



**Self Help  
Africa**  
Food and a future



# KULIMA BETTER

## NEWSLETTER

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Increasing resilience, food, nutrition and income security



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EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI  
I pray that they will all be one - John 17:21



# EDITORIAL COMMENT



Welcome to 2019 first quarter edition of Better Extension Training Transforming Economic Returns ( BETTER) project newsletter. BETTER is part of the €111 000 000 KULIMA (Kutukula Ulimi m'Malawi) programme with the European Union contributing €100 ,000 ,000. The newsletter provide quarterly insights and updates of the KULIMA programme in 10 districts.

The BETTER project is using the farmer field school approach to improve the delivery of agriculture extension services and just after a year and 3 months the approach is proving to be an excellent complementary and reinforcing approach to other agriculture extension services in Malawi. The newsletter profiles smallholder farmers in Karonga, Chitipa, Kasungu, Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota, Salima, Mzimba, Chiradzulu, Thyolo and Mulanje on their journey to diversification, increased production and how they are coping with adverse effects of climate change. We also share with you highlights of the Year One progress and how farmers like Winfred Khwangwala aged 66 from Thyolo are becoming Gender champions working to ensure social inclusion while stopping gender based violence. It is my hope that you will not only learn but enjoy the stories.

**Ulemu Chiluzi**  
Country Director

## FACTS ABOUT KULIMA BETTER PROJECT

- KULIMA BETTER is a five years project funded by European Union (EU ) and being implemented by NGO Consortium led by Self Help Africa and the other partners are Plan Malawi, Action Aid, Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA), Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) in 10 KULIMA districts: Karonga, Chitipa, Nkhatabay, Mzimba, Kasungu, Salima, Nkhotakota, Thyolo, Mulanje and Chiradzulu
- The project started its implementation in January 2018 and is expected to phase out in December 2022
- The Project has three main objectives:
  - (i) Strengthen agricultural extension services through 13,400 FFS groups in order to secure effective and productive services for small holder farmers,
  - (ii) Increase the absorptive/anticipatory, adaptive and transformative capacities of 402,000 smallholder farmers to adapt to adverse effects of climate change and improve food security in 78 EPAs in 10 KULIMA districts ,
  - (iii) Improve food security for 402,000 farmers through effective livelihood diversification and technology transfer.
- BETTER Project is working in partnership with the Government of Malawi, Food Organization and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
- To date the program has reached over 69,198 farmers; 54.9% are women, 45.1% are men.



# BETTER ANNUAL PROGRESS HIGHLIGHTS

Result 1: 402,000 smallholder farmers have improved skills and knowledge to increase agriculture productivity through effective, efficient and inclusive agriculture extension services

- 2,420 CBF were trained by Master Trainers in climate smart agriculture practices.
- 20,773 smallholder farmers trained by the CBFs in small scale vegetable production and the establishment of vegetable backyard gardens.
- 18,358 (8121 M: 10237 F) farmer field school members have been trained in nutrition.
- The CBFs conducted cooking demonstrations with a total of 16,932 (10,361 F: 6571 M) farmers attending the cooking demonstrations.
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## Result 2:

### Improved district-based knowledge management, agriculture extension services and farmer-based experiential learning

- Conducted 147 Cluster field days  
Distributed 800 posters and 1,500 leaflets on FAW and these were distributed during the awareness campaigns in Karonga and Chitipa districts.

### Result 3: 402,000 smallholder farmers have increased crop diversification and improved adoption of integrated technologies.

- The CBFs have trained a total of 34,953 (13,720 male and 21,233 females) smallholder farmers in the best agronomic practices
- The Farmer Field Schools were supported with various inputs to support their studies, the inputs included: small stock livestock (goats, chickens and pigs), legumes, cereals, roots and tubers, horticulture (vegetables and fruits), beekeeping and agroforestry

### Result 4: 402,000 smallholder farmers have access to EWS, savings and loans facilities and training in Climate Smart Agriculture in all the 78 EPAs in KULIMA Districts

- Conducted Participatory Vulnerability Capacity Assessment (PVCA) and Disaster Risk Response (DRR) assessments
- Trained 10 District Civil Protection Committees (DCPCs) 64 Area Protection Committees and 211 Village Protection Committees (VCPCs) in climate change adaptation and Disaster Risk Management
- The project procured and installed 145 rain-gauges and 6 river-line gauges across all the KULIMA districts
- 1,352 Farmer Field Schools have been supported by CBFs to set up demonstrations, comparative and validation studies on different CSA practices which include pit planting, mulching, minimum tillage and agroforestry

## TIKOLERANE FFS BOAST OF IMPROVED CROP PRODUCTION



Maize PAN 3M01 (left) fully matured and PAN 4M 23 (right) not matured but planted on the same day

In Mzimba, Mbalachanda, along the Rukuru river is a small settlement of Chamaliwa. Despite the community's proximity to the river, the community has been harvesting low yields and suffering from poor nutrition due to prolonged dry spells and destructive Fall Army Worm (FAW).

