



“Building resilient Communities and Sustainable Businesses in Africa”

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Message from the Board Chair

As we reflect on the remarkable achievements documented in the Annual Projects Report for 2023, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude and admiration for the tireless dedication and unwavering commitment demonstrated by the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) team, our valued partners, and the communities we serve.

In a rapidly changing world fraught with challenges, the importance of corporate citizenship in driving sustainable development and fostering inclusive growth cannot be overstated. At AICC, we are guided by a steadfast belief in the power of collaboration, innovation, and ethical leadership to effect positive change across Africa.

The projects highlighted in this report stand as tangible manifestations of our collective vision for a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future. From initiatives promoting sustainable agriculture and women's empowerment to endeavors aimed at combating climate change and lifting the ultra-poor out of poverty, each undertaking reflects our shared commitment to leaving a lasting impact on the communities and ecosystems we serve.

As we celebrate the successes of 2023, we must also acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. The road to sustainable development is fraught with complexities, requiring resilience, adaptability, and a steadfast dedication to our core values. Yet, in the face of adversity, I am confident that the collective strength of our partnerships and the unwavering dedication of

our team will propel us forward towards our shared goals.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed board members for their invaluable guidance and support, to our dedicated staff for their passion and commitment, and to our partners and stakeholders for their unwavering collaboration and trust. Together, we will continue to chart a course toward a brighter, more sustainable future for Africa and its people.

With warm regards

Professor Roger Tsafack Nanfosso

Board Chairperson



CEO's Foreword

As we navigate the intricate terrain of corporate citizenship in Africa, it is with enormous pride and a profound sense of responsibility that I introduce the Annual Project Report for our flagship projects in 2023, precisely crafted by the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC).

This report serves as a beacon of our unwavering dedication to fostering sustainable development and social responsibility across the continent. In a world facing multifaceted challenges, the significance of corporate engagement in driving positive change cannot be overstated. At AICC, we are acutely aware of the pivotal role that corporations play in shaping the future of our continent.

Our mandate, firmly rooted in the principles of corporate citizenship, is to empower businesses to become catalysts for transformative change, balancing economic prosperity with social and environmental well-being. The projects showcased in this report epitomize the collaborative spirit of diverse stakeholders, including government, civil society organizations, and local communities.

From initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture and empowering women to endeavours focused on combating climate change and lifting the ultra-poor out of poverty, each undertaking reflects our collective commitment to fostering inclusive growth and resilience across Africa.

Sustainable agriculture stands as a cornerstone of our efforts, recognizing its critical role in ensuring food security, preserving natural resources, and enhancing livelihoods. Through innovative practices and partnerships, we are working to empower small-holder farmers, improve access to markets, and promote resilience in the face of climate variability.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to women's empowerment, recognizing its transformative impact on families, communities, and economies. By providing women with access to training, and economic opportunities, we are not only advancing gender equality but also unlocking untapped potential and driving inclusive growth.

Addressing the urgent threat of climate change is another key priority, requiring collective action and bold leadership. Through advocacy, capacity building, and sustainable practices, we are working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance climate resilience, and foster a transition to a low-carbon economy.

Furthermore, our dedication to assisting the ultra-poor in breaking the cycle of poverty underscores our unwavering commitment to leaving no one behind. By providing targeted support, including access to education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities, we are empowering individuals and communities to build a better future for themselves and future generations.

As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, we recognize that our journey towards sustainable development is ongoing and multifaceted. Yet, amid the challenges we face, there exists boundless opportunity for innovation, collaboration, and positive change.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the tireless efforts of our team at AICC, our esteemed partners, and the communities we serve for their unwavering dedication and commitment. Together, we will continue to chart a course toward a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future for all Africa.

Driana Lwanda

Chief Executive Officer

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AICC	African Institute of Corporate Citizenship
UPG	Ultra-Poor graduation
RESULT	Resilient and Sustainable Livelihoods Transformation Project
FARMSE	Financial Access for Rural Markets, Smallholders and Enterprise Programme
WEEECVC	Women Economic Empowerment in Cotton Value Chain
IP	Integrity Platform
COST	Construction Sector Transparency
PTF	Partnership for Transparency Fund
SIDA	Swedish Fund for Development Cooperation Agency
GBV	Gender Based Violence
NASFAM	National smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi
GAPs	Good agricultural Practices
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
SRI	Sustainable Rice Intensification
DEC	District Executive Committee
DAECC	District Agricultural Extension Coordinating Committee
GALs	Gender Action Learning Systems
FBOs	Farmer Business Organization
WOLREC	Women's Legal Resource Centre



Tiwatukule Project (Ultra-Poor Graduation)

Project Specifics

The project's primary goal is to empower 2700 households in extreme poverty within Dedza and Ntcheu Districts, facilitating their successful transition out of poverty. The project is built upon four key pillars: food security, livelihood enhancement, financial sustainability, and social empowerment. To guide its implementation, the project has established specific goals to improve the livelihoods of the identified target population.

The focal point of the initiative is to enhance the accessibility of livelihood protection and interventions for households facing extreme poverty. These households often possess limited productive assets, face unpredictable income, and lack confidence in pursuing new livelihood opportunities. In response, the project seeks to boost their income-earning potential, foster vocational and business development skills, and broaden their access to seed financing.

Additionally, the project aspires to enhance access to services and goods related to financial and social empowerment and inclusion. Recognising the crucial role of financial inclusion in building economic resilience, the initiative strives to elevate financial literacy, proficiency in financial management, and the availability of financial services and products for the participants. Furthermore, it endeavours to elevate the social empowerment of households in extreme poverty, promoting positive shifts in their personal goals, self-confidence, and integration into society.

