



MALAWI COUNTRY OFFICE - STORIES OF CHANGE, MAY 2023 RESILIENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GAINS (RED) PROJECT



Save the Children

Project Specific Objective 1: Increased Predictable Year-Round Household Income and Expenditure on Children

Story of Change: Helping Youth Get Out of Poverty

When she was impregnated, aged 16 in 2019, Passover Ngwara was destined to become a statistic—a promising young girl who got pregnant, dropped out of primary school and fell into the vicious poverty trap. A typical rural Malawian story that replicates itself across the country.

But, despite all the odds, not all stories end in disaster. And Passover's story is a rare ray of sunshine amongst the stories of gloom.

The cheerful and chatty 21-year-old attributes her changing fortunes and positive disposition to the Resilience Economic Development (RED) skills development component, being implemented in Zomba district in eastern Malawi by Save the Children Malawi with funding from Save the Children Italy. >>Page 2



Passover (L) at her garage with one of her employees

About the Project

Running from July 2019 to June 2024 with funding from Save the Children Italy, the project is focusing on the health and economic status of families with under five children, out of school youth aged 15-24 years and women of childbearing age. In total, the project is reaching 4,200 beneficiaries from 1,000 households to achieve sustainable livelihoods through improved health, agricultural production, and entrepreneurship in Traditional Authorities Chikowi and Mbiza in Zomba district, Malawi. Building on other Save the Children projects like Sponsorship and Pro-Act, RED seeks to consolidate registered gains and ensure that out of school youth and women of childbearing age do lead decent livelihoods.

Baseline: Specific Objective 1

- Six out of ten men over the age of 18 earn incomes towards household needs on a regular basis and a further two out of ten do so infrequently. In contrast, only three out of ten women earn income regularly, though four out of ten do so infrequently.
- Amongst household members younger than 18, nearly eight out of ten earn no income and one out of ten earn income infrequently.
- Six out of ten of the female household heads report casual labor as their primary source of income, followed by crop sales (18%) and petty trading (6%). Less than four out of ten have a secondary source of income
- Eight out of ten had heard about village savings and loan associations (VSLA). However, only two out of ten had members of VSL groups and six out of ten of the households had members that have received training in VSL groups.

IMPACT VIDEO

Watch Passover share her story through this [VIDEO](#)

MIDTERM
OUTCOME
HIGHLIGHT

67%

of targeted households have Sustainable, Predictable Year-Round Income relative to 50% in control group



Skills Development for Youth and Women of Child Bearing Age

Interventions

- Trained 300 youth (Male 91, Female 209) in various skills including Carpentry and Joinery, Motorcycle Mechanics, Fabrication and Welding, Tailoring and Fashion Designing, Phone Repairing, and Hair Dressing Saloon
- Trained 10 youth (Male 5, Female 5) in agro-dealership

Outcomes

- 259 Youths and Women of Child Bearing Age have opened own shops/businesses within the impact area and outside the district



Livestock-Goats Pass on Programme

Interventions

- 222 Beneficiaries have been given Goats under pass on programme. 1,100 goats distributed, each beneficiary receiving 5 goats (1 Buck – He goat and 4 Weaners – She goats)

Outcomes

- 50 Beneficiaries have successfully completed passing on to 50 second beneficiaries, and a total of 250 goats (50 Bucks and 200 Weaners) passed on



Village Savings and Loans (VSL)

Interventions

- Trained 66 VSL groups with 975 members (Male 223, Female 752)

Outcomes

- 58 groups with total membership of 831 (Male 112, Female) graduated



Promotion of Value Chain Crops: Pigeon Peas, Soya, and Groundnuts

Interventions

- In its first phase the project distributed 2,000 kgs of soya to 1,000 (Male 223, Fem 767) beneficiaries – each getting 2 kgs
- In 2022/23 agriculture season, the project has distributed 3,000 KGS of Pigeon peas for seed to the same 1,000 beneficiaries
- Distributed the following Value Chain crops to 1,000 (Male 223, Female 767). These included Soya 1500 kgs each beneficiary getting 1.5 kgs, Groundnuts 2000kgs each beneficiary getting 2 kgs and Pigeon peas 2000 kgs each beneficiary getting 2kgs

Outcomes

- The project has revolutionized the way farmers engage with the market, fostering a sense of unity, strength, and prosperity within their communities. As a result of collective selling/bargaining skills acquired, farmers have witnessed significant improvements in their income and overall economic stability. By leveraging their collective bargaining power, they have successfully secured higher prices for their crops, ensuring a fair return on their hard work and investment.
- For instance, beneficiaries harvested and sold 7,950kgs of Soya at an average price of MK650.00 (\$0.65) per kg while at Local Markets the average price ranged from MK500-Mk550.00 (\$0.5 - 0.55) per kg
- With better proceeds, beneficiaries have bought livestock such as Goats and Pigs, Cattle. Others have constructed houses with corrugated iron sheets, others have bought bikes.



