



# Irrigate Malawi

Magazine of the Shire Valley Transformation Programme: Issue 5, August 2022

**5 COOPERATIVES**

registered in  
Chikwawa

Over 45,000 land  
parcels secured  
for **SHIRE  
VALLEY  
FARMERS**

SVTP  
soldiers on  
after  
**CYCLONE  
ANA**

SVTP: A catalyst to the realization of the MW2063



1<sup>st</sup> Community Conservation Area established in the Elephant Marsh



Women defying odds in a male dominated industry



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**Main cover photo:** *Mary Saulo, Chikhomo Village, Chikwawa*  
**Photo courtesy:** *Alice Kaunda, SVTP*



## In this issue

- 1 Foreword from the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture
- 2 Preface from the Project Coordinator
- 3 SVTP: Down memory lane
- 6 SVTP: A catalyst for the realization of MW2063
- 7 Cyclone Ana affects Shire Valley farmers, SVTP
- 10 A stitch in time: SVTP soldiers on after Cyclone Ana
- 13 Contractor discloses ESMPs for campsites
- 14 SVTP, PPPC engage off-takers
- 15 Over 45,000 land parcels secured for Shire Valley farmers
- 17 Land-related bills assented
- 18 SVTP intensifies agriculture commercialization drive
- 20 First CCA established in the Elephant Marsh
- 22 Malawi making strides in updating IUCN Red List
- 24 DPNW engages communities on wildlife conservation
- 25 A talk on wildlife
- 27 Irrigation is our lifeline
- 29 Women defying odds in male-dominated industry
- 33 Refrain from GBV-workers advised
- 34 CCJP builds capacity of stakeholders in GBV prevention

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## Foreword from the Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture



**Sandram Maweru**

Construction of the Shire Valley Irrigation Scheme through our flagship project, the Shire Valley Transformation Programme (SVTP), fulfils an 80-year-old dream of large-scale, commercial farming in the country. We have set agriculture productivity and commercialization as a key priority area in our country development framework, Malawi 2063. The framework seeks to transform our country from low income to self-reliance. The SVTP is one of the catalysts for the realization of this vision.

The Government of Malawi is investing heavily in this worthwhile, transformative project due to its numerous benefits to national development. I would

therefore like to express my profound gratitude to our development partners, the World Bank, the African Development Fund, the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Global Environment Facility for funding this worthwhile investment that will transform the agriculture sector in Malawi.

It is high time our country move from doing business-as-usual in our farming to transitioning to modern agriculture. The SVTP will benefit an estimated 223,000 smallholder farmers in Chikwawa and Nsanje districts who are usually affected by harsh effects of climate change like droughts and floods. Farmers will grow crops and practice aquaculture and livestock farming commercially. The SVTP aligns with the vision of the Government of Malawi to establish mega-farms to boost agriculture productivity. 43,370 hectares will be irrigated through the project. 14 commercial farms will be established during the first phase of the project.

I acknowledge the challenges the project has faced since the commencement of construction in April 2020. Construction works were suspended twice due to COVID-19. The project was also recently affected by Cyclone Ana which damaged the intake foundation and part of the first siphon. I commend our engineers in the Ministry of Agriculture, other stakeholders and our consultant Korea Rural Community Corporation (KRCC) for tirelessly working on redesigning the intake and designing the cofferdam. Let me also acknowledge our contractors Conduril and Sinohydro for their courage and resilience to work under challenging circumstances while maintaining timelines and quality.

Finally, I recognise staff members in the Ministry of Agriculture, our implementing partners, the Project Management Team, Chikwawa and Nsanje District Councils and our farmers for all the investment in time and efforts in ensuring that this national dream becomes a reality. Together we can!

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## Preface from the SVTP Project Coordinator

I am pleased to present the fifth edition of the Shire Valley Transformation Programme magazine! This magazine provides some insight into the milestones we have achieved and the challenges we have faced during our work.

