



# WEE Project Monitoring Report

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AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) is an organisation which is promoting the role of businesses in building resilient communities and sustainable businesses through partnerships. AICC is committed to promoting responsible growth and competitiveness in Africa by changing the way companies and other local organisations do business in liaison with the public sector to benefit people and the economy in order to build sustainable communities. AICC's exceptionality is the capacity to engage stakeholders both private and public through Public Private Partnership (PPE) approach.

Currently, AICC through UN women with funding from standard Bank is implementing Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) programme in Mchinji and Mzimba Districts which aims at increasing productivity and access to market through climate smart agriculture technologies. The project targeted to develop a groundnuts value chain by concentrating resources on building the capacity of women smallholder farmers that are critical to the broadening of the agricultural sector in Malawi. Through the WEE project, AICC expands its mandate to stimulating and supporting private sector investment in the country's agricultural and rural market with specific focus on youths and women.

The project is promoting the participation of women groundnuts farmers through the development of women clubs concentrating on increasing groundnuts through climate smart technologies. The project is expected to empower women farmers through participatory designing and user led innovations by linking the potential of user led innovations to enable women to design and develop their own labour saving agricultural tools, tailor made for their culture, soils and cropping systems.

As one way of recording progress of the project, a monitoring exercise was arranged to help the organisation to learn from practical experience and to apply the findings in the project for system innovation. During the exercise, the following objectives were expected to be achieved; to learn the progress of the project about the intended or unintended effects, and some of the developments in the environment including obstacles that are encountered as the project is been implemented; to examine to what extent some of the goals that were set, have been achieved using the resources provided; to observe and decide whether some of the project's activities needs to be modified; creating enthusiasm and transferring knowledge that can contribute to some of the innovations which can help in increasing support for the smooth implementation of the project.

The data was captured using the monitoring checklist during the monitoring exercise and the findings have been presented using the project indicators and outputs which have been presented as case studies. Based on the findings, WEE project is on the right track as the interventions that has been implemented, have increased the women's agricultural productivity and access to markets. However, women farmers are struggling with the technical know-how on how to adopt the new technologies due to literacy levels. It was recommended that when the new technology is introduced to women farmers, it should be presented in their vernacular language and let the extension services be provided to them frequently.





## 1.0 Introduction

The African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC) is an organisation which is promoting the role of businesses in building resilient communities and sustainable businesses through partnerships. AICC is committed to promoting responsible growth and competitiveness in Africa by changing the way companies and other local organisations do business in liaison with the public sector to benefit people and the economy in order to build sustainable communities. AICC's exceptionality is the capacity to engage stakeholders both private and public through Public Private Partnership (PPE) approach. AICC's approach to corporate citizenship focuses on the extent of governments, private sector and civil society acting collectively, exercise their collective and shared responsibility to drive and hold the forces of economic power accountable to mankind by ensuring that business enterprises create and produce wealth responsibly. Since its commencement, it has successfully facilitated several multi-stakeholder partnerships and platforms aimed at connecting collective responsibility in development interventions in Malawi.

AICC have been implementing several projects addressing socio-economic challenges targeting women and youth among others in all districts in Malawi. Based on experience accumulated in the past year, AICC has the capacity to mobilize communities, build capacity of stakeholders and beneficiaries, stakeholder engagement, structural strengthening, lobby and conducting advocacy activities. Over the last five years, AICC has developed a reputation for stimulating and accelerating innovations in the agricultural production and markets, supporting multiple commercial actors to test new innovations such as new agricultural inputs like inoculants and equipment on small scale mechanization in the smallholder market, the introduction of the

use of electronic voucher coupons in the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) and the biometric farmer registration in the cotton subsector.

Currently, AICC through UN women with funding from standard Bank is implementing Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) project in Mchinji and Mzimba Districts which aims at increasing productivity and access to market through climate smart agriculture technologies. The project targeted to develop a groundnuts value chain by concentrating resources on building the capacity of women smallholder farmers that are critical to the broadening of the agricultural sector in Malawi. Through the WEE project, AICC expands its mandate to stimulating and supporting private sector investment in the country's agricultural and rural market with specific focus on youths and women.

### 1.1 Background

The WEE project is adopting the Local Value Chain Development (LVCD) approach and integrate women in the groundnuts value chain as effective approaches for improving access to markets. The main goal of the project is to increase the women's agricultural productivity and access to markets which is being strengthened through self-explanatory specific achievements namely: Better access to labour and time saving equipment, Improved access to climate resilience extension services and Improved value chain organizations with advanced market literacy skills. The targeted beneficiaries are been trained on recommended agriculture practices, climate smart agriculture, use of inoculants, and double row planting among others through the government's extension service system at community level. Through this project, AICC has mobilized and built the capacity of women smallholder farmers in order to address the gender gap in agriculture production through adoption of climate smart agriculture and labor-saving

technologies.

