

Impact Snapshot

At A Glance

Country: Malawi and Tanzania

Duration: July 2016 - June 2023

Sectors:

- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**
- **Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods**
- **Gender Equality, Child Protection and Human Rights**
- **Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction**

Total Reach: 49,741 people from 10,825 households: 33,287 people (7,397 households) across four dioceses in Malawi, and 16,454 people (3,428 households) in Laghangareri, Tanzania. This includes 463 people with disability (370 in Malawi, 93 in Tanzania)

Funding/Donor: The Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), and Caritas Australia

Integrated Community Development (A+) Program

Rural communities in Malawi and Tanzania face chronic food insecurity and limited access to safe water. In Malawi, maize provides around two-thirds of household calories, however before the program, most families exhausted their harvest within three to four months, leaving a lean season of hunger from November to February. Clean water was often an hour or more away by foot and was collected from unprotected rivers and wells also used by animals, contributing to diarrhoea and malnutrition, particularly among young children. In Laghangareri, Tanzania, rainfall generally occurs only once or twice a year, leaving communities almost entirely dependent on irrigation from a single spring 10 kilometres away, with pipes and canals in poor condition. Gender inequality, harmful practices and child protection issues are also prevalent across these areas, including child abuse and early marriage, with men typically the sole decisionmakers over household resources and assets. Building on a previous Caritas Australia program, the Integrated Community Development (A+) Program, responded to these needs by improving food security, water, sanitation and hygiene, gender equality and protection, and disaster preparedness through an approach which drew on communities' own assets, skills and resources as the foundation for change.

Relevance

The program used Strength Based, Asset Based and Rights Based Approaches, supporting communities to identify their own resources including land, water, local materials and labour, develop their own priorities and advocate for services from government and other duty bearers. This approach helped the program work in hard-to-reach areas that previously received limited services and complement, rather than duplicate, government and other NGO programs operating in the same districts. In Rumphi, Malawi, communities called the approach Kajikhomele, meaning "working to earn one's living". The name reflected a distinction from aid based primarily on handouts and reinforced the program's focus on communities identifying and using their own assets and capabilities to improve their livelihoods. The program also aligned with government priorities and mandates, with one objective specifically aimed at influencing national policy in Malawi to increase farm productivity and diversify livelihoods and nutrition sources. In Tanzania, the program intentionally left activities such as school infrastructure and rural electrification to government, and drew on government resources in both target countries, including Ministry of Agriculture extension staff in Malawi and district council engineers in Tanzania, to avoid duplication and strengthen delivery.



Project Interventions and Impact

Implemented across four dioceses in Malawi by the Catholic Development Commission in Malawi and in Laghangareri village in Tanzania by the Diocese of Mbulu Development Department, the A+ Program reached 49,741 people through an integrated package of climate-smart agriculture, WASH, livelihoods, gender equality and child protection, and disaster risk reduction. The endline evaluation found that food security and WASH outcomes had improved substantially, with most communities meeting or exceeding their targets.

Food Security and Sustainable Livelihoods

The program supported farmers to adopt climate-smart agriculture through training, drought-tolerant and early maturing seed, organic fertiliser, irrigation and livestock pass-on schemes. It also strengthened alternative livelihoods through village savings groups and vocational activities including tailoring and carpentry. Farmers adopted Mbeya manure, an organic fertiliser made from locally available materials, as the cost of inorganic fertiliser increased threefold during the program. In Tanzania, improvements to canals, boreholes and irrigation systems extended access to previously unserved areas and enabled households to grow onions as a cash crop throughout the year. Livestock pass-on schemes provided households with goats, chickens and pigs and allowed participants to build livestock assets and reinvest income.

Substantial improvements in food production and household income were seen as a result of the program. Average maize yields in Malawi increased more than fivefold, while households in Laghangareri reported eliminating the annual food shortage period. However, results were not uniform. Weak or sick livestock contributed to high early mortality in some Malawi districts, and irrigated land remained well below potential in several areas, limiting the extent to which irrigation could reduce dependence on rainfall.