We have made progress in the construction of major structures on the 6kms stretch of the Main Canal. Three bridge crossings, the rectangular canal/flume, 14 drainage works, and concrete paving of over 4.09kms of the canal have been completed. Three siphons and the fish barrier structure are currently under construction. We have also commenced clearance and excavation of Main Canals 1 and 2.



**Dr. Stanley Chakhumbila Khaila**

Despite registering tremendous progress, we have also faced some challenges along the way. We suspended works twice following a surge in COVID-19 cases at the construction site. The project was also not spared from the after-effects of Tropical Cyclone Ana which damaged the intake foundation and part of the first siphon. However, all structures on the canal are intact. The intake will be re-designed to suit current conditions at Kapichira Dam.

45,833 land parcels have been adjudicated and demarcated in Chikwawa in the SVTP-1 area in preparation for land consolidation. This covers 22,299 hectares belonging to 48,175 landowners (24,628 women and 22,547 men). The Programme also embarked on the establishment of Smallholder Owned Commercial Farm Enterprises (SOCFEs). This resulted in the establishment of five cooperatives from the first five irrigation blocks. These have been registered with the Registrar of Cooperative Societies.

The Programme also supported processes towards the establishment of the Elephant Marsh as a Community Conservation Area, updating the IUCN Red List for Malawi where 86 species are under assessment and the development of management plans for protected areas.

I am hopeful that you will find this magazine informative!

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## The SVTP: Down Memory Lane

Story by: *Alice Kaunda*



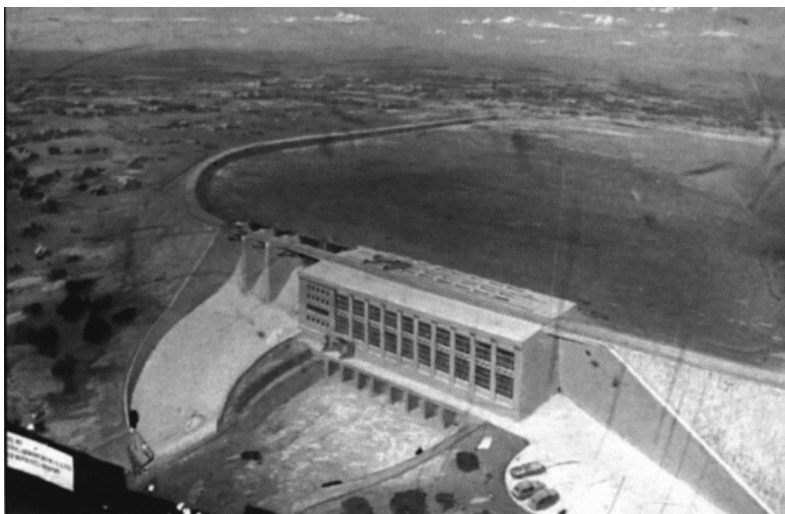
The Shire Valley Transformation Programme has been on the drawing board for over 80 years. Large-scale irrigation farming was one of the three pillars of the integrated development plan of the colonial government called the Shire Valley Project (SVP), developed in the 1940s.

In 1956, the former Governor of Nyasaland Sir Geoffrey Colby described the SVP as having the potential to 'revolutionize the economy of Nyasaland'.

*Dr Stanley Chakhumbila Khaila, Project Coordinator for the Shire Valley Transformation Programme narrates the history of the project to SVTP Communications Officer, Alice Kaunda. Alice Kaunda also speaks to Loveness Matchaya, a farmer from T/A Ndakwera in Chikwawa District about the tale of the Shire Valley Irrigation Scheme over the years.*

**Alice Kaunda:** How did the concept of the SVTP come about?

**Dr Khaila:** Many people believe that the journal paper written by Engineer Francis Edgar Kanthack in 1941 formed the basis for the development of an integrated macro-development program by the colonial government called the Shire Valley Project (SVP). The paper proposed that if we were to do a great job, what was needed was to come up with an integrated hydrological development program. The SVP mainly sought to regulate the level of Lake Malawi and expand water transport through construction of a barrage at Liwonde, generate hydroelectricity at Nkula and establish large-scale irrigation farming in the Shire Valley. I am glad that all three aspects of the SVP are now under implementation.



