

THE CORPORATE CITIZEN NEWSLETTER



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MEET OUR STAFF

Voices from the Ground: Community Impact Stories That Are Changing Lives

Across African Institute of Corporate Citizenship program areas, communities are experiencing real transformation. In this edition, we spotlight the people behind the progress, their stories, their resilience and the partnerships making it possible.

read more in our newsletter

OUR PARTNERS



Message from the CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



At the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC), our mission has always been rooted in the belief that responsible business practices and inclusive development are the twin pillars of a prosperous Malawi. As we continue our journey of building resilient communities and sustainable businesses, I am pleased to share that the period under review has been one of profound transformation and steady progress.

As an organization, we remain focused on delivering programs that respond directly to the needs of our people. Whether through strengthening agricultural value chains, promoting gender equality, or enhancing climate resilience, our goal is to ensure that development is not just a concept, but a lived reality for smallholder farmers and vulnerable groups across the country.

In this edition, we move beyond the strategic frameworks to spotlight the **"People Behind The Progress."** Designed by our Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and Communications team, this newsletter highlights the resilience and stories of the individuals within our various project sites. From the economic empowerment of women and youth to the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices, these stories reflect the high level of integrity and the results-oriented approach that define AICC.

The transformation we see on the ground is a testament to the fact that when communities are empowered with the right knowledge and skills, they can drive their own economic independence and navigate even the most challenging environmental contexts.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our Board of Directors for their visionary leadership and steadfast guidance; our valued development partners We Effect, IFAD through the FARMSE programme, IDI, CIPS, and Transparency International whose technical support, resources and shared commitment to excellence have been instrumental in advancing our work; and to our dedicated staff, thank you for your unwavering commitment. Most importantly, I thank the communities we serve for their continued trust and collaboration. It is through your resilience that AICC continues to achieve its success.

Together, we will continue to drive positive and lasting change.

Driana Lwanda
Chief Executive Officer
African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC)

From the Editor's Desk



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Stories that Shape the Future

Every quarter, we step back from data and deliverables to ask a deeper question: what does impact really look like on the ground? This edition invites you into the stories behind the numbers, the communities, the champions and the change-makers driving AICC's mission forward.

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter. As the M&E and Communication team, our role goes beyond tracking results – we are the bridge between the work happening in the field and the stakeholders who believe in it.

This edition also shines a light on the voices of Rightsholders because the most compelling evidence of progress is not found in a spreadsheet, but in the confidence of a farmer who has diversified her income, the pride of a youth entrepreneur securing his first contract, or the quiet dignity of a community that now has a seat at the table.

We remain committed to rigorous monitoring, honest evaluation and storytelling that honors the complexity of the work we do. Thank you for reading, sharing and staying engaged with AICC's journey.

We hope this edition leaves you as inspired as we are by the work happening across AICC's project landscape. As always, we welcome your feedback, story leads and reflections, the quality of this newsletter grows richer with every voice that contributes to it.

With gratitude and purpose,

Chinsinsi Chilimtsidya
Monitoring and Evaluation Manager

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Women Economic Empowerment in cotton value chain (WEECVVC) Project

Strengthening economic participation and resilience of women and youth within the cotton value chain by promoting sustainable land management, climate-resilient agricultural practices, and enterprise development. This project is engaging 9600 cotton farmers and has reached 5103 women rightsholders.

Balaka
Rivirivi EPA

Salima
Chipoka & Chinguluwe
EPA

Mangochi
Nankumba EPA

BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING FUTURES; THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF MARGARETHE MATEWERE, A FEARLESS GENDER CHAMPION FROM SALIMA

By Rejoice Mlozi



Margarethe standing in front of her cattle pen

Margarethe Matewere, a proud gender champion from Chipoka, Salima, is a testament to the transformative power of the Women Economic Empowerment in the Cotton Value Chain (WEECVC) project, implemented by AICC with funding from the Embassy of Sweden through We Effect. One of 40 empowered Gender Champions, Her story is one of resilience, growth and empowerment, demonstrating how knowledge and determination can change lives. ***"I started farming cotton in 2007, but no matter how hard I worked, I could never make enough profit to sustain my family. It got to a point where I had no choice but to abandon farming altogether,"*** recalls Margarethe. The lack of proper farming techniques and market linkages had left her with no option but to walk away from cotton farming.

However, when the WEECVC project came in, Margarethe's financial transformation took a remarkable turn. Before the project, she struggled to earn more than K300,000 from a single acre of land barely enough to sustain her family. But after receiving training in good agricultural practices and financial management through AICC's WEECVC project in 2024, she generated K3,000,000 from cotton farming and her Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) returns, a tenfold increase from her previous earnings. With these profits, she invested wisely, purchasing 17 goats and 6 cows, and later sold two of her cows for K1,200,000, which she reinvested into two donkeys and an oxcart to support her farming operations.

The gender champion training that Margarethe received from AICC played a pivotal role in elevating her financial mindset. Reflecting on her journey, she shares, ***"I no longer wait for my husband to give me money for tomatoes and other household needs because I am an independent woman."*** With her newfound confidence, she is now working with 24 other women in her VSLA group, training them to be financially independent. Thanks to her, the women are now thriving on their own, proving that empowerment is contagious. As Margarethe looks forward to the new cotton-growing season, She is projecting to earn K6,000,000 from cotton farming and she envisions upgrading her home. ***"I already have livestock, now I need to think about finishing my house, putting in a cement floor, glass windows, and a nice coat of paint,"*** she proudly remarks.



Margarethe's goats

Margarethe Matewere's story is an inspiring example of how the WEECVC project has transformed the lives of women farmers, fostering financial independence and community development. Her journey continues to motivate many, proving that with the right support and training, women can break barriers and achieve their dreams.