Climate Smart Agriculture Technologies

Interventions

- Trained 1000 beneficiaries (Male 223, Fem 767) in climate smart agriculture technologies ✓ application

Activities practiced include:

- ✓ Correct plant spacing and population
- ✓ Planting of leguminous crops
- ✓ Correct Ridge Spacing
- ✓ Crop Residue Incorporation
- ✓ Manure Making and

Outcomes

- The project has transformed agricultural practices, enabling farmers to maximize their productivity, optimize resource utilization, and achieve sustainable agricultural growth. Farmers now have increased yields through the adoption of best farming practices. On average, farmers now harvest 50kgs of crops on a piece of land where they initially harvested 30kgs



<<Page 1 Meet 21-Year-Old Passover - The Female Motorcycle Mechanic

Says Damie Chinseu, Save the Children's Agricultural and Marketing Coordinator for the project:

"We actually want to give economic empowerment to these youths so that they can stand on their own. We trained the youth in welding and fabrication, carpentry and joinery, motor cycle mechanics, phone repair and hair dressing. Upon graduation, we give the youths start up tools for each category and, so far 122 youths have opened up their shops and they are operating within the impact area," he says.

Of the six courses on offer, Passover chose to undergo a motorcycle mechanics course

"I graduated after four months and I received my certificate and a tool box that helped me open my own garage. This garage has helped in changing my life in many ways and now I am also changing the lives of fellow youths as I have now employed four youths on my garage," she gleams.

Chinseu adds that the objective of the programme, that

targets school-drop outs and women of child bearing age who are poor, is for the youth to be economically empowered.

Brenda Katowira, who now runs a welding shop at Mayaka in Zomba, says the skills she acquired transformed her life.

"Before the RED Project, I had dropped out of school in Form 1 in 2017 because my family could not afford to pay for my school fees and then I got married but we lived in extreme poverty" she explains.

When she completed her welding and fabrication training, like all graduates, Katewera received start-up equipment which enabled her to set-up a welding shop.

"Since I opened my welding and fabricating business, I have achieved a lot of things that I could not. For example, I am now financially dependent and I am now able to send some of my relatives to school and pay for their school fees, I can now buy fertilizer and iron sheets for my house. I would like to thank the RED project for changing my life," she says.

[Read more](#)

Project Specific Objective 2: Improved Diets from Sustainable Food Systems for Children Under Five, Adolescents and Women

Story of Change: Nutrition Provides a Way Out of Poverty for Divorced Mother of 7

Divorced with seven kids to feed, 37-year-old Grace Emmanuel typified poverty in its perfect form.

Hungry and on the verge of destitution, Emmanuel soon became the community's laughing stock and well as object of pity as fellow villagers in the south-eastern district of Zomba gossiped about her and empathised with her in equal measure.

"When my husband left me with the seven children, my life was a wreck. I was in extreme poverty that I couldn't feed my family; I was devastated as I had no means to survive. I actually survived on alms from my family," she says.

She adds: "Imagine taking care of seven kids all on my own; they have to eat three times a day. And we cannot even talk about clothing them and buying school necessities. It was all too much."

But like they say, it is at the darkest moment when salvation strikes.

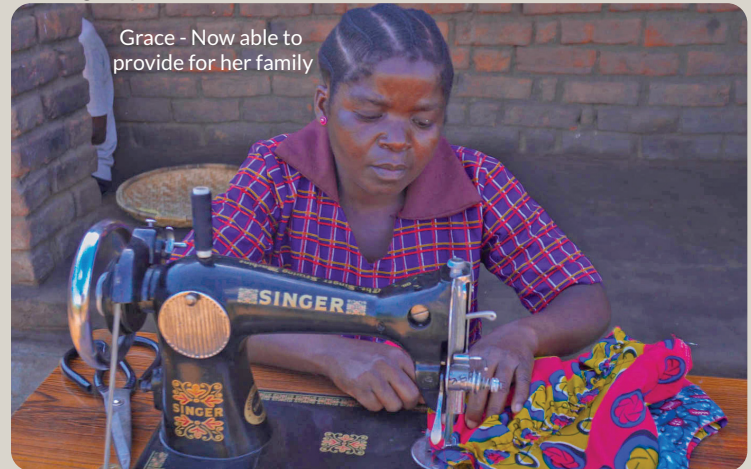
And for Emmanuel, salvation came in the form of the Resilience Economic Development (RED) which is being implemented by Save the Children Malawi with funding from Save the Children Italy.

