

Project Evaluation Series

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

Project code: GCP/MLW/067/EC

Follow-up report

Evaluation of the project "Strengthening community resilience to climate change in Blantyre, Zomba, Neno and Phalombe districts – Follow-up report					03/2023
Evaluation recommendation	Management response Accepted, Partially accepted or Rejected	Management plan			
		Actions to be taken, and/or comments about partial acceptance or rejection	Description of actions actually taken, or reasons for actions not taken	MAR Score	Impact of, or changes resulted from taken actions
<p>Recommendation 1.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>FAO needs to recognize and separate conventional contractual engagements from nonconventional 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</p>	<p>Partially accepted</p>	<p>We agree with the recommendation on *increasing duration of the letters of agreement (LOAs). However, there is no compromise in extending LOAs if a Service Provider's financial reports are not satisfactory as was the case.</p> <p>Already, the office is implementing LOAs with relatively longer duration to accommodate some of the limitations that service providers have been having. Also, the country office has introduced a tailored orientation and refresher training for all Service Providers on operational and financial management of LOAs prior to implementation.</p>	<p>Action has been taken for the implementation of EU-funded projects during 2022, particularly facilitating resources to District Councils and partners for longer timeframes, but in line with project requirements and needs. Training on MS507 procedures was conducted with more than 25 IPs during the last quarter of 2022.</p> <p>Through implementation of a EU-funded programme (KULIMA) during the last 5 years, FAO has invested jointly with the Government of Malawi in the creation of local capacity, mentoring More than 300 extension workers as farmer field school master trainers. This will support systematically and in a more sustainable manner the provision of technical support to communities.</p>	<p>Advancing</p>	

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<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>					
<p>Recommendation 2.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Accepted	<p>Lessons emerging from GCP/MLW/067/EC will inform subsequent programme development including the CPF which will form basis for fundraising efforts.</p>	<p>Formulation of the new CPF (planned to be rolled out on early 2023) will be harnessing on lessons learned from the GCCA project.</p> <p>Currently, ongoing resilience projects implemented by FAOMW are adopting some of the lessons learned from the project, particularly supporting market-oriented production and Income Generation Activities (IGAs).</p>	Good	

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<p>Recommendation 3.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Among other lessons, the project should ensure that: farmer field schools 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Accepted	<p>All the elements in the recommendation are part of an ongoing effort by the country office to improve quality of its portfolio. Various projects have been formulated along this line. At the moment the country office is working on a matching grants system in line with the new MS703 to enable provision of investment grants to groups.</p>	<p>The ongoing resilience building initiative implemented by FAO jointly with other UN agencies and support of FCDO (PROSPER programme) is considering the implementation of small matching grants to support at least 60 groups to venture in market-oriented enterprises that strengthen their resilience capacity to mitigate shocks. Guidelines and technical procedures are under design following the MS703 guidelines.</p>	Good	

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<p>Recommendation 4.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Accepted	Ensure that gender disaggregated data parameters are included in the M&E frameworks for the different projects	<p>This has been rolled out and reports provided currently by different projects provide quality information about gender participation, roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>The upcoming implementation of matching grants for the PROSPER resilience building project will provide an opportunity to mainstream better support to women leading productive activities, providing them better opportunities to participate in resilience building activities.</p> <p>Implementation of CSA has been analyzed by the country office and modules for farmer field schools have been reviewed accordingly.</p>	Good	

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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.					
<p>Recommendation 5.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>	Accepted	Continue ongoing dialogue to operationalize the National Resilience Strategy	FAOMW has supported systematically this and is contributing from different angles to support the operationalization of the National Resilience Strategy. The implementation of the multi-year joint UN resilience project is supporting implementation of the National Resilience Strategy (FAO implementing the outputs 2 and 3) represented a good opportunity to mobilize resources and activities aligned with the national strategy, national agriculture policy and climate change adaptation. FAO has recently engaged the Department of Disaster Risk Management and provided training for the rolling out of the RIMA impact measurement tool for resilience building. A pilot will be jointly coordinated by FAO and the Department of Disaster Risk Management during the first half of 2023.	Advancing	

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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.					
<p>Recommendation 6.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	Accepted	Hotspot profiling and mapping to be mainstreamed as integral planning tool for all climate change adaptation projects. Furthermore, ensure continued engagement of the trained extension workers to conduct training and community outreach	This has been fully implemented for various FAOMW projects. Detailed hotspot mapping has been conducted in more than ten districts across the country and action plans have been drawn with communities, farmer field school groups and extension workers towards resilience building, improved productivity, better nutrition and improve Natural Resources Management.	Advancing	

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