
Rural Development Experience in Malawi



**Critical Analysis of Multi-Sectoral Rural Development Experience
in Malawi: Towards identification and scaling up of best practice.**

Proceedings of a workshop held 23–24 May 2007 in Lilongwe,
Malawi convened by the Ministry of Local Government and
Rural Development, the United Nations Development Programme
and The MDG Centre.



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The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Centre.



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EAST & SOUTHERN AFRICA



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The Salima Agricultural Technology (SATECH) Project

The Clinton-Hunter Development Initiative (CDHI)

The Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Project

The Millennium Villages Project (MVP)

The Improving Livelihoods through Food Security (I-LIFE) Project

Plan International Malawi

The Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi (JOPM)

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADC	Area Development Committee
ADP	Area Development Programme
CAC	Community Area Committee
CBCC	community-based childcare centre
CBO	community-based organization
CDP	Community Development Programme
CHDI	Clinton-Hunter Development Initiative
DA	District Assembly
DCI	Development Cooperation Ireland
DDF	District Development Fund
DEC	District Executive Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DFN	Development Fund of Norway
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFW	Food for Work
FITSE	Finance Trust for the Self-Employed
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HSA	Health Surveillance Assistant
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
ICT	information and communications technology
IGO	intergovernmental organization
I-LIFE	Improving Livelihoods through Food Security
IRD	integrated rural development
JOPM	Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MA&FS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MEP&D	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
MPVA	Malawi Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment
MVP	Millennium Villages Project
NGO	non-governmental organization
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OVC	orphans and vulnerable children
PD	positive deviant
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
PTA	parent–teacher association
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARRNET	Southern Africa Roots Crops Research Network
SATECH	Salima Agricultural Technology
SSEEP	Sustainable Social Economic Empowerment for Poverty Reduction
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNTFHS	United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme
WVM	World Vision Malawi

Foreword

The Government of Malawi has prepared the country's Growth and Development Strategy as an overarching development policy for 2006–2011. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy's (MGDS) major objectives are to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth of at least 6% and to enable the people of Malawi to create their own wealth through socio-economic transformation. Integrated rural development (IRD) is one of the Strategy's six priority areas.

A formal IRD Strategy is being developed to facilitate the rapid process of rural transformation. Among other things, it seeks to induce local economic development by providing basic socio-economic infrastructure from defined growth points. Known as Rural Growth Centres, these serve a cluster of villages in a traditional authority area as well as single villages like the Millennium Villages.

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD) is in the process of developing its Rural Development Policy, which recognizes that rural development has multiple stakeholders. These include government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), bilateral and multilateral development partners and, more importantly, the rural people themselves.

In order to enhance the quality of the policy, MoLGRD, with technical and financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Centre, East and Southern Africa, sponsored a stakeholder workshop entitled *Critical Analysis of Multi-Sectoral Rural Development Experience in Malawi: Towards identification and scaling up of best practice*. The workshop outcomes are intended to contribute to the development of a national Rural Development Policy.

The workshop allowed participants to share their experiences and discuss the best or alternative practices. The workshop proceedings are expected to enrich the management of rural development in Malawi. Among other things, the workshop demonstrated the importance of networking and coordination among the various actors.

MoLGRD hopes that these proceedings will help the many stakeholders to engage more positively in the process of rural development. We further hope that this will stimulate sustained networking and coordination among and between government agencies and the NGOs implementing IRD projects.

MoLGRD will continue to promote joint projects and facilitate greater knowledge sharing between the various stakeholders at national, district and village levels.

Kester Kaphaizi
Secretary for Rural Development



Introduction

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranked 166 out of 177 countries by the United Nations Human Development Index 2006. Over half of the people live below the poverty line (HDR, 2006), with many depending on erratic rainfed agriculture for their food and their livelihoods. Malawi's economy is primarily agricultural, with around two-thirds of the population living in rural areas.

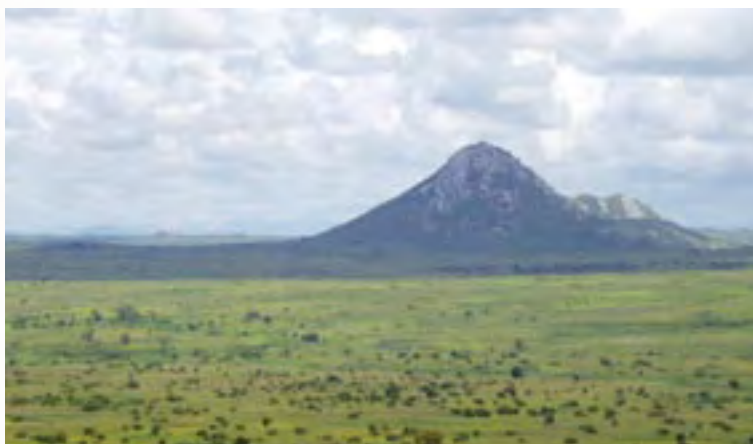
Poverty in Malawi is severe. Shocks from over-reliance on rain-fed agriculture go hand-in-hand with longer-term food insecurity to create a culture of malnutrition. High disease prevalence has shortened life spans to an extremely low level. Rural areas must be the focus of any attempts to tackle this deep poverty, since these are where the majority of the poorest Malawians live.

One of the biggest challenges in international development is how to help the poorest people in a sustainable way. Over the past 30 years, many sub-Saharan African countries, such as Malawi, have been receiving advice and assistance from an increasing number of development agencies. However, the aid and advice they provide is often conflicting (Haug, 1999).

Interdependence between different sectors means that poor health, food insecurity and poverty cannot be tackled effectively by addressing one sector in isolation. Influencing sustainable and positive change means adopting a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to development. This approach is now accepted by many donors and there are numerous actors, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) and government bodies implementing multi-sectoral rural development programmes and projects throughout Malawi. These vary in location, size, scope, focus, duration, methodology and experience. The variations and similarities across these programmes and projects suggested that it might be useful to compare and contrast them in a rigorous way. It was therefore decided to hold a workshop that would bring the diverse actors together to work towards a more comprehensive understanding of best practice and the components that could be implemented on a larger scale.

 ***Hungry and food insecure people may actually find it impossible to build the necessary human, physical and social capital (or assets) that would enable them to raise their welfare level on a sustainable basis*** 

(Malawi PVA, 2006).



The workshop *Critical Analysis of Multi-Sectoral Rural Development Experience in Malawi: Towards identification and scaling up of best practice* took place in Lilongwe 23–24 May 2007. Co-sponsored by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Centre, its purpose was to facilitate sharing, critical analysis and synthesis of lessons learned in implementing multi-sectoral rural development in Malawi. One of the main aims of the workshop was to improve understanding of best practice and the components that could be implemented at scale, including those at the national level.

The workshop was opened by the Honourable George Chaponda, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development; Michael Keating, United Nations Resident Coordinator; and Glenn Denning, Director, MDG Centre for East and Southern Africa. Initial presentations were given by the three government ministries involved in multi-sectoral rural development to frame the discussion in terms of Malawian policy. Firstly, MoLGRD presented its integrated rural development strategy, focusing on infrastructure and local economic growth points; human resources and capacity building; agriculture, food security and natural resource management; small-scale industries and agro-processing; rural credit facilities and rural safety nets. Next, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEP&D) presented its implementation of multi-sector infrastructure services project. Finally, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MA&FS) presented its experience with integrated rural development (IRD) projects.

The opening remarks and government presentations were followed by the critical analysis sessions conducted by NGOs, IGOs and government bodies with experience in implementing multi-sectoral rural development programmes in Malawi including:

- The Salima Agricultural Technology (SATECH) Project, implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- The Clinton-Hunter Development Initiative (CHDI)
- The Mangochi Project, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP)
- The Millennium Villages Project (MVP)
- Sustainable Social Economic Empowerment for Poverty Reduction (SSEEP), implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and UNDP
- The Improving Livelihoods through Food Security (I-LIFE) Project implemented by CARE Malawi and six other NGOs
- Plan International Malawi
- The Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi (JOPM)
- World Vision Malawi (WVM).



Each group presented a brief case study of their programme or project. This included a general description, methodology for design and implementation and some analysis of results. Finally, the presenters discussed lessons learned from their programme or project's successes and constraints

The second day was dedicated mainly to group sessions, during which the participants drew out important lessons learned from the various presentations and proposed recommendations for the government and other stakeholders. The group sessions focused on the five main points that were identified as recurring themes in the critical analysis presentations:

1. Coordination and implementation mechanisms
2. Sustainability, continuity and ownership
3. Capacity building at different levels
4. Enterprise development and working with the private sector
5. Improving communications: networking and knowledge sharing.

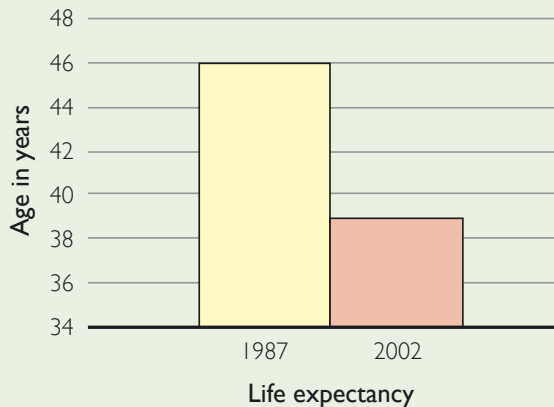
Many participants noted that they had previously been unaware of the extent to which so many organizations were working in multi-sectoral rural development in similar ways. The overlapping themes and methodologies suggest an opportunity for joint projects and, at least, better coordination, geographic and otherwise. The areas of divergence also offered opportunities for different groups to learn from each other's successes and challenges.



Agriculture and poverty in Malawi

There are nearly 2.7 million Malawians who are so poor they are not able to meet the minimum recommended daily food requirements. Nearly all of them live in rural areas. Agriculture contributes 64% of Malawi's income, 65% of its raw materials for manufacturing and 80% of the country's exports.

Other poverty indicators are particularly acute in Malawi. Life expectancy is low and has fallen since 1987, due largely to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic (see graph).



Child malnutrition rates are among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa due to poverty and a lack of dietary diversity. The statistics speak for themselves: 48% of Malawi's children show stunted growth and 22% are underweight for their age.

Source: Malawi PVA, 2006.

This workshop report provides a critical analysis of eight of the participating programmes. The final section presents a synthesis of the lessons learned from their various experiences together with recommendations made by the workshop participants.



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Multi-Sectoral Rural Development Projects

Empowering Vulnerable Communities with Labour-saving Techniques: SATECH

Wells Kumwenda and Timothy Caldecott

Project description and implementation

The Salima Agricultural Technology (SATECH) Project, established in July 2005, focuses on introducing labour-saving technologies to vulnerable groups in an effort increase food security, income generation potential and the general wellbeing of poor rural villages. SATECH operates in 17 villages in Salima District and ran for a total of 32 months, until February 2007.

SATECH project objectives

The overall goal of the project is to secure the future livelihoods of poor rural and marginalized communities in Malawi. Specific objectives include the following:

- To strengthen the participatory capacity of community and village-based grassroots organizations and their involvement in project implementation.
- To provide the target group with appropriate labour-saving and user-friendly technologies that will increase labour productivity and capacity for food production.
- To enable the target group – particularly female-headed households, orphan guardian families and youth – to access, use and manage labour-saving technologies for increased and diversified agricultural and non-agricultural income.
- To improve capacity for making, selling and repairing basic agricultural tools and means of transport.

The total cost of the project is US\$1.13 million, with funds sourced from the United Nations Trust Fund for Humanitarian Security (UNTFHS).

