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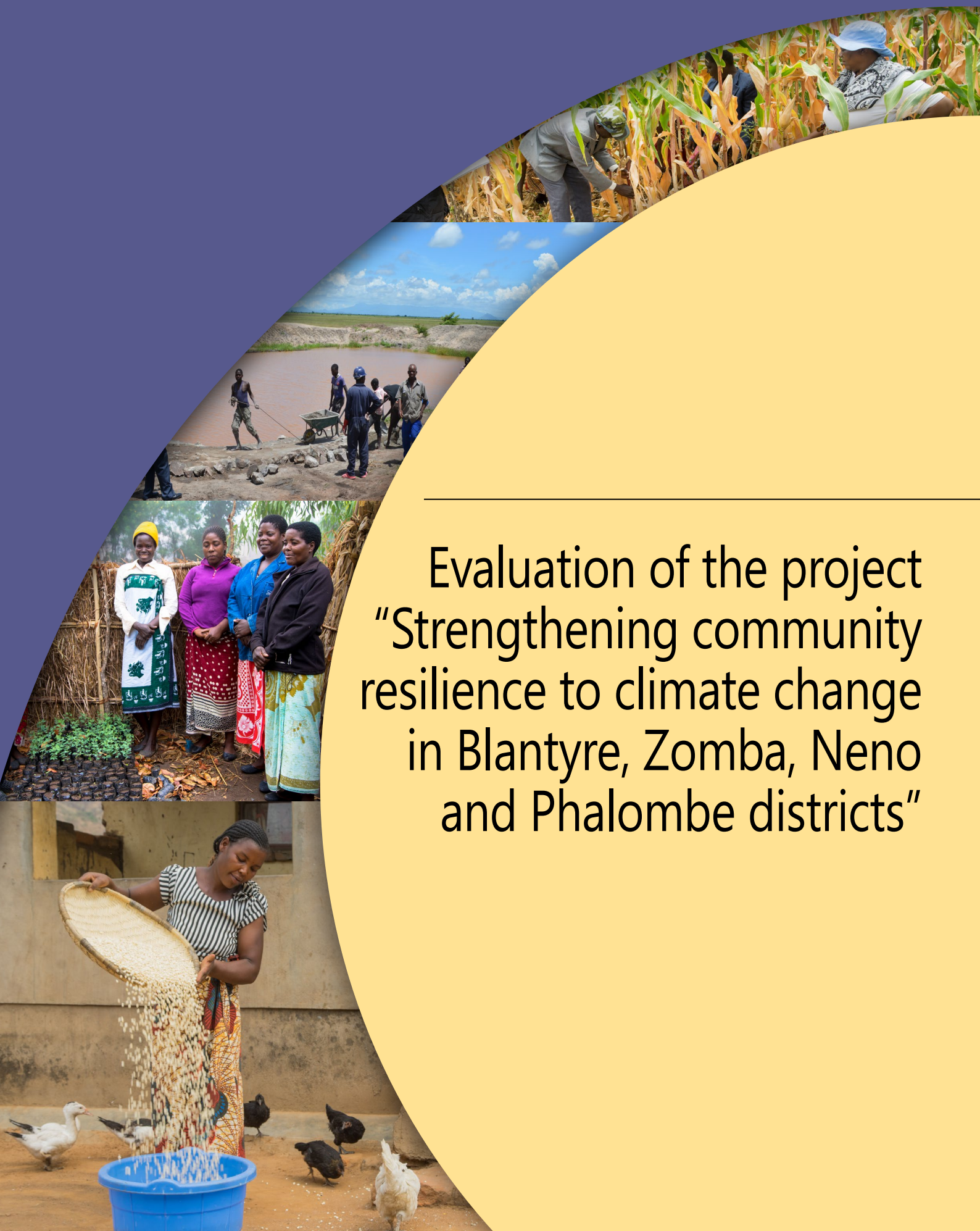

Evaluation of the project "Strengthening community resilience to climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe districts"

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Project code: GCP/MLW/067/EC

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Abstract

The evaluation of the five-year (2015–2020) European Union funded EUR 5 million project, Strengthening community Resilience to Climate Change variability aimed at assessing project performance and drawing sharable lessons and best practices. Covering four project districts - Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe - the evaluation focused on project design, implementation appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, results, outcomes, cross-cutting themes and sustainability.

Beneficiaries and community facilitators informed the evaluation through focus group discussions and limited one- to-one conversations while FAO personnel, the lead implementing agency, and staff from four national implementing organizations, government institutions and development partners responded through virtual/telephone conversations and key informant interviews.

The project was well aligned to global priorities and FAO principles addressing the effects of climate change and national strategies for resilience and social support. The findings indicate that communities in the project areas now exude capacity to absorb and adapt resilience practices against the effects of climate change, and are ably empowered to identify, adapt and adopt better informed actions including gender responsive climate–smart agriculture (CSA) and nutrition-sensitive practices. Transformational behavioural actions in anticipation of and response to climate-related shocks are slowly becoming visible. Evidently, community capacity to safeguard and conserve biodiversity as a resilient building strategy has been enriched. Farmer managed natural regeneration of degraded/deforested woodlands and forests, and land conservation were highpoints. The small financial grants extended to farmer field school groups were used to consolidate group safety nets and micro-credit/saving facilities used for small-scale business investments and engaging in other diverse livelihood options.

The project instituted high-level collaboration and synergy with several partners and actions such as the Cyclone Idai crisis and recovery response and discussions under the Joint UN Resilience Platform. It however underrated attention to cross-cutting themes such as occupational safety and hazards, youth targeted employment, effects of labour intensive CSA practices and farmer field school group prioritization needs addressing immediate vs long-term resilient actions for their most vulnerable members.

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Acknowledgements

This evaluation was supported by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) and FAO Malawi Country Office. The evaluation team was composed of two independent consultants, Rose Azuba (Team Leader and International Consultant) and Lucky Mfungwe (National Consultant), and managed by Olive Zgambo (Evaluation Analyst, OED) and Samuel Kirichu (FAO Malawi Country Office) and a team of data collectors. The team acknowledges the administrative and technical support by personnel from the above offices for their input into the planning and execution of the evaluation. Special acknowledgement to Olivier Cossee and Olive Zgambo (OED), James Okoth, Samuel Kirichu, Innocent Kaponya and Misheck Fombe from FAO Malawi Country Office.

The team profoundly appreciates all stakeholders who informed this evaluation, especially sparing time to respond and inform the evaluation during the challenging times of COVID-19 restrictions.

The Office of Evaluation (OED) acknowledges the support and input by the European Union into this evaluation.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CBF	Community-based facilitator
CdR	Caisses de Résilience
CSA	Climate-smart agriculture
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFS	Farmer field school
ICRAF	International Council for Research in Agroforestry
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
UBR	Unified beneficiary registry
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
VSL	Village savings and loans
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

Introduction

1. This report outlines the results of the final evaluation of the project *Strengthening community resilience to climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe Districts,* GCP/MLW/067/EC. The four and half-year project was financed by the European Union and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the lead, supported by the Government of Malawi and four key national partners, namely: Total LandCare (TLC), the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM), Evangelical Lutheran Development Services (ELDS) and The International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF). The evaluation was designed to provide accountability of the project performance and contribution to Strengthening community resilience to climate change. The lessons from the evaluation are intended to inform future programming and strategic policy decisions in support of management of resilience programmes across the country.

2. The evaluation has been informed by responses to five evaluation questions elaborating on the appropriateness of the project design, project execution, efficiency, effectiveness and extent to which the project addressed cross-cutting concerns of gender, human rights, equity and labour. Respondents included three main categories of stakeholders, namely: i) implementers; ii) policymakers and representatives from institutional support systems; and iii) direct and indirect beneficiaries. The evaluation team gathered data from questions administered through virtual and/or telephone conversations, focus group discussions, key informant interviews (KII); a mini survey and limited one-to-one discussions. The findings were used to validate secondary data from project reports and to draw evaluative evidence to support results.

3. The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) manual and methodological guidelines and practices. This evaluation was carried out in strict observance of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for COVID-19 prevention and control.

Main findings

Project alignment to global, national and FAO priorities

4. The intervention was well aligned to the objects of the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol, and Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13). The design was cognizant of the guiding principles for Climate Change, Action and Mitigation elaborated in the FAO Climate Change Strategy (2017) and the active Malawi Country Programming Framework (2014–2017).

5. The National Adaptation Plans and Action for Climate Change under the considerations of the Malawi Vision 2020, the National Climate Change Management Policy (NCCMP 2016), National Climate Change Investment Plan (NCCIP 2013–2018), and the Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP 2012–2016) were among the key national policies and strategies reflected in the design supported.

Project efficiency and considerations for synergies, collaboration and complementarities

6. The project instituted different strategic management actions to address some of the design shortcomings and implementation challenges. Key actions included a baseline study which generated benchmark information on the levels of community vulnerabilities and adaptive capacity to reduce climate change impacts, and a hotspot mapping assessment to identify precise

locations of severe environmentally degraded spots. The latter were based on five critical issues, namely gully erosion, soil erosion, deforestation, steep slopes cultivation and river bank cultivation. The underlying causes of the critical issues subsequently informed the appropriate site-specific interventions. Both activities supported the development and strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system and its operations.

7. The project established relevant and high-level collaborations with several stakeholders who supported capacity development of beneficiaries, trainers and facilitators to adopt and adapt climate-sensitive and climate–resilient approaches in agricultural production and productivity. For example, it collaborated with ICRAF who supported training in forestry and ecosystem management approaches. The Chancellor College of the University of Malawi supported one implementation partner in the construction of seepage wells, while the Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, supported the monitoring of the theory of change for the project. Government ministries and departments were charged with supporting institutional and systemic integration of climate change and resilience mainstreaming in programmes at national and district level.

8. Under the National Agriculture Cluster, the project, in synergy with other partners such as the Department for International Development (DFID), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), European Union and non-governmental organization (NGOs), effectively supported the vulnerable and resource poor communities which were affected by Cyclone Idai.

Addressing gender, equity, decent labour and human rights

9. At the grassroots and working through farmer field schools (FFSs), the project equitably selected and engaged a mix of men and women in project activities. Although the selection of beneficiaries and implementation was satisfactorily gender–responsive by action, the project indicators and results were not gender-disaggregated and did not inform the evaluation whether or not a balanced climate–smart responsiveness was realized.

10. The evaluation observed that for the more vulnerable persons, especially those who had been hit by extreme weather shocks, long-term actions such as conservation and agroforestry agriculture were not considered as their immediate priorities. Rather, these communities needed food and shelter in the short-term. Other vulnerability issues such as labour intensive approaches in climate-smart agriculture (CSA), child labour protection, human rights concerns in cash-for-work or occupational safety in intensive use of fertilizers aiming at increasing production, required slightly more attention than given by implementers.

Effectiveness and design appropriateness

11. Through this project, awareness of the effects of climate change, and knowledge and skills on how to apply climate–sensitive-resilient practices have increased among communities. The practices for increasing agricultural production were adopted by at least 80 percent of beneficiaries, while those for mitigating the effects of climate change were adapted by at least 60 percent of beneficiaries. These practices include managing soil and forest degradation caused by floods, heavy winds, prolonged droughts as well as those caused by poor crop and livestock husbandry.

12. Beneficiaries, especially mothers and child caregivers, adopted positive health-seeking behaviours as a result of the project interventions. Such behaviours include improved and timely attendance of antenatal care by pregnant women, seeking and using professional and skilled birth attendants

(SBAs), timely presentation of children under the age of five for vaccination, and practising improved nutrition care for children and vulnerable persons.

13. Through village savings and loan (VSL) schemes, at least 325 member associations established loan out credit facilities for their members with a record of 75 percent having used it to meet their needs. The money borrowed was used for various activities that included: purchasing of domestic supplies, improving shelters, paying school fees, and establishing small businesses for buying and selling food items and domestic goods for a small profit. Records and responses indicated that others were engaged in the sale of fish, cereals, pulses, or small livestock such as goats and chicken, while others sold nursery tree seedlings as a source of income. The diversity of such activities could be attributed to the project having trained beneficiaries in 'farming as a business' and conducting 'risk-reduced investments'. These activities mainly empowered beneficiaries to earn some income as a livelihood diversification strategy and in doing so, making them more resilient and prepared to handle shocks. The project did not complete the activities aimed at empowering beneficiaries in effective marketing.

14. The project also aimed to improve knowledge and capacity on conservation and safeguarding biodiversity as a resilient building strategy. Deforestation was one of the critical issues identified during hotspot assessment. The project addressed this through enhanced farmer managed natural regeneration of degraded/deforested woodlands and forests. The project did not comprehensively address watershed systems and water infrastructure management. Beneficiaries were however introduced to and are engaged in water harvesting and irrigation. The project also positively influenced the trend of land conservation especially in Neno, a drought prone district, where land conservation was critical owing to farmers intensively opening up steep slopes during cultivation.

15. The project design had good implementation strategies that appropriately supported the achievement of the above objectives. Some of these include community participatory experimental and experiential learning approaches, modest cost-sharing strategies, a communication and visibility strategy that fronted a media and public-led climate change awareness drive and a community centred (Caisses de Résilience, CdR) approach that integrated mutually reinforcing social, financial and technical capacity support in the development projects.

Long-term and sustainable results

16. Project elements that will sustain the benefits from this project include: a pool of facilitators who are sufficiently well–trained to continue imparting knowledge and skills on how to address climate-sensitive resilience building; a long-term decision support geo-database tool of land degradation hotspots that will continue to inform planning of rehabilitation interventions needed to address underlying causes of degradation; a climate-sensitive and enriched FFS curriculum to guide training and sensitization of communities on the effects of climate change and resilient building approaches; VSL and livestock pass–on schemes, which are safety nets and sources of income to support alternative livelihood activities. These will collectively sustain climate change action and mitigation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusion 1. Alignment to priorities and relevance. The intervention was well aligned to national, regional and global priorities addressing community resilience to the effects of climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, and Neno and Phalombe districts of Malawi. It was firmly grounded in FAO guiding principles on Climate Change Action and the national strategic Actions and plans for climate change. Given the

reported increasing climate change variability in Malawi, the project was relevant in addressing community–resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced shocks and related effects.

Conclusion 2. Design, implementation and management. Overall, the project design was very good and had a potential to deliver the intended results timely. However, due to several challenges including human resource gaps, unanticipated climate hazards and shocks such as Cyclone Idai, El Niño, prolonged seasonal droughts and COVID-19 lockdowns, this was not possible. These cumulatively affected planning, timing and sequence of project activities. Project management, however, instituted strategic management actions that enabled completion and achievement of most of the expected results in accordance with the design. The project also received a one year no-cost extension.

Conclusion 3. Synergy, complementarity and collaboration. The project initiated relevant and strong institutional collaborations to address vulnerabilities and resilience to the effects of climate change. Among others, it set-up a joint UN Resilience Platform of members who, with the Government of Malawi and other partners, participated in the policy reviews of the Malawi National Social Support Programme 2 (MNSSP2), discussion about the National Climate Change Investment Plan (NCCIP) and piloting of the national unified beneficiary registry (UBR). The project also supported the National Agriculture Cluster as a member of the interagency coordination and synergy task team in the Cyclone Idai crisis and recovery response. In collaboration with other projects, it established a pool of trained facilitators who worked jointly to build national capacity for climate-smart and climate-resilient agriculture production practices.

Conclusion 4. Gender, equity, decent labour and human rights. The intervention demonstrated satisfactory gender inclusive participation of the different categories of beneficiaries. The project introduced agro-based gender-responsive climate-smart practices and livelihood options for men and women; well-to-do and vulnerable members of the FFS to participate and benefit from project activities. A positive effort was made to leave no one behind. Other aspects such as occupational safety and health (OSH), use of labour intensive CSA practices, and human right concerns for cash-for-work labour needed more attention.

Conclusion 5. Effectiveness. The project met its objectives generating more tangible results in the lower stream compared to the upper stream. Communities were found to be more aware of the effects of climate change and had attained skills to build resilience to counter the negative effects of climate vulnerability. Evidently, they had developed both adoptive and absorptive capacities to respond appropriately to shocks through an integrated, participatory and experiential learning approach.

Conclusion 6. Sustainability. The project demonstrated several elements that are likely to sustain the benefits, especially at the lower stream compared to the upper stream. Strategically, the elements evolve around a climate-sensitive farmer field school curriculum, a pool of skilled trainers, income generating activities, community behavioural change towards adopting climate–smart practices and engaging in diversified livelihood options.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. FAO needs to improve its recruitment and engagement procedures to accommodate timely and flexible handling of both conventional and non-conventional engagements. The processes need to be less bureaucratic and context specific to secure efficient and smooth project execution even amidst anticipated situational challenges.

Recommendation 2. The project has contributed significantly to enhancing resilience of vulnerable communities. FAO should mobilize resources to support a follow-up phase of the GCC/MLW/067 initiative to continue strengthening community resilience to the effects of climate change in vulnerable communities. The follow-up phase should give opportunity to complete any pending activities while simultaneously expanding to at least five others climate-hazard vulnerable districts. Thereafter, FAO should hand over implementation of the same to the relevant Ministry to roll out the programme fully to other vulnerable communities.

Recommendation 3. FAO should integrate best practices and key lessons learned from the outgoing project into a follow-up project phase. Key practices are: continued application of the CdR approaches, allow sufficient time for farmer field school learning cycles, offer short grants early in the project to allow maximum use, continue with and use geo-spot references to inform the project of the most degraded areas, and sustain group cohesion by continuing with village saving and livestock pass-on schemes as both safety nets and support for alternate livelihood options.

Recommendation 4. In working with climate change adaptation and mitigation with farmer field school groups, FAO should pay more attention to equity, vulnerability and gender responsive selection of beneficiaries, youth targeted engagement and decent wages for vulnerable persons in applying climate-smart agriculture practices. For equitable benefit, FAO support with government extension workers should ensure that youth and vulnerable categories are clearly disaggregated for a better informed needs analysis. Other issues that may require trade–offs such as labour intensity, child labour use, occupational and security hazards, youth employment or rights issues, should be given proper attention.

Recommendation 5. FAO, together with the United Nations and other development partners, should reinvigorate the Joint UN Resilience Platform that had been initiated. This Platform will be a policy hub to strengthen climate change and resilience coordination and collaboration – planning for resource maximization of these areas in the country. FAO should effectively take the lead, by inviting policy representation from other bilateral and multilateral partners to jointly work at strengthening policy links vertically and horizontally.

Recommendation 6. To effectively sustain farmer interest and participation in climate change adaptation and resilience building, the future FAO Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) programmes should take advantage of the following elements that may help sustain the previous benefits: engage existing trained facilitators for continued sensitization and training; embrace research–informed decisions; integrate on- and off-farm experimental learning as well as a cost-sharing financial stimulus package to encourage improved ownership.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

17. This report outlines the results of the final evaluation of the project *Strengthening community resilience to climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe districts*. This four and half-year project was initiated in June 2015 and implemented until June 2021, including a one and a half year no-cost extension. The project was financed by the European Union and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as the lead, supported by the Government of Malawi and four key national partners, namely: Total LandCare (TLC), the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM), Evangelical Lutheran Development Services (ELDS) and the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF).

