



### International Case Study

**Project title:** Women farmers access value-chains and adapt to climate change in Lilongwe, Mchinji and Dowa (MAL08)

**Programme:** Malawi Development Programme

**Organisation:** Oxfam/ Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM)

**Interview Date:** 29 September 2014

**Interview type:** Personal Interview

**Source:** Smallholder farmer

**Name:** [REDACTED]

**Age:** 49 years

**Anonymous?** No

#### Project Summary

Oxfam in Malawi, with funding from the Scottish Government, is implementing a project titled "Women farmers access value-chains and adapt to climate change". The goal of the project is to improve poor women's economic, social and environmental resilience through participation in value chains, increased status and adaptation to climate change. Specifically, it aims at improving the capacity of 15,000 poor women smallholder farmers in Lilongwe, Dowa and Mchinji Districts. One aspect of the climate change awareness and adaptation training includes reduction of tree felling for firewood as trees help reduce soil erosion and flooding and increase fertility of the soil. A practical measure implemented under this project was the use of low energy stoves which only use three sticks of wood.

The project is being implemented by the Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM) and Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD). The total budget for the project is £382,238 for the period April 2012 – March 2015.

## Case Study Background

Apart from enhancing production and marketing of groundnuts and beans, improving the economic status of the targeted women and their income and food security, the project has also mainstreamed climate change adaptation measures to ensure that women contribute to advancing sustainable climate change adaptation strategies. Among other things, the project encourages the use of low energy cooking stoves for household use and agro-forestry. The low energy stoves use less firewood and are more efficient than a traditional „three stones“ fire (open fire with three stones to support a cooking pot).

██████████, 49, from Kachigunundu Village, in the Traditional Authority of Masula, Lilongwe District is among the beneficiaries singing praises about the project. Married, with six children, ██████████ attests that the project's initiatives are playing a crucial role in preserving the environment. Just like most people in the community, ██████████ never thought she could use less firewood to prepare meals for her family. As standard practice, the family usually plants trees around the home and in the field for firewood. However, the trees could not sustain them because of the wood needed to cook over an open fire which forced her to buy more firewood and this increased their cost of living. But the arrival of CADECOM with funding from Scottish Government through Oxfam opened up her eyes and she is very grateful for the project.

## Quotes

*“At first I could use one bundle of firewood which contains eight to ten pieces of wood to prepare a meal for my family. That time I was using the traditional three stones. But three months ago, CADECOM brought low energy cooking stoves and showed us how to use them. I bought one, which I have been using since then and it uses far less wood.”*

*“Apart from saving wood, it is faster than using three stones. I use it even outside the house, which is difficult when using three stones. One can also use it inside the house as it does not produce much smoke compared to my three stones.”*

*“Initially, I had doubts about purchasing it because I thought it was expensive, but after using it for a few days, I realised that it was no longer expensive, the MK 3,500 (£5) I paid for the stove is good value compared to using an open fire because I was always forced to buy more firewood, because the trees around our house cannot not sustain us.”*

## Photos



**Top left:** [REDACTED] using her new low energy stove she bought following training on climate change adaptation



**Left bottom:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] outside her house harvesting firewood for her low energy cooking stove. The stove uses only three sticks compared to eight to ten sticks for an open fire.

## Contact Details

**Contact Name:** [REDACTED]  
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**Address:** Oxfam Scotland |  
**Email:** [REDACTED]@oxfam.org.uk

## Media List

Agreed to media work: Y
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Case Study signed off: Y
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Pictures attached: Y
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Group photos: Y
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Used for media:

**Scottish Government**  
**Malawi Development Programme 2012**  
**Mid Financial Year Report**

**PLEASE READ ATTACHED GUIDELINES BEFORE COMPLETING THE FORM**

Please tick the period to which this Mid Financial Year Report relates:  
**April – Sep 2013**

**Administrative Information**

<b>1. Your organisation name and the name of your project:</b>		<b>2. Project reference number:</b>	
Women farmers access value-chains and adapt to climate change in Lilongwe, Mchinji and Dowa districts of Malawi.		MAL 08	
<b>3. Project start date:</b>		<b>4. Report for financial year (yyyy-yyyy)</b>	
April 2012		2012 - 2013	
<b>5. Please tick which strand(s) of the Scotland-Malawi Co-operation Agreement your project aims to address.</b>			
Civil Society and Governance <input type="checkbox"/>	Sustainable Economic Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Health <input type="checkbox"/>	Education <input type="checkbox"/>

**Monitoring Objectives and Outcomes**

**6. Has the focus of the delivery of your project significantly altered since your last report? If so, please explain how and why and attach copies of all relevant correspondence with the Scottish Government.**

As indicated in the previous two reports, the project has reduced its geographical targeting from thirteen Traditional Authorities (TAs) to six, two in each project district. This change does not affect the total number of beneficiaries (15,000), as indicated in the project proposal.