***A model of Matope Lake Control Barrage produced by Halcrow and Partners in 1954- Photo courtesy of National Archives, Zomba***

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**Alice Kaunda:** When did the implementation of the SVP start?

**Dr Khaila:** The implementation of the SVP started with the construction of the Nkula Hydroelectric Power Station in October 1963 after Nyasaland attained self-government in February of the same year. The construction of the power station was completed in 1965. The Liwonde Barrage was the second project to be commissioned under the SVP in early 1964. Construction works on the barrage were finalized in July 1965.

Rehabilitation of the Barrage started in 2015 and re-commissioning was done in 2019. The Barrage was constructed to regulate the level of water from Lake Malawi and ease transportation challenges for the people of Liwonde. However, the only core aspect of the SVP which has taken years to implement is large-scale irrigation farming in the Shire Valley. This has taken over 80 years to materialize. Construction of the Shire Valley Irrigation Scheme only commenced in April 2020.

**Alice Kaunda:** Why did the construction of the Shire Valley Irrigation Scheme take all these years to be rolled out?

**Dr Khaila:** For irrigation, many studies had to be undertaken over the years to assess the feasibility of the project. Most of these studies were inconclusive. In 2008, the Government of Malawi got funding from the African Water Facility for another feasibility study. The study concluded that it is possible to irrigate over 43,000 hectares of land in the Shire Valley districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje. The consultant, CODA recommended further studies.

In 2012, the African Development Bank provided funding to the Government of Malawi for a pre-feasibility study. The pre-feasibility study confirmed the findings from CODA that Chikwawa and Nsanje have the potential for gravity-fed irrigation farming. The implementation phase started in October 2018. Construction of the irrigation scheme only commenced in April 2020 as there was a need for time to procure a contractor with experience in the construction of large construction works.

**Alice Kaunda:** How will the Shire Valley Transformation Programme (SVTP) bring transformation?

**Dr Khaila:** The SVTP has three major components that will drive this transformation. The irrigation service provision component provides for the construction of the irrigation scheme and bringing water to the farmers. The second component deals with securing land tenure for the beneficiary farmers in readiness for land consolidation into commercial-farms in line with the Customary Land Act (2022). It also focuses on conserving natural resources as a way of preserving the Shire River which is the main source of water for the irrigation scheme.

The last component focuses on agriculture development and commercialization which looks at the production of crops for commercial purposes. The farmers will have to look at crops with available markets. The SVTP will also consider livestock farming and fisheries as part of the transformation drive.



*Loveness Matchaya*

**Alice Kaunda:** When did you know about the plan to construct the largest irrigation scheme in the Shire Valley?

**Loveness Matchaya:** I was born during the great famine in Malawi that killed over 200 people (between 1949 and 1950). My mother used to feed me and my siblings' root tubers for survival. As I was growing up, a rumour surfaced that the government was planning to construct a large irrigation scheme to address our hunger problems.

I have been waiting for the realization of this dream for many years. I am so glad that now construction has started. This scheme will benefit our children in the days to come.

**Alice Kaunda:** How will the scheme help you as a farmer?

**Loveness Matchaya:** Each year, we are affected by either drought or floods. This irrigation scheme will assist us in cultivating crops for both food and trade throughout the year. This will cushion us against the harsh effects of these natural disasters.

### **Did you know?**

- ✓ The Shire Valley Project was formulated based on a 1941 publication titled 'the Fluctuations of Lake Nyasa' published in the Geographical Journal by Engineer Francis Edgar Kanthack.
- ✓ Over 150 people drowned when a ferry overturned on the Shire River near Liwonde in 1965 in a tragedy dubbed 'the Liwonde Ferry Disaster'.
- ✓ Construction of the Nkula Hydroelectric Station commenced in October 1963 after Nyasaland attained self-government in February 1963.
- ✓ The construction of the Shire Valley Irrigation Scheme through the Shire Valley Transformation Programme commenced in April 2020.