The project is promoting the participation of women groundnuts farmers through the development of women groups concentrating on increasing groundnuts through climate smart technologies. The project is expected to empower women farmers through participatory designing and user led innovations by linking the potential of user led innovations to enable women to design and develop their own labour saving agricultural tools, tailor made for their culture, soils and cropping systems. AICC is implementing this project using the Lead Farmer approach Model where project interventions are offered to targeted beneficiaries through pre-selected lead farmers as a focal point. The lead farmer approach helps in encouraging the farmer centered extension systems, enhancing technology uptake, community empowerment, access to information and empowering farmers as change agents for improving women welfare in their communities. The Lead farmers are in direct link with AICC's field officers and these are targeted for all key interventions of the project. In turn the Lead farmers organise a platform where skills are transferred to the followers where the field officers are part of it to ensure quality and effective delivery of interventions.

The project was planned to target a total of 5156 women and household members through the already existing farmer cooperatives in Mchinji and Mzimba districts of Malawi. Direct beneficiaries are women reached with a minimal capacity building intervention through lead farmer approach as farmers are pre-selected as central points of service delivery. Indirect beneficiaries of the project are individuals and groups which have no direct contact with an intervention but are affected project beneficiaries or household members.

## **1.2 WEE Project Interventions**

Below is the description of some of the implementation approaches which the project is following to achieve the main goal of increasing women's agricultural productivity and access to markets for them to be empowered economically.

### **1.2.1 Access to Improved Inputs**

The project links up with improved input suppliers and small-scale mechanization suppliers to provide access to improved certified groundnuts seed, Aflasafe and inoculant. A well-defined input loan revolving scheme is developed to ensure that every woman gets access to certified seed varieties, aflasafe and inoculant. The project concentrates on supporting and engaging agro-dealers to service remote target areas with climate smart friendly inputs and agricultural equipment.

### **1.2.2 Access to extension services**

Another critical service for improved agricultural practices is access to well-timed and suitable extension services. The project provides agricultural extension services which typically, aims to improve knowledge, skills and access to technical information and advice, through informal educational activities such as training, sensitizations, demonstration plots, field days and radio programming.

### **1.2.3 Training**

Women groundnuts farmers are been trained on agronomic practices for specific hybrid seeds through cost effective way like the use of lead farmers, the input suppliers and processors and the government extension officer. Farmers are trained on seed multiplication, planting methods (double row) and other post-harvest methods of handling groundnuts.

The project has been building the capacity of farmers in aflatoxin control through the Aflasafe initiative as well as introduction of small-scale groundnuts shellers and strippers. Farmers are trained post-harvest handling management to ensure that appropriate and recommended post-harvest practices are adopted and followed to reduce losses through aflatoxin contamination. Farmers are told on how they can dry and shell harvested groundnuts as one way of reducing aflatoxin contamination. The project is providing training to farmers in business management and financial literacy through Village Savings Loan (VSL) to ensure that women are able to save and manage their income realized from growing groundnuts.

### **1.2.4 Village Savings and Loans (VSL)**

The project has been promoting the concept of Village Savings and Loans Associations to provide a platform where women are having easy access to financial credit for the advancement of their initiatives. Micro and Macro loans associations are part of the private sector companies that are able to offer financial literacy which nurture women farmers to ensure that their economic status is uplifted.

### **1.2.5 Labour and Time-saving technology**

A lot of smallholder farmers (women farmers inclusive) are using labour intensive agricultural hand tools for difficult tasks such as weeding, planting, harvesting and crop processing. The project has been promoting the use of labour and time saving technology which enable women farmers to handle agricultural services with less effort. Women smallholder farmers are responsible for the majority of the post-harvest activities and this is a burden to them, since they lack effective and efficient equipment that can support them when handling these post-harvest tasks.



### 1.3 Scope of the monitoring exercise

As one way of recording the progress of the project, a monitoring exercise was arranged to help the organization to learn from practical experience and to apply the findings in the project for system innovation. During the exercise, the following objectives were expected to be achieved; to learn the progress of the project about the intended or unintended effects, and some of the developments in the environment including obstacles that are encountered as the project is been implemented; to examine to what extent some of the goals that were set, have been achieved using the resources provided; to observe and decide whether some of the project's activities needs to be modified; creating enthusiasm and transferring knowledge that can contribute to some of the innovations which can help in increasing support for the smooth implementation of the project.

### 1.4 Monitoring collection tool

Based on the nature of the monitoring exercise, a project checklist was developed and was completed at cooperative level. The checklist was designed together with case studies that were developed based on the specific objectives of the project. The tool collected information that focus on evidence of impacts, project implementation approaches and lessons learned. Women groundnuts farmers (Lead farmers) were approached and this helped the exercise to get the relevant information about the project.