The project was developed in close consultation with MA&FS and NGOs active in the project areas. It was further refocused based on the findings of a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) conducted in all target villages. The PRA verified actual needs and required interventions, and assessed the level of community organization, capability in applying labour-saving technologies and potential for income-generating activities.

The project made use of its local leaders and government extension services in identifying problems and selecting beneficiaries at village level, but most decisions were made at meetings where all the villagers were gathered. The villagers identified their greatest problems, the solutions they envisaged for those problems and identified the most vulnerable people. After this exercise, SATECH staff determined which interventions could be accomplished and had beneficiaries register in groups of ten. Each group selected an enterprise in which they would like to participate: maize mills, bakery or agriculture in general (including field crops and horticulture). A community group was also established to take charge of bicycle ambulances and boreholes, items that benefit the entire village.

Appropriate equipment procured by SATECH was distributed to the groups (e.g. watering cans, seeds, treadle pumps and sprayers to horticultural groups and oxen, ploughs, oxcarts and ridgers to agricultural groups), in the presence of an extension worker and upon signature by the beneficiary.

The village committees also identified 35 orphans (aged 14–18 years) to undertake vocational training in metalwork, tailoring, building, carving, carpentry or motor mechanics. Students were also given tuition in life skills and agriculture/horticulture. On graduation, the students received a tool kit, which will allow them to create a livelihood based on their new skills, either as a self-employed artisan or in employment. In addition, the project has trained 18 tinsmiths and four oxcart makers, one of whom has already been given an order for 12 oxcarts.

Follow-up training activities for community development facilitators, local community technology promoters, self-

employment skills for women and rural service providers will benefit approximately 400 people. The technology diffusion aspect of the project will benefit an estimated 5,000 smallholders, 1,250 of whom are women. The current number of direct beneficiaries is estimated at 2,000 households from a total population of approximately 13,500 people, including 1,287 female-headed households and 1,500 orphans.

Project successes and constraints

In its first two years, the project has helped many people to increase their incomes, improve their food security and health, and adopt more labour-efficient agricultural practices. Although it is too early to make a thorough assessment of best outcomes, it is clear that the greatest impact on improved nutrition and income generation has been through horticultural enterprises. In addition, bakery groups are already generating 30% profit on capital employed and agricultural groups are starting to reap the benefits of the labour-saving equipment, such as oxcarts.

Distribution of labour-saving and income-generating equipment has been extensive. The project has distributed 1,200 hand hoes, 65 ox ploughs, 65 ridgers, 65 chains, 217 *pangas* (cutting tools), 230 axes, 55 sprayers, 100 treadle pumps, 500 watering cans, 500 packets of seed, 18 bicycle ambulances, 124 work oxen, 17 bakery ovens and 65 oxcarts.

The project has trained four oxcart makers, one bicycle ambulance maker and 18 tinsmiths in product improvement and business management. All groups have been given equipment in the form of tool kits to improve the quality of their product output. The artisans have greatly improved their products and have attracted private-sector interest.

Project activities have resulted in a number of synergies within villages as they develop systems to deal with new equipment, greater productivity and food surpluses. For example, variable pricing structures for oxcart transport are being created to benefit the poorest (vulnerable groups pay nothing, villagers pay a reduced rate and people from outside the village pay the full fare). Surplus production and income generation from horticulture have spurred a number of other villagers into adopting similar production schemes. In addition, cleaner water is available and there has been a reduction in water-borne diseases as a result of access to safe water from boreholes.

Project activities have been integrated with on-going government, United Nations and other bilateral agency programmes. Alignment of the project with country strategies and action plans regarding poverty reduction, strengthening the agricultural sector and fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic ensures the commitment of the Government of Malawi and other stakeholders to supporting and sustaining the planned activities.

To enhance the outreach of the project to other communities and sustain its activities, a group of 20 extension workers have been trained in the use and maintenance of the introduced technologies and associated educational messages. Particular emphasis has been put on the principle of farmer-led demand, developing close links between all stakeholders, bringing extension as close as possible to the farmers and artisans, and continually involving local leaders.

Extension of the results has been enhanced further through participatory monitoring and evaluation and by assigning responsibility for diffusing selected technologies to local community technology promoters (farmer-to-farmer extension). Successful experiences are being aired through radio broadcasting on the Ministry of Agriculture's free agriculture promotion slot. Newspaper editorials have also increased awareness of project activities.

Lessons learned

The most encouraging general conclusion is that it is possible to reduce poverty and hunger and thereby to improve the lives of vulnerable rural communities. Through working closely with local village leaders, the project was able to promote understanding and ownership in the communities. Involving local leaders helped in identifying beneficiaries and keeping the community involved in making decisions on which were the most appropriate interventions. The project implementation committee, which included the District Commissioner, Programme Manager, District Agricultural Officer, village chiefs, health officials and NGO representatives, and operated at district level, played an essential role in guiding and monitoring progress.

The project ran for less than three years and this is considered to be too short a time-scale due to the need to introduce, refine and monitor the performance of agricultural interventions over several growing seasons. Additional time would also have allowed project staff to train the beneficiaries and government

extension staff in the necessary skills of business management and how to maintain the use of the technologies provided over the longer term.

Project staff also commented on the need to avoid imposing unfamiliar technologies on beneficiaries and neglecting local leadership structures in the planning and execution of projects. It is also very important that development projects deliver what they promise. It was common for villagers to be surprised when project staff returned with equipment or other technologies, showing that too many NGOs arrive, discuss, leave and never return.

A Market-driven Approach: The Clinton - Hunter Development Initiative (CHDI)

Robert Stoner and Peter Kulemeka

Project description and implementation

The Clinton-Hunter Development Initiative (CHDI), formed in mid-2006, aims to develop and implement an IRD model based on a foundation of profitable business activity. CHDI works in Malawi and Rwanda in close partnership with government officials at every level. The approach is to identify export and import substitution markets mainly for agricultural products, then to assist farmers and processors to serve these markets. By providing management and technical expertise, and in some cases direct investment, CHDI aims to help build profitable businesses and prosperous communities.

A significant part of CHDI's work is directed at eliminating barriers to commercial success. One of the most common – especially for land-locked countries like Malawi – is a lack of access to external markets. When farm products do find their way to new markets, the profits too often fall into the hands of middlemen, with little benefit to farmers and their families. CHDI aims to connect producers more directly with their customers by working with government to strengthen farming cooperatives and associations. CHDI helps these groups to purchase inputs such as fertilizers and seed by enabling them to borrow from banks or pre-sell their harvests to reputable buyers. Future support to market expansion could see CHDI investing directly in processing and packaging facilities.

While business activity is an important part of wider economic growth, it cannot improve living conditions and community prospects by itself. A portion of CHDI's funds is therefore used to support community and national infrastructure development projects in the areas of vocational training and education, water and sanitation, and healthcare (working with Partners in Health, PIH, which receives US\$2 million per year).

At the request of government partners, the project concentrates the majority of its efforts in a small number of rural communities. In Malawi, work has begun with PIH and local contractors to construct and staff a hospital in Neno, along with 23 housing units for doctors, nurses and other key medical personnel. This rural hospital will anchor the other CHDI programmes and projects. CHDI recently undertook a clean water programme in this community, and has begun working with the Malawi Rural Finance Company to procure improved wheat seed and fertilizer from local suppliers for the April planting season. Programme staff have also been asked to work in the central community of Nambuma and in the remote northern community of Nthalire.

Project successes and constraints

CHDI contributes to sustainable rural development by investing its resources in profit-seeking agricultural businesses that benefit communities, then leaving them to operate under experienced management. As part of the Clinton Foundation, a non-profit organization, CHDI is committed to reinvesting 100% of any profits in other businesses and community development projects. The Initiative has also committed to leaving its investments in the hands of the communities when operations are closed after 10 years, by which time it is expected that around US\$100 million will have been invested. By emphasizing financial self-sufficiency, CHDI hopes to create pockets of sustainable development that will expand and thrive far into the future.

Protecting and Improving Food and Nutrition Security of Orphans and HIV/AIDS Affected Children: The Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Project

William Price and Austin Msimuko

Project description and implementation

The increasing southern African HIV/AIDS epidemic and the 2002 regional food security crisis prompted Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states to agree on the framework for a mitigating project. The Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Project is a multi-sectoral programme and represents a coordinated response to the food security crisis affecting children in HIV/AIDS-stricken countries by multiple agencies and donors across two countries. FAO was asked to act as the lead facilitating agency in collaboration with UNICEF and WFP. Funding was provided by the German government (€3 million – or US\$4.16 million – to be shared equally between Malawi and Lesotho). The project will serve as a case study and will provide information on feasibility, replicability and coverage, allowing broader action and resource mobilization. The first or pilot phase ran from 2004 to 2007, with field operations commencing in September 2005. Two growing seasons have been covered so far (2005/6 and 2006/7) with an overall cost of US\$27 per beneficiary per year.

In Malawi, members of the national steering committee/advisory board came from various government ministries (Agriculture, Health, Education and Women and Child Development) as well as from the National AIDS Commission, NGOs and the three United Nations' agencies. National and district coordination committees organized workshops to select target communities and draw up work plans. The communities were fully involved in conducting the baseline studies and needs assessments.

Activities were conducted in 11 villages in the two districts of Mangochi and Mwanza in the south of the country, with a target population of 15,382. These districts were chosen because of high HIV/AIDS prevalence (20% compared with the national average of 14%), widespread food insecurity and dependency on mono-cropping, a high level of malnutrition in children under five, a large number of orphans, the presence of possible implementing partners and accessibility. Six focus

areas were developed to address the problems found. The first four were: food and nutritional security, health, education and community services, which were designed to improve immediate and intermediate needs. The final two focus areas of capacity building, and collaboration, networking and coalition building, were included to create sustainability and long-term change.

Project successes and constraints

The project distributed improved seeds, fertilizer and other planting materials to households and trained farmers in agricultural methods. As a result, communities saw a striking increase in food production over the deficit of the preceding year. Households receiving inputs agreed to repay 50 kg of harvested maize each to a community grain bank and this was used to provide food for orphans and the chronically ill. A total of 121 tons of maize was collected with near 100% compliance.

Crop and diet diversification was promoted by providing improved varieties of soybean, groundnut, legumes, cassava and sweet potato. Project staff also trained 400 lead farmers and extension workers in production and processing of the new crops. During the first season, over 40 t of soya were produced, around 21 ha of cassava were planted and 40 group nurseries of sweet potato were established. In the second season, 240 ha of groundnut, 14 ha of sorghum and 6,849 fruit tree seedlings were planted by 2,128 beneficiary households, schools and community-based childcare centres (CBCCs) within the project area. In addition, the project addressed deforestation and soil degradation by establishing tree nurseries and introducing nitrogen-rich plants. Two new dams helped 84 families to cope with erratic rainfall and irrigate their vegetable gardens.

The initial participatory needs assessment revealed a general lack of small livestock so the project introduced a revolving scheme, distributing 580 goats. Group members agreed to pass on the first two offspring to waiting members of another group. Within the first six months, distribution of offspring was already in progress.

An HIV/AIDS awareness campaign involved distributing awareness materials and holding an open day, which was attended by 1,000 people. The project distributed 34 bicycles to home-based care groups, social clubs and community AIDS

committees, and home-based care kits and training were given to 11 village AIDS committees. In addition, 210 women attended a five-day training course in HIV and nutrition.

Another problem in the area was low primary school attendance. The project increased school enrolment by providing school meals for 2,901 students in four schools, teacher training, school and recreational supplies and orphan packages (comprising text books, pencils, exercise books and school uniform). Pre-school child development has been encouraged through support to CBCCs.

