced to new farming technologies such as conservation agriculture, one-one planting and correct spacing between ridges and planting stations. They were also taught how individuals, groups or households can set up a vision for their future.

Moyali decided to apply the biblical principle. Before going out to Judea and Samaria, he first implemented all what he learnt in Jerusalem, his household.

He explained, "For me to lead by example as a local facilitator, I



Moyali and wife in front of their house

decided to implement all what I learnt during the training first in my house. I started farming following the new technologies such as conservation agriculture, correct spacing between ridges and planting stations and I also planted one seed per station".

For what could be described as a miracle to him, Moyali family harvested 30 bags of Maize weighing 50kgs each in the 2016 -2017 farming season from a 0.4 hectare piece of land where he used to get 12 bags previously. He went further and facilitated the setting up of a vision for the family which he says has assisted them visualize the future of their family.

"I sat down with my family – wife and children and set up a vision for our home. We planned and agreed to construct a burnt bricks house with iron sheets roof, pay for our children school fees, open a barber shop and buy goats and a car". The visioning has helped us to see our future on paper and develop actions that will lead to the realization of our desired future", he said.

Things continued to work better for Moyali and his family. Their harvest increased every passing season. His wife has joined and is a serving member of a Village Challenge Fund where she makes savings which they use to buy farm inputs such as fertilizers. Their first born son,

Michael is in form two and they are able to pay for his school fees and support his two siblings who are in primary school with all their academic needs. Their house is now roofed with iron sheets, they have managed to open a barber shop and have eight (8) goats.

In the 2018 – 2019 farming season, the family harvested 46 bags of Maize weighing 50kgs each. Moyali says he gets MK1,000.00 every day from the barbershop. He now looks forward to buying a car in the subsequent farming seasons.

We have, as a family, managed to get all what we had put in our vision except a car, just in four years. We will develop another vision soon after buying a car. Am also happy that I have assisted several households of my follower farmers to start following good agriculture practices and in setting up visions and fulfilling them.



Moyali in his barbershop

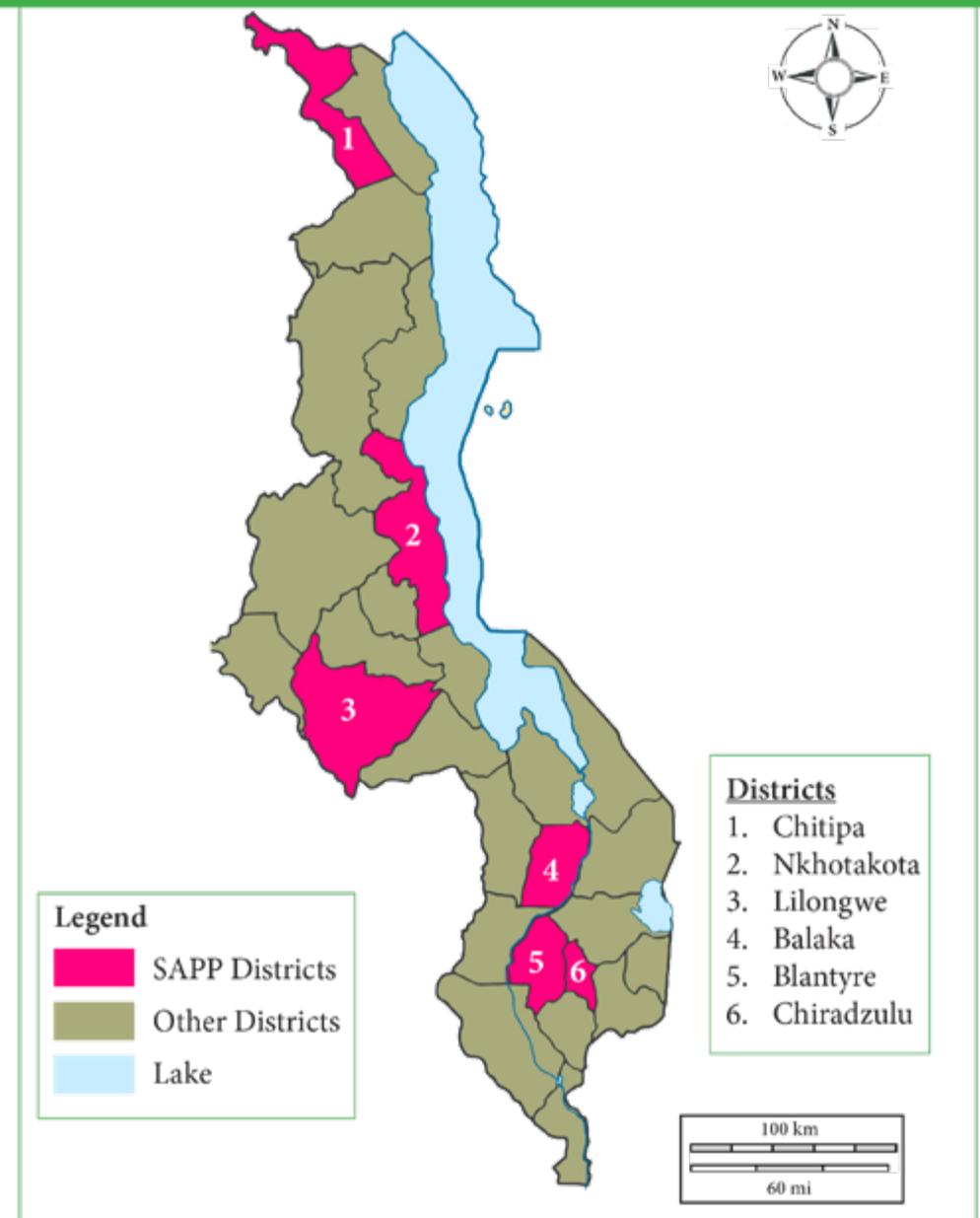
“We have, as a family, managed to get all what we had put in our vision except a car, just in four years. We will develop another vision soon after buying a car. Am also happy that I have assisted several households of my follower farmers to start following good agriculture practices and in setting up visions and fulfilling them”, he explained.

The approach, Moyali says, has helped to change his family in

everything. The household has developed; they share ideas and make decisions together. He also says that they trust each other and enjoy joint control over resources and benefits in the house. Participation of household livelihood activities is also excellent by all the members.

Moyali has twenty five follower farmers comprising of twelve women and thirteen men.

SAPP Implementing Districts



SAPP

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