## 2.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The data presented here, is in form of responses raised from what was captured using the checklist during the monitoring exercise. The exercise focused on evidence of impacts, project implementation approaches and lessons learned in order to have a strong picture on the project's ability. The findings have been presented using the project indicators and outcomes which have been presented in line with the project's implementation approaches.

### 2.1 Women economic empowerment

Women are believed to have been empowered economically, if the average amount of money each woman earns per year can enable her be rated as a person above the poverty line. This is supported by other factors like the ability of women making their own economic decision, the actual number of women earning the recommended minimum wage and the

amount of time these women are taking to do the social economic task. During the monitoring exercise, women farmer's annual income, ability to make a decision on house hold level, adoption of improved agricultural productivity methods, adoption to labour and time saving technology and adoption to financial and marketing services were assessed.

#### 2.1.1 Farmer's annual income

Annual income in this case, simply means the amount of money every beneficiary is able to generate through agricultural related activities. One of the primary indicators of the WEE project is increased incomes for women. In order for women to be economically empowered, they must be able to improve their earning potential. In 2019, the average annual income for women farmers was MWK 67,300.00 compared to an average income of MWK 89,200.00 in the 2020 farming season from groundnuts sales.

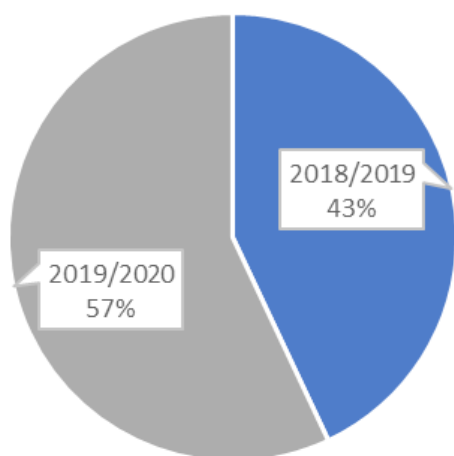
A few issues have been attributed to the success of



women in groundnuts cultivation and the wide difference across communities in women's income. Firstly, access to improved inputs like quality seed, inoculant and Aflasafe initiative has improved the farmer's volume of production and the quality of the groundnuts got after using the new technology of inoculant and Aflasafe. However, other women farmers from some cooperatives are still experiencing low annual income as they still don't have permanent markets to sell their groundnuts due to improper management of their cooperatives. Below is the pie chart showing the average annual percentages of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 farming seasons.

Figure 2. 1: Women average annual income

### AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME



Source: AICC 2020 WEE project monitoring data

#### 2.1.2 Decision-making at the household level

Women groundnuts farmers were asked to explain on who make decisions on the household financial activities. Women's involvement in the overall household decision-making process has markedly improved since the beginning of the WEE project. It has been seen that the power dynamics in households and communities have changed in many cases and women are increasingly being recognised as financial contributors. Women's influence over household decisions extends across all areas of their life including resource allocation. This has been shown on factors like; how best to use household finances.

Many of women farmers responded that both the husband and the wife make decisions, as trainings have been used as opportunities to enhance men's recognition of women's roles in contributing to household productivity and income, which are often undervalued.

Women and men were trained on gender empowerment, including economic empowerment, group dynamics, gender equality principles and gender-based violence. The sessions on sharing experiences increased farmers' awareness about gender disparities and analysed how to tackle the daily situations they face which prolong this inequity. They now understand that both women and men can contribute to women's empowerment. Farming was discussed as a family business, including the implications of income generation activities on women's workloads and how they can be addressed by facilitating access to technologies and services. Family members were engaged in analysing their roles and responsibilities, including workloads and managing the benefits generated.

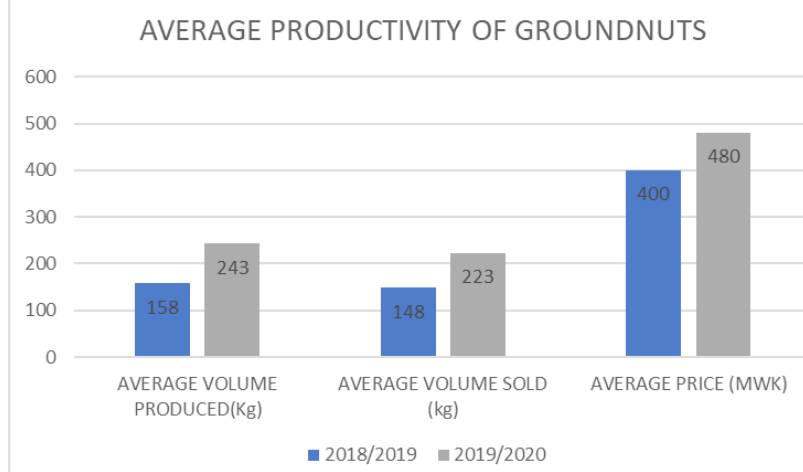
#### 2.2 Improved agricultural productivity, market access and resilience to climate change