A campaign to promote female education culminated in an open day attended by 1,000 participants. Project staff encouraged mothers and guardians of schoolchildren to form 'Mother Groups' to monitor the participation and academic progress of girls in school. Another campaign focusing on women's and children's rights provided training for 400 people. Close to 1,500 people attended the feature event – an open day in Mangochi.

An understanding of the special needs of orphans and vulnerable children is important, especially among those who are in constant contact with them. Project staff are therefore conducting ongoing training in psycho-social support and care for teachers, members of local parent-teacher associations (PTAs), guardians and caretakers.

Long-term changes begin with educating the smallest children, and the project has helped to give pre-school children in the target communities an adequate means of learning and development. CBCCs have been operating in all 11 communities, albeit with inadequate facilities. The project is helping to build permanent structures and providing training in early childhood development techniques and procedures.

Income-generating activity groups were formed in an effort to increase self-reliance in the community. Groups composed predominately of women were trained in weaving, fruit processing, juice making, vegetable growing, mud stove making, beekeeping, mushroom production and rearing goats, chickens and guinea fowl. The groups were also trained in management and marketing skills. Similarly, the project conducted a six-month certified vocational course for 30 children from the project area who were trained in carpentry, bricklaying and motor mechanics.

Lessons learned

It is clear that poor health, food insecurity and poverty cannot be tackled effectively by addressing one sector in isolation, since they are interdependent. Promoting sustainable and positive change means adopting a multi-sectoral approach. In this project, assistance from UNICEF and WFP was an essential part of the planning and implementation stages and illustrates the fact that greater coordination between agencies and organizations is needed in future initiatives.

It is also clear that the people of Malawi are the most important drivers of sustainable change, and that the success of any project is built on community involvement, from the design of the activities to preparations for phasing out. In this project, community ownership was enhanced by the cost-sharing approach, in which the people contributed payment in kind, through labour and materials, in return for inputs.

Realistic goals need to be set relative to the project's resources and timeframe. A three or four year period of implementation would strengthen the chances of sustainability as well as allow for the required scope of activities. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are also needed to assess the efficacy of activities and make any necessary changes.

A failed harvest due to drought could have reversed all the positive effects of this project. More emphasis on water management would mitigate against adverse weather conditions and should be taken into account in the project's second phase.

Lack of resources in primary schools caused by increased enrolment is another potential constraint that will need to be addressed.

Meeting the MDGs: The Millennium Villages Project (MVP)

Rebbie Harawa, Glenn Denning, Chrispin Magombo, Colleen Zamba, Cheryl Palm

Project description and implementation

The United Nations Millennium Villages Project (MVP) began implementing its activities in the district of Zomba in 2005.

The overall objective of MVP is to implement the MDGs in rural communities. The MDGs are quantified, targeted goals that came out of the global UN Millennium Declaration signed in September 2000. MVP takes a holistic approach with full involvement of local communities. MVP goals are in line with the objectives of IRD, but they are also time bound and target the achievement of the MDGs through strategically costed use of resources with clear potential for scaling up. The UN Millennium Project has estimated that the interventions need an investment of US\$110 per capita (see box).

The MVP focuses on clusters of 1,000 households, known as 'Millennium Villages', in the Mwandama area. It covers 114 Malawian villages (7 Millennium Villages) with an overall population of 45,000 people. The core areas of intervention are health, education, infrastructure, agricultural and environmental management, and water and sanitation.

There is one 'research' village (Mwandama), and experience from activities based there will be used to establish the evidence base for implementing the proven and practical interventions needed to achieve or set the path to achieving the MDGs in rural Malawi over a five-year timeframe. The idea is to demonstrate and scientifically document that integrated community-based interventions can enable impoverished rural areas to achieve the MDGs.

Activities are funded by the Government of Japan through the UNTFHS. There are six 'scaling-up' villages surrounding Mwandama, where interventions that have proven effective will be replicated. These activities are funded by philanthropists through the Millennium Promise.

UNDP is the implementing agency and has established a project management unit in Zomba, which is responsible for daily management including planning, coordination, monitoring, reporting and financial and technical support. The project is executed through the MoLGRD, which is also leading the identification of project sites. There is strong collaboration and partnership between the project and other relevant government ministries; for example, the MA&FS operating through the Malawi Inputs Subsidy Programme, provided fertilizer coupons worth US\$368,000 and these were used to buy top dressing fertilizer in the form of urea for MVP farmers. MVP also works closely with District Assemblies (DAs) and project

Cost-sharing in MVP

The MVP targets the achievement of MDGs through strategic costing of resources with clear potential for scaling up. The UN Millennium Project has estimated that the interventions need an investment of US\$110 per capita. This amount is shared between donors, the government and the community:

Donors contribute US\$70 per capita

Government contributes US\$30, in cash or in kind (e.g. roads, electricity and personnel)

Community contribution is US\$10, mostly in kind (e.g. labour).

The per capita costs are broken down according to the types of interventions: health accounts for 30%, education and infrastructure for 20% each, agriculture and nutrition 15%, while water, sanitation and the environment account for the remaining 15%.

goals are harmonized with the formal District Implementation Plan. Administratively, the DA represents the ministries and departments at the district level. The DA prepares the District Implementation Plan, which contains the development plans and allocation of government grants to projects.

Communities in each of the seven Millennium Villages were involved from the start, first through sensitization meetings with local authorities and the larger community, then through community meetings identifying their most pressing needs and development priorities. The project provided technical assistance in coming up with village action plans to ensure that they were in line with the MDGs and to work out how various members of the community could contribute to realizing this plan. For example, in the construction of health clinics and primary schools, the villagers contributed labour and materials for the manufacture of building bricks.

Cost-sharing contributions (US\$) from the community and government towards MVP activities in Mwandama (Sept 2005–Feb 2007)

Activity	Government (GOVT) and community (COM) contribution	Community contribution (US\$)	Government contribution (US\$)
Human blood, stool and urine baseline survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GOVT: Laboratory processing and analysis of the samples; access to centrifuge, microscope and preliminary assessments GOVT: Provided vehicle for field visits and delivering samples 		15,000
			6,000
Support for agricultural production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GOVT: Subsidized urea fertilizer for 7,000 households GOVT: Provided agricultural extension services 		368,000
			78,000
Support for education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COM: Moulded and baked bricks for junior primary schools; provided labour (digging soil, drawing water; mixing soil and water; making kilns) and firewood 	3,000	
Support for health delivery systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COM: Moulded and baked bricks for dispensary; provided labour (digging soil, drawing water; mixing soil and water; making kilns) and firewood COM: Constructed a temporary shelter for outreach clinical services; provided timber, grass, nails and labour 	1,000	
		200	
Support for water resource protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COM: Protection of a shallow well; provided sand, rocks, bricks, implements (wheelbarrows, shovels, buckets, hoes), labour (digging a 6 m pit and construction) 	400	
Support for the school feeding programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COM: Each household contributed two 50 kg bags of maize 	100,000	
TOTAL		104,600	467,000

Project successes and constraints

In Year 1, farmers received an agricultural input package of hybrid maize seed and fertilizer, with each household receiving 10 kg hybrid maize seed, 50 kg basal fertilizer and 50 kg top-dressing fertilizer, sufficient to cultivate about 0.45 ha. In Year 2, they were also given a legume package with 3 kg groundnut seed and 1 kg pigeonpea seed as part of the crop diversification programme.

In the first season, the average maize yield was 5.5 t per ha, a 500% increase over the average yield achieved when cultivating local maize without chemical fertilizer. Households sold part of their surplus and contributed another part (700 t altogether) towards providing school meals. This helped to increase levels of school enrolment. To reduce grain losses in storage, the project team trained the farmers in post-harvest techniques (such as use of storage pesticides) and provided advice on the construction of drying cribs and modern granaries. A village grain bank with a storage capacity of 1,500 t was also constructed.

To promote sustainability and increase household nutrition and income, the project has embarked on crop diversification and livestock promotion activities. The idea is to increase farmers' income and, as a result, their ability to purchase inputs. Training in organic farming techniques, such as agroforestry and compost manure, will also reduce people's dependence on expensive chemical fertilizers. Links between farmers and the private sector are also being promoted to encourage business and enterprise development. These had not been established in time for the first year's harvest and, consequently, farmers had no choice but to sell their surplus to middlemen at a low price. They were then unable to reinvest in farm inputs. Since then, project staff have helped farmers organize themselves into groups and form links with larger buyers, such as the Grain and Milling Company, who can offer more attractive prices. The village grain bank can be used to hold grain for marketing purposes.

To improve community health, the project has introduced clinical outreach services, such as under-five and antenatal clinics. Insecticide-treated bed nets (23,869 in total), which remain effective for up to five years, have been distributed to help combat malaria. Drama groups and theatre helped educate the community about the benefits of the bed nets and how to look after them. In addition, project staff distributed chlorine for water

treatment because most people have no access to safe drinking water. School children also received de-worming treatment.

MVP has started a school feeding programme in four junior primary schools (Dindi, Gala, Linjidzi and Linthipe) within the community. Local farmers provide the school with maize, while project funds supply soybeans, minerals and vitamins to ensure the children receive a balanced diet. The meals are cooked on fuel-efficient stoves, provided by MVP, but the community provides the firewood and the cooks. Early assessment indicates that providing school meals has increased the number of children enrolling in school; for example, at Dindi school, pupil numbers have increased from 280 to 380.

The project is also providing scholarships for 60 students – more than half of them girls – to attend secondary school. In addition, the project and the community have agreed to start building classrooms and toilets in secondary schools.

In the initial stages of the project, new MVP committees were created within communities to work on the project activities. However, as time passed, it became clear that there was conflict between these and the existing decentralized structures, such as Village and Area Development Committees (VDCs and ADCs). Project staff then changed their focus to strengthen the existing structures, rather than supporting new ones.

From the agricultural interventions that have been implemented over the two cropping seasons, it is clear that with adequate fertilizers, hybrid maize seed and good rains, it is possible to end hunger in Malawi. However, because rains are erratic in Malawi, the project is working on water harvesting strategies to ensure that water is available during the dry spells.

The cost-sharing approach, while largely successful, is also one of the main challenges facing the project. For example, there was some confusion over who would pay for housing school and healthcare staff. Acquisition of land for new educational and medical facilities has also been problematic. So far, the government has contributed most of its cost-sharing budget to the agricultural sector through subsidizing the cost of fertilizer and by providing extension workers. The government has already expressed concern that the current budget may not be able to accommodate additional costs, such as salaries for health workers.

Lessons learned

MVP's main message is that community sensitization and empowerment and government involvement at the beginning of the project are vital to success because they encourage a sense of ownership at all levels. Community meetings need to focus on exit strategies and to make sure the distribution of inputs is not seen purely as a 'hand out' but as an investment in the future sustainable development of the entire community.

Scaling up to a larger number of villages will ultimately be carried out by the government, therefore partnership at the initial, planning stage is essential. The project had a high initial cost, which required financial commitment from both the project and the government. This includes reaching agreement on the details of the cost-sharing agreement with government at the very beginning of the project. Project expenditures are outside of the government budget for per capita sectoral spending and the Malawi government will have to double its current per capita investment of US\$50 to be able to scale up the interventions modelled in MVP. This will obviously need a lot of donor support.

If the future success of the farm input, crop diversification and livestock production programmes is to be ensured, there is a need for better marketing strategies, especially market chain development, which includes linking farmers with the local private sector.

It is important that project activities work within and strengthen existing development institutions and structures, both at community and national level. Creation of parallel structures is not recommended. Similarly, project entry points should recognize local leadership and other structures (e.g. farmers' and women's groups).