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## SVTP: A catalyst to the realization of the MW2063

Story by: Alice Kaunda



**A presentation to the Head of State at the National Agriculture Commercialization Conference in Lilongwe**

The President of the Republic of Malawi Dr Lazarus Chakwera has underscored the importance of the transition from smallholder to commercial farming for national development.

“We must transit from subsistence to real substantive farming. If we do not change what we farm and how we farm, we will not become an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation. It’s that simple,” he said.

The President was speaking during the launch of the 10-year Implementation Plan of the Malawi 2063 Vision (MW2063).

The Shire Valley Transformation Programme (SVTP) operates at the centre of the MW2063. The MW2063 is the new blueprint for national development to spur the country from a least-developed status to a self-reliant, wealthy nation. The SVTP contributes to the three pillars of the Vision: agriculture development and commercialization, industrialization and urbanization. It also contributes to economic infrastructure and environmental sustainability enablers of the Vision.

The Government of Malawi is constructing a 133km-long gravity-fed irrigation scheme from the Kapichira Dam in Chikwawa to Bangula in Nsanje to irrigate 43,370 hectares.

The Ministry of Lands secured 45,833 land parcels (22,299 hectares) for 48,175 smallholder farmers in Chikwawa. Smallholder farmers will consolidate their land into commercial farms measuring between 500 to 1600 hectares each. Farmers will hire agri-business management companies to manage the operations of the farms. Farmers will diversify farming to focus on crops, livestock and fisheries. Five cooperatives belonging to smallholder farmers have been registered in Chikwawa so far.

The project is also working on issues of natural resource management in collaboration with communities around Majete and Mwabvi Wildlife Reserves, Lengwe National Park, Matandwe Forest Reserve, and the Elephant Marsh. Conservation of these natural habitats is vital for the sustainability of the Shire River which is the major source of water for the Kapichira Reservoir which supplies water to the SVTP irrigation scheme.

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## Cyclone Ana affects Shire Valley farmers, SVTP

Story by: Alice Kaunda

"Cyclone Ana has bitten us so hard," lamented 73-year-old Lovemore Tiachokele, a farmer from the newly SVTP-established Mwanalilenji Cooperative in GVH Mbenderana in Chikwawa. "This natural disaster is a major setback in my farming. I was hoping for a bumper harvest this year when the rains started. I have lost all my crops. I will not give up. I will replant my field," he said.

The effects of Cyclone Ana have painted a grim picture of a difficult year ahead for many farming families in the district. The crops looked promising until Cyclone Ana made landfall in Malawi.



***Tiachokele in his garden during 2021 growing season (Left) and after the floods in 2022 (Right)***



Joseph Kalira of Njeleza Village, T/A Kasisi bought a garden for off-season farming using compensation money from the SVTP. Although there was a drought last growing season, Kalira harvested maize and bananas from his garden.

"The situation this year is depressing. All my crops have been washed away. These bananas are on the verge of dying because of lack of nutrients. I will replant my maize using residual moisture. I will surely recover from this calamity," he said.

***Kalira: I will recover from this calamity***

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The multi-billion Kwacha Shire Valley Irrigation Scheme was also affected by Cyclone Ana.

"The flash floods breached the dyke used to train the Shire River affecting parts of the intake foundation and siphon but, all other structures are intact," said SVTP Irrigation Engineer, Martin Chizalema.

4.09kms of the concrete paved Main Canal, the rectangular canal/flume, three bridge crossings and 14 drainage works were not affected by the Cyclone. Three siphons and the fish barrier structure are currently under construction. Clearance and excavation works on Main Canals 1 and 2 covering a distance of 46kms is underway.



***The SVTP intake foundation and coffer dam before Cyclone Ana (Top) and the intake foundation and part of the damaged cofferdam after Cyclone Ana (Bottom)***

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An Independent Panel of Experts comprising hydrologists, dam, geotechnical, environmental and social experts, was engaged to assess the damages. The consultant is redesigning the intake to suit current conditions following the impact of the Cyclone. In addition, the consultant is designing a cofferdam for the construction of the intake works, to protect the Kapichira Dam from further damage and to divert the water to the EGENCO intake for power generation. The Kapichira Dam is of paramount importance to the SVTP as it is the main source of water for the irrigation scheme.



