

Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement (WALA) Program Site in Lingoni, Machinga

Background

WALA was a five-year \$81 million Bureau for Food Security Program funded by USAID's Food for Peace Office from 2010 to 2014. The Program was led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and implemented by a consortium of private voluntary organizations (PVOs), including ACDI/VOCA, Africare, Chikwawa Catholic Diocese, Emmanuel International, Project Concern International, Save the Children, Total Land Care, and World Vision International. The WALA project had

Prior to the intervention, the area faced significant issues with deforestation. The river Lingoni did not flow during the dry season, and the area faced considerable food insecurity.

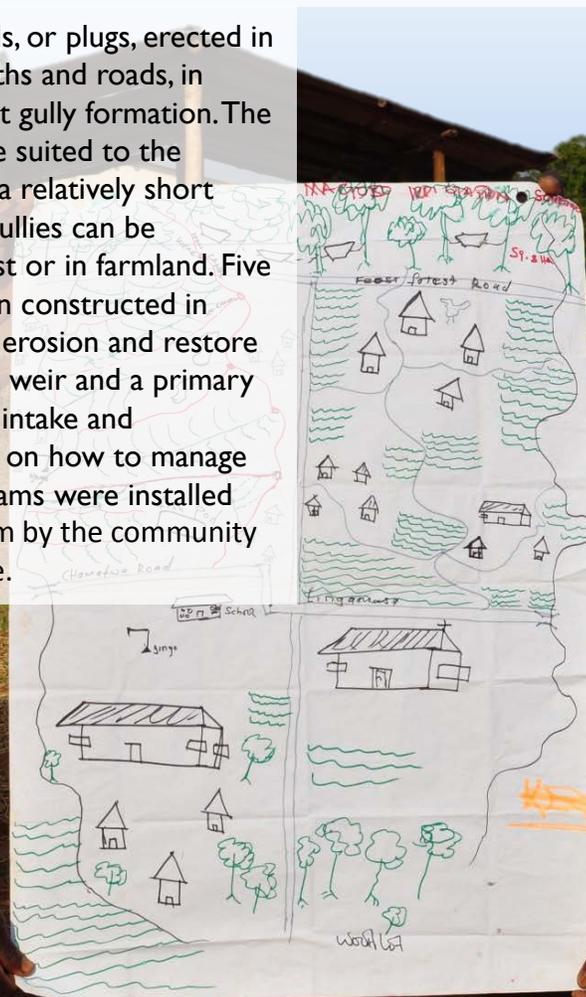
Specific WALA activities in Lingoni include:

Water Absorption Trenches (WATs) are typically large and therefore not recommended for use in farmers' fields, but rather are typically used on field perimeters or up-watershed, such as in an adjacent forest. WATs are used to capture and retain water, in order to recharge the water table. The watershed has 5,440 WATs constructed on 134 hectares of land.

Continuous Contour Trenches (CCTs) are considerably smaller than WATs and are excavated along contour lines in farmers' fields. The trenches reduce water runoff, thus allowing water percolation into fields and increasing soil moisture content. A total of 861 CCTs in 13 rows have been completed.

Stone Bunds are low rock walls erected along a slope's contour that form a semi permeable barrier that slows surface water runoff rate, filters water, and helps spread water over a field. This is a preferred land treatment where loose stone is available. Over time, stone-filled slopes may morph into arable terraced farmland.

Check Dams are simple stone walls, or plugs, erected in eroded gullies or adjacent to footpaths and roads, in order to reclaim trenches or prevent gully formation. The specifications of check dams must be suited to the locality, particularly the flow rate. In a relatively short period (one or two rainy seasons), gullies can be reclaimed either in a protected forest or in farmland. Five hundred (500) check dams have been constructed in gullies, which has helped reduce soil erosion and restore the watershed. WALA constructed a weir and a primary canal, which improved overall water intake and distribution, and trained the farmers on how to manage the irrigation scheme. Many check dams were installed after the close of the WALA program by the community members without outside assistance.



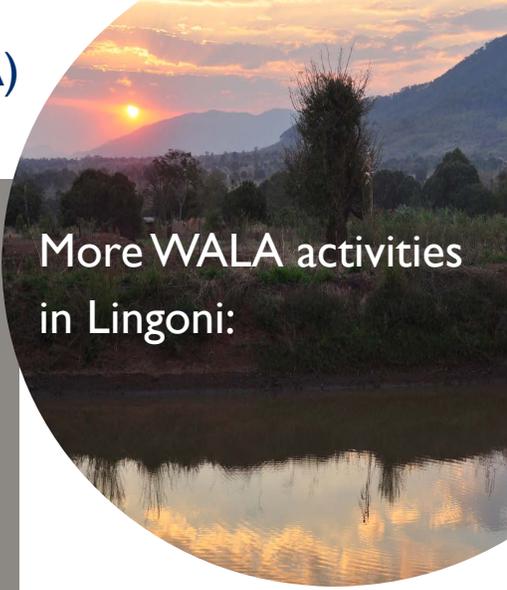
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Alternative income activities,

including bee keeping and fish ponds, were integrated into the responsibilities of the Watershed Rehabilitation Committees. In 2012, WALA helped the local community construct six bee hives. In 2014, the hives were harvested twice, with each hive giving an output of 10 L, or 120 L/year for all the hives. The honey was sold at \$5.66/L so the hives were able to generate \$675 per year. The community used the proceeds to construct six additional beehives, increasing the number of hives to 12.

A fish pond was constructed and stocked with about 2,500 fingerlings. The first time the community harvested approximately 20kg of fish. They have since harvested the fish three (3) times and the profit margins are strong. The community plans to construct and stock three (3) additional fish ponds, increasing the number of fish ponds to four (4). Individuals are also encouraged to have their own fish ponds. Portions of the fish harvest from the large community pond go towards community consumption, sale on the market, and to the poor and sick members in the community. Fish feed and fertilizers are purchased for the members.



More WALA activities in Lingoni:



Afforestation activities promoted by WALA involved the raising and transplantation of indigenous trees, including fruit trees and grass. Vetiver grass was raised in nurseries and transplanted throughout the watershed for purposes of stabilizing treatments such as gullies and marker ridges, among others.

Irrigation and intercropping have been promoted where the main crop grown is maize and rice. The farmers have created small irrigation basins for holding water. The irrigation committee manages water use, ensuring that all farmers are getting their ration of water. Maize is intercropped with beans, garden peas, and pumpkin.



Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

The program has built community capacity in disaster preparedness and response, strengthened linkages among Government of Malawi (GoM) DRR mechanisms, and provided reliable safety nets to the most vulnerable households.

Small grants capacity building support involved building the capacity of communities to apply successfully to the small grants scheme that will be funded under the new national DRR policy.

Training provided the communities means to identify and incorporate new information into their messaging to maintain community interest. Training manuals on DRR were provided.

Food for Work incentives were used as an important complementary tool for DRR and in improving productivity in communities. WALA invested over \$2.2 million in Food for Work (FFW) incentives, representing a cost of \$1.11 per structure-meter.