It was observed that the production of groundnuts has been unstable due to factors like; climate change, instability of price rate which makes farmers to stop working hard in the value chains, since the price rates determine the profit margin that either motivates or demotivates the farmers. However, in 2019/2020 women groundnuts farmers under WEE project registered an increase in production of 53.7% as compared to 2018/2019. An increase in groundnuts production has been achieved due to the introduction of new farming technologies like the double row planting, use of inoculant, Aflasafe and improved seed. Volume of groundnuts

sold has decreased by 1.9% as in 2018/2019 the volume sold was 93.6%, while in 2019/2020 it was 91.7%. The decrease in volume sold is due to instability of access to market.

Market is central to the agribusiness-led development agenda. Gaining access to markets is vital for the smallholder sector to flourish and capitalise on the gains in productivity made through improved access to inputs and services, and strengthened technical and entrepreneurial skills. Women are linked to markets through aggregators who provide markets for their produce. Some aggregators sign contracts with women-only farmer groups, because they are productive and reliable with regard to repaying input credit. In 2019/2020 market access has been difficult due to COVID-19 and political instability which the nation experienced. Apart from vendors, one of the major aggregators who have been linked to the women groundnuts farmers is Alliance one. The aggregator bought both shelled and unshelled groundnuts from different cooperatives in Mzimba north. The average productivity of groundnuts is shown in the graph below:

Figure 2. 2: Average productivity of groundnuts



Source: AICC 2020 WEE project monitoring data

### Outcome 1: Women have increased their productivity in changing climate

The project made progress to achieve women's increase in their productivity through activities that are done to meet the following outputs

## 2.3 Woman's adoption of recommended climate smart agriculture inputs and services

Increasing women's access to inputs is mainly about enhancing women's efficiency as smallholder farmers. This was usually achieved by distributing inputs through grassroots cooperatives by the input suppliers. Farmers were linked to partner aggregators who provide inputs like improved seed, inoculant, aflasafe and other support services to farmers on credit and bought back at harvest time.

### 2.3.1 Access to improved seed

The project linked groundnuts farmers to seed suppliers who provide the certified improved seed. The access to improved seed was enhanced through the introduction of demonstrations plots which were mounted as a way of seed multiplication and showcasing groundnuts technologies.



Figure 3: Farmers trained on the use of improved groundnuts seed

The project introduced a total of 10 demonstration plots in all the 10 EPAs, (Three in Mchinji and 7 in Mzimba North). This initiative assisted women who would otherwise lack credit to buy seed; they also benefited from an assured market as many seed suppliers also promised to buy the farm commodity from the farmers.

The project established the seed revolving scheme in which members of the cooperatives accessed the seed on loan. The scheme subcommittee of three members was mainly comprising of females. Out of the 23-input revolving scheme subcommittee members 51 are females (1 disabled), 25 are males (2 disabled) and 22 youths. Indeed, some aggregators ensure that their inputs and services go to women before men to help them overcome some of the challenges they face in accessing these items. Women are also believed to have a higher pay back rate and this build total trust to the seed supplier. The picture illustrates farmers been trained on how to use improved groundnuts seed.

### 2.3.2 Access to inoculant



Figure 4: Farmers trained on the use of inoculant

The project worked with inoculant manufacturers, to develop a distribution network to reach smallholder farmers with quality and affordable inoculant. In order to expand the network to include more women and overcome the socio-cultural norms which restrict women's mobility, the project linked the Mandolo plus, the inoculant manufacturer to the farmers through the demonstration plots. The inoculant manufacturer trained the women farmers on how to use the inoculant. In turn, women farmers grasped all the skills on how to use the inoculant which made the farmers to effectively use the inoculant in their farms and yield positive results from it. Mandolo plus the suppliers of inoculant visited the project sites to appreciate performance of Mandolo plus inoculant. Through the demonstration plots, about 487(263Female, 152Male, 70Youth, 2 with disability) farmers received and applied inoculant. Out of the sampled fields it was found that the inoculant had a good effect on vegetative growth of groundnuts and nodulation was also found to be perfect in the



fields which applied the inoculant. The picture shows an official from Mandolo plus inoculant manufactures training women farmers on how to use inoculant in a groundnuts field.

### 2.3.3 Access to Aflasafe

The project linked the Aflasafe suppliers to introduce the Aflasafe initiative to overcome the problem of aflatoxin contamination which contributes to the losses made by farmers. Aflasafe is a bacterium which is coated to sorghum and applied in the groundnuts field before flowering period of the plant.

*Figure 5: Farmers trained on the use of Aflasafe*



It is believed that the bacteria reduce the chances of aflatoxin contamination as the plant is right away in the field. The Project procured 300Kgs of Aflasafe and distributed to the beneficiary farmers. A total of 115(65Female, 19Male, 29Youth, 2disabled) farmers have received and applied Aflasafe. The distribution was preceded by trainings and demonstrations on Aflasafe usage and application. The trainings and demonstrations were facilitated by IITA the producers and distributors of Aflasafe. Based on the monitoring exercise, it was recorded that very few women farmers know about the Aflasafe initiative as a lot of them didn't use the Aflasafe during the just ended growing season due to lack of vast knowledge on how to use it. The picture shows farmers been trained on how to apply Aflasafe in a groundnuts field.

### 2.3.4 Training

Strengthening farmer's agricultural and marketing skills and knowledge is central to developing agribusiness and sustainable farming and enabling them to compete in the market place. The project was active in this area, empowering women to develop new marketing skills or business/entrepreneurship skills. Training was usually provided to groups through Lead farmer approach who in turn transfer the skills to their fellow farmers in presence of AICC's field officers.

Women lead farmers were seen to play an instrumental role in bringing about change in more traditional contexts. Some women were selected to participate as lead farmers and hosts for demonstration plots. They were trained in gender issues, business-related trainings

and agronomic techniques. This developed their role as leaders and community organisers, and ensured more women participated in a training making them to become knowledge catalyzers on groundnuts production. Lead farmers select fellow farmers to form their cooperative who then disseminate to wider community. The training activities developed both the hard skills like agronomy



*Figure 6: Farmers receiving a general training* and market skills and the soft skills like non-cognitive entrepreneurial skills to help women farmers to stay motivated and overcome any psychological challenges associated with starting and running a cash crop business. This approach was based on evidence from previous cooperatives which demonstrated that developing the non-cognitive skills was correlated to the adoption of a cash crop, particularly in communities where women are at a relative social disadvantage. The picture shows an AICC officer conducting a training to groundnuts farmers where women lead farmers were in attendance.

### 2.3.5 Village Savings and Loans Association

As part of strengthening women's business management and financial literacy skills, the WEE project enhanced the concept of village savings and loans associations to provide a platform where women were having easy access to financial credit for the advancement of their initiatives.



*Figure 7: Farmers on a Village Savings Loan Association*



The project has done trainings in business management focusing on savings through Village Savings and Loans (VSL). Through the training women farmers grasped skills in managing VSLs. A total of 5 VSLs represented by 142 women farmers have been promoted and strengthened in the Mchinji District and 4 VSLs with 90 women farmers were developed in Mzimba District. However, the 9 VSLs which were developed are not active due to improper management of the VSL members as women farmers are claiming that lack of access to toolkits for VSLs has contributed to the downfall of the VSLs. The picture shows women in a VSL association.

## 2.4 Woman's adoption of recommended labour and time saving equipment and services

Smallholder agriculture is characterised by labor-intensive tasks and the limited use of improved technologies, which together compromise the productivity of the sector. At the household level, reducing and redistributing the time spent by women on unpaid care and domestic work is key to improving their opportunities to participate in productive activities. Many of the initiatives introduced equipment or hire services for productivity gains, often accompanied by a drive to improve quality and add value.

In WEE project, reducing the workload associated with crop processing enabled women to meet the market needs. Women traditionally sold only small quantities of groundnuts because of the labour required for manual processing. By linking them to a private sector operator with mechanised groundnuts processing manual machines, helped them to meet new market demands and also produced higher-quality groundnuts which resulted in higher market prices.

The project introduced groundnuts shellers and strippers to various cooperatives under the WEE project in Mchinji and Mzimba north. This equipment which are tailor made by Bountifield International (formerly compatible Technology International) are indeed compatible with the rural farmer business organization as they are operated manually. The project also introduced chitetezo mbaula as a labour and time saving technology that can reduce the workload of the women smallholder farmers.

### 2.4.1 Use of Strippers

Groundnut strippers are used in threshing of groundnuts nodes from its plant. AICC through the WEE project engaged Bountifield International Malawi which fabricates labour saving equipment and other technologies. During the project period, Bountifield and AICC agreed and signed memorandum of understanding where by the two organisation agreed that the project will be engaging Bountifield as a supplier of the equipment as well as a project partner. The project

procured 6 strippers which were distributed in some of the cooperatives in Mchinji and Mzimba north.

*Figure 8: Farmers threshing groundnuts using strippers*



The strippers acted as a relief among women farmers as this tool saves farmers from the monotonous task of threshing manually which will take a smallholder farmer a period of 3 days to thresh one 50kg bag of groundnuts whereas with the strippers a farmer is able to thresh 2 bags per hour. The strippers have the stripping efficiency of 96% and this means that only 4% is representing the damaged groundnuts rate. The above picture is illustrating women farmers threshing groundnuts using strippers

### 2.4.2 Use of shellers

Hand shelling is labour-intensive but effective for small quantities. It is particularly effective for choosing planting seed because it causes less damage to the seeds. The project procured 9 shellers that were distributed in some cooperatives in Mzimba north and Mchinji Districts. Hand-operated mechanical sheller have the shelling capacity of 44 kilograms of groundnuts per hour. This is really serving time of farmers as they can only hand-shell about one kilogram of groundnuts per hour. If a household produces 800 kilograms of groundnuts from one hectare of land, hand shelling would take approximately 800 hours, compared to the 16 hours that would be required for mechanical shelling, the shelling efficiency is 95%.



*Figure 9: Farmers shelling groundnuts using shellers*

The shellers only provide the kernel breakage percentage of 4%. Using these shellers, farmers are advised not to sprinkle water on dry pods when shelling. While this is a very common practice, it is critical to avoid adding moisture to the nuts. Minimizing moisture is the

single most important factor in controlling aflatoxin contamination on the groundnuts. The picture above is showing farmers shelling groundnuts using manual shellers.

### 2.4.3 Use of Chitetezo Mbaula

As one way of reducing workload and at the same time encouraging climate smart agriculture technology, the project partnered with MAEVE the makers and distributors of Chitetezo Mbaula to distribute and train women farmers under WEE project on the use of Chitetezo mbaula. Trainings were conducted to farmers in order for them to gain skills on how to curb the effects of climate change. Farmers learnt ways of reducing human activities that can lead to destruction of ozone layer. Farmers were able to know the problems of using inefficient stoves that can cause a range of harmful impacts that retards economic and social development in developing countries.

Figure 10: Farmers straining on the use of chitetezo mbaula



During the monitoring exercise, it was confirmed that farmers are using chitetezo mbaula and more modern stoves which is reducing deaths from smoke-related illnesses, mitigate climate change, and lower air pollution. The technology is reducing the risk and drudgery of fuel collection, and lowers household expenditures on cooking fuel. Farmers were recommending the use of chitetezo mbaula as the stoves use less wood and they are efficient leading to less emission of Carbon Monoxide. MAEVE gets funding from GIZ and they promote Chitetezo Mbaula and solar technologies as labour saving and climate smart technologies. Farmers were trained on the benefit and the efficiency of chitetezo mbaula. Pictures above illustrates farmers been trained on how to use Chitetezo mbaula.

### 2.4.4 Woman's adoption of climate resilient agriculture extension services

The women groundnuts farmers have grasped agricultural extension services that encourages conservation agriculture through adoption of minimum

tillage and maintenance of soil cover in the rain fed groundnuts fields. The project is promoting the use of cost effective, participatory and demand driven farmer led extension approached which involves lead farmers in adopting the technology for them to train their fellow farmers.

Through this intervention, farmers are adopting the good agricultural practices that includes the Mandela cock drying of groundnuts after harvesting among others.



Figure 11: Farmers harvesting groundnuts using Mandela cock method However, it was found that appropriate extension services were limited to some farmers, as some farmers are failing to use Aflasafe and the shellers due to lack of knowledge. The picture is illustrating farmers harvesting groundnuts and are implementing the Mandela cock drying as one way of reducing aflatoxin to the harvested groundnuts.

### Outcome 2: Opportunities for organized women to move up with the value chain are provided

As part of promoting opportunities for organised women to move up with the value chain, the project emphasized on the women inclusion in high value agricultural enterprises through financial institutions linkages and the training focused on value addition and agro-processing.

## 2.5 Promoting inclusion of women in high value agricultural enterprises

The project made the following interventions to promote the inclusion of women in high value agricultural enterprises:

### 2.5.1 Linkage to financial institutions

The project established some linkages with financial institutions which aims at assisting women farmers on access to financial services, a training on financial literacy skills and financial record keeping. The project engaged some financial institutions partners like NBS and First capital bank who trained women farmers principles of saving, benefits of Saving, financial record keeping, how to manage a person /group account, how they can process a loan and how farmers can repay bank loans. A total of 204 farmers (67 Male, 137 Female) benefited from the training.



## 2.5.2 Value addition and agro-processing trainings

The project trained women farmers on value addition and processing. The training was facilitated by district trade officer and district agribusiness officers.

Figure 10: Farmers receiving training on value addition



The trainings targeted concepts which helped in raising awareness among farmers of their capacity gaps in terms of processing and value addition, making farmers appreciate the activities in primary, secondary and tertiary value addition.

Farmers grasped conditions needed in MBS 19 and 21 for them to be certified by the Malawi Bureau of Standards. A total of 62 farmers (35Female, 15Male, 12Youth) were part of these trainings. In Mchinji 182(98Female(1Disabled), 39Male, 44Youth) farmers were trained. Below is the picture illustrating farmers been trained.

## 2.6 Cross cutting issues

The project paid attention to women, youth and disabled farmers as one way of encouraging inclusive economic empowerment. It also responded actively to COVID-19 pandemic since the ailment found the project implementation in progress.

### 2.6.1 Women and Youth

The project promoted gender equality by involving women and youth in all the project activities. The project interventions are making sure that women are recognised as a group of people who make essential contributions to the agricultural and rural economies in the community. In many areas rural women are those who manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies through activities like: producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. The WEE project is trying its best to make the women's effort to be defined as "economically active employment" that are essential to the wellbeing of rural households if the women and the youth are given opportunity of making economic decisions on their own. So far, the project has reached 2714 women and 332 Youth as direct beneficiaries and

are expected to reach their colleagues as indirect project beneficiaries.

### 2.6.2 Smallholder farmers with disability

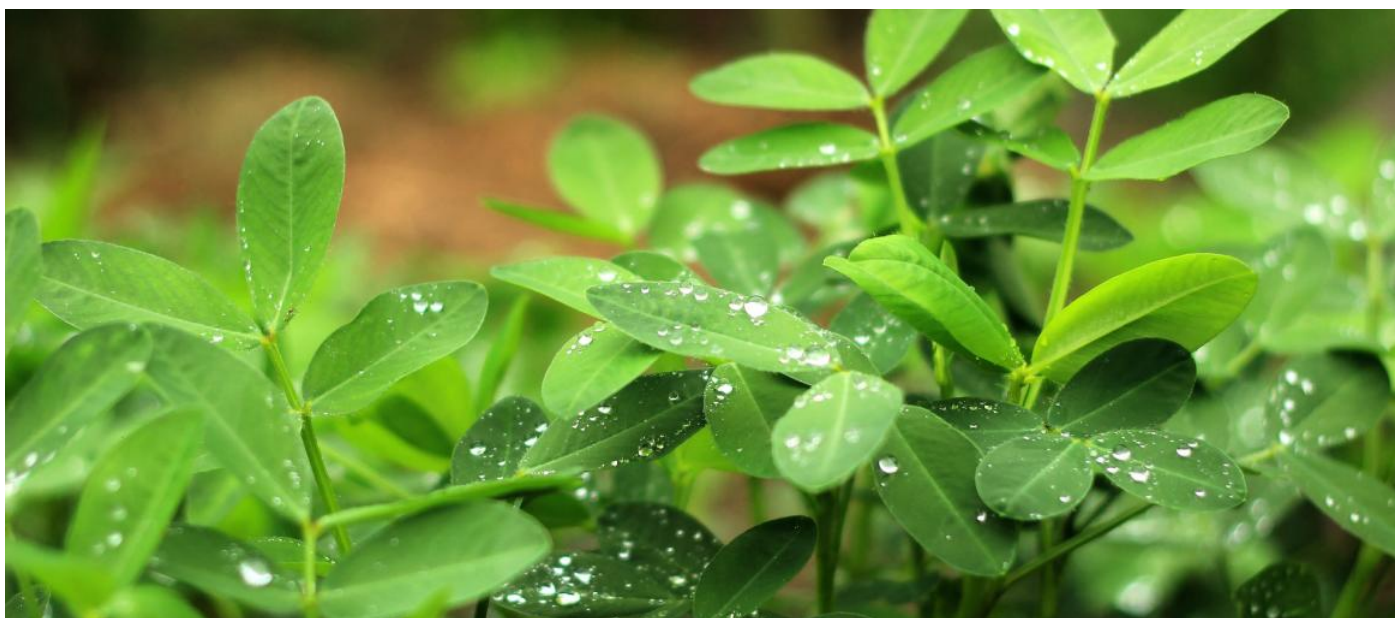
Smallholder farmers with disabilities have experienced the hiddenness and situation of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that excludes them from various aspects of life as well as across the socio-economic development range. The WEE project is encouraging the inclusion of these smallholder farmers which includes women and youth with disabilities in all its interventions. So far 10 farmers with disabilities (that includes women and youth with disabilities) have been involved in agronomic, financial and leadership activities as one way of achieving gender equality and empowering them in socioeconomic development.

### 2.6.3 COVID-19 responses

The WEE project sensitized farmers on how they can protect themselves from COVID-19. This was done by educating cooperative members on how they could implement COVID-19 preventive measures during their cooperative's meetings. The cooperative leaders were told that AICC officials were to continue providing extension services through virtual communication like phone calls, and SMSs when the number of COVID-19 cases continue to increase. The cooperatives welcomed the idea as they were already using the technology in receiving price messages for agricultural products from other agricultural projects







## 3.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter provides the conclusion and recommendation based on the WEE project monitoring exercise.

### 3.1 Conclusion

The monitoring exercise focused on evidence of impacts, project implementation approaches and lessons learned in order to have a strong picture on the project's ability. Based on the findings, WEE project is on the right track as the interventions that has been implemented, have increased the women's agricultural productivity and access to markets. The monitoring exercise observed that the project has a large emphasis on improving women's ability. The monitoring proved some improvements in women's access to agricultural skills, opportunities, resources and other services. The WEE project also witnessed many positive changes in women's action which includes increased confidence, leadership, ability, negotiations and recognition.

However, women farmers are struggling with the technical know-how on how to adopt the new technologies due to literacy levels. It was suggested that when the new technology is introduced to women farmers, it should be made known in their vernacular language and let the extension services be provided to them frequently, for farmers to clearly adopt the new technologies like the use of shellers, strippers, use of Inoculant and Aflasafe.

### 3.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings it is recommended that the factors below need to be addressed for the project to fully empower the women

#### 3.2.1 Women in decision making

For WEE project to meet the objective of empowering women on decision making, there is a need to promote gender equality or gender transformative interventions by building women's skills now and again in leadership, access to financial services underpinned by frequent training in business skills and the encouragement of Village Saving Loans (VSL) which can lead to livelihood development pathways. The financial interventions need to be fully supported and be transformed from informal loans that are done within the groups, to banks formal borrowing that can be achieved by group borrowing as part of building full trust to the banks. This can encourage enterprise development among women farmers and this can also promote value chain development building on existing gender roles.

#### 3.2.2 Access to Inputs

Access to improved inputs and services can provide a range of agricultural services and products which meet market and women's needs. Farmers need to be given an opportunity to access improved seeds, inoculant and Aflasafe, at large quantity, and at the same time they need to be trained the technical know-how on how they can effectively use the inputs. A lot of these farmers can ignore the new technologies, if they don't clearly know how the improved inputs like Aflasafe is applied.

#### 3.2.3 Training

Providing training and coaching and mentoring services to develop women's technical skills for new agricultural technologies, farming as a business, entrepreneurship and negotiating skills can really boost the performance of the farmers in production, processing and marketing. Trainings should be conducted in vernacular language for the farmers to clearly understand the concepts. Let the lead farmers be adequately involved in formal trainings.

#### 3.2.4 Access to Markets

Access to good markets can create improved financial

opportunities. There is a need of establishing linkages and contracts with buyers, and developing new markets. Farmers are encouraged to grow more groundnuts during the planting season but after harvesting, the buyers do not appear to buy the promised farmers. There is a need to make legal linkages which can be in a form of a contract for farmers to have market security as they are growing the groundnuts.

### 3.2.5 Labour and time saving technology

Introducing equipment to improve the productivity and quality of production, and to reduce domestic workloads; and ensuring a safe and healthy working environment is an ideal intervention to women groundnuts farmers. However, there is a need to provide a lot of the equipment and special training on how to use the equipment to achieve the efficiency of the equipment. Farmers can ignore the labour and time serving technology if they don't know how to use the equipment. Women need to be equipped with all the technologies that can assist them during the farm activities and post-harvest activities.

## ANNEX

### Monitoring Tool I

#### MONITORING CHECKLIST FOR WEE PROJECT

##### 1. Women economic empowerment

- i. What is the farmer's annual income?

Year	Amount
2018/2019	
2019/2020	

- ii. Who has been making decisions on the household financial activities?

Year	Marketing	Expenditures
2018/2019		
2019/2020		

##### 2. Improved agricultural productivity, market access and resilience to climate change

- i. How many farmers have accessed the time serving equipment? (field officer)

\_\_\_\_\_

- ii. Production of Groundnuts

Year	Volume produced	Volume sold	Price
2018/2019			
2019/2020			

- iii. Have you experience any shock? If Yes how did you cope up with the shock

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**CASE STUDY 1: Woman's adoption of recommended labour and time saving equipment and services**

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**CASE STUDY 2: Woman's adoption of recommended climate smart agriculture inputs and services**

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**CASE STUDY 3: Woman's adoption of climate resilient agriculture extension services**

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**CASE STUDY 4: Promoting inclusion of women in high value agricultural enterprises**

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CASE STUDY 5: Increasing capacity of women groundnut value chain organisations in production and marketing

Monitoring Tool II

FARMERS REGISTER

Name of cooperative: \_\_\_\_\_

EPA: \_\_\_\_\_

Village Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Traditional Authority: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the officer: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date collected \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Farmer	Gender F/M	Age	Disability Yes/No	WEE Interventions						
				Training	Strippers	Shellers	VSL	Inoculants	Aflasafe	Seed




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