When the project started in July 2019, Emmanuel was one of the first beneficiaries and she narrates her life-changing story.

"When the RED Project came, they trained us in different skill development such as tailoring, poultry farming and nutrition. After the training, I received a sewing machine, 10 chickens and some goats as a start-up," she explains as she puts the final touches on a

niece's dress on her sewing machine.

According to Emmanuel, the RED project also taught her how to fight malnutrition by teaching us the importance of eating all six food groups. [Read More](#)



IMPACT VIDEO

Watch how RED Project has changes Mercy Geleson's Live through this [VIDEO](#)

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Proper nutrition for every child is essential. However, children with disabilities often face unique challenges in accessing and maintaining a balanced diet tailored to their specific needs. One of Malawi leading online publications, Zodiak, in a groundbreaking feature sheds light on the significant strides that RED Project has made in enhancing lives of children with disabilities. Catch the story - [Reason for Patricia to Smile](#)

Baseline: Specific Objective 2

- Overall, four out of ten households had an acceptable Food Consumption Scores (FCS), while the proportion of households with a poor FCS is two out of ten and with a borderline FCS of four out of ten.
- On average, most households had not been meeting the minimum dietary diversity threshold for children of at least four of the seven different food groups (WHO, 2010).
- Large proportion of households had children eating vegetables and fruits, roughly eight out of ten. Only about four of the households had children that ate meat/fish in the last 24 hours during the study.
- Regarding women's nutrition, three out of ten of the households had Women of Childbearing Age
- (WCBA) satisfying the Minimum Dietary Diversity, which means that they eat at least 5 out of 9 food groups in the past 24 hours during the study.

INTERVENTIONS AND OUTCOMES



Youth are sensitised through SBCC and mobilised to develop an advocacy action plan on Sustainable Diets

Interventions

- Twenty-seven youths network leaders trained in advocacy.
- 1,168 youths attended the cooking demonstrations.
- 421 (M: 196, F: 225) youths attended the FGD sessions

Outcomes

- Changed behaviors among the households, as there is no open defecation within the impact area.
- Community management of malnutrition by rehabilitation through organized cooking demonstrations and Community complementary and learning sessions
- Promotion of fuel-efficient stoves among the care groups.
- Chicken pass on to beneficiaries, which has improved consumption choices at households.
- 184 households owning chickens for household consumption.

MIDTERM OUTCOME HIGHLIGHT

66% of targeted households have Food Consumption Analysis scores that are acceptable relative to 54% for control group



Households and communities receive education messaging to prevent all forms of malnutrition

Interventions

- Education messaging to prevent all forms of malnutrition.
- 48 Care groups formed, 33 promoters and 535 cluster leaders selected and trained in Care group model, Nutrition screening, Maternal module, WASH Module, EBF and infant and young child feeding, IHF, CCFLs

Outcomes

- There is no open defecation within the impact area.
- There is Community management of malnutrition by rehabilitation through organized cooking demonstrations and Community complementary and learning sessions
- Chicken pass on to beneficiaries, which has improved consumption choices at households.
- 184 households owning chickens for household consumption.



Nutrition screening

Interventions

- 33 promoters, 535 cluster leaders, 128 VNCCs and ANCCs oriented in nutrition screening.
- 4,533 (M: 2068; F: 2465) under five children, 528 (M: 138, F: 390) adolescents and 4,031 women (232 pregnant; 3,799 lactating) screened.
- Procured and distributed 66 weighing scales, MUAC tapes

Outcomes

- Zero severe malnourished children the impact area
- No death due to malnutrition
- Parents for children with disabilities are managing to feed who have eating difficulties, thanks to the portage approach.

Project Specific Objective 3: Economic and Nutrition Pathways are Protected from Shocks and Stresses



A working session on Disaster Risk Management at Community Level

Story of Change: Armed with Technology, Villagers Brace for Rainy Days

In Muhilili Village in the district of Zomba, a forest of trees atop sitting on a hill stands like a crown jewel at the heart of the village—lush and forestry—a sharp contrast to the bare hills in the surrounding villages which pale in comparison.