18. The main purpose of the evaluation was to i) **provide accountability to the donors and partners** by assessing FAO's contribution to Strengthening community resilience to climate change; and ii) **draw lessons from the implementation processes** to inform future decisions by the European Union, FAO and the Government of Malawi in formulating a second phase of a follow-up intervention.

1.2 Intended users

19. The intended audience of the evaluation findings include United Nations (UN) agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), partners, donors and FAO country and regional offices and headquarters. The evaluation findings and lessons identified will inform future programming and strategic decisions in support of programmes and projects addressing resilience of vulnerable communities within Malawi and the countries in the subregion. Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) at national, district and traditional authority levels, as well as national implementing partners will utilize the findings and lessons to compare and improve planning and implementation of other interventions aimed at addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation (CCAM) in the country.

20. It is also anticipated that these findings could support lobby and advocacy for informed strategic policy decisions towards better resilience management in the country. The knowledge, skills and technology are intended to empower beneficiaries in the community and at household level to take measures towards protecting their environment and improving livelihoods.

1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation

21. The evaluation assessed the entire project implementation period, from June 2015 to June 2021, covering all project activities including those undertaken during the no-cost extension.

22. The evaluation objectives were designed to address the following:

    i. **appropriateness of the project design and execution,** whether needs and priorities of the intended beneficiaries were well addressed both at design and implementation; alignment to priorities of the funding, implementing and oversight partner/institution at the local, national and global levels;
    ii. **project efficiency** in consideration of synergies and complementarity in design and execution;

iii. **project effectiveness and results attained** – whether the project delivered on its results (outputs, outcomes and objectives) and to what extent the integrated community-centred approach linked the social, technical and functional capacities;

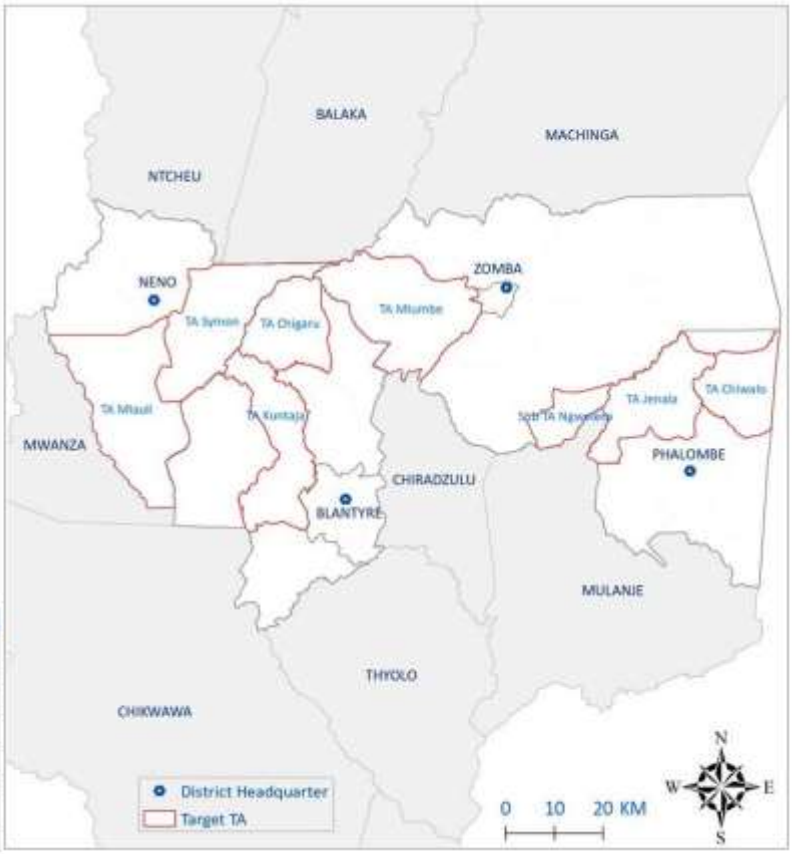
iv. **gender, human rights, equity and labour -** extent to which the project embraced everyone, leaving no one behind while addressing key issues of equity and human rights;

v. **successes and lessons learned -** likelihood of sustaining long-term benefits after the project.

23. Geographically, the evaluation considered activities in all four project districts of Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Global Climate Change Alliance project districts and target traditional authorities

District	Traditional Authority
Zomba	Sub TA Ngwelero
	TA Mlumbe
Blantyre	TA Kuntaja
	TA Chigaru
Neno	TA Mlauli
	TA Symon
Phalombe	TA Jenala
	TA Chiwalo



Source: FAO Country Office – MLW documents (2017). Report on Hotspot Mapping and Profiling. Maps conform with UN. 2012. Map No. 3858, Rev. 4.

24. The evaluation was guided by five **evaluation questions** (EQ 1-EQ 5) presented in Table 1. The sub-themes summarized in Table 2 served as indicative measures that guided the generic themes for each question.

Table 1. Evaluation questions

EQ 1	**To what extent was the intervention aligned (or has it adjusted over time) to FAO and national policies and strategies, and global priorities of** climate change adaptation**, and the needs of the vulnerable communities/most vulnerable within those communities?**
EQ 2	Were project activities implemented timely, and were there sufficient management procedures to affect efficiency, including regular monitoring and evaluation? To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources and synergies, complementarities with other projects and partnerships, etc., and avoided duplication of similar activities of other groups?
EQ 3	To what extent did the project effectively address gender equity, decent labour and other human rights and equity aspects?
EQ 4	Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcome? What was the relevance of using the innovative integrated community centred approach (CdR) for this project? Was it effective in linking the social, technical and financial dimensions in mutually reinforcing ways? Were there unintended results, either positive or negative?
EQ 5	What is the likelihood of achieving long-term and sustainable results through the project?

Source: FAO Country Office – MLW terms of reference for evaluation.

1.4 Methodology

25. Overall, the evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards(UNEG, 2021) and the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED) manual and methodological guidelines and practices. The evaluation process was in three stages, namely i) inception; ii) data collection; and iii) sharing preliminary findings, feedback and final cleaning of the report.

26. The inception stage consisted of an in-depth desk review to understand how the project was designed and implemented by FAO and national partners. The literature review was informed by secondary data – mainly project reports from FAO's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system including annual reports, assessments, surveys and performance analyses conducted in-house and/or by external institutions (see list of documents consulted in the Bibliography). The Action culminated into a profile of key stakeholders that participated in the project, and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities that they each held. This information and additional literature was used to design data collection tools and discuss a comprehensive evaluation plan.

Table 2. Indicative measurements for evaluation questions

	Generic Theme	Sub Theme
EQ 1	Alignment to priorities, Institutional coherence and relevance	• Paris agreement and SDG 13 • FAO climate change agenda • National resilience programmes • National climate change adaptation priorities • Needs of vulnerable persons, social roles
EQ 2	Project implementation, management procedures, and benefits from synergies and Partnerships	• Activity timing • Adjustments vs performance • Adaptive monitoring and learning • Information management • Benefits to integrated approaches • Cost effectiveness
EQ 3	Gender equality, equity, decent labour and human rights	• Address cross-cutting issues • Support to vulnerable communities • Challenges encountered and mitigation
EQ 4	Project design, result effectiveness, and level of integration	• Objectives, outcomes and outputs • Institutional mechanisms • CdR benefits – three dimension • Lessons from CdR • Intended and unintended results
EQ 5	Sustainability mechanisms and extent partnership benefits	• Inbuilt short- and long-term mechanisms • Resilience to climate change adaptation • Institutional and adaptive capacities • Leverage on partnerships • Scaling-up, benefits and linkages

Source: Evaluation team.

Selection and category of respondents

27. In this assessment, we indicated a selection of representatives from various categories of stakeholders to best inform the evaluation as indicated in Table 3. They were basically from three main groups,: i) implementers including FAO Country Office, development partners and national implementing partners; ii) policymakers and institutional support systems represented by staff from selected government mine Ministries, districts and agencies; and iii) beneficiaries from communities represented by farmer field school (FFS) group members, community facilitators and community leaders.

28. Of the above groups, the evaluation received responses from FAO Country Office personnel – representatives from administration and project management, a representative from the European Union, and UNICEF who were a member of the Joint UN Resilience Platform. Others were ICRAF and four national implementing partners. From the Policy and Institutional Support System group, the evaluation received responses from various departments and agencies under the Ministry of Agriculture, Innovation and Water Development (MoAIWD), Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MoFEDP), Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources, (MoFNR), National Authorising Office, administrators and technical persons at the District Offices. For the beneficiaries' category, the evaluation received responses from members of farmer field school groups, community leaders and community trainers from different extension planning areas (EPAs). The number of representatives from each category is summarized in Table 4.

Table 3. Categories of respondents selected to inform the evaluation rationale

	Sub groups	Respondents	Rationale for selection
Implementers & Development Partners	FAO personnel	Project Officers, Coordinators, M&E, different Team leaders	• Lead implementer of the project.
	Development partners	European Union and members of joint UN Resilience team, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, DFID	• Funders and joint collaborators for upstream results.
	National Partners	Staff of EAM, TLC, CADECOM, ADRA, ELDS and AID commission	• Co- implementers of the project in support of FAO and national Government.
Policy makers & institutional support systems	Line Ministries	MoA, MoF, MEPDPR, MoGYSW MoLG, MoH, MoFNR	• Policymakers and implementers of linked and supplementary resilience and CCAM programmes.
	Agencies	MASAF, **DARS, DAES, OPC, DODMA,** Policy & M&E officers	• Funders and researchers supported programme in data generation and CCA activities.
	Districts	DCP, DADO DFP, LRO, LEO, DHO, HSA, ABOs EMO, Nutrition officers, field officers and trainers	• Provided institutional support to the project implementation at the lower stream.
Beneficiaries	Community level beneficiaries	FFS leaders, members, Women, men, youth CBFs, FFS members.	• Leaders of FFS supported the organization and community. activities. The FFS were the key beneficiaries and implemented project activities.
	Community level facilitators	AEDCs, AEDOs,	• Facilitated mobilization and supported training at community levels.

Source: Evaluation team.

Approach to data collection and data collection tools

29. The tools were designed to collect a mix of data responding to the five evaluation questions (see evaluation matrix in Appendix 2). Different tools were designed for each category of respondents and they were administered through virtual or telephone conversations, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KII); one-to-one face-to-face discussions or through a mini survey conducted by a team of data collectors.

30. Prior to data collection, permission was sought from relevant authorities to interact with various communities while in observance of national standard operating procedures (SOPs) for COVID-19 prevention and control.[1] Proceedings were recorded with informed consent from the respondent before all interviews.

Stakeholder engagement

31. In consideration of the COVID-19 standard operating procedures, the evaluation team was able to reach out to a total of 413 respondents, 224 of whom were females (54 percent). A total of 45 focus group discussions were conducted (34 with FFS members, 7 with community-based facilitators (CBFs) and 4 with district officials). The remaining stakeholders were reached through key informant interviews, face-to-face interviews and web-based virtual or telephone interviews (see Table 4).

[1] Meetings of no more than nine people. A maximum of two facilitators and seven respondents, and keeping a social distance of at least 2 meters between each person. Everyone wore masks covering the mouth and nose.

Table 4. Number of stakeholders engaged

Number of respondents					
	Blantyre	**Neno**	**Zomba**	**Phalombe**	**Total**
FFS	119	46	48	52	273 (F=153: M=120)
Non-target beneficiaries		5	7		12 (F=11; M=1)
EPA	14	11	6	4	35 (F=19; M=16)
DAO	3	7	6	5	22 (F=9; M=13)
CBFs	21	10	8	9	48 (F= 27; M=21)
Implementing partners, policy, researchers					23 (F=5; M=18)
Total					**413 (F=224; M=189)**

Source: Evaluation team.

32. At community level, respondents were sampled from all the eight implementing extension planning areas: Kunthembwe and Lirangwe (Blantyre), Lisungwi and Neno extension planning areas (Neno), Ngwelero and Chingale (Zomba) and Mpinda and Tamani (Phalombe). The district staff respondents were the Chief Agriculture Officer, Director of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, and specialists from Nutrition, Agribusiness, Land resources, and Irrigation, Livestock and Extension offices.

33. Other respondents included representatives from FAO and national implementers (TLC, EAM, ELDS and Adventist Development and Relief Agency, ADRA); ICRAF, Department of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES), DODMA, Department of Land Resources Conservation (DLRC), Department of Agricultural Research Services (DARS), Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services and Ministries namely, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Innovation and Water Development and Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources.

34. The evaluation realized over 90 percent representation of the intended categories of respondents, missing out on the remaining 10 percent mainly due to COVID-19 restrictions and additional limitations (see section 1.5). To improve validity and reliability, the evaluation team adapted a consultative participatory approach to ensure transparency and accuracy at every stage.

35. Where need arose, follow-up conversations with key respondents were held to further validate and triangulate findings. The list of respondents is available in Appendix 1.

Data management and analysis

36. Field notes and interview audio recordings were the anchor for the in-depth synthesis of qualitative information gathered for this report. The findings were analysed and triangulated against documented evidence from secondary data and validated through online meetings with selected stakeholders and individual members' feedback into the report. Data analysis was carried out using Microsoft Excel.

1.5 Limitations

37. The evaluation encountered some setbacks mainly related to COVID-19 outbreaks and surging and resurgence of new waves of the disease. Overall, the lockdown (partial or complete), as well as restrictions and regulations on movement, dictated the approach to data gathering and speed of the evaluation. The pandemic affected the overall physical accessibility and to an extent

interaction between parties at all levels (i.e. consultants, FAO Country Office personnel, national and international team members, and the potential respondents).

38. Delays in the onset of activities, as timing of field activities, consequently created indecisiveness about permission for the team lead consultant to travel or not to Malawi. The latter eventually took precedence and a substantial portion of the evaluation was conducted virtually. After the evaluation exercise was initiated, another partial national lockdown was instituted which, among others, resulted in a prohibition of FAO personnel from traveling to the field. Subsequently, the regulations had an indeterminate but obvious and apparently critical influence on the activity response of stakeholders and the overall time spent conducting the evaluation.

39. Despite various innovative approaches attempted, the evaluation team had limited control over respondents' commitment to virtual web-based or telephone interviews, as many requests were either untimely or not-honoured even after repeated scheduling. Consequently, the intended scope, number and specific individual respondents was not fully attained. Itis worth mentioning that web-based interviews were un familiar mode of engagement to many potential respondents, and such approach was costly, demanding for connectivity gadgets and other costs that were neither facilitated by their offices nor easily affordable to people who were already facing challenges caused by COVID-19.

40. The physical face-to-face interactions which were later instituted had to be shortened bearing in mind the standard operating procedures and curfew regulations to enable respondents to return to their homes as early as possible. Only one or two meetings could be held daily, limiting the number and quality of interactions that could be effectively held with beneficiaries. At the analysis and reporting stage, this was aggravated by evaluation team members being busy re-listening to every audio recording, including interpretations from local language to English especially for responses from community and farmer-based interviews.

41. The evaluation team attempted to overcome these constraints by seeking for a no-cost extension of the contracts for the consultants and exhaustively triangulating findings against any existing secondary documentations.

1.6 Structure of the report

42. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 presents the background and context of the project. Chapter 3 presents the main findings grouped by evaluation questions. Lessons learned are found in Chapter 4, followed by conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5.

2. Background and context of the project

43. Agriculture plays a major role in the economy of Malawi. Before the start of this project, the sector contributed approximately 30 percent to the national gross domestic product (GDP), and during the project period 2012–2016 it employed over 80 of the economically active population, being the main source of livelihood for more than 2 million rural smallholder farmers (CIAT; World Bank. 2018). Malawi's economy largely comprises a subsistence agriculture-dependent population, with over 84 percent of inhabitants living in rural areas (Government of Malawi, 2021). The country's economy is largely dependent on its natural resources, either from the land (agriculture), biodiversity and related ecosystem services (agriculture, forestry, tourism, water) or water (fisheries, energy, health).

44. In the recent past, the effects of climate change such as rainfall variability, frequent floods, dry spells, winds and occurrences of pest and disease outbreaks have increased and negatively affected the livelihoods of Malawians, especially the smallholders. These are exacerbated by massive degradation due to increased encroachment of fragile ecosystems, deforestation and poor land management practices. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by socio-economic and demographic factors such as slim economic base, dependence on rainfed agriculture, heavy reliance on biomass energy, high levels of poverty and low adaptive capacity at the community and national level. Consequently, food and nutrition security (FNN) and community resilience are ranked high on the list of vulnerability concerns at stake.

45. An FAO[2] analysis of various climate-related effects in Malawi over time and space has indicated a highly heterogeneous distribution of the effects of climate change. For example, there have been significant differences in terms of rainfall and temperature variability across the four geographical regions of Malawi in the last 28 years, with the southern and central regions recording relatively low levels of rainfall and higher variability compared to the North.[3] Quoting the terminal report (FAO, 2020a), "over the past five decades, Malawi has recorded more than 19 major floods, and seven droughts with such events increasing in frequency, magnitude and scope over years". These climate effects have negatively affected food and nutrition security, availability of forage and water for domestic and agriculture farming, including water for livestock. They have further led to conversion of originally perennial water bodies into seasonal water collection areas. There is loss of biodiversity and related ecosystem services, with an overall environmental degradation, especially soil erosion and siltation of water bodies.

46. Given the upward trend of extreme weather in Malawi, climate change adaptation and mitigation has become a priority for the nation in the recent past. It has received substantial attention from government and donor/partner support at different fronts, including from the FAO Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanisms (FMM). Some of the recent climate change adaptation actions in the country include projects such as: i) Climate Adaptation for Rural Livelihood and Agriculture Production (GEF Facility); ii) Enhancing Community Resilience Programme (DFID, Irish and Norway Governments' funding); iii) Saving Lives and Protecting Agriculture-based Livelihoods in Malawi; iv) Scaling Up the Use of Modernized Climate Information and Early Warning Systems (M-CLIMES), co-financed by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), UNDP and Department of Disaster Management Affairs); v) the National Adaptation Plan in Agriculture (NAP-Ag) under the international Climate Instrument (KII) Initiative jointly implemented by FAO and UNDP; and

[2] FAO EPIC's team computation based on Malawi IHS3 and ECMWF ERA INTERIM reanalysis model.
[3] Project doc GCP/MLW/067/EC

vi) Sustainable Land Management Project of the Shire River Catchment supported by UNDP and One Acre fund.

47. The FMM-funded programmes under the same thematic areas are: Coherence between Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Action and Social Protection in Sub Saharan Africa (most current); projects to address deforestation and reforestation (REDD and REDD+) and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG); determining nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and its implementation; sensitizing and defining mechanisms for reducing child labour and developing the national strategy for contract farming.; and support to the Public Works Programme, and Cash Transfer Programme addressing food insecurity, infrastructure, agriculture and environmental vulnerabilities through a community and social protection approach. These and more are several projects supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation in Malawi.