Improving Livelihoods through Food Security: The I-LIFE Project

Henry Khonyongwa, Redge Masupayi and Dziko Chatata

Project description and implementation

With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), CARE Malawi and six other NGOs are implementing a five-year programme entitled *Improving Livelihoods through Food Security (I-LIFE)*. I-LIFE adopts an IRD focus and promotes a change in focus away from simply supporting people and towards strengthening institutions and processes, thereby laying the foundations for continued development and livelihood enhancement. The overall goal of the programme is to reduce food insecurity among vulnerable households and communities in rural Malawi.

Activities are designed to help farmers make a steady and sustained move from subsistence towards commercial agricultural production. Coupled with this are efforts to improve farming households' nutritional and health practices in order to complement their food security. The programme uses food aid in order to improve and sustain food security among the most vulnerable groups (HIV/AIDS-affected households). The programme is also using food aid to help create productive assets; for example, vulnerable people are asked to work on labour-intensive tasks, such as the building of irrigation dams, and they are paid in the form of food.

The I-LIFE Project has identified three key leverage points for reducing food insecurity in Malawi: a) poverty/low household income; b) poor health and nutrition; and c) weak capacity and lack of sustainability. The technical areas most appropriate for addressing these are: agriculture, natural resource management and related infrastructure, health and nutrition, and coordination and participation of community and district structures.

Implementation started in October 2004 in four Traditional Authorities (Chitekwere, Masula, Mazengera and Masumbankhunda) with a total population of 193,279. The project has so far targeted 15,268 households with the main emphasis on those that are female-headed, affected by chronic illness, are short of labour, or have children under five at risk of malnutrition. The annual cost per beneficiary is estimated at US\$91.70.

The core programme team for CARE Malawi comprises a total workforce of 44 people, including a Project Manager, Project Coordinators and field staff. The project works directly with community facilitators. It is implemented through local institutions at the community and district levels through the decentralized government structure of VDCs, ADCs and DAs.

I-LIFE strategic objectives

1. Livelihood capacities of vulnerable groups are protected and enhanced

I-LIFE improves food availability and access by increasing agricultural production and incomes and improving infrastructure through improved agricultural practice, reinforced linkages between production and marketing, and strengthened farmer organizational capacity. The programme improves access to promising technologies already existing in Malawi. I-LIFE also promotes Food for Work (FFW) schemes (e.g. small-scale irrigation) to improve rural infrastructure.

2. Nutritional status of vulnerable groups is protected and enhanced

I-LIFE increases adoption of improved nutrition and health behaviour, particularly among malnourished children and households affected by chronic illness. This includes community health awareness campaigns, community and home vegetable gardening, and improved capacity of community health workers.

3. Community and district capacity to protect and enhance food security is improved

The programme promotes better community and district level accountability and transparency, and improved efficiency among government structures and civil society to sustain development activities, while promoting coalition building, community organization and workable applications of decentralization within targeted districts and villages.

To achieve these strategic objectives with greater success, the programme also aims to expand its knowledge management capacity to ensure programme quality, influence national policy and sustain development efforts. The ultimate purpose is the sustainability of development initiatives in targeted communities and the replication and scaling up of best practices.

Project successes and constraints

The project has recently undergone a mid-term evaluation and the results show considerable positive outcomes (see Table 1). Improved seeds have been distributed and commercial opportunities have been created through collective production and marketing. Maintenance, rehabilitation or construction of small-scale irrigation schemes has also boosted winter production. Farmers are supplementing the seeds obtained from I-LIFE with their own planted in the same irrigated sites and *dambo* (seasonally wet land) gardens. This is a strong indication that winter cropping may prove to be a sustainable intervention. Income from the sale of winter crops helps to diversify the income base and improve food security in the long term.

Village savings and loans groups have helped to stimulate micro-enterprise development. The impact of village savings and loans activities on the livelihood capacities of vulnerable groups can be considerable. Without such a facility, the only credit available to farmers is through local moneylenders, who commonly charge 100% interest per month (compared to 25% for village savings schemes). Field reports show that most village savings and loans group members use their loans to invest in productivity increases by buying farm inputs or to finance small-scale economic activities such as cooking and selling *mandazis* (deep-fried bread), selling their crops or opening tea shops or grocery stores. Even when loans are not used for investment, they can substantially improve beneficiaries' standards of living. Capacity building of local institutions and efforts to encourage more women to participate have led to women being recognized on committees (including those for savings and loans) and being allowed to take part in decision-making processes.

Health improvements include a high uptake of hygiene and sanitation structures and the establishment of a committed core of trained home-based care volunteers. The health of young children has improved through the positive deviant (PD)/Hearth approach. This draws on the knowledge and capacity of so-called PD mothers who, despite deep poverty, manage to raise healthy, well-nourished children. These women have been brought together with others in 'hearth' activities, during which the groups design recipes, cook and eat together with their children while learning about nutrition, food preparation, health and hygiene.

Households are becoming economically and physically more productive as their nutritional and health status improves. The construction of toilets and the introduction of PD/Hearth sessions were cited as particularly useful in improving children's health. However, it is the targeting of each household with a holistic package of I-LIFE interventions that makes the impact sustainable.

The principal challenges that remain include addressing the disappointing participation of the community in farmer field schools and seed fairs, and the limited staff capacity and experience in advocacy for change among civil society and governance structures. In addition, there is continuing stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Table 1. Indictors of success

Indicator	Totals to date
Households receiving seeds	20,546
Households receiving seeds through seed banks	2,850
Village savings and loans groups formed	200
Village savings and loans membership	3,874
Cumulative savings	MK4.25 m
Kilometres of roads rehabilitated	124.83 km
Kilometres of roads maintained by community	72.42 km
Irrigation structures rehabilitated/constructed	18
Irrigation structures maintained	6
Food for Work beneficiaries	5,151
Children enrolled in PD/Hearth	651
Chronically ill beneficiaries	5,295
Village umbrella committees established	84

Lessons learned

Community sensitization, which includes giving a full explanation of the potential impact of an activity and the work expected of participants, is essential if people are to make an informed decision about participation. If they feel the activity truly meets a demand or solves a problem, then expectations of payment will not usually become an issue and a strong sense of ownership and commitment will ensue.

Strengthening community-based institutions is important and helps build a strong foundation for any development agenda. Positive participation by local leaders is essential. In some cases, areas chiefs may wish to follow their own agenda when selecting beneficiaries but, if the community-based organizations are strong enough, they can hold their leaders accountable to the community as a whole.

In areas where other stakeholders, including government departments, are implementing development programmes, joint planning is essential to avoid duplication of effort. Coordination and partnership will also help to improve relationships between stakeholders.

Improving Food Production, Processing and Utilization: Plan International Malawi

Frances Hagan and Rex Chapota

Project description and implementation

Plan International Malawi works with deprived communities, families and children to create an environment in which children can develop to their full potential. Mzungu village is one such community where Plan works in partnership with the community, government, children and other partners to improve the lives of children.

Mzungu is not unusual in that its people are affected by poverty and food insecurity. This is due to low food production and dependence on one staple food as well as a lack of income-generating activities. Hunger and malnutrition are perennial problems since most families run out of food four months before the next harvest and cannot afford to buy more. At the

same time, HIV/AIDS is leaving a growing number of orphans in its wake. The community is unable to provide early childhood care and has no primary school, clean drinking water, sanitation or health service.

Following a request from the community, Plan facilitated the design and implementation of a rural development project focusing on food security. This was integrated with other activities on health, HIV/AIDS, early childhood care and development, and primary education. The project was implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Southern Africa Roots Crops Research Network (SARRNET), the Ministries of Health, Gender and Child Welfare, the local communities and district authorities. The project covered 83 households and ran for two years from July 2004. The cost was about US\$28,500 and the cost of additional integrated activities in the village and wider community was just under US\$32,400 (all funded by Plan International Malawi).

Plan International Malawi Mzungu Project

The objectives of the project were to:

- Increase livestock production
- Promote crop diversification
- Improve economic status of households through agribusiness
- Improve nutritional status of households through effective use of available food
- Promote vegetable and fruit production.

Education on nutrition, food preparation and the importance of a balanced diet was provided in partnership with MA&FS (focusing on children, expectant mothers and vulnerable people, i.e. the elderly or those affected by HIV/AIDS). Crop diversification was promoted through the introduction of

crops such as groundnut, soybean, cassava and sweet potato, and through vegetable cultivation. The project also promoted such soil-improving activities as composting and planting fruit trees. Treadle pumps were developed for small-scale irrigation of winter crops and households were introduced to the rearing of rabbits, chickens, guinea fowl, pigeons and goats through a pass-on scheme, whereby offspring from the original animals were distributed to other members of the community. Other integrated activities included improved access to health services, provision of a community-based childcare centre (CBCC), activities to raise awareness on the rights of the child and child protection, a voluntary counselling and testing for HIV service, better water and sanitation facilities and primary education.

The project took a participatory approach. All partners, including the community, were involved in conducting a situational analysis, agreeing on a detailed action plan and reviewing progress. In addition, households could decide with which activities they wanted to become involved. The project team made a special effort to ensure that vulnerable groups such as women, children and those affected by HIV/AIDS had access to the project interventions.

The project team helped farmers learn about soil conservation techniques, such as planting fruit trees and cultivating vetiver grass along the contours to prevent erosion. The farmers have established nurseries to multiply their stocks of vetiver and provide plants for other members of the community. Other activities included establishing a fishpond and teaching mothers how to provide a more balanced diet.

In support of improved healthcare, the project provided the local health centre with medical equipment, drugs and furniture. All children under five years old were invited for immunization and health and hygiene educational activities were carried out. HIV-affected families were given rainwater harvesting tanks to reduce the need to fetch water from the communal pump.

In addition to health education and teacher skills development, the project provided the school with classrooms, a latrine and educational materials.

Project successes and constraints

Overall the project has succeeded in achieving most of its objectives and this success has drawn many visitors. A holistic

approach, involving simultaneous implementation of various projects in a 'model' village, has maximized the development potential of the households. Partnering with government at the district level and organizations that have knowledge and skills in relevant areas helped to improve the project's effectiveness and impact. Government officials will continue to provide monitoring support to the communities.

The number of households with livestock has doubled through the pass-on scheme. This works well because of the involvement of community groups in deciding how it should work and in making a special effort to ensure the most vulnerable participate and benefit. Reliance on a single crop has reduced, with all families now cultivating vegetables as well as staple crops. Most families now have food all year round. Some households have generated an income by selling vegetables, cassava and sweet potatoes, and they are now able to buy basic items such as soap and sugar.

The community has planted 48,000 trees. All households have constructed household latrines and there is a new community-maintained borehole. It is hoped that childhood illness will be reduced significantly through continuing availability of immunization (post-project implementation through the District Health Office). An overall rise in income levels can be seen in people's new purchases, which include bicycles, cows, cell phones, televisions and new roofs.

The intervention that had the greatest impact was the promotion of winter cropping and crop diversification. This has reduced hunger and poverty, since families now have food throughout the year and a surplus to sell. In addition, families now have a more varied diet and children, pregnant women and those with HIV/AIDS are much better nourished. Nutritious food is provided by the CBCC.

There are one or two areas where more work is needed. One of these is soil conservation. The idea of planting vetiver has not been embraced with great enthusiasm, partly because the benefits were not obvious in the short term. Another area is market chain development. A lack of a marketing strategy resulted in vendors offering their animals and farm produce at too cheap a price.

Lessons learned

Working with community groups and strengthening their organization has helped this project reach out to more people. In addition, groups can undertake tasks collectively and achieve far more than they could as individuals. This is particularly important for the more vulnerable groups; for example, active participation of women and HIV-affected families ensured that they (and their children) benefited equally from project activities.

Plan's partnering with government at district level and with organizations that have knowledge and skills in relevant areas helped to improve effectiveness and impact. Government officials will continue to provide monitoring support to the communities.