But it was not always like this. Group Village Headman Muhilili, the area's traditional leader, says previously, the area used to be barren and desolate which made it susceptible to floods and other natural disasters.

He explains that, over the years, the Resilient Economic Development (RED) project has worked with the community in developing environmental and natural resources, especially forestry and fighting malnutrition in the village.

Awali Mbaiza is a committee member of the villagenatural resource mobilization committee that protects the village's natural resources, especially the forest.

"We started our project in 2009 and since then we have managed to protect our forest from deforestation. In 2021, the RED project came and gave us extra training on how to manage our natural resources. As a committee, we came up with some by-laws which are followed in the community in order to protect the natural resources. For example, if a person is found cutting down trees without being authorized, they are fined K100,000 (\$100)," he says.

The disaster preparedness, resilience and forestry management component of the RED project looks at how economic and nutrition pathways are protected from shocks and stress by developing disaster reduction plans at community and household level and facilitating participatory scenario planning.

Moses Kachitenji is resilience coordinator for the RED Project and is responsible for the component.

According to Kachitenji, the project focuses on three components; cash preparedness where the project has a high component of crisis modifier aimed at supporting the communities in case of disasters. The project also has a natural resource component, which looks at the communities' best practices for disaster risk mechanisms.

"The communities in Traditional Authority Mbiza face a number of disasters and, as a project, we are working with the government to make sure that we build their capacity on how they can support themselves in times of disasters.

"So, we have basically trained government officials that are responsible for disaster risk management as well as 25 village committees. After this process, we undertook disaster risk assessment where appreciated the hazards the community face and assessed the capacities they have and also the vulnerabilities. We also supported them to develop disaster risk management plans such as early warning, contingency plan and mitigation," he explains. [Read more](#)

Baseline: Specific Objective 3

- Four out of ten households reported having been affected by major unexpected events in the previous years. Fire or house being destroyed or damaged and Drought or flood are two most popular events.
- Only six out of ten households recovered after using coping strategies and remained in the same or better condition than before the shock
- A vast majority of households reported that they worried that the household would not have enough food during the lean season (nine out of ten).
- During the previous lean seasons, a high proportion of households had members limiting portion size at mealtimes (nine out of ten), reducing the number of meals eaten in a day (nine out of ten) and relying on less expensive food (nine out of ten). Furthermore, eight out of ten of the households had members skipping entire days without eating.

INTERVENTIONS AND OUTCOMES

MIDTERM OUTCOME HIGHLIGHT

There is improved beneficiaries' response capacity in face of an emergency. While a large share of the beneficiaries reported having experienced a calamity, they were more likely to have recovered and become the same or even better than before compared to control group.



Cash preparedness activities and crisis modifier for early action

Interventions

- Conducted cash transfers to 982 households through crisis modifier
- Provided farm inputs to 952 farmers for recovery



Community based disaster risk management

Interventions

- 25 Village Civil Protection Committees (VCPCs) trained in DRM (257m, 118f)
- Two Area Civil Protection Committees (ACPCs) trained as trainers in disaster risk mitigation
- Conducted PCVA in 25 GVHs (1741m, 2845f)
- Linked 25 VCPCs to DCCMS to receive weather alerts
- Piloted disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives in 4 schools
- Trained VCPCs and ACPCs in Resource Mobilization



Natural resources management

Interventions

- Trained 25 village natural resource management committees (VNRMCs) in natural Resources management
- Supported Natural tree regeneration across 338 Hectares
- Established Vertiva grass and tree nurseries in 25 GVHs.
- Piloted Environmental and social screening and Management

Objective Three Outcomes

- Proportion of households that reported they recovered and stayed in similar or better conditions than before: it increased from 46% in the control to 54% in the treatment group
- Proportion of households who are aware of local authorities in charge of disaster management improved from 75% to 81%
- Proportion of households who are aware of Disaster Management Plan for their communities improved from 57% to 64%
- 96% of respondents in the control group reported that they worried their households would not have enough food
- The proportion of households with improved Coping Strategies Index (CSI) is similar in treatment and control groups – 47% and 48% respectively
- 25VCPC and 2 ACPC have Developed DRM plans and supporting District contingency planning

IMPACT VIDEO

Watch this [VIDEO](#) to see how empowered communities are mitigating impacts and responding to disasters in Zomba district