“Irrigation has helped us to do farming all the year round and bridge the hunger gap. Harvests are now supplementing yields from rain-fed agriculture and there are no food shortages any longer.” Lead Farmer, Jalawe Irrigation Scheme, Rumphi, Malawi

KEY FINDINGS

- Average maize yields in Malawi rose 5.5 times, from around six 50-kilogram bags per acre at baseline to 31 bags at endline.
- Average monthly household income increased by 58.4% in Malawi, to AUD 68.21, and 43.8% in Tanzania, to AUD 171.10. Both results exceeded program targets.
- In Tanzania, reported months of food shortage fell from four per year to zero, with households reporting sufficient food for an average of nearly 13 months.
- Between 2018 and 2020, the program supported 10 tailors, four welders, eight carpenters and three bricklayers to train through vocational colleges. Several subsequently began training others in their communities.
- Farmers using Mbeya manure reported increasing yields from 4–5 bags per acre to 15–20 bags, with yields of up to 50 bags per acre reported where manure was combined with good soil husbandry.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

The program drilled and rehabilitated boreholes, extended piped water systems and established Water Point Committees across target districts in Malawi. In Tanzania, it rehabilitated a leaking 150,000-litre storage tank and constructed a new 100,000-litre tank, extending piped water to five sub-villages and two primary schools. The Community-Led Total Sanitation approach encouraged households to construct and use their own toilets and handwashing facilities, reducing reliance on shared, uncovered facilities and open defecation. In Tanzania, water sanitation and hygiene investments in three schools included gender-appropriate toilets and menstrual hygiene facilities. The evidence indicates significant improvements in access to water and household sanitation in Malawi, alongside a reduction in reported diarrhoea. Communities also developed mechanisms to maintain water infrastructure. In Tanzania, water committees now collect small user fees to fund maintenance and expansion, with some new water points established without further program support, providing evidence of continued local investment in WASH services.

Coverage remains uneven in some remote and mountainous areas of Malawi, where dispersed settlements make borehole construction expensive. Toilet ownership also declined slightly in one district, where much of the sanitation training occurred during the final two years of implementation.

“Irrigation has helped us to do farming all the year round and bridge the hunger gap. Harvests are now supplementing yields from rain-fed agriculture and there are no food shortages any longer. We boil, roast and eat fresh maize as a snack besides selling dried maize, which we use to process flour for making porridge (nsima in vernacular Chichewa). Maturity of the irrigated maize coincides with the beginning of lean period in November and December and helps us a lot” lead farmer, Jalawe irrigation scheme, Rumphi,

KEY FINDINGS

- Access to clean water in Malawi increased from 75.2% to 97.5% of households, while reported collection time fell to under 30 minutes, compared with up to three hours at baseline.
- Reported diarrhoea prevalence in Malawi fell by 22 percentage points, from 32% at baseline to 10% at endline.
- In Tanzania, waterborne disease cases recorded at the village dispensary fell from 15 to 10 cases per month, while walking distance to water fell to under 100 metres.
- About 90% of households in Malawi’s target districts now have their own toilet with a handwashing facility, up from 4 to 6 households sharing one uncovered toilet.
- In Tanzania, rehabilitation of the existing 150,000 litre tank and construction of a new 100,000-litre tank extended piped water to five sub-villages and two primary schools.

Gender Equality, Child Protection and Human Rights

The program established Child Protection Committees, Gender Male Champion Committees and Mothers Groups in target communities, supported by household gender sensitisation activities. In Tanzania, School Child Protection Clubs used songs, poems and drama to build awareness of children's rights and protection. These structures provided locally recognised mechanisms to identify and respond to gender-based violence, child marriage and child abuse. In Malawi, community bylaws set out locally agreed expectations and penalties for some forms of misconduct, with committees and local leaders addressing less serious cases through counselling or, where provided for under the bylaws, fines or other agreed penalties. More serious cases, including rape, forced marriage and serious physical violence, were referred to the police as criminal matters.

Evidence from focus groups and reported cases suggests that gender norms shifted in some communities, with men taking on more household care work and women reporting greater participation in household and community decision making. Community structures also intervened in individual cases, including supporting girls to leave early marriages and continue their education. Program staff and communities reported examples of serious cases being referred to police and resulting in prosecution, although follow up by police on reported cases remained inconsistent in some districts. In Tanzania, women also reported increased participation in village committees and greater voice in decisions affecting their communities.

"When children were crying before, men were looking at that as women's work. They could neither calm nor take care of them. But now, they are responsible and caring."
Female participant, focus group discussion, Laghangareri, Tanzania

KEY FINDINGS

Strengthened child protection systems helped prevent child marriage and support girls' education in Malawi, with Child Protection Committees rescuing 5 girls from marriage, returning them to school, and helping create communities where serious child protection cases were reported as increasingly rare.

Women's representation on community committees in Malawi rose from 50% to 84%, above the 80% target, including in livelihood activities where 30 of the 40 farmers in the Jalawe irrigation scheme in Rumphi are women.

In Laghangareri, human rights and child protection awareness activities reached 419 people, and reported cases of abuse fell to fewer than three per year (as reported by Child Protection Committees).