DEFYING EXPECTATIONS AND CREATION OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH: THE STORY OF ENELESI YOHANE

By Davlin Juma

In a small Nachidze village, Tradition Authority Kalonga in Salima district where agriculture is both a livelihood and a way of life, Enelesi Yohane stands determined to change her family's future. With a nine-member household depending on her, she took a bold step in 2023 by planting a one-acre cotton field. Though the journey was tough, she refused to be discouraged. That same year, she joined the WEECVC project, implemented by AICC with support from WE EFFECT, gaining valuable knowledge in farming, financial management, and community empowerment. Little did she know that this decision would transform not just her life, but also the lives of many others.



Gifted Hands: Enelesi doing what she knows best.

With guidance from the project and support from WEECVC through the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) and study circles, Enelesi learned how to maximize her farming profits. Her first cotton harvest in 2023 earned her K810,000, which she used to buy cattle and a sewing machine that would later serve a bigger purpose. The success of her first harvest inspired her to expand her farm, and in 2024, she planted five acres of cotton. With the expansion, her combined cotton farming and VSLA returns grew to an impressive K6,000,000, a clear sign of her growing financial independence. With this income, Enelesi believes she is now well placed to invest in assets she once only dreamed of.



Enelesi and her student in her class

Determined to uplift others, Enelesi founded Muchedwanazo Tailoring and Designing School, starting with seven students. She taught them not only sewing skills but also resilience and self-reliance. ***"I wanted to show other women that you can do both farming and business, they compliment each other, and that everything is possible with a clear vision and hard work,"*** says Enelesi. Under her guidance, all seven students graduated from her tailoring school, equipped with the skills to earn their own income. What started as a small initiative turned into a source of empowerment for young people, particularly women, who now saw a path beyond farming.

Enelesi's story is a powerful reminder that transformation begins with a single step. From a one-acre cotton farmer to a businesswoman and mentor, she has defied expectations and created opportunities where none seemed possible. Her journey is an inspiration to many, proving that with knowledge, determination, and support, one woman can uplift not only her family but an entire community. As her cotton fields continue to grow, so does the impact of her vision, one that turns challenges into opportunities and dreams into reality.

GROWING TOGETHER BEYOND COTTON: TITUKULANE WOMEN'S CLUB IN MANGOCHI

By Grace Mbekeani



Titukulane women's group showing the maize they grew

In the heart of Mangochi District, under the leadership of T/A Malembo at Nankumba EPA, the women of Titukulane Women's Club are celebrating a new chapter in their journey of empowerment and growth. Formed in 2022 with 40 hardworking women, the club is dedicated to cotton production and Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA).

In the 2024/2025 growing season, the group successfully harvested and sold their cotton, earning K800,000. Rather than spending all their proceeds, the women made a bold and collective decision to reinvest K300,000 from their cotton sales and added K200,000 from their VSLA savings, pooling together a total of K500,000 to venture into winter cropping through irrigation. Guided by an AICC field officer, the women cultivated maize on an acre of land. Their hard work paid off remarkably well, from their maize harvest, they generated K600,000 from the sale of fresh green maize, which quickly won favor in local markets, and shared 1,100 Kilograms of maize among themselves. The chairlady of the group proudly shared their joy, highlighting how fast their maize was selling and how united they felt as a club. ***"We are very happy with the direction our group is taking. Seeing our maize sell so quickly has encouraged us to believe we can achieve even more together,"*** she said with a smile

Already thinking ahead, the group has started planting vegetables on the land where the maize was harvested, ensuring that the farm remains productive throughout the season. Their immediate goal is to reinvest their earnings to buy a piece of land dedicated to cotton farming.



Beyond that, the women have set their goal on purchasing a water pump to make irrigation farming easier and more sustainable. The long-term vision of Titukulane Women's Club is as bold as it is inspiring: to one day own a maize mill and grow into a fully-fledged cooperative that will not only empower their members but also uplift their entire community. From cotton to maize and vegetables, the women of Titukulane are proving that with unity, determination, and guidance, dreams can be turned into reality.

FROM A VILLAGE SAVINGS GROUP TO A THRIVING MULTI-MILLION COOPERATIVE: THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF NANKHOMBE COOPERATIVE

By Dyana Mafupa



In Balaka district, under Rivirivi EPA, a remarkable journey of unity and transformation has unfolded through the Nankhombe Cooperative. The group started as a small Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) known as Kachere VSLA, in 2019. The cooperative now has a total of 52 members, of these 31 are women. Their main motivation for coming together is to access agricultural extension services from government extension workers more easily and effectively.

With support from AICC, the members of Nankhombe VSLA received a series of trainings in Gender, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), diversification, VSLA management, and most importantly, cooperative formation and management. AICC also linked the group with the Ministry of Trade, which provided guidance and issued them with cooperative certification - a milestone that marked their official recognition as a registered cooperative.

This transition from a VSLA to a cooperative opened new opportunities for growth and sustainability. Soon after registration, Nankhombe Cooperative successfully secured a grant worth MWK40 million (over USD 20,000) to venture into pig production. With the funds, the cooperative members constructed over 4 pig pens, distributed across members' homes. This strategy not only created ownership among members but also helped in protecting the livestock from the risks of disease outbreaks by decentralizing the pig units.

The piggery business has become more than just a source of pride for the members, it serves as a dual engine for their cotton farming, providing both organic manure to enrich their fields and generating income to purchase farming inputs and materials.



club members feeding their chicken



One of the members of the cooperative feeding pigs at one of the piggeries built on her house

From a humble beginning to a thriving registered cooperative, Nankhombe Cooperative stands as a true story of celebration. What started as a small collective effort has grown into an agribusiness that has collectively generated K26,000,000 in returns. A testament to what unity, mentorship, and resilience can achieve. Their success is not just about pigs and profits, but about how smallholder cotton farmers with a shared vision can transform their lives and communities.