With a target of reaching 2700 households in ex-

treme poverty in the Dedza and Ntcheu Districts, the initiative focuses on households grappling with significant poverty-related obstacles, limited resources, and uncertain prospects. The primary aim is to uplift these households, fortify their food security, and enhance their overall well-being.

Concentrating its efforts in Dedza and Ntcheu Districts is strategic, as these areas harbour a concentrated population of ultra-poor households needing assistance. The project efficiently engages with and significantly impact the intended beneficiaries by strategically selecting these geographic regions. The primary recipients are 2700 households identified as ultra-poor in Dedza and Ntcheu Districts, and the project's interventions are tailored to address their specific needs effectively. This involves providing diverse opportunities and resources to generate income, enhance financial access and skills, and promote social empowerment within the community. Through the implementation of this initiative, the project aims to elevate the quality of life, ensure sufficient access to food, promote economic stability, and facilitate social inclusion, ultimately guiding individuals out of impoverished conditions.

Progress in the Year

Total Project Outreach

The year under reporting, 2851 individuals were reached (1853 females, constituting 64.9% of the total beneficiaries; 998 males, representing 35.1%). This gender-inclusive approach is a crucial strength of the

project, aiming at addressing the unique needs and challenges women and men face within the community. 964 youths were reached, comprising 33.8% of the total beneficiaries. This targeted focus on youth involvement underscores the project's commitment to empowering the younger generation, recognising their potential as catalysts for sustainable community development. Additionally, the UPG actively reached out to 108 individuals with disabilities (PLWD). This demographic, representing 3.8% of the total outreach, demonstrates the project's dedication to inclusivity and accessibility.

Number of UPG Households provided with targeted support to improve nutrition and water, sanitation and health (WASH)

The nutrition activities have reached 2751 people, with deliberate efforts to include 100 individuals with disabilities. Similarly, WASH trainings have been provided to 2870 households, emphasising gender-inclusive education and accessibility for 105 people with disabilities. The presence of kitchens in 2102 households signifies a commitment to foundational household infrastructure, including 77 individuals with disabilities. Additionally, 2220 households boast backyard gardens, promoting sustainable agriculture and food security, with 81 participants with disabilities included. Improved functional toilets are accessible to 2396 households, demonstrating a focus on sanitation, including 87 individuals with disabilities. Lastly, 2248 households have functional handwashing stations, reinforcing good hygiene practices, with 82 individuals with disabilities benefiting. These efforts reflect a comprehensive and inclusive strategy to enhance health, hygiene, and sustainable practices, ensuring that vulnerable populations are not left behind in the pursuit of improved well-being.

UPG Households trained in Financial Management.

The training of households in financial literacy has reached 1686 males and 908 females. However, the success is evident in the project's commitment to reaching both genders and fostering household financial empowerment. Active participation in savings and loans groups, with 1853 males and 998 females regularly involved, demonstrates the project's success in establishing community-based financial mechanisms. Similarly, the engagement of households, including youth and individuals with disabilities (PLWD), in borrowing from Village Savings and Loans (VSL) presents a dual challenge. Youth and PLWD face unique barriers to financial in-

clusion, and addressing these challenges requires tailored strategies to ensure their meaningful participation. The success here is notable, given that 964 youths and 108 PLWD-led households are actively borrowing. Overcoming barriers and fostering financial resilience among these vulnerable groups is an ongoing triumph. People with bank accounts from Formal Financial Institutions (FFI), numbering 1686 males and 908 females, showcase considerable success in broadening financial access. The adoption of mobile money services by 1390 males and 749 females, including 723 youths and 81 PLWD-led households, indicates success in leveraging technology for financial transactions.

Number of people trained in entrepreneurship and Business Management

The training programs have reached 1786 males, 998 females, 877 youths, and 98 PLWD. A positive change from the training initiative is evident in the substantial number of individuals who have translated their acquired skills into tangible business activities. Among the trained individuals, 1714 males, 958 females, 842 youths, and 94 PLWD are now actively engaged in small business ventures. This success reflects the project's effectiveness in empowering participants to apply their entrepreneurial knowledge in real-world scenarios. Moreover, transitioning from training to active entrepreneurship has brought about positive changes such as economic self-sufficiency, increased household incomes, and confidence among participants. The establishment of small businesses has not only provided livelihood opportunities but has also contributed to the overall economic resilience of the community.

UPG Households with evidence of resilience to disasters and risks

In total, 1686 males, 908 females, 877 youths, and 98 PLWD-led households have received training in climate-smart agricultural practices. The success of the training is evident in the widespread engagement of households, showcasing the project's dedication to building capacity in climate-resilient farming techniques. The positive impact of climate-smart agriculture training extends beyond individual households, contributing to the community's overall resilience to climate change, sustainable food production, and improved livelihoods.



Resilient and Sustainable Livelihoods Transformation Project

Project Specifics

AICC in partnership with We-Effect is implementing the Resilient & Sustainable Livelihood transformation (RESULT) Project in Salima district with rice farmers potentially at Funde, Jumabunguzi cooperatives and many other rice farmer clubs in areas of Mpatsa Njoka, Senga-bay, Kachala and Kandulu schemes in the district.

AICC through RESULT Project is developing partnership and collaboration with other district stakeholders in concentrating resources on building the capacity of rice farmers, empowering women and the youth on issues of land ownership, involvement in decision making and taking leading roles in groups. The project ensures that farmers improve agricultural productivity and production, income, food and nutrition, security, resilience to climate change, effective, Equitable and Just Food Systems.