48. To drive the climate change adaptation and livelihood resilience building agenda, Malawi has put in place several policies, strategies and entities supporting and spearheading the drive since 2000. The most recent include: the National Climate Change Implementation Plan (2013–2018); National Climate Change Management Policy (NCCMP, 2016); the National Climate Change Investment Plan (2017); National Climate Change Response Framework (NCCRF) and National Climate Change Resilience Strategy (2018–2030). Other products are: Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA); National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), National Designated Entity for Transfer (NDE); National Designated Authority for Green Climate Fund (NDA); National Implementation Entity for Adaptation Fund (NIE).

49. The institutional coordination framework for climate change has three main arms: i) the Cabinet-Parliament- Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources arm under which the Secretariat is located; ii) the Government of Malawi-Donor Working Group below which the National Steering Committee on Climate Change (NSCCC), the National Technical Committee on Climate Change (NTCCC) and Expert Working group arm are located in that descending order; iii) key Ministries including Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and Ministry of Agriculture Innovation and Water Development, and others.

2.1 Context of the project

50. The project Strengthening community resilience to climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe Districts (GCP/MLW/067/EC) was set out with two **strategic objectives**:

i. increase resilience of vulnerable communities and households to climate variability and change;
ii. increase institutional adaptive capacities towards community resilience.

51. It was mainly aimed at supporting vulnerable communities in southern Malawi and to potentially strengthen their resilience to climate variability. The project was implemented within the framework of FAO's **innovative integrated community centred approach:** Les Caisses de Résilience (CdR), an integrated approach designed to strengthen the resilience of farmers' groups to shocks and crises through **social, technical** and **financial** capacity development.

i. The social dimension was directed at reinforcing group cohesion through better governance structures, improved conflict management, good leadership and dignified safety nets such as common saving mechanisms.
ii. The technical component aimed at imparting knowledge of and skills in sustainable and climate-smart agriculture (CSA) production practices, post-harvest handling, bio-

intensive backyard gardening, food safety, HIV and gender-sensitive nutrition education.

iii. The financial capacity was to integrate aspects of farming as a business, entrepreneurial skills, income generating activities, savings and investment mechanisms, and group marketing into the other project activities.

52. Through this approach, the project anticipated six key results::

i. **R1.** Good agricultural practices and technologies for greater resilience to climate change adopted by 70 percent of targeted population.
ii. **R2.** HIV and gender-sensitive nutrition practices improved.
iii. **R3.** Diversity of sustainable livelihoods and regular income generating activities increased.
iv. **R4.** Conservation and safeguard of biodiversity enhanced.
v. **R5.** Institutional knowledge and advocacy for good governance on resilience to climate change improved.
vi. **R6.** Coordination and monitoring of actions on climate change adaptation and resilience programming streamlined.

53. The project aimed at reaching 240 community outreach groups, 172 800 individual resource users, CBFs and district staff as the main beneficiaries. It was designed to consolidate linkages and synergies amongst ongoing resilience building and social protection programmes by the Government.

54. The total project budget was EUR 5 782 430 predominantly funded by the European Commission. Budget performance is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Budget performance (EUR)

	Yr. 1	Yr. 2	Yr. 3	Yr. 4	Yr. 5
Total amount (Euro)	2 089 859	2 822 987	3 608 680	4 468 523	5 782 430
EU share of the expenditures (EUR)	1 396 982	1 812 593	2 380 927	3 249 683	4 568 026

Source: FAO Country Office Project Financial reports 2016–2020.

2.2 Theory of change

55. This section discusses the programme logic and expected results chain (impact, outcome and outputs) paying attention to any programmatic and/or contextual assumptions that could have underpinned the theory of change at Activity level, and change process for each key result area.

56. The project was to target change through sound safety nets and productive investments, and was aligned with a holistic approach of climate change adaptation (CCA), which addresses multiple threats to livelihoods with short- and medium-term interventions.

57. The overall project **objective** as stated in the project document was to increase the capacity of vulnerable Malawian communities to adapt to adverse effects of climate change and contribute to poverty reduction in rural areas. This was envisaged to be achieved through two **Specific Objectives (SO) -** one **upstream** (institutional capacity strengthening) and another **downstream** (enhancing community and household level capacity to adopt and adapt to changes). To increase the adaptive capacities, activities for each Strategic Objectives are articulated around six key results (see Appendix 3).

58. Theory of change. The intervention of strengthening vulnerable communities' resilience to climate variability and change was premised upon enhancing capacities to address and/or adapt to adverse effects of climate change and other livelihood threats such as rampant poverty. Knowledge and awareness of how climate change variability impedes and impinges on their livelihood and the transformative actions towards attaining resilience were the main pathway to change.

59. With growing concern that environmental challenges aggravated by poor agriculture practices have continued to negatively affect their food production and subsequent food and nutrition security, the intervention was therefore premised on a transformative community empowerment process aimed at improving community resilience and vulnerability to climate change. The theoretical pathway of change was that:

60. **IF** capacities of communities and household to adopt and adapt to sound safe coping mechanisms and climate-smart agriculture practices are enhanced; and

    i. funding, implementing and oversight institutions/partners apply a holistic and coherent approach in investing, planning and execution of climate change and resilience programmes;

    ii. **THEN** threats to livelihood and resilience due to climate change vulnerabilities will be reduced.

61. To achieve the intended goals, the intervention envisioned three generic actions: i) **community outreach;** ii) **systems support;** and iii) **policy and programme coherence support** to attain at least six results which would generate the required capacities.

62. Under the community outreach pathway, the change was premised in enhancing practical farmer education through a functional climate-smart – sensitive agriculture curriculum (CSA-FFS) with support of CSA training of trainers (TOT) facilitators. Following a series of activities including training, these would result in *improved understanding of and enhanced capacity to experiment, assess and apply better options of climate change resilient (CC-L) agriculture technologies and good practices* as the first (R1) project result. Through the same learning approach (using FFS), the curriculum would introduce and integrate nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) practices, further tailored to address special needs of the vulnerable such as HIV positive patients, pregnant and lactating mothers, infants and children (6-23 months).

63. For the second result (R2), a causal link was established between gender-sensitive nutrition, health seeking practices[4] and behaviour change in the short-, medium- and long-term framework. The behavioural change was grounded in effective sensitization and training of beneficiaries, especially mothers and women at household level to adopt appropriate practices, such as climate-smart agriculture, maternal, infant and child feeding/care practices and dietary diversification-nutritional practices. The knowledge–attitude-skills capacity chain (R2) was envisaged to be achieved by ensuring compliance through peer-to-peer community outreach. Accordingly, it was anticipated that the climate-smart agriculture and nutrition-sensitive agriculture practices would deliver solutions and strategies that would be translated into effective behavioural change towards food-nutrition-income security and improved community resilience (**R2**).

[4] Vaccination, growth monitoring, promote intergeneration norms such as appropriate child feeding practices, etc.

64. Key result area three (**R3**) - *Sustainable livelihoods and regular income generating activities increased was* reliant on capacity of smallholder farmers to manage risks if skilled in 'farming as a business and risk sensitive investment'. Different pathways of change and transformative strategies were envisaged. First, through gaining appropriate knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to engage in farming as a business, and second through linkages aimed at attaining resilience by participating in and belonging to socially cohesive structures at state and/or non–state activity level. Thirdly, it was envisaged that belonging to a financial group-scheme such as village savings and loan (VSL) scheme and connection to cash-for-work schemes would avail a source of capital for investment and offer a safety net for loans from the VSL-FFS group. Buttressed with social cash transfer programmes where groups are each given a small grant, the expectation was that such groups would build and/or strengthen their businesses. Finally, that group marketing would be enhanced by taking advantage of potential market linkages such as school meal programmes, or collective selling of crops such as cereals or vegetables directly to known markets or through an established warehouse receipt system support. These affirmative schemes were tagged to government support, especially the Public Works Programme in anticipation that they would strengthen the FFS Associations operationally and financially.

65. If the smallholder farmers were facilitated by small but substantial financial investments **AND**; they efficiently applied the gained production skills including group marketing skills; *other production factors remaining constant*, the beneficiaries would generate regular incomes to sustain their businesses and attain a degree of resilience. Drawing on their enhanced management capacities, they would effectively and sustainably manage their savings and loan schemes, overly expanding their lending capacities and subsequent loan portfolio for their benefit.

66. The intervention also aimed at *enhancing conservation and safeguarding biodiversity* **(R4)** as a climate change adaptation system support strategy focusing on 'common goods' as a foundation for community resilience. As a coping strategy for food, income and environmental security, three sub–interventions were selected. The main change - **attaining and sustaining longer-term diversity** - was envisaged through the knowledge-skill-capacity enhancement pathway. First by introducing climate-sensitive seed varieties, whose supply would be sustained by the communities themselves through community seed banks. Second, through ensuring a strong and sustainable natural resources management, such as watershed and wetland management through conservation agriculture and introducing climate change adaptation energy saving technologies for disaster risk reduction and safeguarding the environment. Creating a strong social, technical and financial linkage that mutually reinforces the trio was envisaged as the optimum pathway of change.

67. For results five (**R5**) and six (**R6**), *awareness of effects of climate change and identifying solutions to climate change resilience,* the change action was premised to happen through improved coherence in planning and harmonization in programming of climate change adaptation by all key relevant stakeholders at the upstream. Good governance, climate-sensitive adaptation plans, climate-smart policies, efficient climate change information management systems including platforms for sharing are key attributes/enablers identified to influence change to root.

68. **Assumptions.** At project design,[5] some of the **risks** noted with a potential to affect the project were: i) inadequate institutional capacity to coordinate and implement activities; ii) possible lack of commitment of stakeholders; iii) adverse climatic conditions; iv) lack of commitment from local district authorities, project staff and beneficiaries; v) lack of a sense of ownership of adaptation infrastructure by local communities affecting their operation and maintenance; vi) coexistence of

[5] Adopted from the Project Document, *Call for Proposal 'Community Resilience to Climate Change in Malawi'.* FAO, 2014.

ongoing initiatives with conflicting approaches such as free distribution of inputs, over-inflated task rate levels in the action area; vii) difficulty to mobilize stakeholders for investment with long-term perspective/returns; and viii) weak functioning of the groups/associations.

69. Programmatic assumptions were related to actors, while contextual factors within the programme were responsible for internal changes and quality of implementation. On the other hand, some contextual factors such as unexpected climate change were outside project control but critical to its success.

70. Table 6 presents an analysis of the related assumptions, and whether they affected the change process or not (whether they held true or not).

Table 6. Project assumptions for change interrogated

Context	Assumptions	Whether held true and change process took place or not
Programmatic assumptions due to actors and factors that affected the quality of implementation	Inadequate institutional capacity to coordinate and implement activities	**Partially held true** for upstream where institutional capacity to coordinate and implement was weak and affected activities. The converse happened for lower stream where capacity was strong and change happened.
	Lack of commitment of stakeholders – partners and beneficiaries	**Did not hold true.** Stakeholders were fully commitment to the change process. Stakeholders accepted the behavioural changes introduced
	Weak functioning of group systems	**Did not hold true.** The group systems (FFS) were quite strong and through them change happened.
	Lack of commitment from local district authorities, project staff and beneficiaries	**Partially true.** There were reports of point incidences where district staff hesitated to commit, which delayed anticipated results. However, no incidences were reported in which project staff and beneficiaries did not commit.
	Lack of a sense of ownership of adaptation infrastructure by local communities affecting their operation and maintenance	**Did not hold true.** Ownership was embraced all through by communities They eagerly engaged in experimentation and experiential learning as part of adsorption, adaptation and transformation process.
	Difficulty to mobilize stakeholders for investment with long-term perspective/returns	**Partially true.** especially for stakeholders that were most vulnerable to climate change hazards. Their immediate priorities differed as they were concerned with short-term needs such as food on the table and shelter.
Contextual assumptions critical to the change process	Coexistence of ongoing initiatives with conflicting approaches such as free distribution of inputs, over inflated task rate levels in the action arena	**Did not hold true.** This was not reported and did not affect the project in any way. On the contrary, there was collaboration with other programmes and activities such as action taken under Cyclone Idai to address FNS, water for production and return to livelihood options.
	Adverse climate conditions affecting results	**Held true** where the adverse climate condition prevailed such as cyclones and prolonged drought, the results were affected and the expected change process was not achieved as feared.
	Information and knowledge acquired would not be adopted and adapted to inform changes	**Did not hold true.** Change process was fairly smooth as the information and knowledge imparted was adopted and adapted as expected from the change process. The scale and speed of adaption and transformational change may have been slow in some cases, but still positive.

Source: Evaluation team.

3. Findings

3.1 EQ 1. To what extent was the intervention aligned (or has it adjusted over time) to FAO and national policies and strategies, and global priorities of climate change adaptation, and the needs of the vulnerable communities/most vulnerable within those communities?

Finding 1. The intervention was well aligned to global priorities, mainly the Paris Agreement, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol (Nabuurs *et al*, 2007) and Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG 13) objectives. FAO priorities and principles laid out in the FAO Climate Change Strategy 2017, National Priorities (NMCCMP, 2016, NAIP, NAMA, NAPS, NCCRF, NIE, MNSSP) and Agenda 2063 guiding on how to address climate change adaptation and mitigation, effects of climate change, vulnerability and resilience.

71. **Alignment to Global priorities.** Malawi is one of the countries that signed the 2025 Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1994, and ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. To address the effects of climate change on resilience of communities, the projects' second strategic objective was directed at increasing institutional adaptive capacities. The key results areas - *institutional knowledge and advocacy on resilience to CC improved* and coordination *& monitoring of CCA and resilience programming streamlined* - was clear evidence of the project addressing concerns for climate change adaptation. The project design had clear elements aligned to the global priorities.

72. **Alignment to FAO's Priorities.** The project design was cognizant of all eight guiding principles of the FAO Climate Change Strategy (FAO, 2017a) although during implementation some were more strongly reflected than others. The most considered were addressing how climate change undermines food and nutrition security, embracing the leave no one behind principle, support to policy integration and mainstreaming, promoting evidence-based scientific- and ecosystem-based approaches, and learning from experience. FAO leading by example and incorporating measures for impact are implicit. One of FAO's transformational changes specifies mainstreaming goals and priorities of climate change within institutions to reduce impact of climate change. This project, with its aim at increasing resilience of communities and their livelihoods to the effects of climate change, was well–aligned to this principle.

73. **Alignment to national priorities.** The project objectives were aligned to the Country Programming Framework (2014–2017) which was active at project design. The key component was **Support to disaster risk reduction and resilience in the context of reducing hunger and promoting sustainable agricultural development.** The related outcomes were: i) reduced impact of disaster risk and increased farmer resilience; ii) local adaptive capacities developed for sustainable land management; and iii) sustainable land use for smallholder farmers strengthened.

74. Key players include but were not limited to: BMZ, GIZ World Bank, UK Government (DFID) Norwegian Government, Irish Aid, European Union, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Denmark, Government of Belgium, Japanese Government, as bilateral partners, UN agencies – UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, and UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), institutions of higher learning, training and research, civil society organizations and the private sector.

75. Other important considerations were the national policy Actions, products and strategies such as the National Adaptation Plans (NAP); National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) and

National Adaptations Program of Action (NAPA) as well as Vision 2020, Malawi National Climate Change Management Policy 2016, National Agriculture Policy 2016, National Climate Change Investment Plan 2013–2018, NCCRS 2018–2030 and Social Protection Programme and Agriculture in particular to the Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP).

3.2 EQ 2. Were project activities implemented timely, and were there sufficient management procedures to affect efficiency, including regular monitoring and evaluation? To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources and synergies, complementarities with other projects and partnerships, etc., and avoided duplication of similar activities of other groups?

3.2.1 Management systems

Finding 2. Overall, the project design was very good and had a potential to deliver timely results as intended even though it did not, mainly owing to several operational challenges. The project faced a human resource gap in implementing community outreach activities since the letters of agreement (LOAs) for national Implementing partners were late. The project utilized a back-up of government district extension workers as part of the workforce to support training.

76. Owing to the above challenges, the implementation of several activities planned under result areas R2 and R3 were deferred to year 3. In the last year of implementation, the project was interrupted by COVID-19 lockdowns which resulted in a one year no-cost extension.

77. Delayed and untimely implementation was not only explained by delayed letters of agreement but also due to short-term implementation contracts which were applied in engaging implementing partners in this project. The delays were exacerbated by the temporary impasse between the project and district extension workers which resulted into a human resource gap delaying onset of some activities.

78. In the attempt to make up for lost time due to implementation slowdown in the second year, most of the outstanding activities were congested in the subsequent years, especially in the fourth year. Inevitably, the activity sequence was disorganized which led to non-completion of some skilling activities along the end of the value chain such as marketing and linkages to public works programme.

79. The delays had notable negative consequences, as follows: a sizeable portion of activities were hurriedly implemented in the fourth year, and others were totally not implemented; some of the activities, especially those which were agriculture in nature, could not be re-aligned back into sequence due to lost time and unexpected extreme weather patterns when the cyclone hit, followed by floods and later by a prolonged dry spell. Examples of negative effects of poor sequencing cited by respondents were:

i. Successful adoption and translation of knowledge from demonstration plots to individual households was either delayed and/or not achieved especially when the weather patterns changed
ii. Some farmers who received poultry, lost birds because of poor and un-sequenced timing. The delivery timing was not in sync with training and planning. Therefore, some farmers received birds when they were not ready for them and lacked organized veterinary support.

iii. Small grants which were availed late in the project cycle were not used effectively. Where the drought and dry season had already set in, some groups were not able to use the money intended to support rainfed crop agriculture if they did not have access to irrigation facilities.

iv. In this period, the project did not gather sufficient data to inform planning and monitoring. This resulted in loss of continuity in execution affecting both learning and tracking progress.

80. Some of the national implementers also reported loss of continuity on their side, adding that they incurred unwarranted costs where they had invested in year-long plans, including costs of having recruited additional human resource to support their work. Some national implementers believed project staff should have taken a more proactive approach to make them aware of the ongoing challenges which would enable them to make better and more strategic decisions.

Finding 3. The initial M&E framework was inadequate, with short-term measures which were predominantly outputs and not sufficient to inform implementation, monitoring and learning. The project took positive strategic actions which included redefining benchmark indicators using findings from the baseline study and information from a geo-spatial mapping of hotspot locations of highly degraded areas that needed urgent action. These findings were complemented by a results-oriented monitoring (ROM) activity which contributed to improving the M&E plan. A revised log frame and a communication strategy were put in place to strengthen dissemination.

81. The project carried out a baseline survey, whose results revealed significant information on climate change-related vulnerabilities in the communities. Very conspicuous was the revelation of a high level of food and nutrition insecurity among smallholder farmers and low adaptive capacity to reduce climate change impacts in the communities (FAO, 2016a). Among other things, the survey baseline data was used to identify and re-design short- and long-term benchmark indicators that were incorporated in the log frame to support a more inclusive M&E framework. The process was invaluable although it delayed onset of some activities such as finalizing the FFS training manual and subsequent training of the facilitators.