Tikolerane Farmer Field School (FFS) is comprised of 18 women and 12 men. The objective of the group is to improve food security and nutrition among household levels. The group chose to study maize varieties which would do well in their area considering the weather conditions, and also pest control methods especially for FAW.

The FFS chose to work on a river bank, which was previously unproductive land. The members planted crops such as cabbage, tomatoes, onions and different types of maize seed as demonstration plots for the community. Their aim was to find out which crops would be suitable to the terrain. They also wanted to find out which crops would mature early in order to prevent early attacks from pests and diseases.

Lyford Nondo, the community based facilitator (CBF) was passing on the knowledge he gained from the Master Trainers to the farmers. This encouraged the members to adopt better methods of farming such as correct spacing of ridges and planting stations, early planting, keeping plots clean and also keeping their plots watered at all times, despite the challenges the river encounters throughout the dry season.

During the period of observation, the crop was affected by FAW particularly in the maize field plots. The group deployed an indigenous (local method) by applying mixed pepper, Muwawani, Tephrosia Vogelli, and sand, to control the army worms. The local methods which are not only effective but also affordable as they use locally available resources in the community compared to chemicals which are relatively unsustainable and expensive to an average smallholder farmer.

Previously, farmers did not plant drumhead cabbage and onions because they believed that they would not thrive in their area. Now they have learnt that drumhead cabbage and onions can also do well in their area as such the next winter season they will plant these crops again.

"Being a farmer as well as a CBF I have also learnt how to plant drumhead, through training at Mzuzu RTC. At RTC the drumhead and onions did not do so well because of the poor soils, but to my surprise the drumhead and onions have done well in my area. As such I have already sold 15,000 from just a quarter of the field," said Nondo

"Prior to the action, we did not know which varieties of maize mature fast, after the studies, we discovered that PAN 3M01 matures fast and survives with less moisture .

"We have also observed that PAN 4M 23 is the highest yielding of the four varieties we tried but it wilts with less moisture meaning that it is not drought tolerant. Therefore, when a farmer chooses to plant this kind of a variety he has to plant early and either plant when the rains are good enough or irrigate more," said Wiseman Nondo.

## FARMER HAILS MANURE USE



Edson Gwaye appreciating maize cob

Edson Gwaye, 43, hails from Ofaniele Gwaye village, Traditional Authority (T/A) Kampingo Sibande in Mzimba district. Gwaye is married and has 6 children (4 sons and 2 daughters). Agriculture is the main livelihood for Gwaye's family. He practices both rain-fed and winter farming, and grows garlic, rape, cabbage and tomatoes as cash crops.

"My farming production has decreased significantly over the years due to degraded soils which affected my income and household food security", Edson explains. "Before the onset of KULIMA/BETTER program, I had started processing my papers to leave for South Africa in search of greener pastures as farming alone could not sustain my family" added Gwaye while commending the project.

Gwaye joined Jalawe Farmer Field School (FFS) under KULIMA BETTER project on 8th July 2018. "I joined the group as my last resort in improving my crop production" said Gwaye. The FFS members identified soil fertility management options as a common problem among members.

In addressing problems on soil fertility, Edson adopted manure making and application, pit planting, crop diversification and livestock production. Through the adoption of these technologies, he saw a decrease in his production costs while at the same time having an improved crop stand.

"During 2017/18 farming season I purchased six bags of inorganic fertilizer (three for basal dressing and three for top dressing), costing on average MK26,000 , while for this current growing season I only purchased two bags (One basal and one top dressing)" he explains. He combined the inorganic fertilizer with com-

post and animal manure he made after learning the skills from the FFS. "This has significantly reduced my cost of production with a promise of a good harvest from the crop outlook" Gwaye said.

Through the FFSs, the project has promoted other interventions such as Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF), Fall Army Worm (FAW) control options, nutrition, gender equality and Village Savings and Loans (VSL), in which he participates.