The project is being implemented by AICC in partnership with We Effect, with financial support from SIDA (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The goal of the project is to contribute towards active participation of 5,000 women and youth in exercising their democratic and human rights to Just Food Systems in the Rice Subsector. The project aims to address key challenges and promote equitable and sustainable food systems in the target area.

Progress in the Year

Improved Governance and Knowledge Management

Within AICC, the policies that relate to gender mainstreaming have been reviewed in the period under consideration. The review of gender mainstream-

ing policies within AICC is significant as it directly aligns with the project's broader goal of promoting equitable and just food systems. By enhancing gender-related policies, AICC aims to create an organizational environment that supports the empowerment of women and youth, fostering inclusivity and gender-responsive practices in all aspects of the project. AICC holds the Gender and Sexual Harassment Policy which has been found wanting to the advocated Safeguarding policies on Protection from Sexual Exploitation Abuse (PSEA). The PSEA is a key principle in UNHCR's Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response. AICC plans to incorporate PSEA principles and review its policy accordingly. AICC also intends to incorporate the food system approach in its strategic implementation documents. Within the period, an assessment of the gender representation of the Board of Directors was conducted where the Board made a resolution to add additional members to the Board where 75% should be women. It is in this regard that 4 additional members (3 Women and 1 Male) were inducted into the AICC Board. The addition of the members has also included critical areas of Finance, Monitoring and Evaluation, Legal as well as Programs to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of support to management. The project also supported the activities of the Legumes Development Trust Technical working groups and Board which is hosted within the AICC.

Increased Organization Technical and Management Capacity and delivery

The successful implementation of key project components, namely the Food Systems Approach, Gender Action Learning Systems, Governance, and Social Accountability, underscores our commitment to a comprehensive and inclusive approach. This outcome not only signifies progress but also lays the foundation for sustained success in the project objectives. To bolster AICC organization's capabilities, a targeted training initiative was executed during the reporting period. This initiative specifically focused on equipping 54 AICC staff members with the necessary skills and knowledge pertaining to the pivotal elements of the project. This strategic approach aimed at ensuring that our team possesses the expertise needed to effectively convey the intricacies of the food system to the beneficiaries as the project progresses. Moreover, seizing the opportunity presented by a review meeting held within the specified timeframe, the project extended its training efforts to include 20 stakeholders from the Salima district. By broadening the scope of the training program, we not only enhanced our internal capacity but also engaged external partners, fostering a collaborative and synergistic environment for effective project implementation. A notable achievement during this period was the identification and training of 10 gender champions, comprising 5 males and 5 females. These champions, who are representatives from farmer's groups, played a pivotal role in the 16 days of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) activism commemoration. By incorporating gender-focused training, the project not only contributes to the empowerment of participants but also aligns with broader social initiatives.

In addition to AICC's internal training initiatives, the project demonstrated its commitment to community engagement and awareness by actively participating in external events. The World Food Day commemoration in Salima was a prime example, where the project provided support that enabled the participation of 5 AICC staff, 17 male, and 10 female district stakeholders. This strengthened partnerships at the local level. Furthermore, the project's participation in the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF, 2023) under the theme "Recover, Regenerate, and Act: Africa's solutions to Food System Transformation" highlighted AICC's commitment to staying abreast of global advancements. With a

specific focus on youths and women, AICC's representative actively engaged in discussions and activities that contribute to shaping Africa's sustainable food systems.

Improved agricultural productivity, income, food and nutrition security and resilience to climate change

The project beneficiaries have been refreshed on important Good Agriculture Practices (GAPs). Most importantly, the farmers have been called to adopt the Systems of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique which potentially provides for improved rice quality and productivity. The increased adoption of the SRI technique is significant as it directly aligns with the project's goal of improving agricultural productivity and production. SRI offers the potential for enhanced rice quality and increased productivity, contributing to the overall aim of building resilient and sustainable livelihoods for rice farmers. Several sources, including NASFAM, who rolled-out the technology in 2014, confirmed that SRI help farmers mitigate the effects of climate change that have led to unpredictable weather patterns.

AICC therefore promoted the technology among rice-growing cooperatives in Salima district, and also communicated the of improved rice seed and sustainable rice production. In total, 422 rights holders have been trained, 252 of which are women against the target of 591. To consolidate the trainings, 10 demonstration sites have been identified for the season. The farmers also received trainings on rice farming business management and entrepreneurship. Key to this was the need for farmers to take rice farming business seriously by incorporating business insights in their farming such as issues to do with market research, value addition, retail marketing and customer satisfaction. Linkage to both input and output markets was also done.

Furthermore, the project has conducted cooperative awareness meetings to the farmer clubs namely Mikute and Kandulu farmer clubs that are yet part of any registered farmer cooperative to either be part of one or form one which can potentially provide them with an opportunity to access benefits that only accrue to registered groups.

For already established cooperatives, the project is providing coaching and mentorship sessions for best utilization of the equipment and assets available to them. For instance, Funde and Juma Bunguzi coop-

eratives own warehouses, rice milling, grading and packaging which have been underutilized. The project intends to guide them towards full utilization of these assets. During the period the project also supported the Cooperatives Annual General Meetings.

