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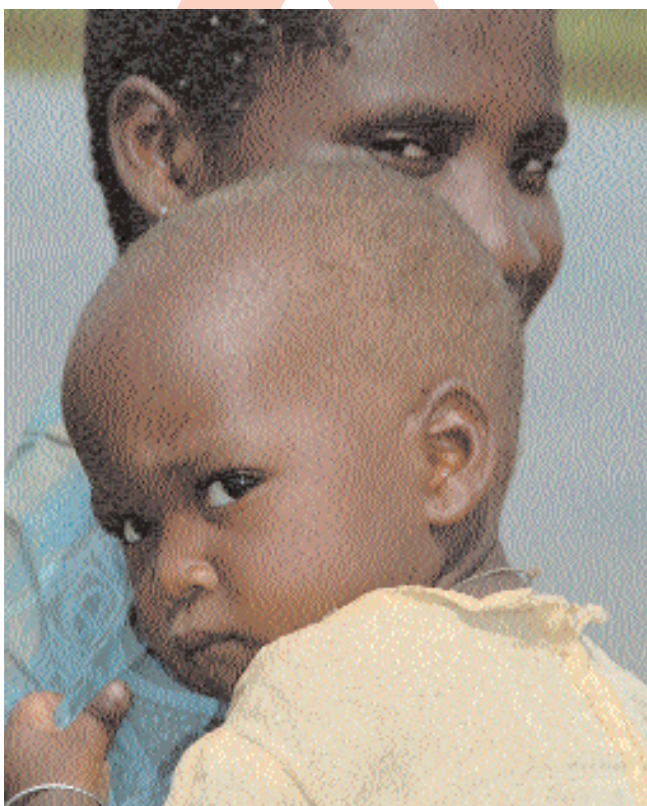


ADAPTING FISH FARMING TO HIV/AIDS AFFECTED FAMILIES

Fish Farming an Effective Livelihood for HIV/AIDS Affected Families

A testimony of Chingale Community

HIV/AIDS is eroding the welfare and livelihood of thousands of Malawians. In addition to suffering through prolonged illness and death, families experience elongated economic hardship through loss of productivity and income, increasing expenses for treatment and highly demanding care and wide-spread exclusion from economic activities. Unless HIV/AIDS affected families are enabled to participate actively in the growth of the rural economy in their communities, it is unlikely that they will be able to continue positively with their lives. Something ought to be done before individual families and communities plunge into irreversible crises.



There are over a thousands of orphans, widows and grandmothers looking after big families that have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

Fish Farming an Effective Livelihood for HIV/AIDS Affected Families

Are Current Responses to the needs of HIV/AIDS affected families working?

Various agricultural technologies and economic investments have been tried to stop this downward spiral of vulnerability and poverty among people affected by HIV/AIDS but so far these have not effectively responded to their needs and strengths. Consequently, there has been a growing economic marginalisation of these families and their increased dependency on service provision.

For example, the requirements of improved agricultural technologies in terms of labour, capital investment, mobility, institutional participation and planning skills often exceed the capacity and capability of affected families because their productive members might no longer be able to participate.

There is therefore urgent need to fully consider these constraints when designing and implementing programs to increase agricultural productivity.

Are there any answers to the needs of HIV/AIDS affected People?

Many opportunities exist for answers to the key needs of affected families. World Fish Centre (WFC) in collaboration with World Vision International, (WVI), a year ago identified one such opportunity that provides such answers. This is Fish farming!



Fish Farming an Effective Livelihood for HIV/AIDS Affected Families



A variety of fish species are harvested once every six months

According to WFC. Fish farming offers multiple benefits. These include improved nutrition rich in proteins, minerals and vitamins, steady cash through diversified and year-round agricultural production, as well as the opportunity to raise larger sums of cash quickly through fish sales.

Fish Farming in Chingale Area Development Program

Thus from July 2005 convinced that Fish farming can make a difference in the life of families affected by HIV/AIDS, WFC through WVI, with funds from World Bank in order to increase the income and nutritional status of HIV/AIDS affected households through improved fish farming practices started providing knowledge and skills in Integrated Agriculture-aquaculture (IAA), nutrition, marketing, group dynamics and HIV/AIDS.

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The purpose of this initiative was to develop adjusted technologies and practices in fish production and utilisation that are specifically suited to orphan and widow headed households.

The basic principle of IAA is to grow fish in water bodies that are closely integrated into a household farm, and intentionally make use of the resource flows of all the diverse activities on a farm such as livestock, vegetables and crops. The major aim is to convert agricultural wastes and manure into high quality fish protein, use the nutrients generated in the pond as fertilizers for growing crops, to reduce the need for off-farm inputs and to grow vegetables around the pond by using it as a small on-farm water reservoir, and with the additional option to grow vegetables, maize and rice in residual moisture of the ponds in times of drought. Thus it is truly an integrated method of agriculture that responds to multiple needs of rural communities.



Mawila Integrated Fish Farming Club
a perfect example of Integrated Agriculture-Aquaculture
(IAA) Project

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Mawila Integrated Fish Farming club is a well established farmer field school.