BUILDING THRIVING COMMUNITIES THROUGH YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: INSIDE THE JOURNEY OF DAMBO YOUTH GROUP

By Jimmy Kazembe



Dambo youth club members in their tomato garden

In Balaka's Rivirivi EPA, Dambo Youth Group is proving that when young people come together with a shared purpose, remarkable things happen. The 40-member group, including 25 young women, is involved in beekeeping, horticulture, cotton farming, and a fruit orchard that already boasts 200 fruit trees.

In January this year, the group launched their Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA). Within just six months, they had accumulated MWK 950,000, with the highest dividend payout reaching MWK100,000. Using part of these funds, they rented a one-acre farm to grow hibiscus under the guidance of AICC field officers.

What sets Dambo Youth Group apart is their creativity and inclusiveness. While they maintain a communal garden, each member is also encouraged to keep a backyard vegetable garden. This ensures every youth has an income stream, with part of the proceeds reinvested into the VSLA. Their vision stretches beyond farming they have already sent three members for tailoring training, who will later train others, creating new skills and job opportunities within the club.

Even with their many successes, challenges remain. Irrigating their gardens is a constant struggle, and the group dreams of acquiring an irrigation pump to secure year-round production. Looking to the future, they aspire to transform into a cooperative and establish multiple businesses, strengthening their role as a pillar of development in their community.

Thanks to AICC's training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), entrepreneurship, and VSLA management, Dambo Youth Group has laid strong foundations for growth. Their journey shows that with knowledge, unity, and determination, the youth can create opportunities not just for themselves but for other members of their community as well.



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



Tiwatukule Project

Empowering 2,500 ultra-poor households enrolled in the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP), aiming to help them transition out of extreme poverty and achieve sustainable livelihoods. By providing a comprehensive package of interventions, including seed capital, financial literacy, business management support, climate-smart agriculture, vocational skills training and gender equality initiatives.

Ntcheu

Dedza

IMPACT STORIES

TRANSFORMATIVE LIVELIHOODS IN DEDZA - THE STORY OF MRS. GRACE MSOCHERA

By Chawezi Banda

In the heart of Dedza, within Traditional Authority Kachere in the group village Masinja lies a tale of resilience and empowerment. Mrs Grace Msochera, a determined woman, has emerged as a beacon of hope within her community through her involvement in the pass-on scheme initiative.

Mrs. Msochera, a widow and mother of three, faced numerous challenges in providing for her family after the passing of her husband. With limited resources and access to formal employment, she relied solely on subsistence farming to make ends meet. However, the unpredictable nature of agriculture and the lack of alternative income sources left her vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. Mrs. Msochera's fortunes began to change



Grace with her ducks

when she was identified as part of participants under the nutrition component in the Tiwatukule project. she received training on animal husbandry practices and was Supported with 5 rabbits and 10 ducks (1 drake and 9 ducks). Excited by the opportunity to improve her nutrition and livelihood, Mrs. Msochera eagerly embraced the challenge of caring for her new livestock.

The project's impact on Mrs. Msochera's life has been nothing short of remarkable. She successfully bred her rabbits and ducks with newfound knowledge and determination, expanding her small livestock enterprise. The surplus produce from her animals provided her family with a steady source of nutrition and generated additional income through sales at the local market. Mrs Msochera's success story has inspired her neighbours and fellow community members to take action. Recognising the potential of small livestock rearing, several households in the area have expressed interest in participating in similar initiatives. Mrs. Msochera has generously shared her expertise and experiences with her peers, contributing to the collective empowerment and resilience of the community.

As Mrs. Msochera's livestock enterprise continues flourishing, she remains committed to sustainability and growth. She reinvests her profits into expanding her homestead garden and purchasing 2 goats, further diversifying her income streams. Through her active participation in community meetings and collaborative efforts with local leaders, Mrs. Msochera advocates for continuing and expanding similar projects to benefit more households in Dedza. The story of Mrs. Grace Msochera serves as a testament to the transformative power of community-led development initiatives. Through the procurement and distribution of small livestock under the pass-on scheme, Mrs Msochera has improved her livelihood and become a catalyst for positive change within her community. Her journey highlights the importance of empowerment, resilience, and collective action in building sustainable livelihoods and fostering social and economic development in rural areas.

EMPOWERING YOUTH IN AGRIBUSINESS: THE TILIMBIKIRE YOUTH GROUP'S JOURNEY TO TRANSFORMING LIVELIHOODS

By Preston Kalengamaliro



In the village of Chikwita in Dedza District, a group of young people recognised the untapped potential of agriculture as a pathway to economic empowerment and community development in the Tiwatumukule through skills for development project. Determined to harness this potential, in 2023, they formed the Tilimbikire Youth Group to engage in agribusiness ventures and transform livelihoods within their community. The youth Group consists of 32 members, including 11 females and 21 males, all committed to promoting youth participation in agriculture and entrepreneurship. The youth group initially encountered numerous challenges in their pursuit of agribusiness including limited access to agricultural knowledge, production resources, and reliable markets hindered their ability to establish sustainable ventures.

In addition, societal perceptions often undervalued the role of young people in agriculture, resulting in scepticism and limited support from some community members. Despite these challenges, the group remained determined to succeed.

To strengthen their operations and ensure sustainability, members introduced a weekly contribution system where each member contributes MK200 per week towards the group's activities and business operations. Through this arrangement, the group collectively raises approximately MK6,400 every week and about MK332,800 annually, enabling them to support farming activities, purchase basic inputs, and sustain group operations. Undeterred by the challenges they faced, the Tilimbikire Youth Group actively sought opportunities for capacity building and empowerment. Through collaboration with local organisations and agricultural extension services, members participated in training programmes tailored towards youth engagement in agribusiness. These trainings equipped the youth with practical skills in crop cultivation, livestock management, financial literacy, business management, and entrepreneurship.