Effectiveness, learning and adaptation

In addition to the training of 54 AICC staff in key areas such as Food Systems Approaches, Governance, Social Accountability, and Gender Action Learning, AICC has proactively engaged in a comprehensive review of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (M&E) tools. This involved the active participation of the M&E Officer in a capacity-building program facilitated by We Effect for a sister project under the Women Economic Empowerment initiative. This collaborative effort not only ensured a robust M&E framework but also demonstrated our commitment to leveraging shared resources and expertise within the consortium. A notable aspect of our implementation strategy has been the empowerment of field teams through the application of Food Systems Approach skills and Gender Action Learning Systems (GALs) skills at the community level. By integrating these skills into project execution, AICC has strengthened its staff's capacity, and has ensured the practical application of theoretical knowledge, enhancing the impact of its interventions.

To further extend our reach and impact, the project took a proactive stance in training 20 partner technical staff, specifically at the District Agriculture Extension and Coordination Committee (DAECC) and District Executive Committee (DEC), in both food systems and gender-equality responsiveness. This collaborative effort ensures that our project is aligned with local contexts and builds a network of skilled individuals beyond our immediate team.

A key learning from the program has been the importance of internal capacity building versus reliance on external consultants. Rather than opting for costly external expertise, the project focused on strengthening the skills of our staff, thereby creating a sustainable and self-reliant framework for continued success. For example, the facilitation of baseline survey by We Effect Regional Staff has been a learning experience for AICC staff operating at a local level. The assessment was crucial, undertaken in collaboration with the We Effect and its partner within Malawi. AICC team were actively en-

gaged in developing the survey methodology collectively as a collaborative effort. Moreover, the implementation of the baseline survey utilized innovative methods, including data collection through online digital platforms such as Solstice, as trained by We Effect. This not only streamlined the data collection process but also allowed for efficient analysis, enabling us to derive meaningful insights promptly. At the time of reporting, the baseline results were not published, but expectations are high that it will provide a snapshot of the initial project landscape.

Finally, there was another notable stride towards effectiveness and inclusivity is the addition of three women with expertise in Accounting and Finance, Program Operations, and Legal services to our Board of Directors. This strategic move not only enhances diversity within our leadership but also ensures a broader spectrum of skills for effective decision-making. The induction of these board members in Governance systems reflects our commitment to overall oversight and prudent management of AICC.

Organisational Development

CIVSAM project has inspired AICC to collaborate with government offices over gender transformation and rights-based approaches. By actively participating in DAECC and DEC committees at the district level, the organization has not only raised awareness of its activities but also established vital connections with stakeholders, facilitating coordination and understanding of donor needs.

The engagement in project reviews halfway through implementation indicates a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptability based on stakeholder feedback, further strengthening the organization's learning culture. Overall, the collaborative efforts and strategic engagements showcased in the narrative highlight the organization's proactive approach in building internal strength and leveraging external support for program success. In addition, AICC collaborated with WORLEC to support women's initiatives, specifically addressing land rights issues, reflects a strategic approach to seeking external expertise in navigating complex challenges. The partnership contributed to the identification and training of 10 gender champions from various Farmer-Based Organizations (FBOs), this further underscores our commitment to gender equality responsiveness, creating a network of advocates within the community.



Women Economic Empowerment in the Cotton Value Chain

Project Specifics

AICC with financial support from We Effect is implementing WEE CVC project in Malawi, whose overall objective is to increase gender equality and empowerment of 9600 women and youth in the cotton sub-sector in Malawi.

The project's specific objectives are increasing the availability of, accessibility to and utilisation of productive resources, financial services and extension services among women and youth in the cotton value chain; reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience to negative environmental and climatic changes impacting smallholder cotton farmers and ensuring that women and female youth fully participate in and are able to meaningfully influence decision making processes in the cotton sub-sector at local, national and regional levels. The project is being implemented in three districts; Mangochi, Salima and Balaka targeting smallholder women and youth cotton farmers and the cotton value chain players.

Progress in the Year

Market linkages between cotton ginning companies and the rights holders in Namkumba, Rivirivi, Chinguluwe and Chipoka EPAs

After conducting sensitization meetings with the rights holders at the onset of Phase 2, AICC planned to conduct 4 meetings with representatives from the cotton ginning companies and the rights holders. At the reporting period, the 8 meetings were conducted and in attendance were representatives from Masapa Cotton Ginners; Malawi Cotton Company and Afrasian Lim-

ited. The meetings were aimed at enhancing access to inputs and markets through the formal agreement.

Through a contract farming agreement, the ginning companies were able to provide inputs to the farmers and buy seed cotton from smallholder farmers under the WEE CVC project. A total of 3198 smallholder cotton farmers (2495 females and 703 female youth) were able to sell their seed cotton at a premium price of MK600.00 per kilo above the minimum MK580.00/Kg in the previous season. The contract agreement between the cotton ginners and the farmers led to the increase in the number of cotton farmers and simplified the means of access of inputs. As part of the package, the farmers were given hybrid cotton seeds, foliar fertilizer and herbicides. Through the linkage arrangement, farmers had an opportunity to have easy access to both the production inputs and markets for the seed cotton.

Cotton field days on reduced use of agro-chemicals and Integrated Pest Man-

During the year, AICC facilitated 10 field days in Chinguluwe, Namkumba, Rivirivi and Chipoka Extension Planning Areas (EPAs). The achievement was against the initial plan to conduct 8 field days in these EPAs. These field days were conducted at different stages namely initial, vegetative and harvesting in order to give rights holders an opportunity to appreciate different practices in the cotton field. The aim of the field days were to advocate for adoption of Integrated Pests Management in cotton production as opposed to use of synthetic chemicals in cotton fields. The field days were co-organized with other partners like Quton

Malawi, a cotton seed company in Malawi and officers from the Ministry of Agriculture under the EPAs.