The pass-on scheme for animal rearing and crop cultivation is benefiting a large number of households. This works well because of the involvement of community groups in deciding how it should work. Making a special effort to address the needs of the vulnerable ensures these groups participate in and benefit from the project.

A holistic and multi-sectoral approach, in which the project addressed not only food security but also the other social needs of the poor, provided maximum development benefit. Development projects should build in a marketing component to ensure beneficiaries reap the maximum profit from their economic ventures.

Shire Highlands Sustainable Livelihoods and
Livelihoods Security Through Partners: The
Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi (JOPM)
John Nyirenda and Yohane Kamgwira

Project design and implementation

The Joint Oxfam Programme in Malawi (JOPM) has been operational in three-year cycles since 1996. It focuses on securing sustainable livelihoods for the poor with the main emphasis on the most vulnerable groups living in rural areas. The current programme, which has two distinct projects, started in 2004 and has shown impact by enhancing food security, increasing average real incomes and improving health.

The Shire Highlands programme is delivered mainly through decentralized government departments (e.g. Agriculture, Community Development, Health, Forestry, Fisheries, Police, Labour, Judiciary, Water, Social Welfare and DAs). VDCs and research stations are also involved. It aims to empower communities to take responsibility for their own development.

The Livelihoods Security Through Partners programme is delivered through civil society organizations, mainly local NGOs. The main emphasis is on the development of partner capacity, to ensure that partners can deliver the programme and remain accountable to their stakeholders.

Entry points have been created through consultations with the DAs and through PRAs conducted by extension workers from different government sectors. The communities themselves then prioritize issues and potential solutions and develop action plans stating the role of all stakeholders. Project activities are implemented by a VDC consisting of five men and five women. The joint programme encourages environmental sustainability by asking all farmers to conserve and improve soil fertility in their fields and, on larger initiatives (e.g. medium-scale irrigation schemes), by conducting environmental impact studies.

Altogether, 120,000 households are benefiting from programme activities. The 2004–2007 strategy was planned on a budget of just under £7 million (US\$14 million) sourced from the four Oxfams (Oxfam GB, Oxfam Hong Kong, Oxfam Ireland and Oxfam Novib), the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Development Fund of Norway (DFN) and Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI). Allocation of funds per thematic area is: livelihoods 45%; HIV/AIDS 12.5%; safety nets 17.5%; governance 15% and gender 10%.

Project successes and constraints

Anecdotal evidence suggests that households adopting new farming methods through the programme have seen a significant improvement in their food security (reduced hunger gap from around 5–9 months to 3–5 months). Sustainable increases in income can also be seen, for example 48 vulnerable older children are engaged in small businesses earning an average of US\$50 per month. Women involved in dairy farming and mushroom production have increased their monthly incomes and improved their families' nutrition. Households involved in

Focus and objectives

JOPM is currently working in the following areas:

- Land tenure reform
 - Promotion of agricultural production
 - Water and sanitation
 - Market access promotion
 - Promotion of social safety nets
 - HIV/AIDS mainstreaming
 - Promotion of care and treatment for HIV/AIDS
 - Emergency preparedness
 - Promotion of good governance
 - Application of a rights-based approach
 - Social organization.
-
- By 2007 at least 50% of the targeted households will have substantially increased their agricultural production and income and have access to clean drinking water.
 - By 2007 at least half the lower-coping households (estimated at 10% of the population) in the programme areas will have increased access to food and inputs for production.
 - By 2007 a substantial number of HIV/AIDS-affected households will have their welfare improved through increased access to services.
 - By 2005 JOPM and at least four of the partners will have an operational system in place to monitor the onset of disasters and design and manage mitigation measures.
 - By 2007 the poor of the Shire Highlands will be actively participating in their governance and begin to claim their rights and fulfil their obligations in relation to the state and other development agencies.

goat and fish production and those introducing irrigation to their farming have all recorded significant increases in their incomes. The programme also helped create two micro-credit schemes, one of which has over 1,000 members and is now self-sustaining. Credit is being used for profit-making small business, trading, fish production, etc.

Positive health changes include a reduction in the incidence of water-borne diseases (e.g. cholera, dysentery) due to improved access to clean drinking water. Many HIV-positive patients have received anti-retroviral drugs, allowing them to play an active role in society once more. Additional changes in people's rights have been seen in that women feel less oppressed, incidences of crime and vandalism have declined, and tea workers are demanding better rights from their employers.

While the programme did influence positive change in the villages, the evaluation team felt that it was not well designed specifically for impact due to a weak M&E framework, neglect of baseline data collection and lack of an M&E unit. Working with and through others, it seems natural that one of its most significant duties relates to acquiring, generating and sharing knowledge. Lack of a dedicated M&E unit and communication office/personnel prevented the programme fully sharing the knowledge and skills it had generated. Additional staff, in the form of an M&E and a communications officer, will enhance implementation of the new approach and ensure knowledge generated by project activities will be shared more widely.

Up to April 2007, the programme worked in 10 districts, but the staff structure was too thin to provide adequate oversight, monitoring and technical guidance to the many partners. Following the 2006 evaluation, activities will be concentrated in just four districts (Balaka, Blantyre, Phalombe and Thyolo). This will allow more beneficiaries to be reached with more interventions, thereby increasing the programme's impact within the implementing districts.

Another evolution was the decision to integrate the two delivery approaches into a single integrated approach through local NGO partners, and to focus on five thematic areas (livelihoods and food security, HIV/AIDS, emergency preparedness and safety nets, governance, and gender). Future capacity-building activities will help to strengthen the NGO partners. The programme team developed a logframe to provide greater clarity and coherence and to define the expected and measurable results. Project methodology also evolved to adopt a revised categorization and clearer targeting of the poor and vulnerable. Households were initially categorized as coping, adaptors or innovative, but the new strategy defines them as poor, vulnerable or most vulnerable.

The programme approach to linking emergency response activities with development planning was very encouraging. The model used in 2004–2005 used existing structures and staff efficiently, offered a broad mix of food and non-food assistance, and had emergency response activities linked conceptually to development programming.

Although the programme's sustainability cannot yet be determined, it is hoped that efforts will continue through the improved capacity of structures like the VDCs and ADCs and involvement of government extension workers and local NGOs. In addition, the project thematic areas are within the government priority areas outlined in the MDGS, giving hope that the government will continue the work.

Lessons learned

Working in partnership with other stakeholders (including government departments, NGOs, community-based organizations and local structures) improved delivery of the programme, increased the opportunities for learning, maximized resources and resulted in a greater chance of creating sustainable impact. However, it is important to note that especially because of the centrality of working with partners, there is often a requirement for investment in capacity building of partners.

The Shire Highlands programme has been implemented through the government extension service for 10 years and has benefited from the extension workers' wide range of technical expertise. If government funding for the extension service continues at current levels, this gives high hopes for the sustainability of the different initiatives, even after donor support is phased out.

Delivering a holistic and multi-sectoral programme that covers a number of thematic areas increases the chance of real impact because livelihoods are diverse and cannot be improved significantly by introducing a single intervention. Similarly, it is important to get the scale of the project right. JOPM resources were spread too thinly initially, and greater impact is to be expected from the revised focus on fewer districts.

It is important to define the target beneficiaries and appropriate interventions accurately. In this project, the initial categories of beneficiaries were not fully understood by all stakeholders and the team had to reclassify to ensure clarity.

Multi-Sectoral Rural Development over 25 Years: World Vision Malawi (WVM)

Essau Mwendu-Phiri

Project description and implementation

World Vision International is a Christian humanitarian NGO working for the wellbeing of the poor and vulnerable, particularly children. Operations in Malawi began in 1982. During the first decade, World Vision Malawi (WVM) employed a Community Development Programme (CDP) approach in implementing its development interventions. The CDP framework was characterized by limited coverage: three to five villages with 2,000 to 5,000 people; a period of three to five years; the Church as a key development partner; and infrastructural development, such as the construction of schools, as the main focus. An evaluation in 1990 showed that this strategy had a negligible affect on poverty, so WVM adopted a new development approach. The Area Development Programme (ADP) concept has a wider coverage – more than 50 villages with population of 30,000 to 70,000 – over a period of 15 years with the main focus on: food security; health, water and sanitation; education; small enterprise development; and HIV/AIDS. In addition to these major areas, the programmes have crosscutting aims such as environmental conservation, gender equality and Christian commitment. WVM now has 44 ADPs – at least one programme in every district except Likoma and Mwanza.

One such ADP is Chingale, located in the northwestern part of Zomba District in the Southern Region of Malawi. Initiated in 1996, it covers an area totalling approximately 200 km². The overall goal of Chingale ADP is to improve the living standards of 30,000 target beneficiaries by 2011. Its specific objectives relate to improving food security, health status (including HIV/AIDS), leadership, education and small enterprise development. The 15-year budget is estimated at US\$4.6 million. World Vision USA has committed to support the programme financially throughout this period.

Selection of a targeted area involves the local government DA, traditional leaders and WVM. The programme design process includes a rapid needs assessment, baseline survey, community mobilization and project/programme coordination committee meetings.

For instance, WVM hired a consultant who conducted a baseline survey in Chingale area. The baseline survey report was presented at a coordination committee forum attended by community representatives, heads of departments at district level, other NGOs, faith leaders and private sector representatives. Ultimately, the forum developed a programme design document outlining the goals and objectives (see box). Thus, the forum enabled the key stakeholders to provide technical support to the community in developing its programme design. As a result the design document was translated into the local language (Chichewa) for the community's use.

Implementation of the programme design requires active participation of the community if meaningful and sustainable development is to take place. WVM therefore ensures the community also takes an active role in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation through various development committees (see Figure).

In most cases WVM facilitates the formation of an Area Development Programme Executive Committee, Commitment Area Committees (CACs) and Sectoral Development Committees wherever it has initiated an ADP. An ADP Executive Committee is an overseer of the development implementation in the entire area. Members of this committee come from CACs that coordinate development implementation in each village group. The community sectoral plans that utilize indigenous knowledge are consolidated to form CAC plans that are presented to the Executive Committee for consideration. Similarly, reports from sectoral committees are submitted to CAC and to the executive committee as a monitoring system.

Chingale ADP has an executive committee, six CACs and sectoral committees such as a smallholder seed farmers' association, fish farmers' association, sponsorship committee, HIV/AIDS committee and water management committee. These allow the community to participate actively in programme planning, implementation and monitoring.

The government and the private sector are key partners and were involved in formulating the programme design document and implementing activities. The government was also involved in identifying the target area and in monitoring and evaluation. For example in Zomba, the District Executive Committee

Chingale ADP: goal and objectives

The overall goal of the ADP is to improve the living standard of 30,000 people in Chingale area by 2011. Its specific objectives are:

- Food Security Project: To improve the food security of 75% of households by 2011
- Health Project: To improve the health status of 6,000 households by 2011
- HIV/AIDS Project: To reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS among 6,000 households by 2010
- Leadership Development Project: To improve the capacity of the community to manage their development in a sustainable way by 2009
- Education Project: To provide access to quality primary education for 95% of school-age children by 2010
- Small Enterprise Development Project: To increase the income-earning capacity of 60% of households by 2011.