Armed with new knowledge and skills, the group developed a comprehensive action plan for their agribusiness ventures. They identified suitable crops and livestock enterprises, secured land for cultivation, and established linkages with input suppliers and market actors. By utilising innovative farming techniques and sustainable agricultural practices, the group began implementing their agribusiness activities with renewed confidence and determination. The journey was not without setbacks. The youth faced challenges including erratic weather conditions, pest infestations, and fluctuating market prices. However, their resilience and adaptability enabled them to overcome these obstacles. They diversified crop production, adopted improved pest management practices, and explored alternative marketing channels to reduce risks and maximise returns from their enterprises.

As the Tilimbikire Youth Group's agribusiness ventures progressed, their impact on the community became increasingly visible. The group's hard work and commitment paid off, generating K1,600,000 in returns in 2025, a remarkable achievement for young people who started with very little. Through their agribusiness activities, the group contributed to local food security by supplying fresh agricultural produce to surrounding markets while also creating opportunities for youth participation in productive economic activities.

The Tilimbikire Youth Group remains committed to expanding its agribusiness activities and strengthening its contribution to community development. The group plans to diversify its agricultural enterprises further, explore value-addition opportunities, and increase youth participation in profitable agricultural value chains. They also intend to mentor and support other young people within the community by sharing experiences, skills, and lessons learned from their journey.

The story of the Tilimbikire Youth Group demonstrates the transformative power of youth empowerment in agribusiness. Through resilience, collective action, and commitment, the group has not only improved the livelihoods of its members but has also contributed to economic growth and social transformation within Chikwita village.

TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH LOCAL DRAMA PERFORMANCES: THE STORY OF MARY SALIRANA

By Chimwemwe Chithyoka

Mary Salirana, a respected member of the community and a project participant under the Tiwatukule through skills for development project implemented by the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) with support from the Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprise Programme (FARMSE) lives with children and grandchild. Like many others in Masinja village, she faced the challenge of ensuring a balanced and nutritious diet for her family. Despite her best efforts, she was not fully aware of the importance of providing her children and grandchild with a variety of food groups each day.



Mary with some of her community showcasing nutritious food prepared

During a community gathering that had been called by the group village chief a dynamic drama group that had worked with AICC case worker for the area in formulating effective nutrition messages was invited to perform. The focus of the performance was to communicate essential messages about nutrition, emphasizing the need for children to consume at least four food groups and a serving of fruit daily. Mrs. Mary Salirana, along with other community members, attended the gathering. As the drama unfolded, the actors skilfully portrayed the significance of a diverse and balanced diet, illustrating the positive impact on children's growth and development. The engaging performance left a lasting impression on Mrs. Salirana and the entire audience, sparking a newfound awareness of the importance of nutrition in their daily lives.

Inspired by the drama, Mrs. Mary Salirana took it upon herself to implement the learnings within her own household. She began planning and preparing meals that incorporated a variety of food groups, ensuring that her children and grandchild received a well-rounded diet each day. Mrs. Salirana's dedication to change extended beyond her family. She became an advocate within the community, sharing her newfound knowledge and encouraging others to adopt healthier eating habits. Her involvement sparked a ripple effect, with neighbouring households also embracing the concept of a diverse and nutritious diet for their children.

The positive changes in Mrs. Salirana's household were evident. Her Children and grandchild, previously unaware of the importance of a balanced diet, now enjoyed meals that included grains, vegetables, proteins, and fruits. Mrs. Salirana observed visible improvements in their overall health and energy levels. Moreover, the bonding experience of planning and preparing meals together became a cherished family activity, strengthening the familial ties between Mrs. Salirana, her Children, and grandchild. The positive atmosphere in their home became a source of inspiration for other families in Masinja village.

Mrs. Salirana's commitment to spreading the message of nutrition reached beyond her immediate family. The village chief, recognizing the impact of the drama group's performance and Mrs. Salirana's advocacy, initiated ongoing community discussions about the importance of diverse diets. The drama group continued to play a crucial role in reinforcing these messages through periodic performances, ensuring that the community remained engaged and motivated to prioritize nutrition.

The case of Mrs. Mary Salirana stands as a testament to the transformative power of effective messaging delivered by a local drama group. Through her proactive adoption of healthier eating habits and her advocacy within the community, Mrs. Salirana became a catalyst for positive change. The collaboration between the village chief, the drama group, and community members like Mrs. Salirana exemplifies how targeted communication can inspire tangible improvements in nutrition practices, leading to healthier and happier communities.

A CATALYST FOR CHANGE: A COMMUNITY LEADER INSPIRING LASTING TRANSFORMATION AFTER FOOD DIVERSITY AND SKILLS TRAINING

By Chawezi Banda

Mr. Samuel Mbewe, a respected community leader in Mphanyama Village in Dedza District, became a catalyst for transformative change after participating in a comprehensive training programme on food diversity and skills development under the Tiwatukule through Skills for Development Project being implemented. His experience not only enriched his knowledge but also inspired positive and lasting change within his community.



As a community leader, Mr. Mbewe recognized the pressing challenges facing his village, including food insecurity, limited agricultural diversity, poor nutrition practices, and inadequate knowledge of sustainable farming methods. Determined to address these challenges, he eagerly embraced the opportunity to participate in the training programmes. The programme targeted and trained a total of 47 community leaders, comprising 18 women and 29 men, who were expected to serve as agents of change and spearhead food diversification efforts within their communities.

The training covered a wide range of topics, including sustainable agricultural practices, crop diversification, organic farming techniques, post-harvest handling, food preservation methods, and value-added processing. Participants were also trained on practical ways of improving household nutrition through food diversification, including mixing different food groups in meal preparation, preparing nutritious porridge fortified with vegetables, and producing hibiscus juice as a nutritious alternative beverage. The training further promoted the importance of ensuring that households consume at least four food groups daily, with an ideal target of six food groups for improved nutrition outcomes.