***The Minister of Agriculture during the site visit***

The Minister of Agriculture Honorable Lobin Lowe visited the construction site to appreciate the extent of the damage. He was accompanied by the Deputy Minister Honorable Madalitso Kambauwa Wirima and Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture Honorable Sameer Suleiman.

Honourable Lowe bemoaned the setback caused by the Cyclone but expressed optimism that farmers will still benefit from the initiative despite some delays caused by the damage.

"We would like to assure our farmers that we will complete this project. Large-scale irrigation is a priority if this country is to develop," he said.

He further called for collaborative efforts from all stakeholders in watershed management in the Shire Valley as the area has been affected by bad farming practices and excessive tree cutting.



***Stoutjesdijk: We will continue supporting the project***

Responding to the Government call for support, World Bank Lead Irrigation Engineer, Joop Stoutjesdijk underscored the World Bank's commitment to the project during the visit.

"I would like to reiterate the World Bank's commitment towards the completion of this life-transforming flagship project. We acknowledge the setback this Cyclone has caused. Despite the setback, we will continue to support this project and discuss with Government how we can restore the Kapichira Dam as a key resource for the functionality of this irrigation project," he said.

Farmers in the Shire Valley are hopeful that the new irrigation scheme currently under construction will cushion them against the harsh effects of natural disasters in future.

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# A stitch in time: The SVTP soldiers on after Cyclone Ana

Story by: Alice Kaunda

"We are working hard to avoid delays to our construction schedule due to the effects of Cyclone Ana. We have two contracts currently running. The first is the construction of the Intake and the first 6kms of the Main Canal and the other one is the construction of Main Canals 1 and 2," said Engineer Martin Chizalema, SVTP Irrigation Engineer.

The SVTP is designing a new intake in line with the current site conditions. The Cyclone affected part of the SVTP intake foundation and four sections of the first siphon.

"The Programme engaged the design consultant and an independent panel of dam safety experts and engineers from the Ministry of Agriculture to assess damage to the two sections and recommend interventions to be employed. The supervising consultant KRC will redesign the intake to suit current conditions," said Engineer Chizalema.

So far 4.09kms of the main canal, the rectangular canal/flume, 14 drainage works, and three bridges have been completed on the intake and first 6km stretch. These were not affected by the Cyclone. Construction of three siphons and the fish barrier structure is in progress.

Construction works are also in progress on Main Canals 1 and 2 covering a distance of 46kms.



**Eng. Chizalema: We are working hard to avoid delays**



**A section of the canal in Chikwawa**

"We have managed to clear sites for the Main Canals 1 and 2 covering a stretch of 46kms from the 6km-point a little outside the Majete Wildlife Reserve. This section extends up to Lengwe National Park. We have also embarked on excavation works in this section. The contract for the construction of this section commenced in November 2021," said Engineer Chizalema.

Indeed, a stitch in time saves nine! The Ministry of Agriculture is employing all efforts to minimize delays in project implementation.

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## Construction in pictures



*The fish barrier structure under construction (Top), the second siphon under construction (middle), bridge 3 during construction (bottom)*

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## Construction in pictures



*The completed rectangular canal/flume (Top), part of the excavation works for the Main Canals 1 and 2 (middle), progress on Siphon 1 (bottom)*

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## Contractor discloses ESMPs for campsites

Story by: Alice Kaunda



**Disclosure of ESMPs at the DESC**

"We will closely monitor the fulfilment of the provisions of these ESMPs. This calls for good collaboration between the contractor, traditional leaders, communities, and other stakeholders at the district level. The documents involve land transactions and environmental management issues which will most likely affect us. Our participation in this process is important," said Group Village Headman Nyamphota.

GVH Nyamphota was reacting to the presentation of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) for the campsite to be constructed in his area.