The Study Circle Organizers and gender champions played pivotal roles in the planning and the execution of the field days. Some of the key stands showcased during the field days were; use of the natural remedies to control cotton pests and diseases, proper use of synthetic chemicals, safety during chemical spraying, proper sprayer handling, proper disposal of cans and bottles, elimination of child labour in cotton fields and avoidance of use of lactating and expectant mothers during chemical spraying in cotton fields and displays on women-led village savings and loans and study circle models. The field days were attended by 1461 right holders (992 women and 469 female youths). After the field days, it was pleased to note that most of the practices which were showcased during the field days have brought in some changes in practices on the part of the farmers. Some of the improved practices included the making and application of manure, making of box ridges and quest for planting improved seeds.

Mentorship and Coaching of Women Gender Champions

During the year, AICC facilitated a workshop on the mentoring and coaching of 45 gender champions drawn from various women led groups in the four EPAs. The gender champions were groomed on their roles and responsibilities in advocating for equal rights in the communities and also to advocate for equal access to productive resources in their communities. Besides being groomed on their roles and responsibilities, the Gender Champions were also groomed on Gender and development intersectional approach, Women Economic Empowerment in Cotton Value Chain, Advocacy and gender and financial literacy. The gender champions also he training was participatory and gender champions shared experiences and insights. During the EPA level annual review meetings conducted by the AICC WEE CVC Team, Gender Champions displayed levels of competent on gender related issues in their community as they were given opportunities to make presentations on what the community should be doing in relation to the gender issues. Local chiefs expressed satisfaction with the levels of understanding between most couples in the communities due to the messages on genders roles, human rights and gender related violence in the communities which were been champi-

oned by the Gender Champions. The trainings resulted into a 20% reduction in the gender based violence in most households as depicted in the annual assessment exercise which was randomly conducted in the EPAs.



The 2023 Seed Cotton Market Monitoring and adherence to Contract Farming

AICC in liaison with Cotton Council of Malawi, Cotton Farmers Association (COFA) and Cotton Officers from the Ministry of Agriculture conducted 3 monitoring of seed cotton markets in designated selling points in the districts. Through the WEE CVC Project, AICC championed the establishment 42 cotton seed cotton selling points and market committees to aid proper aggregation and purchasing of seed cotton from the farmers. Prior to the opening of the markets, the Cotton Council of Malawi made announcement of the licensed ginnerers who were given rights to purchase seed cotton from the farmers.

The licensed ginnerers were Masapi Ginnerers, Afrisian Limited and Malawi Cotton Company. During series of monitoring visits it was observed that the marketing committees helped much in ensuring smooth running of the markets. The involvement of women and youth in these committees also helped much in ensuring that both women and youth has access to output markets. In all the EPAs, Afrisian had 26 markets while Malawi Cotton Company and Masapa Ginnerers had 28 and 14 markets respectively.

The three companies managed to purchase a total of 9486 MT on seed cotton. So far farmers have been bringing good quality and well graded lint. No loan defaulting issue has so far been presented, however, Afrisian has presented one case where the loan borrower died in 2022 and the family has been approached on

the way forward. Furthermore, in Chinguluwe EPA in Salima, it was observed that most of MCC markets were financially dry for some 3 days evidenced by buyers and farmer raising their concerns. 3 markets have market committees which were instituted to oversee the problems of the markets. In Chipoka it was observed that marketing centers are very far from each other which affect the transport cost for the farmers to be too high. Even if the farmers are not happy with the low prices of cotton on the markets, the ginnerers are very much pleased with the good quality seed cotton being brought to the market by the farmers. This is a true reflection of the trainings on proper use of chemicals and good agriculture practices which farmers learnt through the study circles.



WEE CVC Regional Learning and Reflection Workshop.

As part of ensuring smooth transitioning from the pilot phase to the Women Economic Empowerment Phase, a regional team comprising representatives from Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique met in order to reflect and learn from each other on the activities implemented in the pilot phase. Workshop was held in Zambia on May 22nd to 26th, 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia.

The main objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- I. To discuss the recommendations which were made during the Mid Term Review exercise.
 - II. To discuss the proposed reporting template for quarterly reports for the Women Economic Empowerment Project
 - III. To discuss learnings and reflections from the implementing countries.
- During the workshop it was clear that there are numerous perennial challenges in the cotton value chain hence necessitating an increase in the number of farm-

ers leaving cotton production. Prices and availability of cotton seed has also affected cotton production. In Zambia, there is some potential from a value addition point of view with the handlooms. There is need to consider spinning and weaving. No spinning and weaving factory for yarn. In Mozambique there is value addition but the market for handloom products is elusive. The products are not perfect quality due to capacity. Yarn has to be sourced externally. In Zimbabwe, there is potential as a main crop grown by 300 000.

Value addition will improve the economy for women. There is need for the right technology for the value addition efforts. In Malawi, some of the issues which were discussed during the workshop were part of the stakeholders meeting agenda which most value chain players lamented on. Amongst the issues, lack of motivation on the part of the farmers to grow more cotton was singled out as one of the factors affecting the growth of the sector in the four countries.

The highlights from the meetings brought in good results as ginnerers started pressing for localized seed multiplication initiative and/or import Open Pollinated Cotton Varieties in order to improve the situation of seed availability and accessibility in all the cotton producing areas. One ginner, Masapa Cotton Company started registering farmers across the country to engage in cotton contract.