Mr. Mbewe actively participated in the training sessions, absorbing both theoretical knowledge and practical skills that he could immediately apply within his community. Equipped with this new knowledge, he embarked on a mission to promote food diversity and sustainable farming practices in Mphanyama Village. He together with nutrition promoter organised educational cooking demonstrations, established demonstration plots, and facilitated community dialogues to share lessons from the training and encourage wider community adoption.

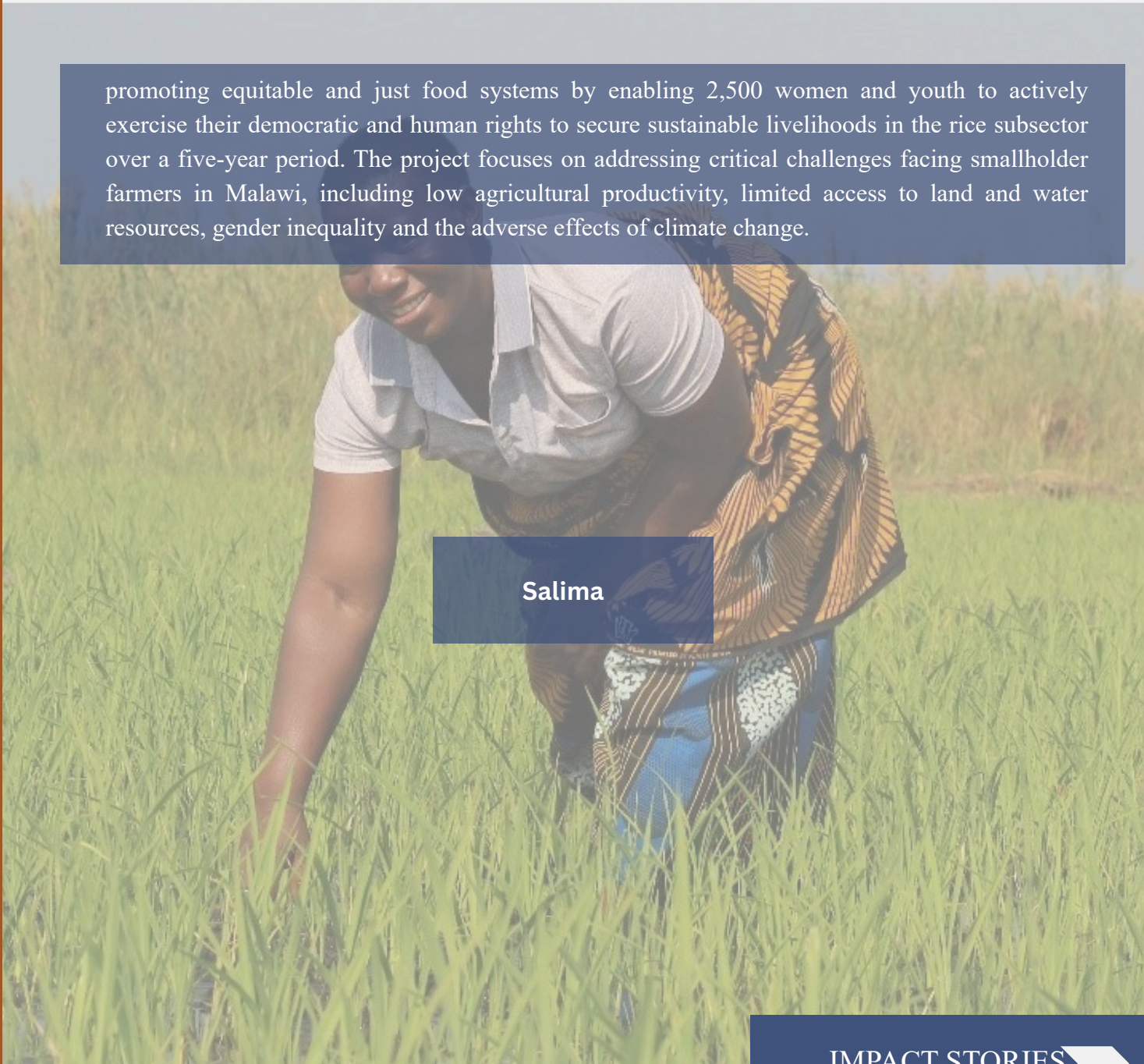
Mr. Mbewe's efforts yielded tangible results as community members increasingly embraced sustainable farming practices and diversified both their agricultural production and diets. Under his guidance, households established vegetable gardens producing crops such as leafy vegetables, tomatoes, onions, and legumes, while also adopting crop rotation, composting, and mulching techniques to improve soil fertility and productivity. Farmers who previously harvested an average of 10 bags (50kg each) of produce reported increased harvests of up to 15 bags (50kg each) following the adoption of improved farming and post-harvest practices introduced through the training.

The introduction of food preservation methods such as sun drying and fermentation enabled households to extend the shelf life of vegetables and other produce, reducing post-harvest losses and improving food availability throughout the year. In addition, Mr. Mbewe encouraged value-added processing activities such as making jams, sauces, and dried snacks, creating additional income-generating opportunities for households within the community. Mr. Mbewe's dedication and leadership in promoting food diversity and skills development did not go unnoticed. He gained recognition both within his community and among local authorities for his contribution to improving food security, nutrition, and household livelihoods. His exemplary leadership inspired other community members and leaders to replicate similar approaches, further amplifying the impact of the training programme.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Resilient and Sustainable Livelihoods Transformation (RESULT) Project

promoting equitable and just food systems by enabling 2,500 women and youth to actively exercise their democratic and human rights to secure sustainable livelihoods in the rice subsector over a five-year period. The project focuses on addressing critical challenges facing smallholder farmers in Malawi, including low agricultural productivity, limited access to land and water resources, gender inequality and the adverse effects of climate change.