The contractor for the SVTP Main Canals 1 and 2 Sinohydro disclosed Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) for the three campsites in GVH Mbenderana in TA Kasisi, GVH Nyamphota in T/A Katunga and GVH Ndagonea in T/A Ndakwera in Chikwawa District.

The ESMPs were disclosed to the Chikwawa District Environmental Sub-Committee (DESC) and community members in the concerned areas following approval from the Environmental Affairs Department. Facilities at the campsites include batching plants, hostels, storage facilities, offices, washrooms etc.

The contractor signed agreements with the landowners to hand over the permanent structures after de-commissioning. The three campsites will assist in the efficient and effective construction activities for Main Canals 1 and 2 which will cover a distance of 46kms from the 6km point up to Lengwe.

"The people and the machinery required for the project will require secure space. This has necessitated the construction of these campsites to be an operating base for the project. Our role as a project is to enforce compliance to the provisions of the ESMPs by the contractor," said Christopher Mwambene, SVTP Environmental Safeguards Specialist.



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Reacting during the DESC disclosure meeting, Chikwawa District Environmental Officer Elina Mkandawire underscored the importance of the disclosure process to coordination between the communities and the contractor.

“The disclosure process will ensure buy-in of communities into project activities. The contractor should remain committed to the provisions made in these ESMPs for smooth

implementation of activities. Extension workers in the three areas will monitor compliance to agreed provisions in collaboration with the DESC,” she said.

The project has developed ESMPs for all construction-related activities like the irrigation scheme, schools and churches constructed under in-kind compensations, borehole drilling and construction of offices among others.

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## SVTP, PPPC engage off-takers in Chikwawa

*Story by: Alice Kaunda*



**An engagement meeting at KAMA Cooperative in session**

“We have so many expectations from this new irrigation scheme. The transition from electricity pumping to gravity-fed irrigation will save millions we incur each month. We will be able to reduce our operating costs as a cooperative,” said Joseph Sululu of Katunga-Maseya Cooperative in Chikwawa.

Sululu was speaking in Chikwawa during one of the meetings jointly organized by

the SVTP and the Public-Private Partnership Commission (PPPC) with existing off-takers, Phata, Kasinthula and Katunga-Maseya (KAMA) Cooperatives. These meetings focused on water purchase agreements and the role of the Operation, Maintenance and Management (OMM) Operator of the scheme. A site visit was also organized for the off-takers.

“It is critical that we start planning on the water utilization processes. As a cooperative, we face two main challenges with water utilization: erratic electricity supply and huge costs each month. Our crops need water at all times,” added Reckson Fellow from Phata Cooperative.

The off-takers will sign water purchase agreements with the Operator to utilize water from the scheme. Proceeds from water utilization will go towards the maintenance of the scheme. PPPC is procuring the OMM Operator to manage the 133km-long irrigation infrastructure on behalf of the Government of Malawi.

The design for the irrigation system for the existing off-takers has been completed. The pipeline will cover a distance of 8.8kms to supply water to these existing off-takers.

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## Over 45,000 land parcels secured for Shire Valley farmers

Story by: Alice Kaunda



**Benedicto (in white) during the land adjudication exercise**

"For many years' my neighbour and I used to have a lot of disputes over land boundaries. We could encroach into each other's farms to the extent that we could call the chief to address the problem. These disputes took years until the Ministry of Lands came to ascertain our boundaries and drew the maps of our pieces of land. This has brought closure to the confusion and secured our land forever," said Makulata Benedicto of GVH Mbenderana, TA Kasisi in Chikwawa.

Benedicto is a beneficiary of the land adjudication and demarcation process piloted by the SVTP through the Ministry of Lands since September 2020. This process will assist the SVTP to secure land for large-scale irrigation for smallholder farmers who will consolidate land into 14 commercial farms in the Phase 1 area of the project.

Land adjudication and demarcation involve ascertaining land ownership and determining boundaries as stipulated in the newly assented Customary Land Act (2022). The Act provides the citizenry with land ownership and ensures the security of tenure for future generations.