Networking meetings with research institutions to identify key areas of collaborative study and carry out field trials

Three partner organization meetings were conducted with strategic players in the research and development field in the cotton value chain. The partners were the Makoka and Chitala Cotton Research Stations under Department of Agriculture Research Services in the Ministry of Agriculture and Quton Malawi Limited.

During the meetings, AICC understood that Quton has made some strides in coming up with cotton varieties that are doing well in most parts of the country after various field trials and farmer engagement mechanisms in all the fifteen cotton growing district in Malawi. In 2023, Quton had 6 trials and 56 demonstration plots mounted in 6 districts across Malawi. In all these trials and demonstrations, Quton had been showcasing four cotton seed varieties namely; 467, 570, 569 and 570. Through various farmer engagements and feed-

back sessions, farmers have preferred 569 and 570 due to high yielding aspects and ability to withstand Malawi's weather. As regards Makoka and Chitala research stations, government of Malawi has also taken a leading role in promoting seed multiplication initiative through engagement of new seed company known as Seed Works.

Collaboratively, new cotton seed trials have been mounted for the past three years and it is expected that come next year there might be a release of new cotton varieties on the market. In view of this development, AICC through the Women Economic Empowerment project will plan to sensitize cotton farmers to buy the two cotton varieties which have shown a very good economic value through increased yield and resistant to pests and harsh weather. Outcomes from meetings were; finalization of the trial analyses and submission of the analysis report to the Agriculture Technology Clearing Committee.

Training rights holders in Group dynamics and conflict management

During the Year, AICC facilitated 8 sessions of group dynamics and leadership trainings for 60 women led businesses in the four EPAs. The trainings were organized in order to ensure effective operations of the women business groups. The trainings were conducted in liaison with the business group leaders and the interim executive members.

Among others the key topics that were covered include: developing a group vision and objectives for the business group, leadership skills, conflict management mechanisms, and communication and facilitation skills. After the trainings, most members of the groups showcased changes in their behaviours and group cohesion was good as there were no cases of conflicts emanating from the groups. It total there were 1458 rights holders (988 adult women, 84 female youth and 386) who were trained in group dynamics and leadership skills.

District Civil Society Organization forums and District Executive and Agriculture Coordinating Committee meetings

During the Year, there were four stakeholder meetings which were conducted and attended by AICC-Women Economic Empowerment Project Team in Balaka, Salima and Mangochi districts. These meetings included the District Executive Committee (DEC), District Ag-

riculture Stakeholders Panel (DASP), District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committees (DAECCs).

During the meetings, AICC made a presentation on the progress of establishing women led business groups and selection of gender champions at EPA level with an aim of ensuring that women voices are heard and women are taking part in all development activities in the EPA. In total there are 45 gender champions who have been working hand in hand with the Study Circle Organizers in executing the gender related activities in the EPAs. Beside the involvement of gender champions update, the district committee made some recommendations that all NGOs in Agriculture should be regularly attending the meetings so that they can be able to discuss gender related issues and approach the gender related challenges as a district. With 8 advocacy meetings which were held in the 4 EPAs by the gender champions, it was clearly observed that the communities need series of engagement and advocacy meetings on women rights, gender-based violence elimination and reporting and women economic empowerment among others.

The advocacy drive was also conducted during the 16 days of activism period in the EPAs. As the year went by, it was good to note that the total number of women participating in various project activities increased from 20% in the first three months of the project to 60% in the last quarter of first year of the WEECVC project owing to the knowledge on women involvement in economic empowerment initiatives like businesses and group participation.



Women Restaurant and Poultry Business in Namkumba EPA in Mangochi



During the reporting period, AICC facilitated the launch for various business groups under the Women Economic Empowerment Project. The symbolic business groups launch took place in Namkumba EPA in Mangochi. Tsanya Women Business group was the host. Tsanya Women Business group is a member group of an-all-women members. The group was formed on 27 April 2023 as a result of the awareness and sensitization meetings which were conducted in the area. The group originates from Muli village, TA Namkumba within Namkumba Extension Planning Area (EPA) in Mangochi district.

The group has 13 members comprising of 12 women and 1 man and the members are driven by the need to improve their economic security. After the process of awareness and group formation, the women decided to venture into chicken rearing and running a restaurant. Chicken rearing and running a restaurant are amongst the viable businesses in the area. The launch was graced by the We Effect Country representative, Regional Program Manager and Traditional Authority Chamba. To date the group revenue has increased from K250,000 in the first quarter to K718,000.00 in the last quarter of the year. Notably, some members from the groups used the proceeds from the business to pay for land rentals, school fees for their children and purchasing of basic needs for their homes.

Facilitating trainings in Record Keeping and Business management.

During the Year, AICC through the WEE-CVC project has trained 789 right holders from 30 women led business

groups. These groups were engaged in various businesses like; beekeeping, horticulture and poultry farming. The objective of the activity was to establish systematic records keeping which helps in promoting transparency and accountability for sustainability of the businesses.

Proper record keeping will as well help farmers to plan well in calculating and sourcing of capital, keep updated operating expenses and be able to calculate profit/loss. The record keeping is also essential in profit sharing as these women are doing their businesses as a group. In total there were 89 women farmers who attended the training. It was very imperative for the farmers to properly keep farm as well as business records if they want to realise profits. Knowledge and skills farmers gained on record keeping will help them access inputs and markets but also engage in produce aggregation for better markets. Those groups who were trained in the business and record keeping were now able to calculate their profits and losses but also be able to know if they are on track or making losses through the records on sales and inputs invested in the businesses

Gender advocacy meetings at community level

During the Year, AICC engaged Gender Officer from Salima District Council to train members of Village Development Committees in the areas of gender, GBV, women empowerment and decision making. Throughout the training participatory approaches were employed whereby participants had time for focus group discussions, case studies presentations, questions and answers sessions as well as debate sessions. Another interesting area was on examples of GBV prevalence in their communities and how they are handled and then later were equipped with knowledge on gender, gender based violence as well as sexual harassment.