The project known as "Adapting Aquaculture to HIV/AIDS Affected Households" targeted community institutions and already existing Community Based Groups (CBGs) such as farmers' clubs through formal trainings and farmer field schools in Traditional Authority Mulumbe, Chingale Area, West of Zomba District.

This area has a comparative disadvantage in terms of household income and food security. However, the area has great potential for agriculture and aquaculture (fish farming). The communities are hard working and willing to adopt new innovations and the presence of World Vision that is already working with the community makes it ideal for this project.

The families with little or without resources were targeted. The communities themselves identified these through worth ranking. Special emphasis was on female-headed households and women as they are both the main players in food security activities, and the main custodians of family health including care of the vulnerable and the chronically sick, and those suffering from HIV/AIDS. A total of 1000 households were targeted.



There are hundreds of old women caring for their orphaned grandchildren without resources.

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Training that was provided included managing fish ponds, handling of fish stocks, processing, marketing of fish and community based monitoring and evaluation.

These activities were implemented by communities themselves and facilitated by World Vision International, Chingale Area Development Programme (ADP). WVI's role focussed on community mobilization and capacity building in the identified fish farming potential areas. There has been full involvement of relevant government ministries providing guidance on policy and ensuring that interventions were built on government national goals.



Members of the Chingale Integrated Fish Farming Association harvesting fish

What Changes were expected and have they been realised?

According to Joseph Nagoli, Senior Research Officer for WorldFish Center, long-term impact are expected from the project. He says that although these would take some years to evidently be observed there are observable indications of desired results.

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Community members tell their success stories

1,000 Orphan and widow headed families in Chingale have already started benefiting from the project. They have at their disposal suitable fish farming technologies and skills that are enabling them improve their nutritional status and generating increased income.



One of the young orphan women, Violet Juliana, 21, who heads a family is a proud owner of a fishpond

According to John Emmanuel, 17, Secretary of the Chingale Integrated Fish Farming Association, in July 2005, the community selected 1,000 orphan and widow headed families through worth ranking method. These women and young ladies divided themselves into groups of 25 to 30 in 32 targeted villages. The community constructed 1 fishpond in each village for each group.

But as economic and nutritional benefits began to emerge individual members in the groups could not wait longer before they could own their personal ponds. Each member got so inspired that they wanted to have their own pond.

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"When the initial fish harvests had been done and the women saw the monetary and nutritional returns the ponds were beginning to bring into their pockets and homes, individuals started constructing their own ponds because they felt the ponds had begun to break the poverty trap in which they had been held for so long," says John Emmanuel.

In few months that followed, 80 orphans and widows who head families constructed their own ponds and stocked them with fish. While the Association was helping the initial 1,000



Gladys, left her grandmother centre and her fellow club member chatting happily on the edge of their fishpond.

members, 200 more women expressed interest and constructed their own ponds. This overwhelming demand for fishpond suggests the relevance of the technology to poor and vulnerable women especially those whose families have been affected by HIV/AIDS.

A visit to the fishponds site reveals the remarkable skills the women have attained in pond construction, pond stocking,

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fish care, predation control and harvesting skills. The fish farmers are also versed with record keeping and product marketing.

John Emmanuel says that Fish Farming has become an established livelihood among people in Chingale.

“The Chingale Integrated Fish Farming, which started in 2003 has 28 clubs with a total membership of 699 fish farmers who own 32 fish ponds,” says Emmanuel.

The fishponds are in total stocked with 2.5 million various species of fish. We harvest the fish once every six months.

Fish Club donates MK 150, 000. 00 to HIV/AIDS Affected families

One of the 28 fish clubs in Chingale, Limbikani Fish Club, has donated a total of MK 150, 000.00 to 35 young orphaned women and widows who head families.

“As a club we want to see that all the families that have been affected by HIV/AIDS and look after families have access to fish-ponds,” says Manfred Moyale Secretary of Limbikani Fish Farmers Club.



Women members of Limbikani Fish Farming club resting on the contours of their fish ponds

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According to Moyale, the club has been helping the more vulnerable people especially women in the community through the WFC-Malawi Office "Adapting Aquaculture to



Grandma Gladys has enough food and money to look after her orphaned grandchildren

HIV/AIDS Affected Households" Project facilitated by WVI-Malawi Office.

"We help these women keep fish in order to raise income which is meant to help them care for the orphaned children in their families," says Moyale.

Moyale says that initially the club constructed 11 ponds worth MK 110,000.00 and distributed them to the 35 women. These women work in groups. Before the ponds were allocated to them the club trained the women in various fish farming and leadership skills.

The club through WorldFish Centre supplied 8,000 fingerlings worth MK 40,000.00 to be stocked in the ponds.

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Moyale further explains that they expect these fish farmers each to have her own fishpond besides the group pond, which they jointly own. We ask the village headman to allocate a piece of land to those members who do not have land. This is the advocacy role the club plays in this project.

Once a piece of land is allocated to a member, the group or club work together to construct the pond. This is why this method requires less labour in put from an individual and it is very well suited to members who might be sick and not able to work as hard as they used to be.

"It takes a maximum of 4 days to dig a pond if 20 people are involved and work very hard," says Moyale.

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