82. To operationalize the M&E system, district and community officials were oriented to joint planning, coordination and monitoring of agriculture, resilience and social protection programmes. Effective tools, guidelines and plans for data collection were therefore required at the units where project information was generated. However, respondents from some of the districts noted that clear work plans for monitoring and harmonizing data collection and reporting were missing. The same respondents mentioned that in their districts, the project seemed to have lacked a consistent system for information flow in which such gaps could have been addressed. Since this finding did not apply to all districts, it was indicative evidence that there was a disparity in implementation rigour within and between districts, which may partly explain why some districts performed better than others.

83. Project data was missing for all results areas (R1-R6) for the implementation period June 2015 to May 2016. Likewise, data was missing for result areas (R2-R4) and part of R1 for the implementation period June 2016 to May 2017. In light of the missing data, analysis and conclusions of the total-sum performance of the project, especially around some particular activities, was a challenge.

84. The evaluation also noted that all data records were not gender-disaggregated and there were no specific gender-sensitive indicators among the key indicators.

3.2.2 Synergy complementarity and collaboration

Finding 4. The project was instrumental to the formation of a Joint UN Resilience Platform and FAO project personnel contributed significantly to its coordination and activities. The Platform defined approaches to harmonize and galvanize UN support for climate change adaptation by contributing to the discussions of National Climate Change Investment Plan and the review/formulation of the Malawi National Social Support Programme 2 with lessons learned from MNSSP1.

85. The Joint UN Resilience Platform was composed of representatives from UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and FAO as lead. The Platform organized dialogues that brought together key Ministries, Departments and Agencies from government ministries such as Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Innovation and Water Development and Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources to deliberate on the integrated support to the Malawi National Social Support Programme.

86. The platform worked towards enhancing interinstitutional collaboration between Ministries, Departments and Agencies focusing on building synergies at different levels. A member of the Platform affirmed: "We were able to reduce territorial disparities and institutional fragmentation between Ministries through the social support programme. 'Through policy dialogues, we successfully convinced departments to break the siloed planning and commit to collective planning for climate change adaptation and resilience programmes." Different stakeholders tabled information about their ongoing programmes and activities in addressing climate change adaptation and resilience. The Social Support Programme and precepts of social protection were considered as uniting factors. For example, Ministry of Agriculture, Innovation and Water Development staff appreciated the collaboration and were more willing to integrate the social aspects and needs of the community besides the traditional focus on production. Consequently, different stakeholders now have an opportunity to more holistically understand and envision the effects, vulnerabilities and mitigation Actions of climate change.

87. District level collaboration both inter- and intra-department was visibly evident and attributable to project activities. National implementers affirmed multi-level involvement of officers from key district offices such as the Directorate of Planning and Development in the Office of the District Commissioner and Office of the Directorate of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services. As part of the institutional collaboration, several district staff participated in training of facilitators while the districts themselves provided the needed space for training. Despite this level of collaboration, in some districts, the engagement had a difficult start when some district officers demanded for monetary facilitation fees which the project had not budgeted for. This was however resolved with time.

Finding 5. The project established relevant collaborations with technical, training and research institutions in collective capacity development of trainers. They jointly established a pool of trainers to support climate–resilient agriculture production applying FFS training approaches and the CdR resilience building tool.

88. Such collaborations, as noted by this evaluation were with ICRAF, Department of Agricultural Research Services of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development and the Chancellor College of the University of Malawi all well known for technical training. ICRAF participated in training of Master Trainers, imparting knowledge and skills of fodder technology use, fruit production and consumption, landscape cover management and fertilizer tree system-based technology. DARS was responsible for promoting landraces by providing planting material

and training of staff and farmers, while Chancellor College of the University of Malawi supported one implementing partners in the construction of the seepage wells.

89. Although the Department of Agricultural Extension Services and ICRAF were engaged in the actual training of the facilitators or training of trainers, some respondents noted that they should have been involved earlier at the time of designing and reviewing the curriculum rather than later in trainings only. Similarly, failing to have involved the Department of Forestry in activities addressing forest management from the onset was a missed opportunities.

90. KULIMA,[6] a project mainly promoting diversified agriculture production and productivity in a climate-resilient approach, has a lot of similarities with this project. The KULIMA project adopted the CdR tool and FFS training approaches. Together with ICRAF, they organized collective training and shared facilitators with the current project which maximized resources avoiding unnecessary duplication for all the three projects. Whereas the project missed the involvement of ICRAF at the point of curriculum development, ICRAF is now working with KULIMA to strengthen the curriculum further for training in climate–resilient agriculture approaches. This was a worthwhile synergy which is likely to demonstrate long-term benefits to the wider community.

91. The Enhancing Community Resilience Programme (ECRP), a six year project funded by UK Aid, Irish Aid and Norwegian Embassy, was undertaken to increase resilience of vulnerable communities to climate variability. It was implemented between 2011 and 2017. This evaluation sought but did not find any information referring to cross-learning or functional actions that could have been shared with the ECRP despite the similarities in aims and interventions[7] promoted by both projects.

92. The Cyclone Idai response demonstrated strong interagency coordination and synergy between FAO and UN agencies (mainly FAO, WFP and UNICEF), development partners (European Union, DFID and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, OFDA), Government of Malawi (MoWAID) and several national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Through the National Agriculture Cluster, interventions were harmonized in support of the crisis and recovery of those communities - including the four project districts that had been affected by the cyclone hazards. Many vulnerable and resource-poor communities from the project districts were reached with varying assistance and aid packages which ranged from immediate supplies of food to climate resilient technologies such as farming and agro–input supplies, including drought tolerant and early maturing varieties of crop and vegetable seeds. Technologies to access water for irrigation/winter production were also supplied through irrigation packages of equipment and tools. This collaboration probably depicts one of the strongest evidence of efficient and effective cohesion of synergistic support between project activities for humanitarian support.

93. The hotspot mapping undertaken by the project (described in detail under result Area 1, EQ 3) generated information that has been adopted and is still being utilized by communities and other government public work programmes to identify and delineate spots that urgently need climate change action. The information generated is vast, intensive and informative, which will save other

[6] KULIMA is a European Union-funded project. KULIMA stands for 'Kutukula ulimi m'Malawi' meaning Promoting farming in Malawi. The project aims at promoting sustainable growth to increase incomes employment and food security in Malawi in the context of a changing climate. It was designed to strategically contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is aligned to the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II.

[7] Village savings and loans (VSL), disaster risk reduction (DRR), early warning systems (EWS), small-scale irrigation, agroforestry, conservation agriculture, catchment management, gender, small-scale livestock (SSL), youths, markets and knowledge management.

future programmes from any immediate needs for duplication of hotspot mapping in these districts.

94. Another activity where synergy is evident is with an ongoing USD 300 000 Irish Government-funded intervention entitled **Coherence between Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Action and Social Protection in Sub Saharan Africa.** Funding is for a gap–filling study aimed at providing additional information on mechanisms of deepening the integration of disaster risk reduction (DRR) into social protection as an integral part of coherence between DRR and Climate Action. Funding is a catalytic benefit arising from a previous social action – climate change project.

95. The project has also recorded sessions of information sharing with the Shire River Integrated program in which several partners - GIZ, WFP, UNICEF and Government of Malawi - have established dialogues to share planned activities to avoid duplication. In collaboration with another FAO Technical Corporation Programme (TCP/MLW/3502) (FAO, n.d.), this project with the International Labour Organization (ILO) supported development and the successful piloting of the national unified beneficiary registry (UBR)[8] which attracted additional support from the World Bank and KFW Development Bank to sustain the initiative.

3.3 EQ 3. To what extent did the project effectively address gender equity, decent labour and other human rights and equity aspects?

Finding 6. Overall, the selection of participants was gender-sensitive, comprising all categories of people thus including men, women and youth in the project activities. In the formation of FFS groups, a gender mix of both better-to-do and poor smallholder farming households was evident and there was additional effort to deliberately include households with disabled persons. The project had gender inclusive FFS, with equity benefits.

96. From a general outlook, the project involved women, men and youth, especially given that the nature of project activities was predominantly agriculture-based and women represent the biggest number of persons engaged in the sector. However, a quantitative analysis on gender inclusivity was limited because the project results and records were not gender–disaggregated.

97. Records show that energy saving stoves did not only save the environment by reducing the amount of firewood used, but also the amount of time spent fetching the firewood, and reduced time spent on cooking. The time saved was allocated to other productive activities.

98. Given that the project had a substantial agriculture component, a gender responsive approach to climate–smart agriculture required specific identification of different needs, priorities and realities of the effects of climate on men, women and youth. This called for specifically designed actions to close any existing gaps. The need for gender–sensitive indicators to measure and assess success was therefore implicit. However, neither of these two aspects were well articulated in the design.

99. A platform for action learning was established and women got empowered through the knowledge they got and the skills imparted. Unfortunately the project had no specific indicators

[8] The UBR, a national platform used for entering, storing, accessing and sharing household data to facilitate respective programme implementers in targeting, linking, monitoring and producing periodic reports on the outreach and implementation of social support programmes in Malawi, is one of the successful national products under the MNSSP products.

to measure such benefits. However, trainers observed that women were more responsive to new knowledge and learning additional skills. In his words, one trainer affirmed:

> *Women were eager to engage in business skilling. This is easily achievable when they have some level of education/literacy since they pick concepts easily. If women are to be given equal opportunity in training including leadership skills, we will go a long way in addressing these effects of climate change and attaining resilience.*

100. The project did not institute any specific guidelines or actions in addressing differences in vulnerabilities for implementation and in research. Observing that vulnerability is neither homogenous nor a one-size–fit–all when being applied to group members. Some implementing partners observed that the most vulnerable persons struggled to sustain their membership in the FFS since, on many occasions, their priorities were very specific and different from the wider group members' priorities. In particular, those who had been most affected by El Niño or Cyclone Idai.

101. Concluding from responses of the different persons interviewed, the unfortunate reality was that the immediate needs of the most vulnerable persons was food security, shelter and nutrition security in that order. They were less concerned about the long-term climate induced insecurities in the short-term. Simply phrased, some project actions addressing resilience such as conservation and agroforestry agriculture were out of their reach as some were even challenged by not owning or owning limited land for agriculture. This certainly affected their absorptive and adaptive capacity for attaining wholesome resilience. Special consideration was a prerequisite at beneficiary selection and/or activity design to ensure equitable benefit for such a category of stakeholders in particular at grant allocation.

102. In the *Endline survey report*' (FAO, 2019a) and *Main Evaluative Learning Report* (Nelso *et al.*, 2020) authors observe that the more vulnerable households were faced with more challenges such as higher rate of children falling sick, insufficient resources to meet medical expenses and inadequate capacity to buy seeds or open land. Owing to this vulnerability, they were truly incapable of engaging in farming as a business in the true sense compared to the better-off households. This was further attested to by some national implementing partners during discussions in responses to our questionnaires.

Finding 7. The project did not sufficiently discuss with stakeholders cross-cutting climate-sensitive and vulnerability concerns and related trade-off for use of labour-intensive approaches in application of climate-smart agriculture. The evaluation found no information indicating comprehensive discussion of concerns, such as occupational safety and health (OSH); child labour use; human right concerns in cash-for-work labour activities; limited youth/gender targeted employment and (lack of) decent wages for this group.

103. The project did not sufficiently discuss with stakeholders/beneficiaries the trade-offs required to address these negative effects. Some effort was made to address the negative effects associated with heavy use of fertilizers vs the urgent need to increase production. Members of the communities and beneficiaries interviewed did not have comprehensive knowledge of the negative effects associated with the issues raised in this Finding. In reference to heavy use of fertilizers, some project implementers mentioned that some groups were informed of the dangers but had to make a decision between no use vs intensive use for the sake of improving food crop yields which they needed the most. The experiential learning Action involving experimentation on field plots by farmers and communities had the potential to explain some of these issues if the project had maximized the planned implementation time.

104. Similarly, there was no information indicating that the communities engaged in excavation activities through the cash-for–work approaches were forewarned of the dangers and discussed their rights to engage in such activities prior to the engagements. Moreover, there was no information indicating that the project had taken additional actions to discuss and address issues such as decent wages for youths, a critical consideration required under the climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches as guided by SDG 13 and FAO climate change strategy in agriculture.

3.4 EQ 4. Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcome? What was the relevance of using the innovative integrated community centred approach (CdR) for this project? Was it effective in linking the social, technical and financial dimensions in mutually reinforcing ways? Were there unintended results, either positive or negative?

105. The question sought to assess appropriateness of the design and how it translated into outcomes. Results are discussed by results areas, followed by discussion of the CdR Approach.

3.4.1 Key result areas/outcomes

Result 1 (R1). Improved understanding, capacity to experiment, assess options and apply climate change resilience and good agriculture technologies.

Finding 8. Data gathered in the final evaluative learning report and in the evaluation assessment indicate that climate-sensitive-resilient practices have been invariably adopted by at least 60 to 80 percent of beneficiaries, which is within the project target range of 70 percent. According to respondents, adoption of climate-smart and climate-resilient agriculture practices in Neno and Phalombe districts was higher (80 percent) than Blantyre and Zomba districts (60 percent).

106. Awareness of the effects of climate change was high (over 80 percent) in all four districts (80 percent), with 60 percent of beneficiaries agreeing that communities are better off and less vulnerable since the project was introduced (Figure 2). A pool of community trainers and facilitators were trained to handle climate-smart and climate-resilient practices applying the FFS approach.

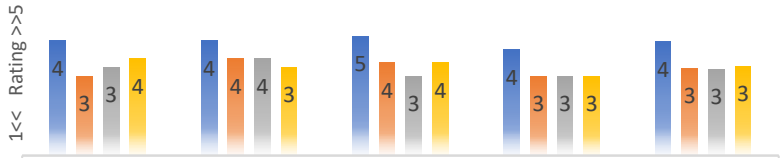
107. The project enriched the FFS curriculum by integrating into it CSA and resilience building practices addressing land and water management, livestock production and natural resources management. A significant number (at least 70 percent) mentioned that they have gained skills through extension agents, while others mentioned that they acquired knowledge and skills directly through peer to peer exchange with FFS members or community facilitators or from extension workers. The facilitators mentored and trained by the project on how to apply the FFS curriculum, in turn utilized this knowledge to train FFS members as attested to by members of all the four districts. Of the many facilitators who were trained, 86 percent adopted the climate-smart-resilient curriculum and affirmed that they can confidently apply it for training with little or no further assistance.

108. At least 86 percent of the communities affirmed that they have **applied climate-sensitive-resilient practices and technologies** imparted through learning, demonstration and comparative validation studies. Some evidence to this was physically visible during on-site field visits. Unfortunately a number of demonstration farms, household crop plots and other structures

on ground had been eroded by limited group activity mainly attributed to inaction due to COVID-19 restrictions.

109. The results in Figure 2 show the respondents' perception of the project effectiveness with reference to increased awareness of the effects and vulnerabilities of climate change; increased adoption; and sustainability of mitigation actions. Respondents were district staff, CBFs and Agriculture Development Community Officers. The rated effects of climate change were: increasing floods, soil erosion, heavy winds, prolonged drought, pests and diseases, invading termites and witch weeds, for example. The average score returned was '**4**', translated into 80 percent agreement for purposes of this evaluation. They further observed that through project activities, **community-level awareness of the effects of climate change** was increased. Notwithstanding, the responses also indicated differences in perception scores between districts. Outstandingly, by the time of this evaluation the Phalombe communities were comparatively more knowledgeable about climate change variability and its effects compared to others.

Figure 2. Stakeholder perception of project effectiveness assessed by knowledge acquisition, adoption, and sustainability of climate-smart agriculture practices



	Blantyre	Neno	Phalombe	Zomba	Average
Communities more aware of CC effects	4	4	5	4	4
Communities have adopted activities that are Climate smart to protect environment	3	4	4	3	3
Communities are better off and less vulnerable to climate risk due to activities introduced.	3	4	3	3	3
Communities will remain carrying out the activities to protect the environment	4	3	4	3	3

Score rating: - 5 very strongly agree, 4 strongly agree; 3 agree, 2 disagree and 1 very strongly disagree

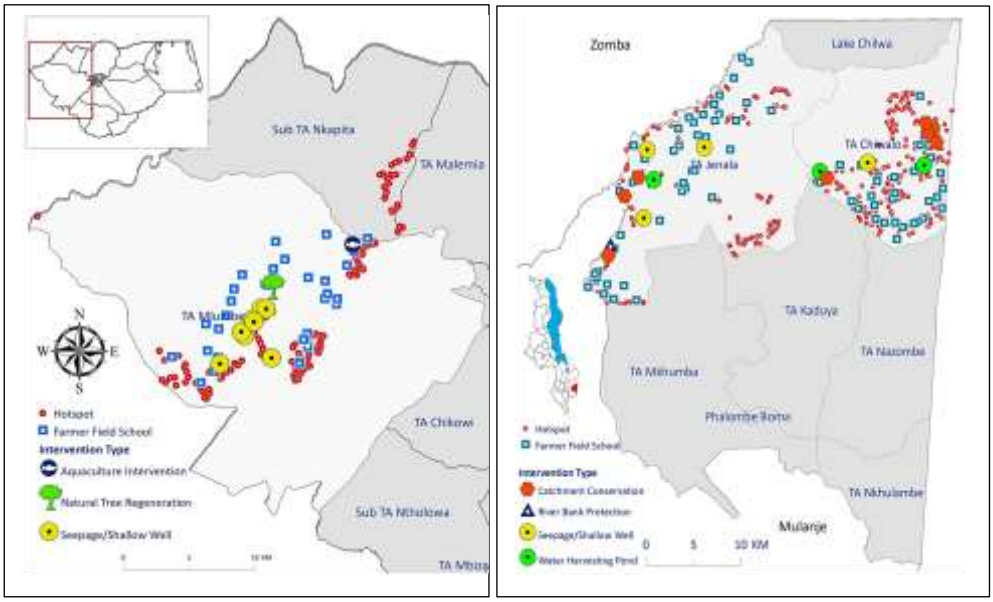
110. With regard to **adoption of CSA practices, an average score of '3' was returned**, which was **translated into** 60 percent agreement that adoption took place. The records further indicated that the communities of Neno and Phalombe had higher adoption rates –average of 80 percent compared to the other two. The assessment for adoption of CSA practices was based on selected activities which were: water management technologies, (harvesting and drainage), community and individual management of natural trees (regenerating natural forests, raising tree nurseries and sustaining forests) and practices for managing soil degradation including knowledge gained from hotspot mapping and training by facilitators.

111. For sustaining benefits attained through the project and communities remaining resilient in terms of capacities, respondents scored an average of '**3.5**' translated into an estimated 70 percent agreement that beneficiaries were likely **to sustain climate change adaptation and mitigation practices and remain resilient** to risks.

112. The hotspot mapping identified a total of 1 507 (FAO, 2017b) hotspot locations (Zomba 281, Phalombe 390, Blantyre 263 and Neno 573) of high environmental degraded areas in the four districts which urgently required intervention. The process not only yielded very informative data used by this and other projects, but with futuristic potential use by the districts. The process was

also highly participatory involving members of FFS, community leaders, trainers and officials from the districts. Using the hotspot mapping information, for example, in Zomba a total of ten interventions were addressed - eight seepage wells, one natural tree regeneration and one aquaculture. In Phalombe, 19 were handled. They included seven seepage wells, eight catchment conservation sites, one riverbank protection and three water harvesting ponds.