## FARMERS REVAMP BANANA PRODUCTION



Farmers appreciating the banana varieties

Malawi is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa affected by Banana Bunchy Top Virus (BBTV). Over the years, the disease has caused great devastation, leaving farmers in the country destitute as the crop is regarded as their main source of food and income. Karonga is one of the districts that depend on banana as a source of their main meal. In the district, farmers used to plant bananas using suckers from unknown sources, without applying good agriculture practices which resulted in poor yield.

Self Help Africa conducted a field day in Kaporo North Extension Planning Area in Karonga under the theme: Banana Production, Key to Food, Nutrition and Income security. The field day attracted over 500 community members. The event was graced by the Programme Manager for Karonga ADD, Mr Aggrey Kamanga, Karonga District Agricultural Development Officer (DADO), Agriculture Extension Development Coordinators (AEDCs), representatives from different media houses and local leaders graced the occasion.

Four banana fields were visited where farmers are conducting studies on banana varieties. Different varieties of bananas namely: Mulanje, Kenya, Sukari and Ndoki were planted and now they are in a reproductive stage. During the field day participants appreciated the current performance of different banana varieties after receiving same treatment in the four banana fields that were visited.

"All these bananas were planted on the same date and through this study we have observed that Kenya is growing fast and has produced more suckers some of which we sold and others we shared with outreach groups for them to grow for studies as well as income generation", said Eliza Uledi who is the Master Trainer for Mwanguluku section.

However, according to the farmers, Ndoki is not performing well in the area as it requires more water as compared to Kenya, Mulanje and Sukari. BBTV disease is one of the common diseases affecting banana production in Malawi. Nelson Mwakafwisha who is also a member of Wiyule FFS explained to the participants some of the good practices that need to be followed to prevent or control the disease in banana field. "Use disease free planting materials, uproot and burn the affected bananas and keep the land free from bananas for at least four to five months", Mwakafwisha advised. Unique Ndimbwa who is a member of Wiyule FFS and a Community Based Facilitator for Kolapanansi FFS outreach group encouraged farmers to venture into banana farming which is a good source of income and food.

"I want more members from my group to have individual banana fields, so far three members have established their own fields", Ndimbwa said.



## KULIMA BETTER: A GAME CHANGER!



Alima Spesha showing in her maize garden

Alima Spesha, 28 years old comes from group village headman Chota of T/A Malenga Chanzi in Nkhotakota district. She is a mother of four children and one of the thousands of farmers that have benefited from the 5-year EU funded project.

Since the start of the project in Nkhotakota district, Spesha has been one of the active members in Chipopomo Farmer field school, where selected smallholder farmers have been doing different studies on maize crop production using traditional agricultural technologies in order to increase household resilience, food nutrition and income.

For many years,

Spesha has been using traditional techniques in her production of maize. However, according to her experience, it has been difficult for her family to come up with a solution. At the farmer field school, she's studying about the impacts of applying manure in three different planting methodologies: pit planting, ridge planting and conservation agriculture. She decided to adopt ridge planting with application of bokashi manure at on her 1acre maize field.

Spesha is now expressing her joy with the coming of KULIMA BETTER project as she calls it a game-changer to the life of her household. The knowledge she is getting from the FFS has improved her use of these traditional knowledge of agriculture in maize crop production. Spesha is a happy woman with the way her field has performed.

"At first, I didn't welcome the idea of Farmer Field School. I wasn't interested in joining Farmer Field

School because I thought it will be a waste of time. But now I do not regret", said Spesha. The answer to her research was not through cultivating a large area but to know the impact of applying manure. She cannot regret the time she has been spending at her FFS because it has brought a lot of positive impacts to her farming.

## KATETE FFS OUTSHINES AMONG THE FFS IN SALIMA



Katete FFS members on the groundnuts study plot

Located 27 kilometres South West of Salima is one of the most successful Farmer Field School out of 310 of them formed in the district.

Katete Farmer Field School is in Kumwala village in in Traditional Authority Khombeza at Matenje Extension Planning Area. The group started its operations in August 2018 with a membership of 7 men and 23 women. Just like any other Farmer Field Schools; the members of Katete FFS underwent a series of trainings including group dynamics, Agro-Ecosystem Analysis (AESA), post-harvest handling, Integrated Homestead Farming conducted by Mr John Njazi – the Agricultural Extension Development Officer (AEDO) as well as Master Trainer.

Katete FFS the chose to study maize and groundnuts. The group came up with Integrated Production and Pest Management on Fall Army Worm (FAW) as study title in maize and effect of plant population in groundnuts.

What makes Katete to be one of the most successful Farmer Field Schools in Salima district is the leadership of Mr Daison Lojasi- the chairperson of Katete. He boasts his school has registered no member dropout and attributes this to good community sensitisation meetings which clearly spelt out what will be done and

what will not be done in the implementation of the project so that the interested farmers make informed decisions after self-evaluation and also perceived benefits the project will bring in their lives. The school also has the best designed study as well as commercial plots adding up to 0.4 ha. Katete's unique feature also lies in its ability to contribute towards the operations of their group. For example, members got all the required inputs (seed and fertilizer) from Evangelical Association of Malawi, but they decided to buy additional input. To his effect they agreed to contribute money amounting to K14,000.00 for the purchase of additional fertilizers and seed for maize commercial (SC403), groundnut commercial (CG 7). Later after planting our study plots we also received 3kg of Open Pollinated maize seed (ZM523) for multiplication so that at the end of the growing season members can share the seed. Initially each member contributed K50 as membership fees and later K500 towards the group operations fund. In addition, the group also raised K13,000 by providing casual labour.

The group started Village Savings and Loans (VSL) to assist the members to have access to soft loans for small business promotion so that they are economically empowered. Apart from investing money borrowed from VSL members are also able to buy other food items which they are not producing themselves.

"I would like to thank European Union (EU) for supporting this programme, as it will assist in development of knowledge and skills of farmers" said Mr Daison Lojasi. The successful implementation of Farmer Field School concept by Katete, has created interest and demand by non-participating community members to join.

## SAYING GOODBYE TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



Self Help Africa Gender & Social Inclusion Advisor, Mary Sweeny and Mr Khwangwala and his wife and grandchild

Winfred Khwangwala, 66, is married, a father of 5 children and 4 grandchildren. He is a community-based facilitator and gender champion for Malamulo Farmer Field School (FFS) at Heleman Village, Traditional Authority Khwethemule in Thyolo. He became a full-time farmer in the year 2017 following retirement from his profession as a Printer at Malamulo Publishing House where he had worked for 41 years.

When the farmers were setting up Malamulo FFS in 2018, Khwangwala was elected a leader for the group. A recent gender analysis conducted by Self Help Africa with funding from European Union (EU) under the Kutukula Ulimi m'Malawi (KULIMA) Better Extension Training Transforming Economic Returns (BETTER) Project revealed that the prevalence of Gender Based Violence (GBV) is 35.2% higher in the 10 KULIMA dis-

tricts than the national prevalence rate of 34%. The 10 KULIMA districts are Karonga, Chitipa, Mzimba, Nkhatabay, Kasungu, Salima, Nkhotakota, Thyolo, Mulanje, and Chiradzulu.

In order to address the challenges, BETTER project adopted the Gender Action Learning System approach (GALS) to promote gender equality, challenge gender norms that lead to gender-based violence and engage men as champions of change in championing gender equality.

"The GALS is a community led empowerment methodology that will address GBV among farming households and its adoption in the BETTER project will significantly reduce incidences of GBV in the 10 KULIMA districts," said the Gender Advisor, Regina Matengo

### Before GALS Training

"I was the lion of the house and very inconsiderate to my wife and children. I used to be the only decision maker in the house she did not have a say with regards to how the money will be spent in the house," revealed Khwangwala.

Khwangwala and his wife have grown maize on a 4.5 acres of land and they have established an integrated homestead farming comprising of small stock (chickens), a backyard garden where they grow leafy vegetables, onion and pepper, and an orchard with more than 14 species of fruits which include both exotic and indigenous fruits.



Khwangwala has become a champion of change in his own family. Using the GALs tools, his family has mapped out their vision by the year 2021. They would like to build a good house with electricity and they are working out the steps they need to take for their goal to be achieved.

## KULIMA BETTER PICTORIAL FOCUS



KULIMA PROGRAMME LAUNCH: Self Help Africa Country Director, Ulemu Chiluzi, Self Help Africa Executive Director, David Dalton and EU Delegate Jean Pierre Bussogorro



2018 World Food Day in Nkhotakota: Minister of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development, Honourable Joseph Mwanamvekha visiting NGO Consortium stand

## Enhancing Nutrition Knowledge and Skills For Improved Dietary Diversity



Post Harvest handling best practices-Mango preservation in Karonga



Cooking demonstration by FFS members in Nkhatabay



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