The participants were also enlightened on the ways and where they can report GBV cases. Finally, the participants were challenged to be gender advocates in their respective areas. In total 53 members were trained (9 Female Youth, 10 Female Adults, 17 male adults, 17 male Youths). AICC took advantage of the platform to introduce the gender champions to the community structure for coordination.

Establishment and management of agro-forestry nurseries.

From the 50 planned nurseries, AICC facilitated the establishment of 87 agro-forestry nurseries and

12,000 seedlings in all the EPAs. Right holders were trained in proper management of the forests and establishment of the nurseries. The aim of the agroforestry trainings was to equip women and youths with skills and knowledge in climate resilience strategies. In collaboration with forestry department, the right holder's groups received 50,000 polytubes for nurseries establishments and also trained in nursery management.

The seeds were locally sourced such as Acacias, Mtanganga, fruits, polyacantha and other locally available seeds which can do well in their area. In the 87 nurseries women and youth dominated the participation, 1875 members (1243 women and 632 youths) against the targeted 1500 members. These clubs are also involving in various business and are in VSLs clubs. It is expected that these seedlings will be planted in 13 local community woodlots in the 4 EPAs.

Monitoring of sharing out of the Village Savings and Loaning Association (VSLAs).

The WEECVC team monitored the sharing out of savings in the VSLA groups in all EPAs. Key areas during this monitoring were: record keeping on ledger as well as individual VSLA record keeping and books. Much emphasis was on the value of share, number of the shares, interest rate and calculations. Farmers were advised to have interest rate below 20 percent and minimum of 10 percent as recommended by MUSCCO so that all members can benefit from the facility. In total there were 304 VSLAs in all the districts. During the Year, money amounting to MK944.67 million was under Savings and loaning within the members of the groups. As per the main purpose of the establishment of the VSLAs in the EPAs, farmers, members of the VSLAs used the proceeds to buy inputs for cotton production in the 2023/24 season and purchasing of other basic needs.

Commemoration of African Child Rights Day

In the year, AICC being part of the Gender/Child Protection Technical Working in Balaka district was part of the African Child Day commemoration at Mbera Primary School Ground. This year, the day was commemorated under the theme 'The Rights of the Child in the digital environment'. This created a platform where Stakeholders were brought together and advocated for Child Rights. As WEE-CVC, the Balaka Field Officer advocated for the safety and health for children and women during cotton production. Two gender champions were also in attendance as one way of

ensuring that they are equipped with knowledge and skills on rights protection. These engagements were very influential in advocating for the elimination of involvement of children in the cotton related activities



The Sixteen days of GBV activism campaign launch

During the Year, WEECVC Team participated in 16 days of Activism against Gender Based Violence. The events took place in Mangochi at Lungwena Primary School ground and Salima district at T/A Salima ground. During the launching events, there were series of activities marking the climax of the message delivery of Gender Based Violence related messages. Some of the activities includes dances, poems, commemoration road big walk, football matches, dramas, displays and panel discussions among others. In total there were 2174 participants (1047 women, 874 female youth and 253 adult youth).

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign that takes place between November 25 (the International Day against Violence against Women and Girls) and December 10 (International Human Rights Day) in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasize that violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights.

The 2023 World Cotton Day Cerebration

Malawi joined the world in celebrating the World Cotton day (WCD) on 4th October 2023 at Ngodzi Primary School Ground in Salima District. The theme for the year's World Cotton Day was- "making cotton fair and sustainable for all: from farm to fashion".



Climate Smart Project

Project Specifics

Climate smart project is being implemented in a consortium where AICC seeks to enhance the rice value chain in Karonga. The project prioritizes the advancement of various facets crucial to the sector's success. The project concentrates on bolstering the operational efficiency and strategic networking of rice cooperatives, recognizing them as pivotal nodes within the value chain. Through tailored interventions, The project fortifies their managerial capacities, facilitating streamlined operations and decision-making processes. Additionally, AICC's effort extends to augmenting their marketing strategies, equipping them with the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate competitive markets effectively. Particular emphasis has also been placed on fostering inclusivity by ensuring that women and individuals with disabilities are not only integrated into cooperative structures but also empowered with tailored support to actively participate in and benefit from the rice value chain.

Central to AICC's initiative is the imperative to enhance access to credit facilities for rice cooperatives, recognizing the pivotal role financing plays in sustaining and expanding agricultural enterprises. By facilitating access to credit, AICC sought to empower cooperatives with the financial means to invest in crucial infrastructure, technology, and capacity-building initiatives, thereby fortifying their long-term sustainability and resilience. The focus focus on gender and disability inclusion ensures that marginalized groups are not left behind but rather provided with equitable opportunities to engage meaningfully in the rice value chain. Through these concerted efforts, AICC aims not only to strengthen the economic viability of rice pro-

duction but also to foster social equity and inclusivity within the agricultural landscape of the target districts.

Progress in the Year

Summary of what has been done in the year

We have actively engaged with a diverse array of stakeholders throughout the agricultural ecosystem. Recognizing the interconnectedness of the value chain, we have collaborated closely with farmers, input suppliers, processors, distributors, and other relevant actors to ensure a comprehensive approach to strengthening the sector. Through ongoing dialogues and partnerships, we have leveraged the expertise and resources of these stakeholders to develop strategies that address the multifaceted challenges facing the rice value chain.