It was reported in the End of Financial Year Report that the role of the implementing partner, FAFOTRAJ, had been reduced and would now only support activities in one district. This was mainly due to capacity issues, particularly in finance, management and challenges related to staffing. From May 2013, the programme team has been committed to working with FAFOTRAJ, establishing the extent of the weaknesses within the organisation and building their capacity. Activities included frequent monitoring and engagement, additional training, mentoring and various meetings. This resulted in a formal assessment of FAFOTRAJ in August.

<p><b>1.1.5</b> <i>To facilitate the formation of producer groups based on value chains of choice by the women</i></p>	<p>During the reporting period, a total of 1,855 farmers were mobilized, registered and trained (1,113 of which are women). This brings the total number of farmers to 14,109, representing 94 per cent of the project target.</p> <p>There has been a great deal of interest from other women in the project areas and we expect to surpass the target.</p> <p>The groups formed in this reporting period are: Machichi Producers and Marketing Group (95 members), Dzithandizeni Women's Group (860 members), Mduwa Bulking Group (120 members) and Mkanda Bulking Group (78 members). Members of the groups have been trained in business management, women's empowerment and gender analysis, value chain approach, seed multiplication, climate change and crop diversification.</p>
<p><b>1.1.6</b> <i>To facilitate the formation of village market fora for accessing value chain services for producers</i></p>	<p>In this reporting period, four more Bulking Group Centres (BGCs) were formed Mchinji, bringing the total to 27 across the three areas. The same BGCs are also used as village market fora and agricultural training, to enable the women farmers to access value chain services and assistance and allow them to negotiate a better price from buyers.</p> <p>The 27 established BGCs provide a space for farmer groups to congregate and sell their produce in bulk, adding value in each of the three districts. Essential information on markets and prices are shared within the groups. The BGCs support farmers in ensuring a better quality of produce – low quality produce will not be accepted. It is expected that the groups will evolve into cooperatives after a series of training sessions on cooperative formation and management.</p>
<p><b>1.1.7</b> <i>To facilitate the establishment of community based processing centres for adding value to produce in each of the three districts</i></p>	<p>No community based processing centres have been established in this reporting period. However, by the end of this financial year, six will be established, two centres per district.</p>
<p><b>1.1.8</b> <i>To facilitate formation of Village Savings and Loan (VSL) groups for poor women and linkages to microfinance institutions</i></p>	<p>The project intended to establish 15 VSL groups, however 241 have now been formed in the three districts, involving 4,820 women. This large</p>

<p><b>1.3 Link to specialised expertise</b></p> <p><b>1.3.1</b> <i>To facilitate links between producer groups and business development service providers (e.g. micro-finance institutions) and supporting the microfinance institutions to provide services</i></p>	<p>conducted. In total, 23 farmers (12 women) from Mkanda, Nkhunguyembe, Mduwa and Machichi Cooperatives from Mchinji District travelled to the Zuwe Cooperative in Mzimba District, to exchange skills and experiences. The farmers found this to be extremely useful as the Zuwe Cooperative is successful in agro-processing. The farmers gained skills in farmer organisation, group dynamics and marketing skills, which they will use to strengthen their own cooperatives.</p>
<p><b>1.3.2</b> <i>To facilitate links between producer groups and business development service providers (e.g. agricultural commodity markets)</i></p>	<p>No links with micro-finance institutions were made in this reporting period because the groups have not yet saved enough money. This activity will take place in the next reporting period.</p>
<p><b>1.3.3</b> <i>To facilitate links with national farmer organisations and registrar of associations</i></p>	<p>During the reporting period the project has concentrated on linking the smallholder producers to better markets for their commodities. 33 farmers (17 women) in Mchinji who belong to Tithandizane Farmer Association have been successfully linked to Capital Oil Refinery Industries (CORI), one of the largest vegetable oil refining companies in Malawi. An initial meeting has taken place, during which the farmers and the company signed an agreement stating that CORI will buy raw groundnuts from the producer groups and prices will be negotiated between the two.</p> <p>The same 33 farmers have also been linked with CAMCO who are the leading agricultural equipment supplier in Malawi, specialising in the provision of groundnut processing equipment. CAMCO will be able to provide technical services to the farmers on any machines the farmers buy from them.</p> <p>In the current reporting period, the project facilitated meetings with the Farmers Union of Malawi which is the umbrella union for all farmers in Malawi. From these meetings, one farmer organisation, the Machichi Cooperative, became registered with the body. They have since started benefitting from this and in August they attended an annual meeting for farmers. This will enable the farmers to speak collectively and have more influencing power over the government to formulate and implement policies that are more favourable to their specific needs.</p>

