



# Adaptation Story



## Malawi

### OBJECTIVES

- Strengthening community awareness and ownership of adaptation, especially among women and youth
- Enhancing resilience plans through insurance-based asset creation and income diversification
- Strengthening government capacity to generate and disseminate climate information to forecast climate risks, mobilize early action and tailored community climate services



Malawi, one of the Least Developed Countries, has experienced an increase in the frequency, intensity, and variability of weather-related shocks in recent years, including floods, droughts, dry spells, and recorded temperatures. Over the years, hotspots for these shocks have become especially evident in the Southern region of Malawi.

A project funded by the Adaptation Fund in Malawi, implemented by Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development with the support of the UN World Food Programme, is aimed at changing that dynamic, by building resilience in local communities. Through enhancing climate adaptation and food security of households with integrated climate risk management strategies and structured market opportunities, the project is transforming lives and livelihoods across Machinga, Zomba, and Balaka Districts.

As part of its integrated risk management approach, the project supports the design and implementation of climate risk insurance (CRI) to alleviate farmers' vulnerability to climate-related shocks. Small-scale farmers are able to subscribe to Area Yield Index Insurance (AYII), a product that insures the value of their purchased inputs (such as farm equipment, seeds and other resources) against low yields. During the 2023-2024 agricultural season, up to 20,224 farmers were insured for a total value of US\$ 4.06 million. Since the beginning of the project, up to US\$ 1.9 million in insurance claims have been paid to farmers targeted by the project.

Gedion Malora, a 65-year-old farmer from Mkapa village in Machinga district, vividly remembers the struggles his family faced due to climate change impacts over the years. "Climate change threatened our livelihoods with droughts and erratic rains, jeopardizing our crop yields," he recalls.



Beneficiaries after receiving their insurance payout in Zomba district, Malawi, one of the areas targeted by the project. (photo by PULA/Lindiwe Karim)

*"Access to rainfall data helped us plan our crops better and mitigate risks"*  
 – Fabian Black Junior,  
 community extension worker in Zomba District

However, since becoming a beneficiary of the Adaptation Fund project in 2020, Gedion's life has taken a turn for the better.

Through access to CRI, Gedion was able to safeguard his crops against climate hazards and recover income from losses he endured. Investing the insurance claims wisely, he then diversified his income by growing drought-tolerant crops like cassava and sweet potatoes. "Agricultural insurance protected my family from crop losses and enabled me to invest in sustainable farming practices," Gedion explains.

Through his investments, he not only secured his family's food supply, but also improved their financial stability. He earned an additional US\$ 266 from his investments over six months and saved up to US\$ 110 in total through Village Savings and Lending groups (VSL) to cushion him for any future shocks. VSL groups are self-managed groups gathering community members (often women) that wish to pool their savings to cover for unforeseen expenses, but also to provide small loans. Through the project, VSL groups received financial literacy trainings to develop their financial capacity skills and knowledge, enhancing their members' capacity to make informed and effective financial decisions.

### PROJECT BY THE NUMBERS

85,000 HOUSEHOLDS	BENEFITTED 382,500 INDIVIDUALS	195,075 WOMEN	STRENGTHENED MARKETS ACCESS 7,168 FARMERS	CONSERVED 16,754 HA OF LAND	INSURANCE CLAIMS PAID TO FARMERS \$1,902,939 THROUGH CRI IMPLEMENTATION
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*Farmers celebrating warehouse constructed to enable farmers to aggregate their crops for the market.  
(photo by Ministry of Agriculture – Adaptation Fund Project/Annie Malunga)*

In addition to providing CRI, the initiative has empowered farmers to make informed agricultural decisions by enhancing their access to timely climate information through targeted weather trend service platforms.

Fabian Black Junior, a community extension worker in Zomba District, highlights the significance of climate information and data in farming. "Access to rainfall data helped us plan our crops better and mitigate risks," he says. Through the establishment of 46 rain-gauge meteorological stations, community-driven data collection has provided farmers with valuable insights on weather patterns and enabled them to adapt their farming strategies accordingly.

Through this Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture (PICSA) approach, a total of 15,542 farmers received agro-advisories, interactive weather and climate adaptation radio programs, text messages and other types of information products, helping them to effectively use climate information to support their decision-making on the ground.

Additionally, the project has promoted climate-resilient agriculture practices and irrigation development, benefiting over 81,000 farmers. About 16,754 hectares (ha) of land have been restored through soil and water conservation practices, climate smart interventions and crop diversification. Three solar-powered irrigation systems with the potential of covering 26 ha to benefit 191 beneficiaries were also installed.

Henry Masaninga, a farmer from Mdawali Village in Zomba District, who received 250 self-propagating banana shoots for replanting through crop diversification and drought tolerant approaches in the project, shared his transformational journey. "Cultivating bananas provided me a lifeline amidst climate challenges," he says. "My family and I have made over US\$ 3,787 from selling bananas in just one year. I have managed to pay for my family's meals, improved my house, and paid school fees for my children's education."

Thanks to the project's support, Henry's banana farm became a source of steady income, improving his family's quality of life and livelihood. Eager to pay it forward, Henry passed on some of the drought-tolerant banana shoots to fellow farmers for them to plant in their gardens, fostering plant propagation and enhancing the resilience within his community.

In addition to strengthening the resilience of agricultural practices, the project has also enhanced market access for 7,168 farmers (1,926 male, 5,242 female), empowering them to thrive despite climatic uncertainties. VSL groups were supported to establish group marketing networks and received training to improve their financial literacy, enhance their understanding of saving approaches and how to maintain good credit. As a result, since 2020, VSLs have accumulated a total of US\$ 242,351 in savings and shared a total of US\$ 318,529 in small loans to their members to help them invest in new businesses. Through strengthened group marketing, during the 2023-2024 agricultural season farmers sold various crops such as groundnuts, cow peas, rice and soybeans valued at US\$ 50,621. This represented a substantial increase compared to the US\$ 3,000 in sales from the prior agricultural season. Moreover, six farmer organization warehouses have been constructed with funding from the project to support collective marketing and enhance good market prices. Through financial literacy training and market engagement interventions, farmers in target project districts saw remarkable growth in their agricultural ventures. With access to credit and better market prices, farmers diversified their incomes, ensuring greater resilience against climate shocks.

The project also demonstrated improved community capacity to manage climate risks, with a significant portion of project households equipped with knowledge and resources to tackle adverse climate impacts. Further, female-headed households have seen a boost in livelihood security, showcasing the project's commitment to gender inclusivity and empowerment. As communities embrace these climate-resilient livelihood practices and market-driven approaches, the project demonstrates collective resilience in the face of the growing climate crisis and lays a scalable foundation for sustainable development in the project's vulnerable communities and beyond.