Our engagement with various actors in the value chain has fostered a culture of collaboration and knowledge-sharing, enabling us to harness collective insights and best practices. By facilitating cross-sectoral exchanges and collaborations, we have fostered synergies that amplify the impact of our interventions and enhance the resilience of the rice value chain. Moreover, this inclusive approach has empowered stakeholders at all levels to take ownership of the project's objectives and contribute proactively to its success. As a result, our efforts have been characterized by a spirit of cooperation and mutual support, laying a solid foundation for sustainable development within the rice sector of the target districts.



The Sesame Platform

Project Specifics

Understanding the importance of collaboration and stakeholder engagement, AICC has pioneered the establishment of Sesame value chain platform, which serves as dynamic forum for fostering dialogue, knowledge exchange, and collective action among stakeholders.

The platform has been designed to address multifaceted challenges facing specific industries while leveraging the diverse expertise and resources of participants to drive meaningful change in the sesame value chain. Through a participatory and inclusive approach, AICC facilitates the co-creation of strategies and solutions that promote sustainability, resilience, and equitable development along the entire value chain.

Progress in the Year

National Sesame Stakeholder Consultative Workshop

African Institute of Corporate Citizenship in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture organized a National Sesame Stakeholder Consultative Workshop at Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe. The Workshop was financially supported by AICC, Shire Valley Transformation Project as well as the Transforming Agriculture through Diversification and Entrepreneurship (TRADE) Programme. The objective of the workshop was to bring together stakeholders from across the Sesame value chain to discuss and address challenges related to production, marketing, processing and value addition as well as policy.

The event commenced with opening remarks from the Chief Executive Officer of AICC Mrs.

Driana Lwanda. Her remarks were followed by the Director of Crops Mrs. Elida Kazira who expressed gratitude towards the planning and organization of the meeting but also expressed the importance of Sesame Production to the Country's Agriculture. The Guest of honor, the Controller of Agriculture and Technical Services Mr. Alfred Mwenifumbo opened the meeting and challenged the participants to walk the talk by ensuring that a road map towards development of a Sesame Value Chain or Platform is agreed upon at the end of the workshop.

The keynote address was delivered by a representative of the Director of Agriculture Research Services Dr. Esnat Yohane who focused her address on the challenges being faced by Sesame farmers centering on Production, Marketing, Value addition as well as Policy. The workshop incorporated presentations that were made on various topics related to the sesame value chain. The workshop also included breakaway sessions, where different Technical Working Groups members collaborated to brainstorm key issues in their respective TWGs and develop a roadmap for the future. By fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing, the workshop aimed to drive positive change and improve the livelihoods of sesame farmers in Malawi.

Sesame Scoping Exercise

In response to the increasing interest in sesame within the Japanese market, WFP enlisted AICC to oversee a comprehensive sesame scoping exercise in select districts of Malawi. This initiative aimed to assess the viability of sesame cultivation, evaluate the existing value chain, and identify growth opportunities. The exercise was conducted in Karonga, Rumphi and Mzimba



The Beef Platform

Project Specifics

AICC has hosts the Beef Platform, that focuses on the success of beef value chain in Malawi. The beef industry holds significant economic potential and plays a vital role in food security, employment generation, and rural livelihoods in Malawi. However, like many agricultural sectors, it faces numerous challenges ranging from limited market access and productivity constraints to environmental sustainability concerns and market dynamics.

The Beef Platform initiative seeks to harness the collective efforts and expertise of stakeholders involved in the beef value chain to address these challenges and unlock the sector's full potential. By establishing a collaborative platform, AICC aims to facilitate dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collective action among diverse actors, including farmers, processors, traders, input suppliers, policymakers, researchers, and civil society organizations.

Progress in the Year

Strengthened production skills of smallholder producers to engage in commercial agriculture

AICC facilitated refresher training to AVOs, other stakeholders and animal scouts. The main goal of the activity was to refresh frontline workers on the exact and detailed activities and type of training that would be conducted. This event was followed by the mounting of demonstration plots. The demonstration were key in the training of beef farmers. Demonstrations plots were established to encourage farmers adopt the disseminated information in their respective localities

Strengthened FBOs skills for collective services and market linkages

AICC continued to implement group dynamic trainings to grouped beef farmers, particularly the members of a dip tank committee. AICC led cattle structures in discussions and coaching along with local community stakeholders; beef farmers, village heads, ADC, VDC, ASP committees and the youth. The presence of key stakeholders was inspiring for the farmer groups to commit towards financial stability through VSLs.

Strengthened business skills of smallholder producers to engage in commercial agriculture

AICC along with partners demonstrated methods of drying livestock pasture in a way that preserves nutritional contents. The Department of forestry was engaged to carry out nursery establishment and tree planting training in all various EPAs for beef farmers. The targeted beef farmers were persuaded to plant trees as pasture to their animals and for environmental purposes. Practical demonstration methodology was used to train farmers and demonstrations were mounted next to the pasture demonstrations that were initially mounted in the targeted EPAs. The skills that beef farmers acquired will help them to plant trees in their fields and homes to prevent soil erosion, to improve soil fertility and the tree as a feed itself. As part of the sustainability plan for the dip tanks, AICC ensured that the committees have been effectively linked to agriprenuers



We Believe in Team Building



We are Committed to Gender Equality

AICC Management Team



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Augustine Zgambo, Head of
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