**Chilonga: The Government is not taking away land**

Team Leader for the Land Reform Implementation Unit Davie Chilonga underscores the importance of citizen participation in the rollout of systematic land adjudication and demarcation throughout the country.

"The Government is not trying to take away land from the citizens but to secure land for them considering the increase in population. Land adjudication and demarcation give people the power to own and develop land. They can also opt to lease or sub-lease the land without losing ownership. This process will help reduce land-related disputes as people will have documentation to prove ownership," he said.

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Group Village Headman Mbenderana agrees that land adjudication and demarcation exercise has reduced boundary disputes in his area.

"This exercise is very important. Having the maps and documentation showing ownership will ease our work of addressing boundary disputes. We will be able to check the documentation and confirm the status on the ground to determine the rightful land owner. This exercise will not reduce our influence as chiefs but help us lead our people better. I want to urge my fellow chiefs to embrace this development," he said.



***GVH Mbenderana: This exercise is very important***

Benedicto encourages people in the Shire Valley and throughout the country to participate in the systematic land adjudication and demarcation exercise when the time comes.

"It is important for people to register their land with the Ministry of Lands to secure tenure. This will give us full ownership of land and reduce the burden of cases on our chiefs," added Benedicto.

The Ministry of Lands printed and displayed maps for 26 Group Village Heads (GVHs) and is preparing title plans and customary land certificates for the land parcels. The Ministry issued a new moratorium barring land sales and the issuing of new leases in the project area. The Ministry also provided clearance on land consolidation registration.



***A map verification exercise in Chikwawa***

The Shire Valley Transformation Programme is championing land tenure security activities in the Shire Valley districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje to secure land for smallholder farmers who are beneficiaries of the much-anticipated 133km-long irrigation scheme.

45,833 land parcels covering 22,299 hectares have been adjudicated and demarcated in Chikwawa belonging to 48,175 landowners (24,628 women and 22,547 men).

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## SVTP: Land-related bills assented

*Story by: Alice Kaunda*

The President of the Republic of Malawi Dr Lazarus Chakwera in May 2022 assented to six land-related bills. These pieces of legislation will help address challenges the country has been facing with land management.

The SVTP supported the drafting of the amended bills and related processes. The amended bills recently passed by Members of Parliament during the fifth meeting of the 49th session of Parliament include Land (Amendment), Land Survey (Amendment), Physical Planning (Amendment), Customary Land (Amendment), Land Acquisition and Compensation (Amendment), and Registered Land (Amendment).

The project has been piloting some provisions of the bills through the Ministry of Lands since September 2020. Specifically, the project has been conducting a land adjudication and demarcation exercise in Chikwawa to secure land for project beneficiaries. The exercise is aimed at ascertaining land ownership and establishing boundaries for landowners. 45,833 land parcels covering 22,299 hectares have been adjudicated and demarcated for 48,175 landowners in Chikwawa district.



***Mbano: Bills will bring sanity to land management***

Deputy Surveyor General in the Ministry of Lands, Masida Mbano, said the bills will bring sanity to the way land is managed in the country.

"These important pieces of legislation will greatly assist with development planning. For example, the Customary Land Act the President has assented to gives people power to own land. People will receive certificates as evidence of land ownership through the land parcel adjudication and demarcation exercise. In the case of the Shire Valley, this will ease the process of land consolidation in readiness for commercial irrigation farming. Landowners will use their land as holding capital for their farming business," he said.

There have been a lot of land-related disputes across the country because of the lack of tangible evidence of land ownership and the existence of clear boundaries. The implementation of the systematic adjudication and demarcation exercise across the country will secure land for the citizenry as landowners will be given documentation as evidence of ownership.

"When a person registers land, they have confidence to develop that particular piece of land. Certification of land ownership gives people assurance that no one can grab that land," Mbano added.

The Ministry of Lands has facilitated the establishment of 38 Customary Land Committees (CLCs) in the SVTP Phase 1 area to resolve land disputes in locations where they occur. In the past, land

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disputes could be resolved at the courts without all witnesses physically present. A Physical Development Plan and associated local land use plans were developed for Chikwawa and launched. All CLCs have been trained on land use plans and these have been linked to the Village Action Plans (VAPS) for easy monitoring by M&E and Community Development Teams at the District level. Chikwawa Boma and Nchalo Urban Structure Plans were finalized and consultations were done with communities and other stakeholders at the district level. The programme is in the process of finalizing the Ngabu Urban Structure Plan.