Figure 3. Intervention sites in Zomba (left) and Phalombe (right) districts informed by hotspot mapping



Source: FAO MLW Report (2017) - Hotspot mapping and profiling. Map confirms to UN. 2012. Map No. 3858, Rev. 4.

Result 2 (R2). HIV and gender sensitive nutrition practices improved.

Finding 9. Project records indicate that the FFS curriculum was enriched by incorporating nutrition, gender and HIV messages which were appropriately packaged. Many beneficiaries at household level were sensitized and trained using the tools and materials developed. Positive knowledge and changes in health seeking behaviour among mothers and caregivers of children and the vulnerable persons was noted.

113. The review of the curriculum and preparation of the training materials was done early in year 2, while the training and other activities under this component were predominantly implemented in the last two years. The number of associations targeted increased from the targeted 240 to 325, while the total number of mothers trained in health seeking behaviour reached 9 623 - almost tripling the targeted number of 3 600. These achievements are attributed to the redesigning of the implementation approach by engaging government staff to buttress training a change from the initial plan of using only implementing partners.

114. The project endline survey report (2019) discusses the health seeking behaviours such as mothers regularly attending antenatal care, birth attendance being supported by skilled personnel, maternal education and adoption of appropriate practices in support of children under the age of five as well as changes in anthropometric indicators assessing child nutrition status. The quantitative results indicate a mix of unclear trends resulting from insufficient supporting data, while the qualitative results reflecting the voices of respondents strongly affirm key positive outputs especially on sensitization of mothers and caregivers. Mothers and caregivers were equipped with knowledge on care and nutrition of children and vulnerable persons. For example,

of the mothers sensitized, 6 270 out of 9 000 (70 percent) had their children receive an appropriate vaccination which was a commendable adoption from the project activity.

Finding 10. The project desired to consolidate and replicate good practices of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and promote integrated food systems through dietary diversification which it achieved. The project target of engaging 3 600 household was surpassed by far in reaching 8 261 households.

115. The evaluation team learned that during sensitization a link was made between agro–forestry and food and nutrition security. The households were encouraged to engage in vegetable growing, fruit production and small animal stock rearing as an agriculture diversification practice. Project records and some responses indicated that subsequently communities increasingly adopted more balanced diets as households engaged in own legume and vegetable production practices adopted from the project training. The training enhanced nutrition-sensitive approaches including specialized growing, harvesting and preservation of legumes and vegetables, as well as nutrient–sensitive processing/cooking of food to cater for special nutritional needs of the vulnerable persons such as those in antiretroviral therapy (ART).

116. Although this evaluation did not have sufficient interface with the vulnerable persons who were involved in nutrition/HIV/related activities, the other project documents (endline survey report and main evaluative report learning reports) record that the result, especially outcomes from these activities, drew mixed reactions. Without any doubt, behavioural change and practices were visible as beneficiaries attested to having increased their harvest of fruits and vegetables citing that harvesting fruits now lasted close to the whole year compared to before the project intervention. Food meal plans including the number of meals per day and dietary mix in general improved for many who were able to have better yields, while those from drought and armyworm–hit areas mentioned that they were unable to harvest the variety of foods needed. The evaluation team was not in a position to ascertain the short- to medium-term the extent to which the project activities impacted upon the nutrition security and health of the beneficiaries and communities.

Result 3 (R3). Improved knowledge, attitude and capacity on diversifying sustainable livelihoods and regular income generating strategies.

Finding 11. The pathway for attaining regular income generation was envisaged through smallholder farmers managing risks and engaging in 'farming as a business and risk-sensitive investment'. This was on one hand fairly well achieved, while the second component of realizing resilience through participation and belonging to socially cohesive structures with state and non–state activities was only partially accomplished.

117. **Diversifying sustainable livelihoods.** The communities' capacity to engage in CSA practices and diverse farming enterprises was enhanced through knowledge and skills in basic entrepreneurship and business management that was imparted through training. In this approach, the project introduced a business-oriented approach, supporting FFS groups to initiate VSLs and mobilize money into their savings which they could borrow as start-up capital or to manage existing small businesses.

118. Project records indicate that approximately 325 member associations benefited from training in farming as a business of which 296 FFS are estimated to have established their VSL-FFS.

> 'At some point I appreciated great change in my household when my wife bought school uniform, fees and writing material for our children. When I inquired where she got the money from, she replied that she got a loan from FAO VSL. She also bought cooking oil and a packet of sugar'
>
> FFS member in Phalombe district

Beneficiary testimonies echoed a heightened interest in VSLs due to access to credit. Previous records and responses to the questionnaire estimate that over 75 percent of members have accessed loans from the VSLs. The project buttressed FFS–VSL groups financially with a small group grant amounting to MK 850 000 (USD 1 000). The VSL scheme was therefore a twin utility serving as a source of income and a safety net.

119. **Income generation.** Project records and responses indicate that credit drawn from VSLs were invested in diverse crop enterprises plus a few selected livestock enterprises such as pig, poultry and goat farming. Others invested in apiculture, a multi-benefit enterprise used for generating income, and a stimulus for natural forest regeneration and control of deforestation. Selling of tree seedlings as an income-generating activity was embraced by both groups and individuals. The project distributed goats to some groups which had established a 'pass–on-livestock' scheme. The project supported irrigation farming by distributing solar powered water pumps.

120. Contrary to the anticipated pathway of change, the credit accessed was not invested predominantly in farming as a business. It was in addition used to meet a whole array of needs such as: purchasing domestic supplies, improving shelters, paying schools fees, and establishing small businesses involving buying and selling of food items and domestic goods. Food item businesses varied from sale of fish, cereals, pulses, to small animal stock like goats and poultry. A small number invested in farming activities such as buying agro-inputs or seedlings, while others used the loans simply to pay utilities or purchase domestic requirements.

121. Whatever the investment was, it was a source of income generation and empowerment especially for the women who seemed to predominantly embrace this component. Proceeds from small businesses were further used to purchase agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers, household assets and for others to improve shelters such as purchase iron roofs to replace grass thatches. Others used the monies to start livestock rearing engaging in goats, pigs and chicken farming as an alternate option.

122. Along the production chain, outcomes are also credited to members' knowledge of and capacity to circumvent the negative effects of climate change, plus ability to adopt CSA practices.

123. **Resilience through socially cohesive structures.** Besides the project-funded VSL activities, members were encouraged to join other ongoing government social protection and resilience building interventions - the Public Works Scheme' and Social Cash Transfer programmes such as road construction, excavation activities or constructing swales for water harvesting under the 'cash-for-work' schemes. Beyond giving the groups information and directing them to where such opportunities existed, the project did very little to advance this component. However, a study[9] carried out by FAO in collaboration with ILO, UNICEF, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and Ministry of Agriculture, Innovation and Water Development noted an important link between Social Cash Transfer (SCT) schemes vs Public Works Programme (PWP). It revealed a potential to positively support the vulnerable and poor households as well as stimulating growth in the economy.

124. **Support to group marketing.** The group members were introduced to improved marketing approaches and discussed possible group marketing approaches and market linkages they could engage in for more profitable sales of their farm produce. The project had planned to link the

[9] A study on Cost-Benefit Economic Simulation Analysis of Selected Social Protection and Agricultural Programmes in Malawi.

farmer groups to predefined systems, intermediaries or agencies such as the school meal programmes and/or warehouse receipt systems as a way of targeting better prices and sustainable markets. Unfortunately, the project achieved very little in this sub-activity.

Result 4 (R4). Improved knowledge, attitude and capacity on biodiversity, conservation and safeguarding.

Finding 12. The project sharpened farmers' skills and engaged over 7 000 beneficiaries from member associations in an assorted mix of conservation activities. Whereas the overall impact of knowledge acquisition and capacity development could not be precisely ascertained, heightened awareness and motivation towards natural resource and biodiversity conservation resulting from the project is undoubtedly visible.

> *'Our produce is purchased by vendors who come to buy from our households. Even in our group, when we sold our produce we also sold through the very same vendors. We didn't have any formal agreements with them as a group'*
>
> *Member of FFS group in Neno district*

125. Farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR) of degraded and deforested areas, regeneration of woodland and forests; unlimited growing of fruit–trees and adoption of environmentally friendly cooking stoves that use less firewood are some of the examples of skills improved. With improved nursery management skills, groups raised seedlings which were at first distributed to members for outplanting at no cost. The seedlings were later sold to group and community members at a modest fee to generate income to meet some of the group needs.

126. The project aroused and reinvigorated interest in the value and knowledge of natural resources conservation, especially fruit–tree agro–forestry. Community members were sensitized to desist from vices such as setting bush fires, and indiscriminate tree cutting for making charcoal. Whilst conservation agriculture, especially adoption of improved agro–forestry practices such as natural tree regeneration and restoration of previously extinct useful local seed varieties was laudable, the project missed an opportunity to translate and link these into seed and grain bank systems which had been planned but not implemented.

127. Members appreciated the value of planting fruit trees and vegetables around their homesteads and along river boundaries, which served the duo purpose of contributing to climate-smart resilience, safeguarding of the environment and contribution to food and nutrition security.

128. Under this component, more results could have been visible where these activities were implemented timely and were well-sequenced over the project span rather than being congested in the last one to two years. While records indicate that demonstration plots were successfully established to support practical learning, subsequent adoption at individual household level was hampered by challenges such as off-season planting and unexpected extreme and unfavourable weather patterns that ensued over years. Long dry spells, Cyclone Idai and floods also contributed to the challenges.

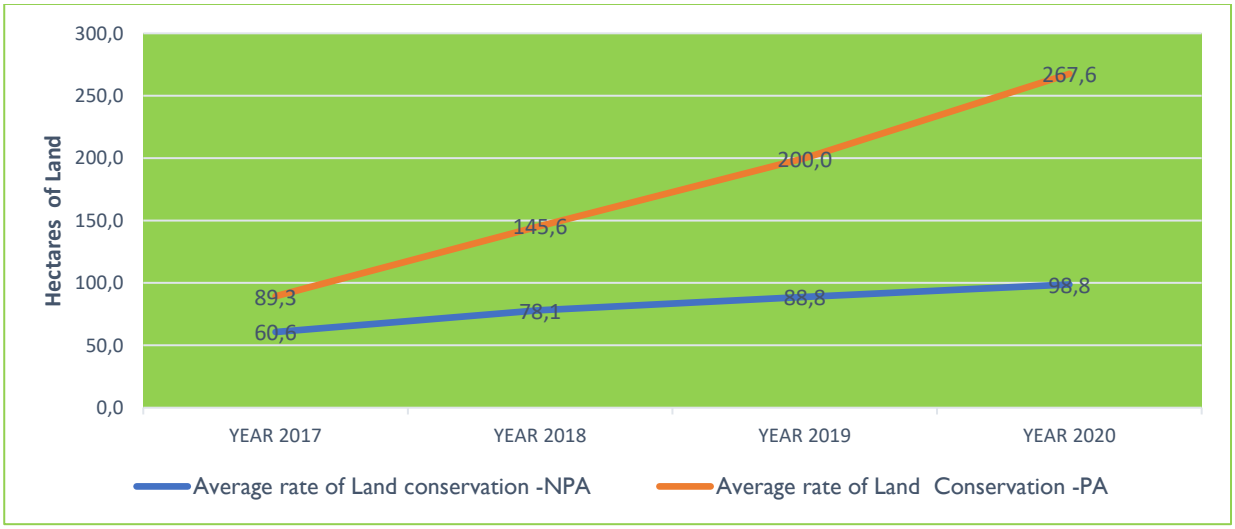
129. At least over 100 training of trainers took place, who in turn engaged members of associations in improving management of watersheds and sustainable use of wetlands. Despite the project having imparted skills for water and soil management including sustainable wetland use management, it did not present clear activities for watershed management at the community level according to some respondents, despite the project having engaged in very informative in-depth discussions on agriculture social support integration way early in 2017 and having comprehensively discussed watershed systems and water infrastructure management

130. The project did not design clear activities nor indicators to mainstream and monitor climate change adaptation and adaptations plans into the district development plans. This is in spite of the district and village level adaptation plans having been discussed extensively as well as possibilities of how FAO would strengthen and support the District Social Support Committees to address climate change resilience concerns. Where interest was stimulated, there was unfortunately no follow-up to ensure implementation. It was also noted that the districts did not have specific plans and budgets to address climate change and resilience action.

Finding 13. The project has positively influenced the trend of land conservation. Several interventions as reported by the farmers were centred at reclaiming degraded land, gully reclamation, soil and water conservation infrastructures, developing and maintaining woodlots, nursery management and natural forest regeneration. Comparative assessment of land where project intervention was and where it was not, shows a positive improvement in the project area.

131. A trend analysis to understand land conservation over four years (2017–2020) was undertaken in 13 areas of Neno district EPA. Five of these (Magareta, Chididi, Ligowe South, Ligowe North and Kambale) were within the project areas, and eight (Chawe, Chikalema, Dalioni, Dambe, Kundembo, Mandadzi, Neno Central and Nsambe) were outside project area.

Figure 4. Average land area (ha) under conservation in Neno district - a comparison of activity in the project area (PA) vs non-project area (NPA)



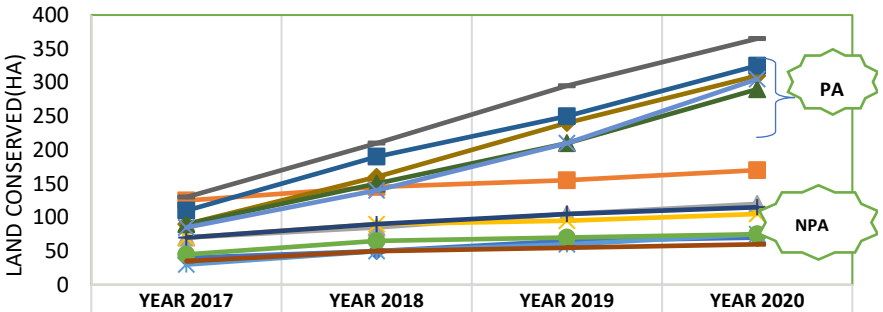
Source: Evaluation team.

132. This study results from Neno, a district where land conservation is critical due to massive cultivation on hillslopes, that on average, were more successful efforts to conserve land in the project areas compared to the non-project area (Figure 4). On average, land under conservation has increased more exponentially as compared to areas where there has been no sensitization on land conservation. In 2017, the average of 89.3 hectares (ha) conserved increased to 267.6 (ha) by 2020 in the project area. Compared to the non–project area, annual conservation of land was 60.6 ha in 2017 which increased to only 98.8 ha in the year 2020. In terms of rate of increment, in the project area the rate of annual increment is 38 ha per year while in the non-project area is 10 ha per year over the last four years.

'Neno is a drought prone area. The FMNR model was adopted and adapted by many farmers who were sensitized under this project. They learned how to manage trees without waiting for water. They are able to keep trees without getting rid of them. The trees have increased in number and this is a good practice for addressing climate change'

Trainer, Neno

Figure 5. Comparison of land (ha) conservation trends - project area (PA) vs non-project area (NPA) in Neno district



	YEAR 2017	YEAR 2018	YEAR 2019	YEAR 2020
NPS-CHAWE	40	50	65	70
NPS-CHIKALEMA	125	145	155	170
NPS-DALIONI	70	85	105	120
NPS-DAMBE	70	90	95	105
NPS-KUNDEMBO	30	50	60	75
NPS-MANDADZI	45	65	70	75
NPS-NENO CENTRAL	70	90	105	115
NPS-NSAMBE	35	50	55	60
PS-CHIDIDI	130	210	295	365
PS-KAMBALE	90	160	240	310
PS-Ligowe North-PA	110	190	250	325
PS-Ligowe South	90	150	210	290

Source: Evaluation team using data from the Neno District Agriculture Office.

133. For each of the five areas, there was a noticeable upward improvement in trend of land area in hectares (ha) under conservation over a four-year period. The improvement was comparatively slower in the non-project areas (Figure 5). Other factors remain constant, which is another indication of a positive effect of the project demonstrated under 'biodiversity, conservation and safeguarding'. This data was only availed by Neno district where farmers cultivate on steep slopes and land conversation is key.

Results 5 (R5). Institutional knowledge and advocacy for good governance on resilience to climate change improved.

Finding 14. This Action was designed to integrate climate change adaptation into policies and programmes at national and district level, and facilitate linkages and coherence within and among partners. Both the design and execution were given insufficient attention and therefore the evaluation team has little understanding of this component.

134. Lobbying and advocacy for policy-related changes and knowledge management of data on performance for evidence–based information are key mandates of FAO. The responses from various stakeholders seem to indicate that less than five (some mention only one) training and sensitization sessions were carried out. None of them mentioned any advocacy materials produced under this component (**R5**).

Result 6 (R6). Coordination and monitoring of actions on climate change adaptation and resilience programming streamlined.

Finding 15. Policy-related activities were carried out under this component which set a stage for inter-ministerial and interdepartmental collaboration and formation of the first Joint UN Resilience Platform. Details are already discussed under collaboration.

135. To facilitate a common platform for coordinated planning and programming, this project joined efforts with the ongoing activities of the TCP designed to enhance coherence between agriculture, social protection and resilience building interventions. A policy note was developed and discussed targeting harmonized convergence of social protection and agriculture support, which informed the review and reformulation of the Malawi National Social Support Programme 2. The project supported the formulation of the UBR details which have been discussed comprehensively under EQ 3, subsection 3.2.

3.4.2 Appropriateness of design towards outcomes

Finding 16. The project adopted a participatory approach by involving communities in their setting at the different grassroot levels. The communities were mobilized through the FFS FAO brand. The model is so far on record as a reliable approach for effective community mobilization, skilling and farmer learning. The experimental approach attracted community interest in experiential learning.

136. In the long-run, involvement of communities in hotspot mapping did strengthen their capacity and empowered them to understand their needs better, taking ownership of their self-development. Communities now have a comprehensive understanding of the effects of climate change and they can comparably identify which groups are more vulnerable and what actions can possibly be undertaken in mitigation of such vulnerability.

137. They adopted a cost-sharing approach improved ownership and this was one way of linking social and technical capacities. For example, in constructing water wells, the communities dug and excavated the wells while the project supplied hardware materials such as cement, bars, materials, meshed wire and labour for artisans who constructed the wells. Some implementers however had misgivings on this approach, mentioning that the design was erroneously a one-size-fits-all in all districts and yet working environments varied. In some districts more work was required, and where the communities could not handle the work, there was need for additional funding which the project had not considered as budgets were more or less equal across all districts.