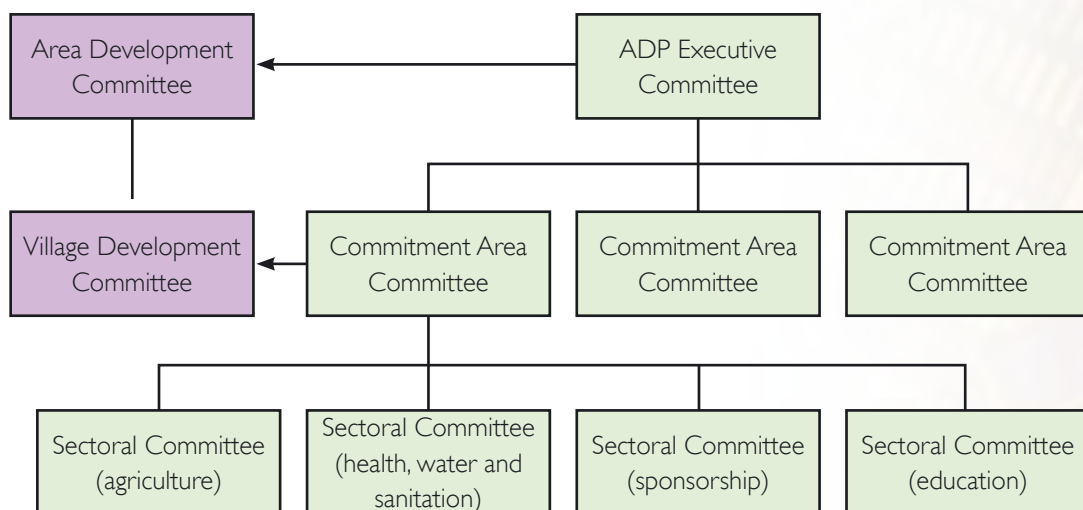
Improving gender equality and environmental conservation are additional crosscutting objectives.

(DEC) not only monitored implementation of the Chingale programme, but also participated in its mid-term (2001) evaluation. Lessons from the evaluation were shared to all DEC members. In addition, the private sector Pannar Seed Company signed a contract with Chingale ADP to buy about 100 t of cowpea.

Two major changes have taken place as the programme methodology has evolved. Firstly, as a result of policy change in World Vision, the small enterprise development component of the programme was dropped. Secondly, a strategic decision was taken by the ADP management to focus the first five years of the programme on food security issues.

Government Structure

World Vision Structure



Area Development Programme structure at community level

Project successes and constraints

Mid-term evaluation revealed that Chingale ADP made great progress towards its goal of improving the living standards of the 30,000 people in the area. About 2,000 households crossed the community's poverty line of US\$40 per annum (Chingale Baseline Report 1996) after realizing an average income of US\$102 from seed sales. Incidences of water-borne disease reduced from 650 to 8 cases due to better sanitation and clean drinking water supplied by 30 new boreholes and 10 shallow wells. Maize yields tripled following the implementation of a farm input revolving loan that enabled 3,000 families to access high-yielding maize seed and fertilizer.

Economic empowerment through seed sales, fish farming and winter crop production unlocked social development as farmers accumulated assets, enhanced their resilience and sent their children to school. As well as improving nutrition, fish farming had environmental benefits, since farmers were encouraged to keep the natural forest cover to ensure perennial water flow for the fishponds.

Positive results were evident from some development interactions. For instance, seed multiplication and food crop production saw the farmers reserving maize for consumption and repaying maize loans from seed sales. Secondly, the community was encouraged to plant trees in the watershed area because the ADP linked it to profit from fish farming. However, the agroforestry intervention had the least impact because of the long cropping time; it was 3–5 years before the farmers could harvest the trees and realize any profit on their investment.

Thirdly, road infrastructure improved community accessibility and unlocked the area to further economic activities as more buyers and sellers flocked to the community. All these achievements hinged on improved health following a significant reduction in disease as a result of health sector development interventions. These successes have been scaled out to other ADPs with even wider success and impact on poverty and hunger. In fact, a number of other NGOs have replicated these initiatives in their working areas.

Lessons learned

Every multi-sectoral development programme should start with the end in mind. Thus, issues of project sustainability must be built into the project design right from the start. This includes planning for phasing out. While an integrated approach is likely to lead to greater impact, projects should use the most critical need as the entry point, and this need may not be the same as the perceived one identified by the community itself. Meeting this need will then trigger other development activities.

Stakeholder analysis is critical to ensure a sense of ownership and commitment. In addition to the local community, the community's elites working outside the area (e.g. lawyers and doctors) should be engaged in this process to help oversee development initiatives. The poor do not need charity; they need inspiration. Development agencies should challenge rural communities to think and meditate on prosperity rather than on poverty.

Building the capacity of communities to manage the programme is a prerequisite to sustainable projects. Capacity building activities should target local leadership, community members and staff, identifying the gaps and designing appropriate programmes to address their needs.

Strong and well-articulated marketing systems are needed that can perform a range of services, including purchasing, storage, transportation, processing, distribution and market information systems.

Where possible, use of existing local government structures in implementing rural development should be encouraged. Where local structures are non-existent or not functioning, development agencies may set up parallel structures. However, the decision to set up parallel structures should be revisited regularly and, at the same time, efforts should be made to strengthen the existing ones.

Overview of Multi-Sectoral Rural Development Programmes and Projects in Malawi

SATECH	CHDI	OVC	MVP
Cost (US\$ per beneficiary per year)	Uncosted	27.00	50.00
Duration	2 years 8 months	4 years	5 years
Households	15,000 beneficiaries 17 villages	2,243	7,000
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Agriculture Department of Extension and Training Salima District Commissioner PIH DAs Ministries of Health, Agriculture, Local Government, Education, Energy and Mines, Water and Irrigation Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government (Zomba DA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MoLGRD Ministry of Health UNDP Community Local government
Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agricultural and horticultural production, artisan training and entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Vocational training and education Water and sanitation Agriculture and environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food security and nutrition Health Education Water and sanitation
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To secure the livelihoods of widows, orphan guardians and orphans, especially through introducing appropriate labour-saving technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve household food security and nutrition of orphans and HIV/AIDS-affected children and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To achieve the MDGs in target communities and demonstrate achievability in wider areas

I-LIFE	Plan International Malawi	JOPM	WVM
Cost (US\$ per beneficiary per year)	91.70	8.85	10.20
Duration	5 years	3-year strategies	15 years
Households	15,268	120,000	6,000
Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Agricultural Office • Community • ICRISAT • SARNET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SARNET • Government departments • Local NGOs • CBOs • VDCs, ADCs, etc. 	Government (Zomba DA)
Sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food security and nutrition • Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture and food security • Water and sanitation • Market access promotion • Safety nets • Health: HIV/AIDS • Emergency preparedness • Governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food security • Health • Water and sanitation • Education • HIV/AIDS • Community accessibility
Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To address food insecurity through a multi-sectoral approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve food security, health status, community capacity to manage own development and access social services, and educational standards

Notes: One household is estimated to include an average of 5 people. See list of acronyms for expansions.

Lessons Learned

Knowledge gained during the implementation of the nine projects has yielded many important lessons. From these case studies, the workshop participants were able to make recommendations based on their shared experiences (see Annex 2). Several common themes emerged.

I. Work in partnership with the government

Analysis of the projects emphasized the importance of working closely with the government, especially at local levels. Several different aspects of this relationship emerged. For example, in SATECH, it was noted that knowledge held by local government personnel is an important asset that can assist project activities such as selecting suitable beneficiaries for targeted interventions. Several projects and programmes (MVP, JOPM, Plan International Malawi, and WVM) emphasized the importance of working through the government to achieve programmatic objectives, since cost sharing and using government capacity, such as the extension network and research laboratories, can help maximize available resources.

The extension network, administered by local government, can play a major role in implementation of projects and programmes. For example, JOPM benefited from the extension workers' wide range of technical expertise. Projects should perhaps be cautious about relying on the existing government extension service to continue project activities into the future, since government resources are limited and may be redirected towards other priorities. Additional resources will be required. In the case of JOPM, the project thematic areas were within the government priority areas outlined in the MGDS, thus increasing the probability of sustained support from the government.

Government decentralization in Malawi has empowered local governance structures, making them better equipped to handle IRD projects. Projects should therefore aim to work closely with local government, and project and programme plans should both strengthen and be guided by district development plans.

Joint planning with the government is important for a number of reasons. The I-LIFE project suggests that joint planning will

help to avoid duplication of effort. Once projects and programmes understand which local government and local community structures are in place, they can build on these and fill in gaps, rather than setting up parallel structures. For example in MVP, new community committees were created to work on project activities. However, conflict between these and the existing decentralized structures, such as VDCs and ADCs, began to occur and project staff had to change their focus to one of strengthening existing structures rather than building new ones. JOPM shows that there is a significant opportunity for the government and the project/programme to learn from each other, while Plan International Malawi suggests that working with local structures promotes greater continued support from the government (see box).

Ministries get involved

Plan International Malawi worked closely with MA&FS to provide project beneficiaries with education on nutrition, food preparation and the importance of a balanced diet. Crop diversification combined with education on nutrition helped households to improve on their diets. Plan also worked in partnership with the District Health Office and the District Gender Department. Partnering with government at the district level helped to improve the project's effectiveness and impact. Government officials will continue to provide monitoring support to the communities.



Recommendations

- Help build capacity of District Administrators
- Make use of existing decentralized structures rather than creating new ones
- Take account of district development plans when planning new projects
- Maintain an up-to-date inventory of existing rural development projects
- Direct more resources to coordination
- Make better use of electronic communication
- Improve and formalize structures at national level for multi-sectoral planning, monitoring and evaluation.

2. Invest in sustainability, continuity and ownership

All projects confirmed that community involvement, from the planning stage throughout project implementation and beyond, is essential for any sustainable impact. For example, Plan International Malawi took a participatory approach, with all partners – including the community – involved in conducting a situational analysis, agreeing on a detailed action plan and reviewing progress (see box). Involvement in the decision-making process in particular encourages community ownership of the project objectives. MVP illustrates the value of good communication between the project, partners and communities, so that everyone knows what to expect and how to plan project activities.

The SATECH case study shows that project beneficiaries are more likely to participate in project activities without financial compensation if they perceive the activities will be useful to them. Project leaders in the OVC project voiced the opinion

that allowances can hinder the sustainability of development work if they are used to encourage people to undertake activities they would not otherwise become involved in. Similarly in I-LIFE, community sensitization, which includes giving a full explanation of the potential impact of an activity and the work expected of participants, is considered to be essential if people are to make an informed decision about participation. If they feel the activity truly meets a demand or solves a problem, then expectations of payment will not usually become an issue and a strong sense of ownership and commitment will ensue. Cost-sharing arrangements, where the project and government contribute finance and the communities contribute resources in kind, have also proven successful (see box).

In both SATECH and MVP, village and district committees guided and monitored activities. MVP found existing local structures, such as women's groups, to be a suitable and useful entry point. With help in the form of capacity building, members of local communities can become agents of change (see next section). In Plan International Malawi, working with community groups and strengthening their organization helped the project reach out to more people, achieved more through collective working, and ensured active participation of the most vulnerable members of the community (e.g. HIV-affected families).

Several projects mentioned project duration – saying that project timescales are often too short to achieve lasting impact. For example, World Vision originally had five-year projects, but soon realized that five years is not long enough to create any real continuity. Similarly, SATECH was planned for just under three years, but project staff soon realized this was too short, due to the need to introduce, refine and monitor the performance of agricultural interventions over several growing seasons. Additional time would also have allowed project staff to train the beneficiaries and government extension staff in the necessary skills of business management and how to maintain the technologies provided over the longer term.

For programmes that aim to make significant improvements in the lives of a target group, it is important not to spread resources too thinly. JOPM decreased its coverage area from 10 districts to four in order to ensure greater impact.

Longer-term considerations must be built in to projects from the design stage. WVM promoted the idea that projects should be designed with the end in mind and that phase-out and continuity should be central considerations right from the project's inception. However, while projects should consider exit strategies, it is also important to note that government structures will remain in place and should be supported to create continuity in development.

Getting communities involved

The Plan International Malawi's project in Mzungu village was designed in collaboration with the local community and district extension officers. After being involved in a participatory situational analysis, the community helped define the priority activities and decided how they should be carried out. They also helped identify sources of funding, including their own contributions.

The communities organized themselves into committees for each intervention and held meetings to help people decide which activity they would like to be involved with. The committees made sure that HIV-affected families had equal access to the project interventions and that the benefits of each activity could be passed on to a wider group.

- **Animal rearing:** Ten households received goats, ten received chickens and another ten were given rabbits. Participants agreed to follow a pass-on scheme, whereby they distributed the offspring of these livestock to other villagers.
- **Crop diversification:** Demonstration plots introduced farmers to groundnut, soybean, cassava and sweet potato cultivation. The farmers received planting materials and agreed to multiply these and distribute them to other members of the community.
- **Vegetable cultivation:** Three groups, each of 20 farmers were given treadle pumps, wheelbarrows, hand implements and seeds, and shown how to make compost. They then cultivated and sold vegetables as a group.

To give or to share?

Most projects provided communities with inputs or technologies to ensure that their basic needs were met. However, WVM was strongly against this. The programme views the practice of giving inputs to beneficiaries as dependency-creating and detrimental to community cohesion and development. Instead, WVM requires farmers to repay their maize loans in full. Other projects take the middle ground, giving communities a lot but, at the same time, asking them to make their own contributions in kind (e.g. in agricultural produce and labour in OVC and Plan International Malawi).

The principle of cost sharing was employed at the community level in several of the projects. In MVP the community supplied inputs such as bricks, labour for digging a well and maize for the school feeding programme (estimated value US\$104,000). In the OVC project, community ownership was enhanced by the cost-sharing approach, in which the people contributed payment in kind through labour and materials in return for inputs. Project staff in these cases aimed to ensure that the distribution of inputs was not seen purely as a 'hand out' but as an investment in the future sustainable development of the entire community.

Recommendations

- Undertake participatory community needs assessments prior to project design
- Use the DA as an entry point
- Involve the community in planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Government should be more bold in its negotiations with projects and insist on certain standards (for project length, etc.)
- Projects must work through local structures
- Maintain transparency in project operations
- Exit strategies: Projects should consider and plan for project completion, but also note that government structures will remain in place and should be supported to create continuity of development
- Use of appropriate technologies keeps maintenance costs low.

3. Build capacity at different levels

Most of the projects recognized that, while it is important to make use of existing capacity, it is equally essential to put effort and resources into building the capacity of stakeholders, since lack of capacity is one of the greatest obstacles to project continuity and sustainability. Capacity-building efforts can be directed at local government officers, extension services, community groups, NGOs, and other stakeholders.

Capacity building proved a successful means of creating income and self-reliance in the SATECH and OVC projects. In SATECH, training in vocational skills (e.g. metalwork and motor mechanics) and provision of basic equipment allowed many poor orphan teenagers to break out of poverty, build a livelihood for themselves and make a positive contribution to the development of their community. SATECH also focused on strengthening the participatory capacity of community- and village-based groups, to ensure project interventions were appropriate to their needs.

The OVC project had a clear focus on capacity building as a means of creating sustainability. Here, project staff not only distributed improved seeds, fertilizer and other planting materials to households, they also trained farmers and extension workers in production and processing of the new crops. Women's groups learned about management and marketing skills in addition to being offered a wide range of vocational training. This type of new knowledge allows members of the community to become agents of change, providing the potential for sustained development.

More generally, WVM stresses the need to build the capacity of the local community so they can manage the programme themselves in the future. The I-LIFE paper recognizes the importance of strengthening the capacity of the programme itself, particularly in the area of knowledge management.

One of the major issues occurring in the group session discussions was the importance of building local government capacity, particularly that of the DA. The DA is responsible for managing local multi-sectoral development projects and will remain in authority long after the project finishes. DAs often lack funds and equipment to carry out their mandate and need support for training and recruitment activities. Extension workers in particular can benefit from project support in providing them

Capacity building for local institutions

MVP has made a commitment to build the capacity of the government staff who will take over when the project phases out. For instance, in the health sector, there is a recommendation by the Global Fund to have a Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA) for every 250 households, but implementation of this has become delayed due to lack of funding. In response, MVP and the Ministry of Health have agreed to share the cost of 35 HSAs for Mwandama. The HSAs will be recruited by the government and MVP will pay them for the first four years. After this, the government will be responsible for their salaries. MVP also proposes to recruit high school graduates from the community and train them to Medical Assistant level so they can work in village dispensaries.



with the knowledge and tools they need to implement rural development activities. For example, JOPM mentioned that improved capacity of structures like VDCs and ADCs and involvement of government extension workers and local NGOs should enhance the sustainability of the programme. In SAT-ECH, the outreach and sustainability of the project was enhanced by training extension workers, with particular emphasis put on encouraging farmer-led demand and bringing extension as close as possible to farmers.

There was some dispute about the role of allowances. The OVC experience suggested that allowances seriously hinder the sustainability of development work. In the group sessions a number of participants disputed that allowances could play an important role in creating incentives for local community members or extension workers to achieve project objectives. The I-LIFE experience suggests that when programmes met genuine community needs, allowances are not needed.

Strengthening institutions and processes

The I-LIFE project adopts a relatively new focus in rural development, which aims to address not only the symptoms of complex humanitarian emergencies but also their root causes. This requires a change in approach, from supporting people to strengthening institutions and processes.

The project interventions focus on capacity building of the decentralized government structure, thereby improving governance at district and local level. Grassroots institutional strengthening initiatives are an integral part of the programme, since it is believed that these will foster good governance practices and ensure the sustainability of development efforts. Issues surrounding HIV/AIDS and gender have been mainstreamed in many of the programme's initiatives (e.g. village savings and loans schemes, agricultural production, marketing and development of infrastructure such as small-scale irrigation schemes).

Recommendations

- Build on existing capacity where possible
- Fill gaps, e.g. in DAs to ensure devolvement process is completed, improve recruitment and training
- Equipment is important for local government to function (transport, telecommunications, etc.)
- Incentive structures and allowances can facilitate local work by local government officers.

4. Support enterprise development and working with the private sector

For projects that targeted food security through improved inputs and fertilizer, the surpluses were often much larger than anticipated. This created the new problem of trying to ensure that farmers achieved good prices for their crops. I-LIFE, MVP and Plan International Malawi all acknowledged the need for effective market chain development. Even projects that have food security as the main focus should pay adequate attention to creating links between farmers and new markets, including the private sector, to ensure they receive a fair price for any surplus production.

WVM states that strong and well-articulated marketing systems are needed with attention paid to a range of services, including purchasing, storage, transportation, processing, distribution, and market information systems.

Successful enterprise development through training, as demonstrated by OVC and SATECH, has been described in the previous section.

CHDI emphasizes financial self-sufficiency and works to eliminate barriers to commercial success. However, the project recognizes that while business activity is an important part of wider economic growth, it cannot improve living conditions and community prospects by itself. A portion of CHDI's funds is therefore used to support community and national infrastructure development projects.

The importance of providing access to credit facilities was mentioned by I-LIFE, which stated that the impact of village savings and loans activities on the livelihood capacities of vulnerable groups may be considerable. Even when loans are not used for investment, they can substantially improve beneficiaries' standards of living. Most project participants used their loans to invest in productivity increases by buying farm inputs or to finance small-scale economic activities. JOPM helped create two micro-credit schemes, one of which has over 1,000 members and is now self-sustaining.

Business development in MVP

The MVP is currently working on marketing issues through helping farmers form cooperatives. These are characterized by partnership between the community and micro-credit institutions. The NGO Opportunity International Bank of Malawi and World Vision's Finance Trust for the Self-Employed (FITSE) have already shown interest in this kind of partnership with Mwandama farmers and meetings have been scheduled to discuss the way forward. Such micro-credit schemes will help community members to start small businesses while also introducing a culture of saving money.

Recommendations

- From project inception and even for projects where the primary concern is food security, marketing must be considered
- NGOs can facilitate links between villages and wider market chains, including the private sector
- Access to finance should be dealt with as a business and not be run directly by the project to encourage sustainability
- Government: Consider creating institutions/programmes to mitigate against risks in crop yields
- Government: Strengthen the Cooperative Development Unit
- Government: Give incentives to private sector companies to engage with villages
- Projects: Create detailed marketing strategies
- Projects: Do more community sensitization (including school curriculum/activities)
- Projects: Separate social services from financial services/aspects
- Projects: Explore potential links and facilitate them
- Projects and government: Support capacity development of micro-finance service providers

5. Learn from experience: the importance of M&E

A large number of NGOs, governmental organizations and IGOs have been involved in IRD projects since the 1970s, and it is important to learn from past experience. The case studies underlined the importance of building in regular M&E activities, since these can help to optimize the project impacts. For example, the OVC project stressed that ongoing M&E is needed to assess the efficacy of activities and make any necessary changes. Assessment of project experience and stakeholder feedback on project approaches and activities can enhance programme design. I-LIFE plans to use mid-term evaluations to inform evolution of project design. It considers its detailed M&E plan, which uses standard I-LIFE data collection tools, to be an aid to better understanding of project successes and failures. Project design can then be improved project design based on this knowledge.

The programmes that have been running for a longer period in Malawi have used outcomes of M&E as a basis for overhauling their approaches and strategies. WVM's evaluation of its early operations indicated that infrastructural development had little impact on addressing household poverty. As a result, a new approach was adopted from 1990 onwards (see box).

Strong M&E frameworks can make a big difference in ensuring sustainability of impact. The evaluation team reviewing JOPM felt that while the programme did influence positive change in the villages, it was not designed specifically for impact due to a weak M&E framework, neglect of baseline data collection, and lack of an M&E unit. As a result, the project methodology evolved to adopt a revised categorization and clearer targeting of the poor and vulnerable. To further increase impact, future activities will be concentrated in fewer districts.

New focus for World Vision Malawi

Over the past 25 years, M&E activities have prompted WVM to change its development focus and thereby to improve the programme's impact. During the first decade (1982–1992), WVM adopted a 'community development project' approach. This had limited coverage (three to five villages with 2,000–5000 people), spanned between three and five years and involved the church as the key development partner. The main focus was on infrastructural development, such as construction of schoolrooms, bridges and shelters for young children. The 1990 evaluation showed that this strategy had a negligible affect on poverty, so WVM adopted a new development approach called an 'area development programme'. This model has a wider coverage – more than 50 villages with a population of 30,000 to 70,000 – and projects run for a longer period of time (15 years). The major focus is on food security; health, water and sanitation; education; small enterprise development; and HIV/AIDS.

Recommendations

- Consider body of past/existing experience in project design
- Incorporate a strong M&E framework into project design
- Undertake regular external evaluation
- Respond to stakeholder and evaluation concerns
- At the national level, there is a need to set a structure and enhance tools for M&E
- Build community capacity in planning, M&E. Build capacity for measuring project outcomes and for using a locally owned M&E system

6. Improve communications: networking and knowledge sharing

While new knowledge has been generated by all the projects under review, the participants at the workshop agreed that there is no need to 'reinvent the wheel'. They felt that this report would be a useful knowledge-sharing tool, both for improving existing projects and for designing new ones. The fact that participants had previously been unaware of the extent to which so many organizations were working in multi-sectoral rural development in similar ways highlights the need for more networking and knowledge sharing opportunities.

The group sessions underlined the benefits of promoting information and communication technology (ICT) for networking and knowledge sharing. The traditional meetings for exchange of information and ideas should be replaced or augmented by faster and cheaper methods of communication among stakeholders. For example, e-forums and an electronic mailing list would allow the multi-sectoral development community to communicate more regularly.

Use of ICT would help the Government of Malawi to play a stronger coordinating role in ensuring projects and programmes have optimal impact on poverty reduction in the country. This could be achieved through various actions:

1. By maintaining an up-to-date and well-circulated inventory of rural development projects/programmes.
2. By being bolder in government negotiations with projects. The government should insist on certain standards for project focus, location and duration.
3. By setting up district and government guidelines that support information sharing and communication amongst IRD partners.
4. By formulating a code of ethics that addresses issues of acknowledging other organizations' work and ideas, documenting IRD work, ideas and innovations.

Recommendations

- Need to align projects with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) and other national policies to allow a common base for comparison across organizations
- Set up district government guidelines that support information sharing and communication amongst IRD partners
- Formulate a code of ethics, which addresses issues of acknowledging other organizations' work and ideas, documenting IRD work, ideas and innovations
- Support exchange programmes and field visits amongst IRD organizations and the community members they are working with, in order to provide empirical evidence of experiences
- Promote the use of ICT e.g. through telecentres and e-forums
- Hold a national workshop on IRD (every two years).

Annex I.

Workshop Programme

Critical Analysis of Multi-Sectoral Rural Development Experience in Malawi: Towards identification and scaling up of best practice

Capital Hotel, Lilongwe, 23–24 May 2007

Day I

Morning

8.30

Registration

9.00

Opening Comments

- Facilitator welcomes
- The MDG Centre, *Glenn Denning*
- UNDP, *Michael Keating*
- MoLGRD, Secretary for Local Government, *George Mkondiwa*
- MoLGRD, Minister *George Chaponda*

10.00

Coffee Break

10.15

Government Presentations

- MEP&D (10–20 minutes)
- MoLGRD (10–20 minutes)
- MA&FS (10–20 minutes)
- Panel Q&A Session: MEP&D, MoLGRD, MA&FS (15 minutes)

3 Case Studies

(each 15 minutes presentation,
15 minutes discussion)

11.30–12.00 Case Study I

- SATECH Project, UNIDO, *Tim Caldecott* and *Wells Kumwenda*

- 12.00–12.30 Case Study II
- Clinton-Hunter Foundation, *Peter Kulemeka*
- 12.30–1.00 Case Study III
- Mangochi Project, FAO/UNCDF/WFP, *Austin Msimuko and Bill Price*

1.00 **Lunch**

Afternoon

6 Case Studies

(each 15 minutes presentation,
15 minutes discussion)

- 2.00–2.30 Case Study IV
- MVP, *Rebbie Harawa and Chrispin Magombo*
- 2.30–3.00 Case Study V
- SSEE, *Chris Dzimidzi*
- 3.00–3.30 Case Study VI
- I-LIFE Project, CARE Malawi, *Henry Khonyongwa and Redge Masupayi*
- 3.30–4.00 Case Study VII
- Plan International Malawi, *Rex Chapota*
- 4.00 **Coffee Break**
- 4.15–4.45 Case Study VIII
- JOPM, *John Nyirenda*
- 4.45–5.15 Case Study IX
- WVM, *Essau Mwendo-Phiri*
- 5.30–6.00 Preparations for workshops
Break into groups for following day's sessions

Day 2

Morning

8.30–9.30 Two Commentaries on Presentations
(one government, one external)

9.30–12.30 Workshops (includes coffee break taken in individual groups)

12.30 **Lunch**

1.30–2.30 Presentation of Conclusions

2.30–3.30 Closing

- Facilitator (1–2 minutes)
- MDG Centre Presentation of Workshop Summary (20 minutes)
- UNDP Response to Workshop Summary (20 minutes)
- MoLGRD Response to Workshop Summary (20 minutes)

3.30 **Press Conference**

Annex 2.

Group Sessions

Topic I

Coordination and implementation mechanisms

District Level

1. Limited capacity in the DAs
 - a. Recommendation: Capacity building as compulsory in ALL plans for DAs and the NGO community should also contribute to assisting the assembly in this goal
2. Stakeholders are deliberately ignoring structures in place
 - a. Recommendation: Decentralization to be taken as focus, i.e. appreciate and utilize the district structures apart from the national structures
3. Projects do not reflect the District Development Plans
 - a. Recommendation: Project implementation should be incorporated in District Plans
4. DA takes too much time to respond to project proposals including emergency relief
 - a. Recommendation: DAs should accommodate or respond as soon as possible, especially in emergency relief situations
5. Work and projects are duplicated in areas as no information is available to the DA or other stakeholders working in the area
 - a. Recommendation: Establish an inventory of all service providers and/or operating partners to form a district database which should also be circulated to the stakeholders
6. Inadequate monitoring and supervision of development at grass roots level
 - a. Recommendation: Need for adequate resources to accommodate for coordination cost at all levels, i.e. VDC, ADC, and DA (e.g. cost of travel, lunch allowances, etc.)

7. Poor management of information circulation
 - a. Recommendation: Rather than the traditional meetings for exchange of information and ideas, there is a need to have faster and cheaper ways of communicating to various stakeholders for district-related issues, for example, emails to be sent with a deadline for responses with inputs, etc.

National Level

1. Lack of structure for multi-sectoral planning, monitoring and evaluation
 - a. Need to set structure and enhance tools for having participatory policy, planning, monitoring and evaluation
 - b. Need for joint technical inter-ministerial and stakeholder meetings, perhaps twice a year
2. Majority of NGOs are not providing enough information on project profiles which include budget, project execution, etc. that they are conducting in areas
 - a. It should be mandatory for all NGOs to write to the respective Ministry and DA on every project with the complete profile

Topic 2

Sustainability, continuity and ownership

1. Sensitization of communities
 - a. District and community entry process precedes sensitisation. Inappropriate entry compromises support from relevant authorities
 - b. Participatory approaches with money identified and with money not yet identified
 - c. Ideally, community needs assessment to be done before a project is designed
 - d. Entry point in the district should be the DA
2. Participatory planning
 - a. Once involved, communities know what it is about, can participate in implementation and own it
 - b. Community feedback and information sharing builds trust and helps in continuity of interventions
 - c. Build community capacity in planning, monitoring and evaluation. Capacity in measuring and using their own indigenous M&E system helps communities evaluate themselves
 - d. Districts now have District Development Plans (derived from Village Action Plans) from which potential project can be pulled. District should be firm in enforcing compliance with needs identified in its Development Plans
 - e. Development partners need to work with the district to develop comprehensive good quality Village Action Plans and District Development Plans
 - f. Government should be bold when negotiating with NGOs and development partners and enforce the rules and regulations on how they should operate in the country and districts
 - g. Strengthen systems at DA level to enhance transparency and accountability so that NGOs and partners develop confidence to put money in the District Development Fund (DDF). This will allow the assembly to take charge of implementation, rather than the NGOs and partners going direct to the community to implement
3. Ownership
 - a. For communities to own projects, there should be transparency so that community members know details of implementation (money coming in, being spent and other inputs and processes used in implementation)

- b. Projects/programmes should be based on community and district needs rather than political directives
 - c. Capacity building at community level is key for community participation and ownership (e.g literacy)
 - d. Provide volunteers with income-generating activities to empower them economically so they can meet their basic needs
4. Exit strategy
- a. Build capacity at all levels so that activities can run once the project phases out (ensure skills transfer)
 - b. Use of locally appropriate technology to ensure continuity
 - c. Should we exit? Development is a continuum. Exit in the context of specific inputs being provided by the project
 - i. Exit from the community's level of dependency
 - ii. Exit strategy starts the day entry is made (WVM presentation)
5. Maintenance costs
- a. Use of appropriate technologies keeps maintenance costs low
 - b. Issues of maintenance costs should be built in right from the start. Build skills of communities/beneficiaries in maintaining what they have (they should have ideas on costs involved, money coming in and profit margins if any)
 - c. Business concept so that funds and other resources can be generated from communities where applicable, and cost elements to be borne by government are clearly built into the government budget
 - d. The district should have capability to supervise projects so they can support maintenance and be able to negotiate with potential donors/partners on capacity or lack of capacity to carry on maintenance

Topic 3

Human resource capacity

- I. Organizational structure
 - a. The DA organizational structure is in place
 - b. However, gaps exist in terms of:
 - i. Councillors are not in place
 - ii. Devolvement of central ministries is not completed
 - iii. Inadequate staff at all levels (both quantity and quality)
2. Capacity building
 - a. Human resource
 - i. DA establishment not approved
 - ii. Recruitment leaves a lot to be desired, i.e. empowering DA to recruit through decentralization policy
 - iii. Training of staff
 1. Training needs and plan
 2. Training staff according to plan covering staff and beneficiaries at all levels
 - b. Office equipment
 - i. This includes computers, copiers, faxes, specialized equipment for specialized functions
 - c. Transport/mobility of staff is critical for monitoring and evaluation, supervision and implementation of programmes as planned
 - i. Vehicles
 - ii. Motorcycles
 - iii. Bicycles
3. Incentives
 - a. Better accommodation for DA staff at all levels
 - b. Better salaries for staff at DA levels
 - c. Transport support for extension workers at DA levels
 - d. Allowances for staff, i.e. supporting extension workers through liaison with the DA management

Topic 4

Enterprise development and working with the private sector

1. Marketing


- a. From project inception and even for projects where the primary concern is food security, marketing must be considered
- b. NGOs can facilitate links between village level and higher levels
- c. Key hurdle:
 - i. What to do with accidental surpluses
 - ii. Lack of predictability (rainfed agriculture)
- d. Recommendations:
 - i. Government: Consider creating institutions/schemes/programmes to hedge against risks
 - ii. Projects: Create detailed marketing strategies
 - iii. Attention to different marketing needs for accidental surplus versus those produced for a certain market

2. Cooperatives/associations

- a. Should be encouraged to grow organically
- b. Key hurdle:
 - i. Community trust
- c. Recommendation:
 - i. Government: Strengthen the Cooperative Development Unit
 - ii. Project: More community sensitization (even in school curriculum/activities)

3. Access to finance

- a. Sustainability is key
 - i. Finance must function as a business
- b. Key hurdle:
 - i. Conditions of loans
 - ii. Range of services
 - iii. Physical/geographical availability
- c. Recommendation:
 - i. Project: separate social services from financial services/aspects
 - ii. Project/government: support capacity development of microfinance service providers

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4. Linkages with private sector
 - a. There is an opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship between private sector and small-scale farmers in rural villages
 - b. Key hurdle:
 - i. Identification of synergies/schemes
 - c. Recommendations:
 - i. Government: incentives to companies to engage with villages
 - ii. Project: explore potential links and facilitate them.

Topic 5

Improving communication and knowledge sharing

1. Current state of communication and information sharing
 - a. No single focal point of contact in government line ministries
 - b. Weak capacity in already established communication networks
 - c. Lack of ICT skills and equipment
 - d. Inaccessibility of IRD documented work and non-uniformity of format
2. Obstacles to information sharing
 - a. Organization bureaucracy stifling information sharing
 - b. Competitiveness among organizations and fear of encroaching in other's territories
 - c. Lack of acknowledging work done by other IRD organizations, and organization taking credit of other's work
 - d. Government's undefined role in the mediation of conflicts amongst IRD organizations
3. Way forward
 - a. Need to align organization projects with MGDS and other national policies, to allow a common base for comparison across organizations
 - b. Setting up of district and government guidelines that support information sharing and communication amongst IRD partners
 - c. Formulation of a code of ethics, which addresses issues of acknowledging other organizations' work and ideas, documenting IRD work, ideas and innovations etc.
 - d. Exchange programmes and field visits amongst IRD organizations and the community members they are working with, in order to provide empirical evidence of experiences
 - e. Promote the use of ICT e.g. through telecentres, e-forums
 - f. National workshop on IRD (every 2 years)

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