Salima

A FARMER, A BUSINESSWOMAN, A CHANGEMAKER: ZAYINABU UZENI'S STORY

By Atisha Mtawali



In Kandulu Village, Chipoka, Salima, lives Zayinabu Uzeni, a determined mother of two who has been part of AICC's Resilient and Sustainable Livelihoods Transformation project for over a year now

A rice farmer, she farms one and a half acres of land and recalls how before joining the project in 2023, she would harvest only 25 bags of rice. After learning about the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) and applying Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) taught under the project, her yields soared. ***"Now I harvest 45 bags from the same piece of land, and this season, I am hoping to get even more,"*** she says.

But Zayinabu's transformation did not stop in the fields. Before the project, managing a business felt like guesswork. ***"I didn't know how to keep records or calculate profits,"*** she admits. Equipped with training in record keeping, budgeting, and profit calculation, she took her first bold step accessing a K60,000 loan from Khonde Bank to start a small vegetable business. After repaying in full, she returned for a K180,000 loan to open a grocery store. She later accessed a K800,000 NEEF loan to purchase a solar system and smartphone to help operate her business efficiently. Today, her combined business efforts have generated over K2,400,000 in profit, a remarkable achievement for someone who once ran her business on guesswork.

Her journey has not been without hardship. Thieves once broke into her kraal, stealing livestock and raiding her shop. ***"It was a hard time,"*** she recalls. But through her VSL group, she accessed a loan and bounced back quickly.

Looking ahead, Zayinabu dreams of having more livestock, starting a motorcycle transport business, and above all, sending her two sons to school. Her story is one of resilience, transformation, and proof that with the right support and determination, change is not only possible it is sustainable.

GROWING MORE WITH LESS: HOW SRI FARMING TRANSFORMED KACHINGWE'S RICE ENTERPRISE

By Atisha Mtawali



Kachingwe Banda, a father of three from Salima's Chipoka region, is a proud member of the Kafunde Farmers' Cooperative. Since joining the Resilient and Sustainable Livelihoods Transformation project in 2023, his journey in rice farming has taken a major leap forward, thanks to training in the System of Rice Intensification provided by AICC with support from We Effect.

Before his involvement in the project, Kachingwe faced significant challenges in his rice farming. In 2023, he invested K250,000 into his rice farming and earned K1,500,000 in returns. With these proceeds, he purchased 10 goats and reinvested K750,000 back into his farming, this time adopting the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) a method that focuses on planting single seeds at wider spacing to maximize root development, reduce input costs and dramatically increase yields.

The results were transformative. Traditionally, Kachingwe would plant more than four seeds per station, but SRI taught him to use just one seed per station. ***"It's more cost-effective and highly profitable,"*** he proudly states. Today, he consistently harvests over 30 bags of rice from the same piece of land double his previous yield. By embracing SRI, his farming generated K3,500,000, enabling him to expand his asset base significantly, acquiring 32 goats, 4 sheep, and a 100-watt solar panel for household lighting. He also invested in plastic chairs for community event rentals, creating an additional income stream, and built a brick fence around his home, a quiet but powerful symbol of growing stability.

Besides rice, Kachingwe has diversified into beans and maize, providing additional income and food security for his family. Looking ahead, he plans to purchase a motorbike for transport and invest in cattle to further expand his livestock. His story is a compelling reminder that targeted agricultural training can unlock livelihoods, foster resilience, and ignite dreams that once felt out of reach.

FROM DEPENDENCY TO SELF SUFFICIENCY : SENGABAY RICE COOPERATIVE RECEIVES RICE MILL AND WATER PUMPS

By Joana Simango



handover ceremony for modern rice mill and water pump

The Sengabay Rice Cooperative in Salima has taken a significant step forward in their journey towards growth and sustainability, thanks to the support from the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) under the RESULT project, funded by We Effect. Recently, the cooperative received a modern rice mill valued at K14,600,000 and water pumps valued at K1.800,000, transforming their capacity to process and irrigate their rice crops.

For years, the Sengabay Rice Cooperative has been a vital player in rice production within the region. However, the lack of their own rice mill posed a significant financial challenge. The cooperative had to pay to access milling services from private millers, a cost that significantly reduced their profits and often limited the volume they could process at once. Furthermore, inconsistent water supply during critical growing seasons made it difficult to maintain high yields. With the new rice mill now in their possession, the cooperative can process their rice independently, reducing operational costs and increasing profit margins. By managing the milling process internally, they no longer need to depend on external service providers, which also saves time and fosters efficiency. Additionally, the mill's ability to process large volumes means that cooperative members can bring their produce for milling locally, enhancing the quality and consistency of their rice products.

The provision of water pumps is equally transformative. These pumps will ensure that the cooperative can consistently irrigate their rice fields, even during dry spells. This reliable water supply will enable the cooperative to expand their farming activities and increase yields. As irrigation challenges diminish, the cooperative plans to introduce double cropping, growing rice twice a year, thereby doubling their output and boosting income for its members.

Speaking during the handover ceremony, the chairperson of Sengabay Rice Cooperative, Habiba Msusa, expressed heartfelt gratitude to AICC and We Effect for their unwavering support. ***"These resources are a game-changer for us. Previously, milling costs took away much of our profit, but now we can process our rice locally. The water pumps will also help us maintain consistent production throughout the year."*** she said.

Also speaking at the ceremony, Mwabi Sichinga, Project Coordinator for We Effect, commended the remarkable progress of the RESULT project and reaffirmed We Effect's commitment to the rice value chain. ***"What we are witnessing here is exactly what we envisioned smallholder farmers taking control of their production and building sustainable businesses. Investing in the rice value chain directly aligns with Malawi's Vision 2063 commercialization objectives"*** said Sichinga.

The RESULT project implemented by AICC with the support of We Effect, continues to empower smallholder farmers through practical interventions that enhance productivity and promote economic empowerment.