**Improved enabling environment for poor women smallholders' integration into the profitable agro-based value chains through increased national awareness**

**3. Facilitate enabling environment for agribusiness**

**3.1 To facilitate agribusiness and market road shows.**

**3.2 To facilitate women farmers' participation in national trade fairs**

**3.3 To conduct advocacy and lobbying for improvements in the regulatory/ enabling environment for specific value chains based on evidence from the project.**

this intervention this year.

This activity will take place in the next phase, after harvest.

Women farmers in Mchinji were taken to Blantyre where they participated in the 10th Annual Trade Fair. They were able to speak with other fellow farmers, share ideas and create links with possible buyers of agriculture produce.

Five farmers were linked to the Farmers Union and were able to participate in the annual general meeting which raised several policy issues to government, including access to markets and finance for farmers. Oxfam and the Farmers Union have since created an advocacy strategy focusing on three key policy areas; national agriculture to ensure that farmer's voices are respected and heard; national climate change; and access to markets for small holder farmers, with a specific focus on gendered access to markets.

**8. Have you experienced any constraints or difficulties since your last report? If so, what action have you taken to overcome them and what effect have they had on your project?**

**FAFOTRAJ Partnership**

Since the last report, Oxfam has provided thorough and consistent support to FAFOTRAJ with the aim of increasing their capacity enough to enable them to properly support farmers in Lilongwe. However, it was found that the partner was still unable to fulfil their obligations and offer support and training to the farmers, therefore we ended this partnership in October 2013.

This has had an impact on the project and implementation. The budget reflects our caution in allocating funds to FAFOTRAJ, whilst they were only operational in one district. To ensure that the project is restarted quickly, we have since signed new agreements with CARD in Mchinji and Dowa and with CADECOM in Lilongwe. Both organisations are current partners of Oxfam with experience of operating and working in these areas. It is expected that the project activities can re-start quickly with minimal impact on the farmers and result in no financial losses overall. The spend will be reflected in the next reporting period.

**Accessing better markets**

It has been difficult and slower than expected to link farmers to markets. This is due to the complex policy and legal frameworks in place, which do not support farmers. The Malawi Government is in the process of developing a policy which will enable farmers to sign contracts with buyers to guarantee prices for their commodities. However, this legal framework has not yet been finalised.



Women gather in Mchinji district to receive training from [REDACTED] following the sessions she attended with CARD on agri-business and value chains.

### Financial Reporting

10. Please provide a detailed breakdown of actual expenditure for the financial year to which this mid financial year report relates, compared to the programmed expenditure detailed in your original application form.

Budget Headings	Programmed Expenditure	Actual Expenditure
Staff	52,405.80	11,219.86
Running Costs	12,787.12	1,460.09
Travel and Subsistence	4,417.33	0
Programme Delivery	94,947.79	17,751.62
Audit	3,900	0
Small additional funding available (from reduced admin costs)	1,037.00	0



the project reach more farmers in a short period.

**3. Learning tours help farmers learn easier and faster**

Through the exposure visit the farmers in Mchinji made to Zuwe Agro processing in Mzimba, the visiting team were able to learn and understand what their fellow farmers are doing. Zuwe Agro-processing farmers are processing crude vegetable oil which is later sold to processing companies. The visiting farmers were encouraged by this and are now ready to try similar things in their areas.

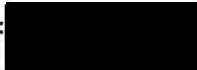
**13. Please make any further comments you feel might help illustrate your progress.**

Despite the serious issue we faced with FAFOTRAJ, important elements of the project have progressed well. Happy to say this when spend is only 20% of that planned? Within the reporting period, farmers have increased access to stable markets through becoming linked with CORI. A successful exposure tour also took place which will build the capacity of farmers through knowledge-sharing and participation in trade fairs. We are confident that now our partners are in place, activities will progress rapidly.

**14. Please let us know if any of your contact details have changed.**

N/A

Signed by:



Date: 01/11/2013

Designation on the project:

