



## Temwa Building Sustainable, Resilient Communities

### Agriculture and Forestry Report – July 2022

This report shares the latest developments under Temwa’s Building Sustainable, Resilient Communities project in Nkhata Bay North, Malawi, between June 2021–July 2022. We are pleased to report that significant progress has been made in improving food and income security for families in the area. Our support over the last year came at a critical point when secured UK government aid funding for work in the area was cut and risked us not being able to provide any assistance to farming families in this region who were struggling to cope with climate change. However, due to some generous donors, Temwa was able to raise enough money to continue this life changing work. Below we describe the positive developments in the communities over the past year.

#### Project context and aims

In the Nkhata Bay North, 90% of families are subsistence farmers and 58% of people live below the national poverty line. The families here depend on being able to grow food, but are facing hardships due to the effects of climate change. Erratic rainfall, drought, flooding, strong winds and crop pests are affecting food production and exacerbating high vulnerability and poverty. These challenges have been worsened further by local deforestation, which erodes the soil, dries up water sources, and lowers agricultural productivity.

This project aimed to improve the climate resilience of vulnerable families through sustainable farming, forest-friendly livelihoods, and sustainable use of local natural resources. Thanks in part to the Charles Hayward Foundation, the project has contributed to improving long-term food and income security, by creating and strengthening sustainable livelihoods and by improving community stewardship of natural resources.



#### Building Sustainable, Resilient Communities project achievements

We are proud to report that, in the last year, your support has helped build climate resilience of remote, disadvantaged communities through the following project activities and achievements.

##### Outcome 1: Improved food security for vulnerable households

Climate-smart farming helps families adapt to the changing climate while increasing productivity. During the reporting period, Temwa’s Usisya Demonstration Garden has continued to provide community members the opportunity to learn climate-smart farming techniques.

The Demonstration Garden enables farmers from the surrounding villages to learn new methods to improve their crop yields, and also generate income. This past year, the garden has produced mustard, cabbages, tomatoes, aubergines, peppers, pumpkins and sweet potatoes. While the cabbage and mustard crops thrived, an invasive fungal disease outbreak affected other crop yields. However, this provided the farmers with an opportunity to learn how to deal with fungal pathogens, and the garden still raised roughly MWK 90,000 (£73.20) from vegetable sales, which will be reinvested into the garden's operations.



As we continue to wait for funding from a donor who is specifically interested in supporting Outcome 1 of this project, we have been busy working towards Outcomes 2 and 3, which your kind donation has helped support. Outcome 2 has also helped improve community food security by improving crop production and livestock rearing skills of farmer group members.

## Outcome 2: Increased income from climate-adaptive livelihoods

Diversified income sources and livelihoods, that do not damage the local environment, are essential for creating climate-resilient communities. They create a safety net that helps communities weather through times of crisis. During the reporting period, Temwa worked with 20 farmer groups, exceeding the project target of 16. These farmer groups specialised in beekeeping, cultivating cash crops (such as legumes, groundnuts, beans, and bananas), and rearing small livestock, including pigs, rabbits, and goats. Our support for each farmer group is individually tailored to help them grow and find solutions to any challenges they are experiencing. For example, three groups asked how they could increase the profits from their farming. We supported them by delivering training sessions, which covered the business cycle, and farm income and market analysis, to help them increase their efficiency and profits. Temwa's training has also supported the farmer groups to operate as Village Savings and Loans Groups, which allows them to save and borrow money, helping the groups become more financially secure and resilient.

The farmer groups are actively self-organising, identifying their needs, and increasingly committing their own resources for their forest-friendly micro-enterprises. For instance, many beekeepers (as pictured) have requested provision of protective bee suits and hive-smokers, which they could not source on their own, to improve their operations. The Zulunkhuni Beekeeping Group is independently constructing a processing facility for their honey, and planning to build a storage facility. The Titemwanenge crop production group has independently ventured into winter cropping beans obtained from the last season of harvest, and the Temwanani women's group has planted vegetables using their own resources.



Although there has been improved operations, collaboration, and commitment from the farmer groups, unfortunately, several of the crop-producing farmer groups have not met their production target this year due to extreme weather. The Nkhata Bay district has experienced heavy rains, flooding, prolonged droughts, and an influx in crop pests during the past 12 months, which has reduced produce yields. Unfortunately due to climate change, erratic weather patterns are expected to increase, which is why our work to strengthen the resilience of these farming families is so crucial.

Despite the shortfall in crop production, the resolve of the farmers has not fallen: all of the farmer groups are working to expand and improve their businesses. For example, the Zulunkhuni Beekeeping Group harvested a whopping 347kg of honey, and is looking into expanding their business to growing tomatoes. The Luondwe Goats Group, in turn, is still growing produce in their winter horticultural garden. Their goat herd is also growing, and the free goat manure, which is used as free organic fertiliser, is hugely

beneficial to the group members. The global cost of living crisis has pushed the cost of chemical fertiliser up to £55 per bag, which is unaffordable for most farmers still relying on it. Temwa's support for helping farmers transition to sustainable farming, including livestock herding, has made fertiliser sustainably accessible for these farmer groups (see case study below for more details).

### Outcome 3: Improved community stewardship of natural resources

In the last 20 years, a quarter of the forest in Nkhata Bay district has been destroyed. The degrading land and climate change make it difficult for farming communities to make a living to feed and support their families. Local governance structures, such as Area and Village Development Committees, play a central role in promoting the sustainable management of local natural resources. Your support has enabled Temwa to continue working closely with these structures and 8 Village Natural Resource Management Committees, who were present at all relevant training events, in line with our community-driven approach.

This past year, the local governance structures and the wider community have started showing amazing initiative and leadership in protecting their forests independently. They have also started creating multi-year plans to guide their activities. For example, the Dube Village Natural Resource Management Committee has created bylaws to issue permits which monitor and regulate the collection of logs for firewood and timber. The Chigwere Village Development Committee is working with great success with the district's Department of Forestry and local villages to stop illegal felling in the protected Kaning'ina Forest: in June, ten individuals were caught cutting timber and stopped. In Chikwina, quarterly patrol visits are now conducted in Kandoli Forest to prevent illegal deforestation, while in Bigha, local governance and community police confiscated 20 bags of illegal charcoal by using roadblocks.

Alongside local governance efforts, the wider communities are increasingly understanding the link between forest protection and profitable livelihoods. More farmers are becoming aware that a well-managed forest can create an access to non-timber forest products including mushrooms, honey and fruit for sale (see case studies below) and can supply them with fresh water. The livelihood work funded through your support was complemented by reforestation activities carried out with funding from the Temwa Carbon Balance scheme. In 2021-2022 the communities planted 39,651 trees: 32,095 fast-growing and timber trees, 6,306 agroforestry trees on farms, and 1,250 fruit trees in orchards. Our support for forest friendly livelihoods has continued to slow down deforestation rates in at least two villages. We thank you for your support in making these achievements possible.

## Community stories

### Pigs provide manure and money, leading to food and income security

*Linear Mgodhi, 54, lives with her husband and two children. She used to struggle to support her family's basic food needs, because her land had poor soil quality. Linear first learned about Temwa through our community engagement meetings, where the idea of livestock rearing was suggested. After expressing her interest, Temwa supported Linear through this livelihoods project: "I am now an owner of six pigs that produce manure which I apply in my field. My maize stalks have produced big cobs and the beans have also done very well.*

*Previously I could only harvest one single 90kg bag of maize from the field, which could not sustain us as a family. **We had to buy maize from the market in order to make it to the following growing season. However, with help from the manure this year, I am expecting to harvest four 90 kg bags of maize and 18 tins of beans! My household will be food secure.**" Linear has gained status and recognition within the community because people come to learn manure techniques from her. She has also been able to obtain extra income from her pigs. "Last year I was unable to send my son to school because of school fees. This year the pig that I received from Temwa's livelihood project produced piglets.*



*I sold one piglet which provided enough funds to send my son to Choma Secondary School. Growing up, my husband and I could not afford to go to secondary school. I am very proud that in the near future, I will have a graduate in my household.” Thanks to your support for this project, people like Linear are able to transform their and their families’ lives.*

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### **Planting trees to save crops**

Chazeka, 58, is a village headman and sustenance farmer in Mzgola village. He struggled to grow food, after 87% of the land in his village was suddenly cleared of trees for the production of charcoal. **“It**



**wasn’t raining as much as it used to when I was young. We started experiencing problems growing crops with the little rain that resulted from the deforestation.”** To address the problem, Chazeka reached out to Temwa who taught him how to care for the land and foster healthy forests. Chazeka has noticed many benefits from planting trees: not only has the rain started to return to his area, but the trees also help enrich his diet; Chazeka has been planting fruit trees and collecting nutritious wild mushrooms from timber forests, which helps nourish his family, and allows him to make extra income.

Thanks to your support, Chazeka is now leading by example and other community members are starting to regenerate their forests, which was not the case before.

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## **Thank you**

The Temwa team in both Malawi and the UK remain incredibly grateful for your generous support towards our livelihoods work. Without funding from loyal supporters, we would not have been able to keep this project going during the past year. As the communities are experiencing ever worsening consequences from the climate crisis as well as acute financial pressures due to the global cost of living crisis, our support now has been more important than ever. Going forward, we have secured partial funding to launch a new exciting three-year Farming Futures project in August 2022. It will build upon the successes of this project, and work with 25 farmer groups to turn them into flourishing community enterprises.