ROOTED IN RESILIENCE: MARTHA PETURO'S TRANSFORMATION THROUGH RESULT PROJECT

By Jimmy Kazembe



In the heart of Chizanje Village in Chipoka, Salima, lives Martha Peturo, a resilient mother of seven, a lead farmer, and a passionate gender champion. As a proud rice farmer, Martha plays a crucial role in her community supporting and mentoring over 200 fellow farmers. Her journey of transformation began in 2023 when she joined the CIVISAM project under AICC's RESULT initiative.

Before she received training from AICC, Martha faced numerous farming challenges, especially around the timing and methods of rice planting. *"I didn't know the right time, or the required seed to plant per station,"* she recalls. *"I would use a lot of seeds on a small piece of land and get poor yields."*

That changed when Martha was introduced to the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). By training in water and land management and the effective use of manure, she learned to grow more with less. *"Now, using SRI, I harvest up to 40 to 60 bags of rice from one acre, compared to the 10 to 20 bags I used to get in the past,"* she proudly explains.

Apart from farming techniques, the project also emphasises livestock integration. Martha and other farmers are encouraged to keep livestock for both income and as a source of organic manure for their fields. She now owns goats and chickens, contributing not only to her farm's productivity but also her household's food security and financial resilience.



Martha also highlights the power of collective action introduced through the project. *"Before, we sold our produce individually and vendors would exploit us with low prices. Now, thanks to what we've learned about cooperatives, we sell as a group and negotiate for better prices,"* she says.

Her hard work and the knowledge gained through the RESULT project have already borne fruits. In 2023, Martha earned K2,500,000 from rice farming income she used to pay school fees for her child, buy two goats, and replace her thatched roof house with iron sheets. By the 2024 growing season, her earnings grew to K3,000,000, with this income, she managed to buy a bicycle, a bed, more chickens, and 20 additional goats, while continuing to support her child's education.

Martha's income is further supplemented by her small businesses of selling beans and fish, and participating in village banking. Her entrepreneurial spirit and farming success go hand in hand.

Looking to the future, Martha is determined to expand her rice fields, renovate her home, and grow her agribusiness. But her ultimate dream? *"I want to buy a water pump so I can practice winter cropping and farm throughout the year,"* she says with a hopeful smile.

Through dedication, innovation, and support from the RESULT project, Martha Peturo is not just transforming her own life, she's lighting the way for hundreds of farmers in Chizanje Village

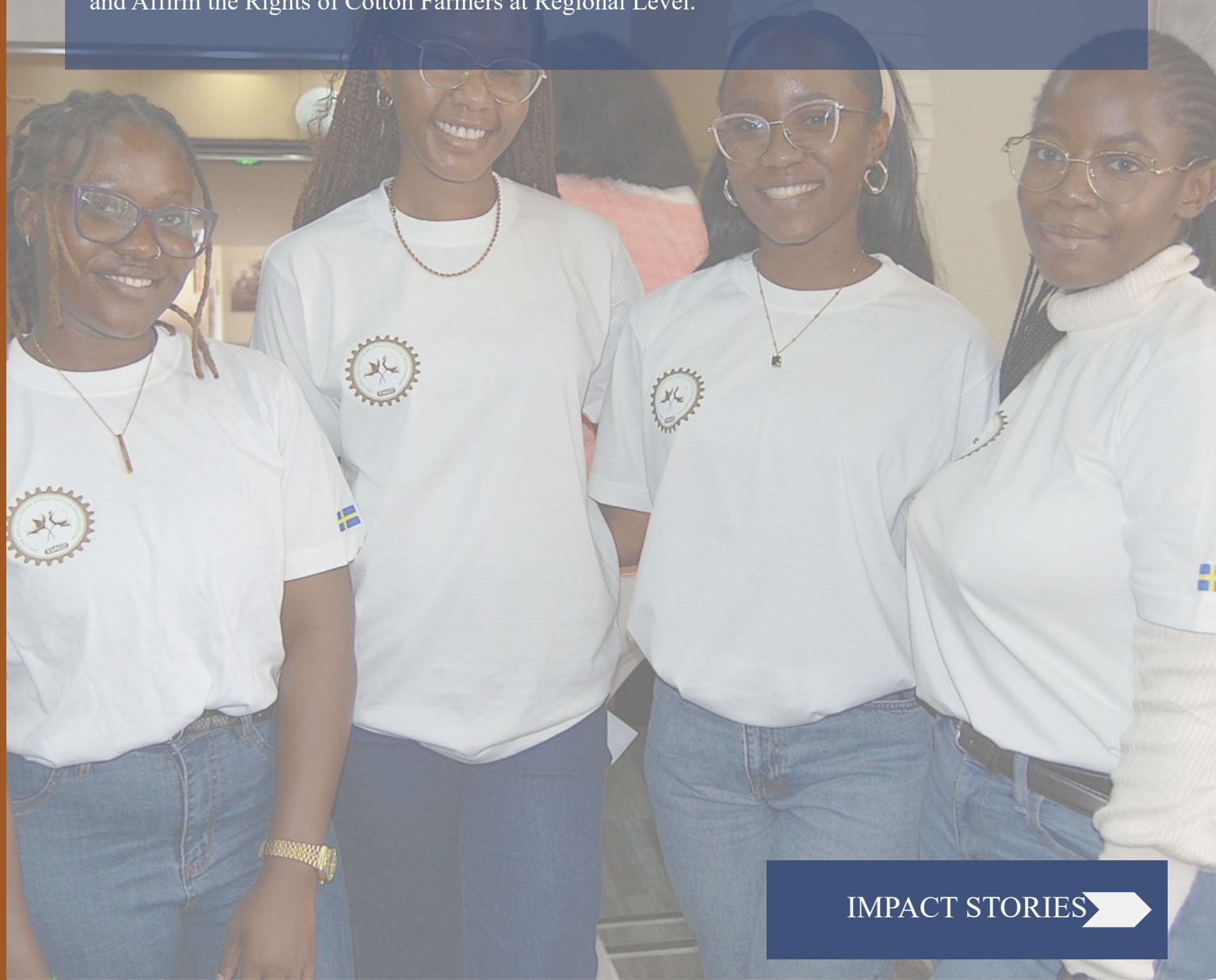




PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Eastern and Southern Africa Cotton Organisation Project

Strengthening Capacity of Cotton Farmers and Partner Organisations to Mobilise and Organise around an Advocacy Agenda to influence key Decision Makers to adopt or amend Policies to Protect and Affirm the Rights of Cotton Farmers at Regional Level.