In most Malawi communities, households can now reach clean water in under 15 minutes, increasing the time and safety of women and girls generally responsible for collecting water.





Climate Resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction

The program promoted climate-smart agriculture through drought-tolerant crop varieties, intercropping and Mbeya manure, alongside irrigation systems that reduced dependence on rainfall. Communities were also supported to identify disaster risks and develop mitigation measures. In Tanzania, environmental protection training supported communities to develop local conservation action plans. The program was implemented during a period of significant climate shocks and extreme weather events. Cyclones Idai in 2019, and Ana and Gombe in 2022, destroyed crops, livestock and infrastructure in southern Malawi and repeatedly disrupted progress. These shocks highlight both the value and the limits of the program's climate resilience measures. Climate smart farming and irrigation provided alternative ways to maintain production, but irrigated land remained well below potential in several Malawi districts. Tree planting in Tanzania's driest areas was also largely unsuccessful because of insufficient rainfall.

KEY FINDINGS

In Dowa, where depleted soils have limited yield gains, better post-harvest management gave households an additional one or two months of self-food sufficiency.

Solar, motorised and treadle irrigation pumps supported year-round farming. Households in Malawi have begun replicating solar irrigation at larger scale, including one woman who bought her own diesel pump and planted 1 hectare of iron and zinc rich beans.

Villages that did not take part have copied climate smart agriculture, tree planting, energy saving stoves and vegetable gardens after seeing participants benefit, including in Rumphi.

In Tanzania, 54 people received environmental conservation training and subsequently developed a community action plan.



Sustainability

There is evidence that many program benefits are already being sustained through community structures, local practices and user financed infrastructure. Water, irrigation, livestock and child protection committees remain active with limited external supervision. In Tanzania, village water, irrigation and livestock committees collect small user fees to fund maintenance and expansion, including new water points established without further program support. A number of low-cost practices are also continuing independently, including Mbeya manure production, backyard gardens and beekeeping. Practices introduced by the program have begun to spread beyond participating households, with neighbouring villages adopting WASH facilities and farming techniques after observing their use in target communities. Sustainability is less certain for activities requiring specialist technical support. Fish farming has underperformed, with most ponds reportedly failing, while beekeeping has also been constrained by limited access to replacement stock and specialist advice.

Case Study

Eliya Mussa lives in Laghangareri village, Tanzania, where rainfall occurs only once or twice a year and farming depends heavily on irrigation. Before the program, her household had no livestock and relied on production from a single, poorly maintained irrigation source. Through the program, Eliya received a female dairy goat through the livestock pass-on scheme and participated in irrigation farming alongside improvements to canals and boreholes. Her goats have since increased to nine, with three sold for between TZS70,000 and TZS90,000 each. She has used her newfound income from crop and livestock sales to build a new brick house and pay school fees. “Thank you to Caritas Australia because it has been helpful. My life has changed because of A+. I received goats and participated in irrigation farming. I am constructing a new brick house and paying school fees without problems after crop sales.” Eliya’s experience reflects wider changes reported in Laghangareri, where 40 households have received goats through the pass-on scheme and average household income increased by 43.8% between baseline and endline.



Recommendations / Future Programming Priorities

1. Build any future phase on the Strength Based, Asset Based and Rights Based Approaches, retaining the emphasis on community-led identification of assets, priorities and solutions.
2. Explore expansion to additional districts across Malawi's four dioceses and neighbouring villages in Tanzania, including Malekchand and Barazani, where there is evidence of demand and potential to build on established community structures.
3. Prioritise additional boreholes and irrigation infrastructure in areas where access remains low, including electric-pump boreholes in the driest sub-villages of Tanzania.
4. Provide targeted technical training, extension support and equipment for fish farming and beekeeping addressing the specialist capacity and input gaps that limited results to date.
5. Support participants to become self-reliant by graduating participants that have stepped out of extreme poverty using responsible graduation models.
6. Strengthen referral and follow-up mechanisms between Child Protection Committees, police and other duty bearers to improve responses to reported cases of abuse.
7. Scale practices that have demonstrated potential for wider uptake, including Mbeya manure production and value addition for higher-value crops.

This Impact Snapshot summarises results from the final evaluation of the Integrated Community Development (A+) Program, implemented by CADECOM (Malawi) and the Diocese of Mbulu Development Department (DMDD, Tanzania), and supported by Caritas Australia and the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). The evaluation was conducted by an independent consultancy in 2022.

Caritas AUSTRALIA | Australian Aid

For further information contact Connor McBride, Programs Systems and Quality Manager, connor.mcbride@caritas.org.au