138. Community specific experiential learning at FFS - a strategy for improving adaptive capacities - was embraced as it supported a process of identifying problems and allowing farmers to design solutions. They experimented learning, observed and validated the best results at their FFS group plots. Examples of practices tested included:

i. Pests and disease – after identifying problems, they comparatively applied biological, natural and chemical methods separately to identify the most cost-effective and efficient method of control.
ii. Persistent dry spells and droughts - groups compared the use of manure vs conservation agriculture, and use of early maturing varieties vs local resistant varieties which are slow growers.
iii. Water harvesting technologies – compared pit planting, checked dams and storm drainage.

iv. Nursery seedlings growth – compared performance with different types of seed varieties with and without fertilizer application and selection of trees which suit their own environment and season.

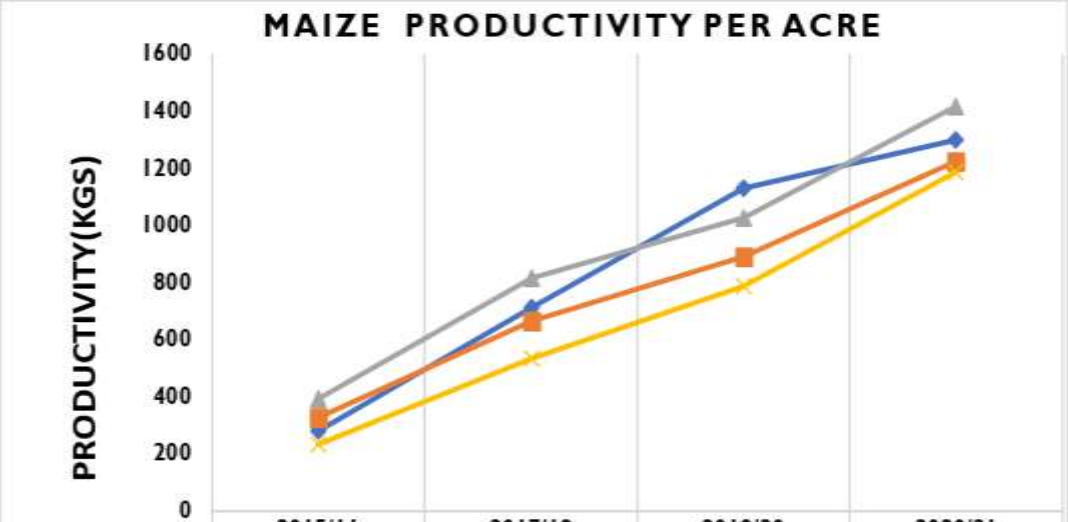
v. Growing maize – tested yields against line planting, seeding numbers and use of organic vs inorganic fertilizers.

139. Due to participatory experiential learning, farmers are currently able to identify climate change-related problems and attempt to find and experiment crop productive performance using what they consider to be the best solutions at their group or respective farms. The knowledge transferred and gained by farmers is being used to assess options and apply to different suitable scenarios to avoid and reduce effects due extreme climate hazards.

140. Working with ICRAF under the Fertilizer tree system–based technology, farmers were introduced to two tree spp – *Grisidea spp and Tephrozia spp,* which they planted and nurtured. They were later capacitated to assess performance including assessing which of the trees spp were most suitable for their environment underscoring the special conditions under which each one thrived better.

141. Figure 6 shows results from a farmer experimental test of growing maize under different conditions. The farmers compared Conventional vs CSA approach to maize growing varying spacing, ridging and seeds per station.

Figure 6. Results of a farmer experiential learning on maize productivity



	2015/16	2017/18	2019/20	2020/21
Blantyre	280	710	1130	1300
Neno	329	664	893	1225
Phalombe	392	817	1025	1417
Zomba	233	535	788	1188

Scenario 1: Conventional methods of 3 seeds per station on a 95 cm ridge spacing vs 1:1 planting
Scenario 2: Hybrid seeds vs uncertified seed.
Results: There was improved maize production using the CSA approach compared to conventional methods in all the districts
Source: Evaluation team using project data from GCC/MLW/067/EC.

142. The trend of production shown in Figure 5 conforms to a voice from one of the women farmers in Zomba district who said. "Ever since I got married in 2006 I have never harvested over 10 bags"

Finding 17. The project introduced a visibility and communication strategy, enlisting media and public collaborators to collectively support capacity of stakeholders to access and disseminate information on the effects of climate change and its mitigation. This transformative strategy strengthened networks and collaborative monitoring, learning and evaluation. It contributed towards effectiveness of the internal M&E mechanisms.

143. Transformational change is one of FAO's strategies of impact along the pathway. Beyond collaboration and buy–in strategies, country offices need to look at their internal mechanisms including those espoused in FAO's climate action. Arising from policy dialogues with partners, the project observed this need and took corrective mechanisms to strengthen both the M&E systems and communication.

144. The project designed and implemented a communication and visibility strategy to create awareness and improve ownership and understanding of climate change issues. The project equitably employed exhaustive channels including radios, televisions, print media (leaflets, brochures), social networks, lobbying and advocacy, and community dialogues to sensitize different categories of stakeholders to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

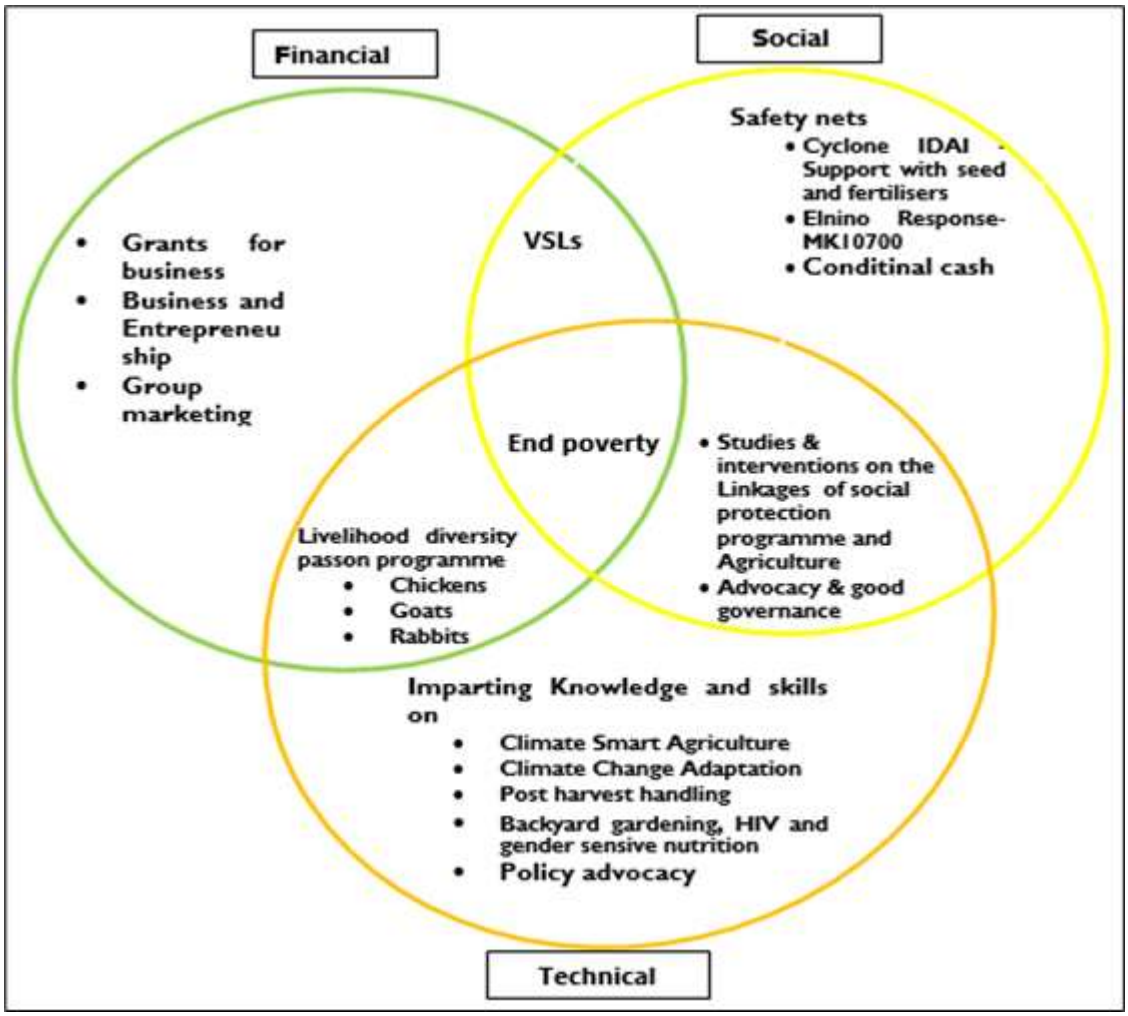
145. Media publicity activities strategically conscripted journalists from national and private broadcasting corporations and print media to share project messages on climate change adaptation within the country and the region. Sharing experiences, challenges and mitigation measures by FFS farmers on public media was a notable approach. It yielded positive results as it expanded the reach, created awareness and interest while strengthening experiential learning further as per project plans. Some of the farmers in Neno and Zomba districts attested to this as the positive turning point which helped them grasp concepts of climate change and how they could participate in mitigating effects in order to improve their resilience.

3.4.3 Linking social, technical and financial dimensions

Finding 18. The three aspects were linked and mutually reinforcing. The social dimension directed at group cohesion reinforced governance through conflict management, improved leadership and dignified safety nets such as common savings mechanisms, while technical capacity development imparted knowledge and skills on sustainable and CSA production practices, including post-harvest handling, bio-intensive backyard gardening, food safety, HIV and gender-sensitive nutrition education. On the other hand, the financial capacity development bolstered the integration of farming as a business, entrepreneurial skills and risk management to improve,

support and sustain income generation. Savings, investment and group marketing were the key drivers.

Figure 7. Social, technical and financial linkages



Source: Evaluation team.

146. The project design hinged on the innovative integrated community approach in which activities are linked through social capacities, technical and financial dimensions in a complimentary and mutual approach. Activities such as VSL and small stock livestock production played a dual role of doubling as a financial/safety net mechanism in case of shock, but also contributing strongly to the production circle (Figure 7, Venn diagram). The approach presents a strong example for diversification as a resilience strategy.

147. **Unintended benefits.** The project had assumed that the national implementers are within the communities and their staff are conversant with the FFS approaches. On the contrary, the findings indicate that many of them also needed to be trained before they could engage communities. Implementing partners have now benefitted from this capacity development since their staff can apply the FFS model and are being engaged by other programmes and projects to support various activities which require FFS groups as entry hubs. One implementing partner staff said:

> *'We as institution benefitted. We have also learned how to apply the FFS approach which we are now hired for as resource persons. It has capacitated us to train and write good reports.'*
>
> *Quote from an implementing partner staff*

3.5 EQ 5. What is the likelihood of FAO/GCCA project achieving long-term and sustainable results through the project?

Finding 19. The project has several elements which are likely to sustain benefits in the short- to long–term. First, it generated a pool of trainers and facilitators, who not only live and stay among communities, but also have sufficient knowledge of the FFS training approach. Second, it has established platforms for regular sharing among farmers, which are strong opportunities for sharing challenges, lessons learned and activities that require collective bargain. Third, it created mechanisms that empowered beneficiaries to undertake hotspot mapping and experiential learning which has set the stage for community monitoring, evaluation and learning.

148. The project developed a pool of over 1 000 facilitators (461 training of trainers and 685 outreach facilitators) who reinforced the existing traditional government extension workforce in training. Furthermore, the records indicated that collaborative training of facilitators in some districts was undertaken with the Afikepo and KULIMA projects. This capacity being resident within the community, raises the possibility of sustained level of facilitation and training of communities even after the project has ended.

Box 1. Case study on improved productivity

Mr. Namkumwa is married and a father of six. He is a member of Chididi FFS in Ligowe EPA, Neno district.
"Before the inception of the FAO/GCCA project, I was cultivating on a 3.5 acre land where I could harvest between 15 and 20 bags of maize prior to 2019 (when the FFS was not established). After being taught climate change adaptation farming practices and technologies, I doubted their effectiveness such that I replicated to these practices in 2019/2020 growing season on a 1.5 acre of the land. On the land, I did ridge alignment, applied manure, planted early maturing maize variety (Kanyani) using 1-1 method. I also applied manure which I sourced from the livestock (Chickens) I benefitted from the project. I weeded my field on time as we learned at the FFS. Now I have 58 bags (2 900 kgs) but this was less than 3 acres because I did not grow anything on the other part of the field.
I am now convinced and planting Kanyani. This is because, our area receives rains very early around December but by January we have dry spell. So if you are not careful by the time there is dry spell your maize crop is still at a tender stage and maybe affected by the dry spell. But for Kanyani, by the time we have dry spell, the maize is almost matured such that come February when people have started complaining about hunger, at least you are on the safer side. So this variety is very good for me because it matures early and it gives very big cobs. I sold part of last year's yield (2 900 kg) and the money was used to buy farm inputs such as fertilizer, and the other money was used to boost my grocery shop."

149. Coincidentally, four of the active platform members moved from the UN agencies they were representing to other workplaces. This created a setback to the platform activities which compromised the immediate continuation. A wider platform of stakeholders engaged in social protection was formed after the smaller platform disbanded. It is hoped that through the remaining members who were sensitized, the effects of climate change adaptation and resilience building agenda will remain a key item at the fore on the platform agenda.

150. Community members' participation in hotspot mapping and mitigation actions of degraded areas capacitated them to monitor and self-assess their risks and vulnerability. They are now in a position to recognize advance warning signs and even plan for modest preventative and corrective measures. In addition, a cost-sharing approach in which community ownership and action was tested and proven plausible when they participated in excavation and construction of water facilities. The model presumes that communities will now readily contribute to care and maintenance of facilities such as those they had supported with their own energies.

151. 'Livestock-pass-on' is a good scheme with positive elements that can sustain benefits beyond project life under the livestock project component. However, several considerations are paramount for it to remain sustainable and these need to have been embraced at the design stage. Key is the governance strength of group scheme, in particular adequate guidelines including sanctions for those who break the pass–on chain. This in turn was dependent on whether all the subsequent potential beneficiaries who are presumed to be vulnerable have sufficient knowledge and resources to meet subsequent veterinary costs and costs of feeding and care management of the animals along the entire value chain.

152. The continued change in weather and climate patterns is in itself a motivator for people to continue using the knowledge and experience they have amassed from this project. The group and individuals that have established the business of growing seedlings will continue offering outgrower planting material to the others which indirectly sustains benefits achieved. While the others engaged in apiculture enterprises, integrating honey production and afforestation also convey lifelong contribution to preservation of forest reserves.

153. The use of integrated approaches in FFSs is promising long-term sustainability as it has brought cohesion within the groups. The financial interventions, particularly the VSLs and the grants keep the groups together as members have to meet regularly to save and discuss imminent opportunities as they are updated on their savings. Continued interest to buy shares from the VSLs to sustain project investments has been elicited. Experiential learning has stimulated investment in groups as farmers have not hesitated to invest small finances in experiments to secure benefits for the future. These and other group actions are strong elements of group sustainability that will remain after the project has ended.

154. The ongoing UBR process and the linkages initiated through the joint UN resilience programme are unoptimized opportunities for sustaining upstream project benefits.

4. Lessons learned

155. The project has generated some lessons to improve future actions and programming of similar projects. These include good practices, innovative approaches and challenges which may need improvement. They are both operational and administrative in nature.

Lesson 1. Strategic adaptive management is needed when project intents do not go according to plan. The project had multiple challenges – human resource constraints, unforeseen extreme weather disasters and shocks, COVID-19 lockdowns and others not so well known reasons that caused slow down and/or prevented activity implementation. The project embraced strategic activities such as baseline survey, hotspot mapping of the environmentally vulnerable areas, and introducing a communication and visibility strategy in an effort to solve some of the constraints.

156. Whereas the actions elicited relevant information to inform the context, in our view, they were not sufficiently coherent to consolidate a quick and innovative holistic action to inform adaptive management. Such an action would have involved a programmatic theory of change review to make the right adjustments to address time and implementation sequence. A one–year no-cost extension has been one of the more effective solutions adopted.

Lesson 2. To strengthen community resilience to the effects of climate change, a simultaneous and holistic approach that addresses multiple vulnerabilities is paramount for success. This project applied the CdR, an already known approach in which productive, financial and social capacities are addressed at household and group level to attain maximum gain. Therefore, knowledge and skills to improve climate–sensitive production alone would not have been sufficient to elicit the desired change if communities had neither a source of income to supplement technology adoption nor strong social constructions to secure interest, trust and ownership to promote group cohesion.

157. In this project, farmers implemented activities that required additional financial support to buttress effective production. These included purchasing of drought resistant seeds, agro–inputs such as fertilizers, maintenance of solar water pumps for irrigation or growing and nurturing of seedlings. There was a need to entrench robust group governance and social cohesion for resilience to take root all of which were envisaged under the CdR Approach in the project design.

Lesson 3. Financial interventions, such as VSLs and small grants have multiple benefits to the project. The VSL as an example was not only a source of income, but a foundation for group cohesion and a safety net to the group and members in times of shock.

158. Since group members are obliged to meet regularly to save and update themselves on their savings and in so doing, they create a platform for peer to peer information and learning exchange and also share information about any other ongoing activities and imminent opportunities.

Lesson 4. If well managed, small grants and credit facilities from VSLs extended to communities are a sure source of stimulus to diversified livelihood options in one way or another, especially for women. Even when the money was intended for farming as a business as was the case in this project, members will use it to meet an array of needs ranging from domestic utilities and meeting social needs such as school fees. The well–to-do or elite household may use it for the intended purpose, however the majority look to it as a safety net.

159. The end result is that it empowers communities and the poor households towards resilience, while to the vulnerable it is a safety net, temporary soft landing to cushion suffering from shocks and hazards. In all cases, the end justifies the means and pathway was taken towards resilience.

Lesson 5. Strategic involvement of community members, district officials and national implementing partners ensures wide spread learning, maximizes resource use, and enhances ownership and attitudinal change towards adoption for a wider impact. Participation is a key driver for learning and securing ownership to sustain benefits for current and future programmes.

160. The evaluation team noticed that to date, members who participated in hotspot mapping are still using their knowledge to support peer to peer learning while others have been contracted by districts to support training whenever called upon. Those who successfully participated in experiential learning are excited about the findings and vow to continue applying the knowledge and consider new field experiments. The overall knowledge and interest in climate change adaptation and mitigation has been expanded where there was participatory learning.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Alignment to priorities and relevance. The intervention was well aligned to national, regional and global priorities addressing community resilience to the effects of climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, and Neno and Phalombe districts of Malawi. It was firmly grounded in FAO guiding principles on Climate Change Action and the national strategic Actions and plans for climate change. Given the reported increasing climate change variability in Malawi, the project was relevant in addressing community–resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-induced shocks and related effects.

161. In Malawi, climate change has adversely impacted on food security, water availability, and on the sustainable livelihood of the communities, especially rural communities predominantly engaged in agriculture. Project activities were clearly responsive to the calls by the Government of Malawi through the National Climate Change Investment Plan to all stakeholders at all levels to support the management of adverse effects of climate change.

162. Given the increasing climate change variability for communities in Malawi affected by hazards such as rains, floods, winds, prolonged dry spells, seasonal droughts and shifts in precipitation patterns, the project was relevant in supporting disaster risk reduction by improving community adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change vulnerability.

163. The project actions to improve adaptation and transformational capacity of communities supported by government staff, NGOs and service providers, were relevant environmentally, socially and economically. Institutions, systems and men and women in groups and at household level, benefitted from infrastructural and structural changes, skills development, knowledge and information management on how to mitigate effects of climate change by building absorptive and adaptive capacity for resilience.

164. Guiding principles underscored in the FAO Climate Change Strategy (2017), and expectations of transitioning food and agriculture systems and livelihoods to become more resilient to the effects of climate change, were evident in the project design. Similarly, the project was aligned to global guiding principles stipulated in the Paris Agreement, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and the Agenda 2063.

Conclusion 2. Design, implementation and management. Overall, the project design was very good and had a potential to deliver the intended results timely. However, due to several challenges including human resource gaps, unanticipated climate hazards and shocks such as Cyclone Idai, El Niño, prolonged seasonal droughts and COVID-19 lockdowns, this was not possible. These cumulatively affected planning, timing and sequence of project activities. Project management, however, instituted strategic management actions that enabled completion and achievement of most of the expected results in accordance with the design. The project also received a one year no-cost extension.

165. The project did not fully take off as scheduled in the first year of implementation, owing to delayed finalization of a comprehensive climate change-integrated FFS curriculum. It later faced a human resource gap in implementing community outreach activities due to short contracts and delayed renewal of letters of agreement for national implementing partners. The project still lost time, in spite of a good inbuilt back-up design plan to use services of government district extension officials as part of the training workforce.

166. During implementation, unanticipated climate hazards such as Cyclone Idai, El Niño, and prolonged seasonal droughts aggravated the situation. As the project struggled to repurpose and realign the needs of communities that had been affected by shocks, COVID-19 lockdowns further challenged implementation, collectively and cumulatively affecting the planning, timing and sequence of project activities.

167. The project engaged government extension workers as part of the training workforce as back up for the human resource gap. In doing so, a pool of trained workforce was established to support sensitization, training and facilitation of project activities at district level. Management reviewed and refined the work plans rescheduling a number of activities to the back years of the project. Consequently, implementation congestion was created and the project was granted a one year no-cost extension. While this released some pressure, some activities, in particular at the end of the agriculture value chain systems such as marketing, were not completed as expected.

168. A revised M&E plan informed by data from the project baseline study and information from a geo-spatial mapping of environmentally degraded hotspot locations, together with a communication and visibility strategy, additionally assisted the project to keep on track.

Conclusion 3. Synergy, complementarity and collaboration. The project initiated relevant and strong institutional collaborations to address vulnerabilities and resilience to the effects of climate change.

169. It instituted a Joint UN Resilience Platform through which members advanced deliberations on approaches to galvanize coordinated support for national climate action for maximum gain. Three key national programmes namely (the National Climate Change Investment Plan, Malawi National Social Support Programme 2 and the UBR) specifically benefitted from dialogues on this platform.

170. Working in collaboration with officials from the districts, extension planning areas, and staff from ICRAF and implementing partners, has established a pool of trained facilitators who have worked jointly with other projects such as KULIMA and Enhancing Community Resilience Programme trained facilitators and training of trainers to enhance national capacity for climate-smart and climate–resilient agriculture production practices. They are available within the communities and are being engaged by different projects. The project, however, did establish strong links with other critical stakeholders such as the Department of Extension Services and Department of Forestry.

171. The project also supported the National Agriculture Cluster for the Cyclone Idai crisis and recovery response. The interagency coordination and synergy was formed between the Government of Malawi, UN agencies including FAO, WFP and UNICEF, and with other development partners (European Union, DFID and U.S. OFDA) and several national NGOs. The project contributed funds to the National Agriculture Cluster towards catering for the most affected resource poor and smallholder farmers rendered most vulnerable by the shocks. The funds were used to purchase food and agriculture inputs and supplies, and equipment and materials for irrigation technology.

172. The project strengthened FFS groups using the CdR resilience building tool to enhance mutually reinforcing capacities for social, technical and financial benefits. The integrated approach successfully harnessed positive energies which contributed to improving group cohesion, governance, and to a limited extent collective bargains at group marketing.

Conclusion 4. Gender, equity, decent labour and human rights. The intervention demonstrated satisfactory gender inclusive participation of the different categories of beneficiaries. The project introduced agro-based gender-responsive climate-smart practices and livelihood options for men and women; well-to-do and vulnerable members of the FFS to participate and benefit from project activities. A positive effort was made to leave no one behind. Other aspects such as occupational safety and health,

use of labour intensive CSA practices, and human right concerns for cash-for-work labour needed more attention.

173. Overall, selection of participants was gender sensitive with evidence of a good mix of both the better-to-do and poor smallholder farmers from different FFS groups. The project generated gender transformative climate change action and mitigation plans, as well as gender–responsive adaptive and absorptive capacities at village, EPA and district levels. Both men and women are more aware of the effects of climate change, how they render men and women differently vulnerable, and the possible gender–sensitive, climate-smart approaches to enhance resilience.

174. Although the trainers observed that women were very eager to learn and had gained much knowledge and skills through experiential learning and experimentation, the extent to which this was achieved was not determined, and neither was the extent to which gender inclusivity was embraced, since the project did not always gather gender–disaggregated data. The exception was data from the Cyclone Idai crisis and recovery response which clearly indicated that 55 percent of beneficiaries were women. However, since women represent 70 percent of the agriculture labour force, and considering that the project was mainly agricultural-based, circumstantial extrapolation (anecdotes) shows that a sizeable proportion (estimated to be over 50 percent) of beneficiaries were women.

175. The project did not address the following concerns: failing to act on the fact that vulnerable persons most affected by Cyclone Idai were unable to focus on long-term and transformational resilient capacities given that their immediate needs were food and shelter; the project failed to comprehensively discuss occupational safety and health concerns and use of labour intensive CSA practices; use of chemicals (fertilizer) to improve production, disregarding the possible negative effects; child labour use in agriculture; and human rights concerns for communities engaged in cash-for-work labour. Likewise, there was limited discussion on youth/gender targeted employment and/or (lack of) decent wages for these categories.

Conclusion 5. Effectiveness. The project met its objectives generating more tangible results in the lower stream compared to the upper stream. Communities were found to be more aware of the effects of climate change and had attained skills to build resilience to counter the negative effects of climate vulnerability. Evidently, they had developed both adoptive and absorptive capacities to respond appropriately to shocks through an integrated, participatory and experiential learning approach.

176. The communities learned the strategies and skills for natural resource management and biodiversity conservation, farming as business and risk sensitive investment as an income generation strategy, resilience building through self-vulnerability assessment, identifying environmentally degraded hotspots, experimenting and instituting sustainable and lasting climate sensitive measures, and using socially cohesive structures and safety nets to sustain their livelihood.

177. The knowledge and skills imparted were translated into visible actions towards improved resilience, including deliberate actions to assess their vulnerability, experimental actions and innovate strategies to cope with shocks and stress, as well as long term attitudinal and behavioural change to share and reduce risks.

178. Among a wide array of skills, the communities learned to: manage degraded and deforested areas through unlimited tree growing and agro–forestry activities around homesteads and river banks; practice climate-smart agriculture practices such as integrating forest regeneration with apiculture; grow drought resistant and early maturing crop varieties, including vegetables and fruit trees to supplement food, nutrition and income security, manage soil degradation and

practice soil land conservation and soil conservation management, and apply water harvesting and crop irrigation technologies as means on biodiversity, conservation and safeguarding the environment against current and future climate shocks and effects.

179. The transformational process was slowly taking shape, requiring systematic approaches in sensitization and information dissemination to change attitudes from fixed 'receive handout' expectations to 'cost-shared' production. Farmers' willingness to purchase inputs for FFS experiments when delivery of inputs was delayed was a positive testimony to the change.

Conclusion 6. Sustainability. The project demonstrated several elements that are likely to sustain the benefits, especially at the lower stream compared to the upper stream. Strategically, the elements evolve around a climate-sensitive farmer field school curriculum, a pool of skilled trainers, income generating activities, community behavioural change towards adopting climate–smart practices and engaging in diversified livelihood options.

180. Activities with a cost-sharing element such as improving water facilities are associated with a monetary or physical benefit such as planting and/or sale of tree seedlings or/or pass-on animal scheme are likely to strengthen ownership and sustain benefits longer.

181. Farmer-generated results from experiential and experimental learning attracted increased interest and greater adoption. The benefits are likely to contribute to improving food and nutrition security as learning was focused on testing the effects and identifying more sustainable solutions towards becoming more climate-resilient. Stronger adoption is expected where a modest income generation was involved, and this is likely to encourage continued learning and experimenting.

182. The introduction of CBFs to support facilitation and training, provided a strong back up to extension delivery, relieving the often high overload onto government staff. Given that the CBFs work and stay in the communities, the learning cycle of the FFS curriculum is likely to be well timed, to ensure completion of activities in the future.

183. The knowledge transferred to farmers and frontline staff on the Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture (PICSA) has proven to be relevant as for how farmers are responding to projected weather forecasted. This has helped farmers in decision-making when increased adaptation and flexibility for livelihood options are needed, especially those practicing crop and livestock agriculture.

5.2 Recommendations

184. The following recommendations are drawn from the findings, lessons learned and conclusions.

Recommendation 1. FAO needs to improve its recruitment and engagement procedures to accommodate timely and flexible handling of both conventional and non-conventional engagements. The processes need to be less bureaucratic and context specific to secure efficient and smooth project execution even amidst anticipated situational challenges.

185. Even though the evaluation team was not given clean information on why engagement or renewal of letters of agreement of the national implementing partners were delayed, the assumption is that it was either a management problem or insufficient flexibility in the FAO financing mechanisms. In order to avoid this, FAO should lengthen the duration of letters of agreement of implementing partners beyond one year in a three to five-year project. The alternative is for project management to plan recruitment and discuss contractual obligations for engagement of

all required personnel at the onset of the project in order to beat any slow and bureaucratic processes.

186. FAO needs to recognize and separate conventional contractual engagements from non-conventional ones with partners such as government officials. The engagement of district officials as trainers was an FAO-public sector partnership which required special arrangements following context–specific realities. It must be embraced with a degree of negotiation and flexibility which is different from contractual obligations with a private consultant. The misgivings by district officials about approaches to logistical support and further delays in training could have been and should be avoided in the future. FAO should continue investing in these partnerships with district officials.

187. When faced with challenges, the project management needs to adopt an open information sharing approach with relevant stakeholders. In this project, implementing partners and beneficiaries were not made aware of the challenges at hand, and especially the implementing partners were unable to make strategic decisions with regard to their engagement.

Recommendation 2. The project has contributed significantly to enhancing resilience of vulnerable communities. FAO should mobilize resources to support a follow-up phase of the GCC/MLW/067 initiative to continue strengthening community resilience to the effects of climate change in vulnerable communities. The follow-up phase should give opportunity to complete any pending activities while simultaneously expanding to at least five other climate-hazard vulnerable districts. Thereafter, FAO should handover implementation to the relevant Ministry to roll out the programme fully to other vulnerable communities.

188. In the second phase, the project, would first and foremost complete any pending activities including the promotion of market-oriented production, developing group marketing skills followed by harnessing productive alliance approaches between the farmer groups and offtakers in the four project districts.

Recommendation 3. FAO should integrate best practices and key lessons learned from the outgoing project into a follow-up project phase. Key practices are: continued application of the CdR approaches, allow sufficient time for farmer field school learning cycles, offer short grants early in the project to allow maximum use, continue with and use geo-spot references to inform the project of the most degraded areas, and sustain group cohesion by continuing with village saving and livestock pass-on schemes as both safety nets and support for alternative livelihood options.

189. Among other lessons, the project should ensure that: FFS learning cycles of the different value chain farming enterprises are allocated sufficient time for activities from production to marketing; the CdR approach which integrates the three dimensions – *technical, social and finance enhancing capacities* – is well balanced since they mutually re-enforce each other.

190. Short-term financial grants should be offered early in the project to allow for well-timed planning for their use, especially within the seasonal agriculture activity cycles given that many small businesses are farming related.

191. Phase 2 of the project would also support the completion of geo-spot reference mapping of severely degraded spots to inform mitigation actions in the newly selected project districts. The project should also strengthen VSL and pass-on livestock schemes to sustain group cohesion and safety net options for the poor smallholder householders.

Recommendation 4. In working with climate change adaptation and mitigation with farmer field school groups, FAO should pay more attention to equity, vulnerability and gender responsive selection of beneficiaries, youth targeted engagement and decent wages for vulnerable persons in applying climate-smart agriculture practices. For equitable benefit, FAO support with government extension workers should ensure that youth and vulnerable categories are clearly disaggregated for a better informed needs analysis. Other issues that may require trade–offs such as labour intensity, child labour use, occupational and security hazards, youth employment or rights issues, should be given proper attention.

192. This project revealed that oftentimes the priorities of the majority in a group are likely to exclude the voice of minorities. Therefore, for equitable benefit from the project, FAO with government extension workers should always ensure that a careful analysis of the needs of the most vulnerable and youth has been carried out and their interests considered to ensure that no one is left behind.

193. For example, small financial grants should be extended on a competitive basis to individuals and groups. For individuals, *viability of the business plans* could be one of the key criteria for qualification, while for groups, *evidence of inclusion/participation of the most vulnerable group members* should be one of the key criteria for priority consideration.

194. For climate-smart agriculture practices, FAO project managers should present evidence of having considered and discussed trade–offs with concerned stakeholders, for example, highly intensified CSA practices, using fertilizers, employing youth and child assisted labour in agriculture, or rights concerns in food for work as a trade-off for improved production or increased income.

Recommendation 5. FAO, together with the United Nations and other development partners, should reinvigorate the Joint UN Resilience Platform that had been initiated. This Platform will be a policy hub to strengthen climate change and resilience coordination and collaboration – planning for resource maximization of these areas in the country. FAO should effectively take the lead, by inviting policy representation from other bilateral and multilateral partners to jointly work at strengthening policy links vertically and horizontally.

195. The Platform should also include representation from the relevant key Ministries since this outgoing project demonstrated that upstream actions were weak. The Platform should be converted into a policy platform that has high powered representation and with capacity to handle joint policy issues linked to climate change and resilience.

196. The country has several programmes supporting climate change and resilience which are not working together. Although they have similar objectives (some even have similar names) the collaboration is not solid enough as each programme claims to be working in different districts. The policy platform should review its original intentions and set stronger and clearly measurable actions for building all three dimensions (absorptive, adaptive and transformational), which are essential for capacity building for resilience.

Recommendation 6. To effectively sustain farmer interest and participation in climate change adaptation and resilience building, the future FAO GCCA programmes should take advantage of the following elements that may help sustain the previous benefits: engage existing trained facilitators for continued sensitization and training; embrace research–informed decisions; integrate on and off-farm experimental learning as well as a cost-sharing financial stimulus package to encourage improved ownership.

197. The practices include clear activities for collaboration and synergy with similar ongoing climate change adaptation projects, and how the products from the outgoing project can be utilized. In this case, engaging the trained facilitators, using information on geo-mapped hotspot locations to inform mitigation actions, inclusion of a well-crafted, research-linked on- and off-farm

experiential learning activities, and a modest cost–sharing package with a reasonable financial stimulus package, will collectively contribute to a successful phase 2 of the project and inform programming of similar projects.

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Appendix 1. People interviewed

Last Name	First Name	Institution	Position
Ali	Isaac	Zomba-DAO	Chief Agriculture, Environmental and Natural resources (CAENR)
Ali	David	Phalombe DAO	CAENR
Balasilo	Mathews	Lisungwi EPA	Community-Based Facilitator (CBF)
Bauleni	Elson	Blantyre Lirangwe FFS	Vice-Chairperson
Before	Joseph	Phalombe-DAO	Agribusiness Officer -DFP
Bester	Elube	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Chagoma	Estery	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Chibambo	Barbara	National Authorising Office Support Unit	Manager – Sector Agriculture and Food Security
Chikapa	Catherine	Phalombe-Tamani EPA	CBF
Chilenje	Sungani	Neno DAO	District Irrigation Officer-DFP
Chilonga	Alfred	Lisungwi EPA	Agriculture Extension Development Officer (AEDO)
Chilungwe	Ngano	Neno DAO	Water Development Officer
Chimangasasa	Godfrey	Kunthembwe EPA	AEDO
Ching'amba	C.	Phalombe-DAO	VO
Chipaka	Faduweki	Zomba Kachere FFS	Secretary
Chipeto	Ralph	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Chipyoza	Gilbert	Neno EPA	AEDO
Chirombo	Elida	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Chisale	Edwin	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Chisanu	Mary	Neno Nyayiyaye FFS	Chairperson
Chisesele	Norah	Kunthembwe EPA	SCDA
Chitunga	Felix	Phalombe-Tamani EPA	CBF
Chiwona	Vexer	Neno EPA	AEDO
Dyson	Gladys	Blantyre - Toyamike FFS	Secretary
Dzaoneni	Chilebo	Zomba-Ngwelero EPA	AEDO
Dzimbiri	Rodrick	Blantyre-DAO	Agribusiness Officer-DFP
Dzumani	Masautso	Neno EPA	Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator (AEDC)
Eliza	Rafael	Blantyre Nkonkola FFS	Vice-Secretary
Eluby	Joseph	Neno Dzawone FFS	Secretary
Esime	Lajabu	Blantyre Nikhalatso FFS	Chairlady
Felistas	Mtenga	Lisungwi EPA	AEDO
Fombe	Mischeck	FAO – Co Malawi	Senior M&E Officer
Fulatila	Henderson	Evangelical Association of Malawi	Monitoring and Evaluation
Gomonda	Steven	Zomba-Ngwelero EPA	AEDO
Idi	Aufi	Kunthembwe EPA	AVO
Indaba	Qoma	Lirangwe EPA	AEDO
Iron	Chimwemwe	Phalombe-Mpinda EPA	CBF
Jackson	James	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
James	Mary	Phalombe-Tamani EPA	CBF
James Dande	Getrude	Phalombe Mwayiulipo FFS	Chairperson
Jenala	Pilirani	Zomba-Chingale EPA	AEDO

Last Name	First Name	Institution	Position
Jere	Zwide	Total Land Care	Executive Director
Josia	Mclean	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Jumbe	Ernest	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Kabangwe	Owen	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Kachisa	Ted	Phalombe-Mpinda EPA	AEDC
Kachuru	Mafuno	Zomba-Ngwelero EPA	AEDO
Kalua	Precious	Lirangwe EPA	AEDO
Kamanja	Lines	Neno EPA	CBF
Kamanja	Joseph	Phalombe Talandira FFS	Treasurer
Kambawua	Gertrude	DAES -MoAIWD	Director - LRCD
Kandodo	Ester	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Kaonda	Alick	Evangelical Lutheran Development Services (ELDS)	Programme manager
Kaponda	Henderson	Kunthembwe EPA	AVO
Kaponya	Innocent	FAO – Co Malawi	Programme officer-M&E
Katema	Chris	ICRAF /World Agroforestry	Agroforestry Scaling Up Officer
Khoswe	Josephy	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Kika	Charity	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Kirichu	Samuel	FAO – Co Malawi	Senior Programme Officer M&E
Koloko	Graciano	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Kumbuyo	Macson	Lirangwe EPA	AVO
Kumpakisa	Felia	Neno Khalanawo FFS	CBF
Kumwenda	Doreen	FAO-CO Malawi	Policy Officer (Former)
Kumwenda	Chesterman	FAO-CO Malawi	Project Coordinator-Prosper
Kweke	Sailes	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Lameck	Beatrice	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Lemison	James	Zomba Tikondane FFS	Chairperson
Lipato	Thriza	Kunthembwe EPA	AEDO
Lipenga	Agness	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Liyada	Alloysms	Zomba-Ngwelero EPA	AEDC
Lolence	Semu	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Luis Fernando	Amaya Ortiz	FAO – CO Malawi	Programme Officer and Head of Coordinating Unit
Madinga	Christina	Zomba-DAO	Extension methodology officer-EMO
Magalasi	Mike	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Magalasi	Mike	Blantyre Tithnandizane FFS	Chairperson
Magola	Samson	Zomba Makaikai FFS	Chairperson
Majawa	Vincent	Lirangwe EPA	AVO
Makawa	Judith	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Makoka	Lucia	Lirangwe EPA	AEDO
Makungwa	Prescort	Zomba-Ngwelero EPA	AEDO
Makupara	Laison	Phalombe Tilimbike FFS	Chairperson
Maloya	Bosco	Phalombe-Mpinda EPA	CBF
Mambo	Mathews	Zomba-DAO	Nutrition officer-DFP

Last Name	First Name	Institution	Position
Manyozi	Catherine	Neno Mpakasa FFS	Chairperson
Mapira	Joseph	Blantyre Tikondane FFS	Chairperson
Masema	Felix	Phalombe-Tamani EPA	CBF
Maxwell	Phiri	Lisungwi EPA	AEDO
Mayikolo	Grace	Lisungwi EPA	CBF
Mbulukwa	Mphatso	Blantyre-DAO	Director
Memory	Nicolas	Lisungwi EPA	CBF
Mhango	Wezzi	Neno EPA	Veterinary Officer (VO)
Mhone	Zalelapi	Lisungwi EPA	AEDO
Misoya	Mary	Lirangwe EPA	CBF
Mkwanda	Elliot	ZombaChivumbe FFS	Treasurer
Mlowoka	Bryer	Evangelical Association of Malawi	Programme manager
Mkwapata	Noel	Neno DAO	Agriculture Extension and Methodology Officer
Moffat	Mercy	Neno EPA	CBF
Moses	Grivene	Lisungwi EPA	CBF
Moses	Elias	Zomba-Ngwelero EPA	AEDO
Mphande	Linda	Blantyre-DAO	CAENR
Mphoka	Charles	Phalombe-Tamani EPA	AEDC
Mphoya	Penson	Neno EPA	CBF
Mpwina	Charles	Zomba Titamike FFS	Secretary
Msisi	Patrick	Phalombe-Mpinda EPA	AEDO
Msowoya	Doreen	Lirangwe EPA	AEDO
Msusa	Bessie	Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MoFEPD)	Chief Economists – Dept of Economic Planning and Development
Mtwala	Ken	Neno EPA	CBF
Mugo	Margaret	FAO – Co Malawi	GIS Expert
Mwachande	Manyolo	Phalombe-Mpinda EPA	CBF
Mwamadi	A.	Phalombe-DAO	District Trade officer
Mwanakhu	Friday	Phalombe-DAO	Principal Agriculture Officer
Mzungu	Maxwell	Lisungwi EPA	CBF
Namgoneka	Simon	Phalombe Tipindule FFS	Vice Secretary
Nathale	Yohane	Phalombe Tadala FFS	Vice Chairperson
Nazombe	Alfred	Lirangwe EPA	AEDO
Ndala	Yusita	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Ng'oma	Spencer	Total Land Care	Project Manager
Njoloma	Joyce	ICRAF /World Agroforestry	Associate Scientist
Nkhoma	Jelome	Ministry of Agriculture. Irrigation and Water Departments (MoAIWD)	Director, Department of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES)
Nkhoma	Keegan	Kunthembwe EPA	AEDO
Nkhoma Makasu	Willy	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Nyala	Chrispin	Zomba-Chingale EPA	AVO

Last Name	First Name	Institution	Position
Nyoka	Betserai	ICRAF /World Agroforestry	Director ICRAF
Okoth	James	FAO- CO Malawi	Senior Project Officer & Ag FAOR
Pakundikan	Micheal	Lirangwe EPA	AEDO
Phameya	Chiyanjano	Phalombe-Mpinda EPA	CBF
Pungulani	Lawrence	MoAIWD - Department of Agricultural Extension Services-	Project Coordinator-DARS
Reuben	Raphael	Zomba-Ngwelero EPA	AEDO
Robert	Kondwani	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Sambuka	Vincent	Neno DAO	Land Resources and Conservation Officer
Samuel	Manuel	Neno Chididi FFS	Chairperson
Sanudi	Loney	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Sayenda	Ethel	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Sidik	Aubrey	FAO – Co Malawi	Programme Officer-Planning, Programming and Partnership
Simbi	Bonwell	Zomba-Chingale EPA	AEDO
Simbota	Simbota	Blantyre - Kachiye FFS	Chairperson
Somanje	Dereck	Neno EPA	CBF
Stafello		Neno - Mulonde FFS	Vice Secretary
Stonard	Innocent	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Supuni	Goodson	Phalombe-Mpinda EPA	CBF
Tandaunde	Maclean	Lisungwi EPA	AEDC
Tchaka	Dick	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Thindwa	Mildred	Kunthembwe EPA	AEDO
Thom	George	Blantyre Mlambe FFS	Chairperson
Walusa	Alfred	Kunthembwe EPA	CBF
Willy	Fred	Blantyre Tadala FFS	Facilitator
Wiski	Rjab	Zomba-Chingale EPA	CBF
Yesaya	Samu	Neno Nsangu FFS	Secretary
Zambezi	Diana	Neno -District Agriculture Office (DAO) –	Agriculture Officer
Zaniku	Olive	Kunthembwe EPA	AEDO
Zidana	Mable	Phalombe-Tamani EPA	CBF

Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

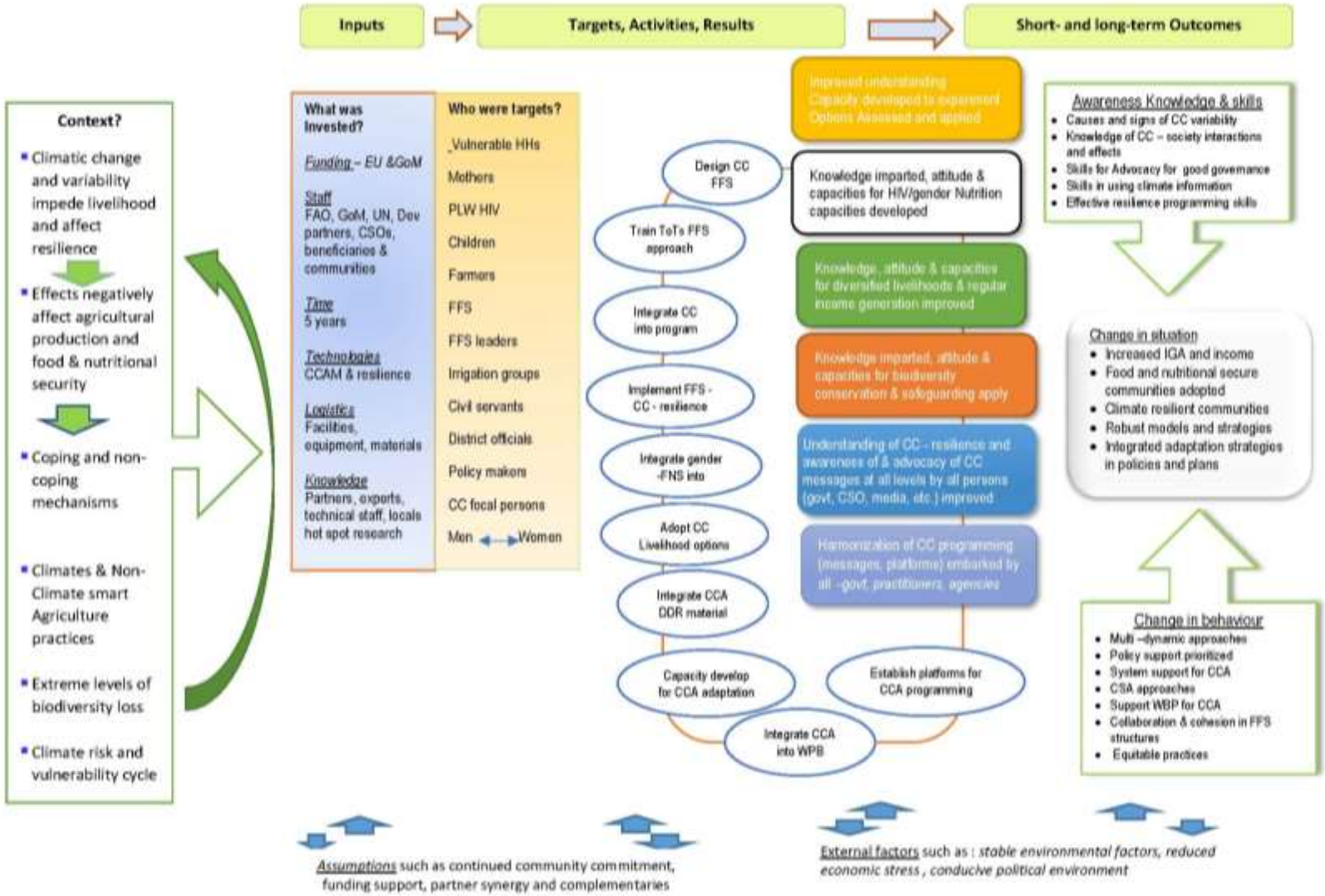
Evaluative questions	Sub questions	Judgement criteria	Data collection methods and source of verification
EQ 1. To what extent was the intervention aligned (or has it adjusted over time) to FAO and national policies and strategies, and global goals of climate change adaptation (CCA), and the needs of the vulnerable communities/most vulnerable within those communities?	**EQ 1.1.** Was the broader goal consistent with the Paris Agreements, and SDG 13? **EQ 1.2.** To what extent are objectives and results, both intended and unintended, consistent with FAO climate change (CC) agenda? To what extent are they aligned to the national and local priorities? **EQ 1.3.** How and to what extent was the project aligned and coherent with CCA mechanisms and the national resilience programmes at country level? **EQ 1.4.** Are the results (both intended and unintended) consistent with national CC development programmes /plans and adaptation strategy? **EQ 1.5.** Were the needs of women, men, youth, disabled and other most vulnerable persons embedded in the project design addressed in the project? **EQ 1.6.** To what extent was the alignment responsive to accommodate social roles and their productive capacities?	● Level of integration and articulation of global CC targets to national level planning ● Functionality of common platforms set up to address CC agenda ● CC concerns and status informed by national risk diagnosis ● No. of national programmes such as NAPS, CEWs, DDPs, reviewed or operationalized to reflect climate change adaptation and mitigation and resilience ● Examples of outcomes from actions and outputs on institutional coherence and linkages in support of resilience at different levels among partners ● Level of vulnerable persons integration at design stage ● Evidence of 'leave no one behind' principle	<u>Data collection methods</u> ▪ Document reviews of secondary data ▪ Structured and semi-structured/ virtual and face-to-face interviews ▪ Conduct limited FGDs ▪ Telephone conversations ▪ Risk diagnosis results <u>Source of verifiable data</u> ▪ Programme documents ▪ FAO programme staff ▪ Implementing partners ▪ Beneficiaries at national and districts level ▪ Key Ministries and agencies staff ▪ Communities leaders ▪ Beneficiaries at community level ▪ Development partners (EU, UN agencies, and others)

Evaluative questions	Sub questions	Judgement criteria	Data collection methods and source of verification
EQ 2. Were project activities implemented timely, and were there sufficient management procedures to affect efficiency, including regular monitoring and evaluation? To what extent has the project built on existing agreements, initiatives, data sources and synergies, complementarities with other projects and partnerships, etc., and avoided duplication of similar activities of other groups?	**EQ 2.1.** What time was allotted and expended for achievement of different results? **EQ 2.2.** Was the time reasonable in relation to results and benefits? Was there a much better option? **EQ 2.3.** Did the project make any management adjustments and how did these influence the achievement of results or project performance? **EQ 2.4.** To what extent was the M&E systems - including generated information - used to adapt and improve planning, execution and learning ? **EQ 2.5.** How effective has the project been in periodic and consistency in sharing information generated and key messages and results to partners, stakeholders and the general audience? **EQ 2.6.** Has the project generated evidence of benefits and changes attributed to enhanced partnership and synergies owed to the integrated approaches? **EQ 2.7.** Has the implementation approach been more cost effective?	● Flow of results and outcomes vs timeline implementation ● Lessons on management procedures, such as hotspot mapping, profiling recruiting of facilitators, trainers and execution of project ● Challenges, how they were overcome and lessons learned from adjustments ● Level of information sharing ● Influence of communication and visibility strategy ● Evidence/utility/efficiency of M&E tools, indicators and process ● Robustness of M&E system – targets, indicators, specificity, measurable and monitorable, time bound, etc. ● Synergies attained with existing government programmes (e.g. join UN resilience programme (ECRP), Government of Malawi social programmes, USAID-funded nutritional programme, Shire River Basin development programme) ● Support to resilience registration programme, risk diagnosis and CCA coordinating mechanisms	<u>Data collection approaches</u> ▪ Document review ▪ Discussions with management ▪ Structured and semi-structured interviews ▪ Limited FGDs <u>Source of information</u> ▪ Monthly assessment reports, annual reports ▪ FAO personnel ▪ Members of UN joint review ▪ Community beneficiaries ▪ Government agency officials ▪ Implementing partner staff ▪ Trainers ▪ Community facilitators ▪ CCA focal persons
EQ 3. To what extent did the project effectively address gender equity, decent labour and other human rights and equity aspects?	**EQ 3.1.** How did the intervention address cross-cutting issues such as human rights, equity and other equity aspects? **EQ 3.2.** To what extent were the above effective? **EQ 3.3.** To what extent was the support (nutrition, hygiene, dietary and livelihood diversification) of the vulnerable communities achieved?	● Application of Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) tools especially in selection of beneficiaries ● Work for action approaches such as work for food ● Human rights approaches ● Equitable consideration in design and implementation	<u>Data collection methods</u> ▪ Desk review ▪ Key informant interviews ▪ Limited FDGs ▪ Structured observation <u>Source of verification</u> ▪ Programme and assessment reports ▪ Interviews from beneficiaries communities

Evaluative questions	Sub questions	Judgement criteria	Data collection methods and source of verification
	EQ 3.4. To what extent was intended target group targeted? **EQ 3.5.** Did the project encounter any challenges in ensuring gender equity and addressing concerns of the vulnerable persons? **EQ 3.6.** How did the project overcome these challenges?		▪ Implementing partner staff ▪ Development partners ▪ Beneficiaries (men, youth, women) ▪ Other key informant stakeholders
EQ 4. Was the project design appropriate for delivering the expected outcome? What was the relevance of using the innovative integrated community centred approach - (CdR) for this project? Was it effective in linking the social, technical and financial dimensions in mutually reinforcing ways? Were there unintended results, either positive or negative?	**EQ 4.1.** How effective has the project delivered on intended results (objectives, outcomes and outputs) **EQ 4.2.** What institutional mechanisms and CCA practices are evident at different levels upstream and downstream respectively arising from this project? **EQ 4.3.** Did the project record any benefits of the CdR approach and to what extent were the three dimensions mutually reinforcing? **EQ 4.4.** What lessons from the CdR can be applied for future CCA and resilience programming? **EQ 4.5.** Did the intervention generate any unintended results, either positive or negative?	☆ Discuss summary results by the following ● Overall contribution to resilience of vulnerable communities to climate variability ● Short-term outcomes vs long-term outcomes of knowledge; skills and household income ● Upstream and downstream s (community, household vs institutional) adaptive capacities ☆ Summary of expected outcomes and outputs by six key result areas ☆ CdR integrated vs unintegrated approaches ● Intended and unintended positive/negative results	<u>Approach to data collection</u> ▪ Documents reviews ▪ Discussions ▪ Structured interviews ▪ Content and thematic analysis ▪ Limited FGDs ▪ Structured observations ▪ Key informant Interviews <u>Data sources</u> ▪ Secondary data ▪ Implementing partners staff ▪ Beneficiaries ▪ Project staff ▪ FAO personnel ▪ Partners ▪ Beneficiaries <u>Key informants</u>
EQ 5. What is the likelihood of achieving long-term and sustainable results through the project? How has FAO collaborated with partners and to what extent did the project develop partnerships or enhance existing ones? Has the partnership strategy been appropriate and effective, or promoted stakeholder engagement in the project?	**EQ 5.1.** What mechanisms did the project put in place to ensure the short- and long-term results from the project? **EQ 5.2.** Which of these are likely to sustain sustainability of resilience to CCA among communities? **EQ 5.3.** Which of these are likely to sustain institutional adaptive capacities for scaling-up and replication resilience to CCA? **EQ 5.4.** To what extent did the project leverage support of other partners for collaborative CCA and resilience actions ?	▪ Sustainability mechanisms for agriculture practices, gender and HIV, Sensitive nutrition ▪ Diversity and income generation Conservation and biodiversity ▪ Sustainability mechanisms for coordination, monitoring and institutional capacities for CCA and resilience programming ▪ Level of participation of national agencies and development partners	<u>Data collection approaches</u> ▪ Document review ▪ Interviews ▪ Discussion with project administration ▪ Structured observations ▪ Limited FGDs ▪ National agenda <u>Source of information</u> ▪ Endline and annual review reports ▪ FAO personnel ▪ Development partners ▪ Staff of key MDAs ▪ Community beneficiaries

Evaluative questions	Sub questions	Judgement criteria	Data collection methods and source of verification
	EQ 5.5. To what extent has partnership contributed to achieving sustainable results and at what level are they most felt? **EQ 5.6.** To what extent has the intervention yielded complementarity and synergy under the partnership? **EQ 5.7.** What mechanisms are in place to ensure sustainability of the linkages and benefits accrued from such partnerships?	▪ Sustainability platforms for collective planning and execution of resilience and CCA action ▪ No. of sustained joint programming and coordination activities between Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) sustained ● Continued dialogues and funding arrangement of initiatives towards CCA and resilience programmes at donor, government, NGOs and community level ● Partnership strategy approaches for sustainability developed and drivers for such partnership ● Aspects of financial, institutional and environmental sustainability	▪ Implementing partner staff ▪ Civil society organizations ▪ Adaptation plans funding

Appendix 3. Theory of change



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