IMPACT STORIES

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND COMPETITIVE VALUE CHAINS FOR A PROSPEROUS RURAL ECONOMY THROUGH ESACO

By Chimwemwe Chithyoka



The African Institute of Corporate Citizenship joined regional leaders, policymakers, researchers, private sector actors, farmer organizations, and women and youth champions at the 2025 Regional Value Chain Conference, a powerful gathering that united 82 participants, including 42 women and 19 students, from Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Zambia supported by WE Effect.

Held under the theme **“Building Sustainable, Inclusive, and Competitive Value Chains for a Prosperous Rural Economy,”** the conference was a collective call to reimagine the future of agriculture across Eastern and Southern Africa, one where farmers are empowered, markets are strengthened and rural communities are resilient in the face of growing economic and climate pressures.

Speaking during the conference, We Effect Representative Sian Morgan highlighted the urgency of confronting these realities. *“The cotton sector holds strong potential to transform rural economies. However, it continues to face deep-rooted challenges including low productivity, limited value addition, fragmented markets and climate vulnerability that must be addressed to unlock inclusive growth.”*

One of the conference’s most inspiring moments came on the sidelines through the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) Project, where more than 700 women farmers in Zambia received insurance payouts after suffering climate-related losses. The milestone demonstrated the tangible impact of building systems that protect vulnerable producers and strengthen resilience against external shocks.



For AICC, the conference reaffirmed the importance of regional collaboration in advancing sustainable agricultural development. AICC Chief Executive Officer Driana Lwanda emphasized the value of collective action in addressing common challenges. *“Regional integration is key to accelerating growth in the agriculture sector. Many of the challenges our countries face individually are strikingly similar and that is precisely why we need a shared platform for solutions.”*

As conversations transitioned into commitments, delegates agreed on several actions, including the establishment of a regional technicians’ platform to address cotton value chain challenges and seed sovereignty, stronger advocacy for government investment in extension services and increased participation of women and youth within the value chains.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Collaboration, Action and Dialogue to Reinforce the Engagement of Civil Society in improving public financial management (CADRE) project

Strengthening the watchdog role of civil society and SAIs as key players that hold public institutions responsible and accountable on the use of public finances.



ADVANCING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT: DISSEMINATION OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

By Chimwemwe Chithyoka



Group photo, Blantyre conference

The African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) convened civil society organizations leaders, youth-led CSOs, media practitioners, local government officials and community-based actors in Blantyre and Mzuzu to engage with one of Malawi's most critical public accountability tools: The Auditor General's Report. The workshops created a platform for those closest to communities to directly interact with audit evidence and the institution responsible for producing it.

Across its governance work, AICC has consistently observed a critical gap: while CSOs are well positioned to demand accountability, many lack access to, or the capacity to effectively use, the Auditor General's Report. Yet this report, produced annually by the National Audit Office, is a constitutionally mandated assessment of how public resources are managed across government institutions. It is intended to inform Parliament, guide corrective action and equip citizens with evidence to hold duty bearers accountable.



Group photo, Mzuzu conference

With support from the INTOSAI Development Initiative, AICC partnered with the National Audit Office to bring the 2023 report closer to civil society and the media through structured, in-person engagements. The workshops created space for joint reflection on key findings, persistent systemic issues, and what meaningful follow-up should look like at local and regional levels. Discussions were candid and solutions-oriented. Participants examined why audit findings recur, what limits implementation of recommendations, and how civil society can drive sustained accountability. A clear consensus emerged: audit reports alone do not create change impact depends on informed, coordinated action.

A key priority identified was the need to simplify audit information. In its current form, the report remains highly technical and inaccessible to many community structures. Participants emphasized developing user-friendly materials that translate findings into practical information for citizens, enabling broader participation in accountability processes

The engagements also strengthened collaboration between the National Audit Office and civil society, laying a foundation for continued dialogue and joint action. While these workshops mark an important step, the focus now shifts to sustained follow-through tracking recommendations, engaging duty bearers and ensuring audit findings are actively used beyond the workshop space.

By bringing the Auditor General's Report into the hands of those who can act on it, AICC is supporting a shift from awareness to action, advancing accountability and transparency in public finance management where it matters most.

KNOW OUR STAFF

Field Team Spotlight



Grace Mbekeani
Project Officer- Mangochi

“I believe Lasting change happens when communities are equipped with the right skills, exposure, resources and confidence to shape and sustain their economic growth



Mariah Mzumalah
Project Officer- Salima

“I work with cotton farmers and youth to strengthen production, build business skills and promote gender equality so communities can grow quality cotton and earn sustainable incomes



Dyana Mafupa
Project Officer- Balaka

“I believe that every Malawian should value Agriculture as pathway to stronger households and a stronger nation. through resilient farming, diversified livelihoods and women empowerment, families can build a sustainable future



Atisha Mtawali
Project Officer - Salima

“working closely with women in rice farming has shown me how powerful inclusion is. when women have access to knowledge and resources, entire households become more resilient



Davlin Juma
Project Officer- Salima

“Empowering women and youth in the cotton sector is about more than just farming it's about shifting mindsets. Seeing a farmer transform a harvest into a sustainable business is the ultimate proof of our work on the ground.



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