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## SVTP intensifies agriculture commercialization drive, 5 cooperatives registered

*Story by: Alice Kaunda*

Mary Saulo, a 48-year-old farmer from Chikhomo Village, is a member of the newly established Chingalumba Producers and Marketing Cooperative in TA Kasisi in Chikwawa. She beams with excitement at the mention of large-scale commercial farming through the SVTP. Destructive impacts of climate change like drought, floods and shifting weather patterns have affected farming in the Shire Valley leading to poverty and hunger.



**Saulo: We should stop doing business as usual**

"We are feeling the pinch of climate change. We are faced with floods or drought every year making it difficult to do profitable farming. The world is changing. We should stop doing business as usual and start embracing new ways of farming. The SVTP irrigation scheme under construction will open doors to economic freedom for us as we will be able to cultivate crops at least twice a year," she said.

Five out of the 14 targeted irrigation blocks in Phase 1 of the SVTP have been registered as cooperatives at the Registrar of Cooperative Societies in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. These cooperatives are Kambadwe, Mantchombe, Mwanaalirenji, Mulambe and Chingalumba Producers and Marketing Cooperative. The irrigation blocks will consolidate land into 14 commercial farms measuring between 500 to 1600 hectares in the Phase 1 area of the project.

"Our vision is to profit from commercial farming like our counterparts at Phata. In my view, transformation means becoming financially independent and being able to provide food for my family. This project will transform our lives, our children and generations to come," added Saulo.

Before registration, the Programme conducted five-day Cooperative Member Education training for the five irrigation blocks in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Chikwawa District Council attended by 2,940 landowners.

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**Moyo: The training was beneficial**

"The training is beneficial to us as prospective commercial farmers. We have learnt about the roles of a cooperative, how to manage a cooperative and the importance of developing business plans for the farming venture," said Nota Moyo of Nyamphota Village, TA Katunga in Chikwawa.

The cooperatives elected interim Board of Directors and six sub-committees for each of the five blocks. The Ministry of Trade and Industry trained 60 members from these five boards in bye-law formulation. 2,755 landowners in 27 established business centres under the five cooperatives (1929 women and 826 men) reviewed the formulated bye-laws. Business centres provide opportunities for villages under the cooperatives to discuss issues in detail before general assembly meetings. 2,720 landowners (1686 female, 1034 male) approved the bye-laws during five general assembly meetings before submission to the Registrar of Cooperative Societies for registration of the cooperatives. Officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry provided backstopping support in the bye-law formulation process to ensure that the bye-laws are in line with the Law before submitting documentation for registration. Board of Directors and sub-committees have since been elected and trained for these cooperatives.



**Chimpesa: We provide backstopping support**

Henry Chimpesa, Cooperatives Auditor at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, explains the role of the Ministry in the process: "Our role as the Ministry is to support the cooperatives develop bye-laws in line with the Cooperative Societies Act. Leaders of the Cooperative and the general assembly must meet to review the bye-laws before registration with the Registrar of Cooperative Societies. Cooperative Societies Act no. 36 of 1998 has given the power to the general assembly to make decisions for the cooperative."

The project will engage the last nine irrigation blocks to discuss the choice of business entity for operating their farming business, once the Ministry of Lands provide the final list of landowners in the adjudicated and demarcated land parcels in the nine blocks. The blocks can choose to operate as either cooperatives, limited companies, farmer clubs or associations. Depending on the choice of entity, the project will conduct customized trainings and facilitate the registration of the entities.

For the first five irrigation blocks, the Programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Lands and the Chikwawa District Council conducted 44 meetings with 2,366 landowners (1,273 female and 1,093 male) to provide information on the choice of entities. Landowners in the five blocks opted to register their farming business as cooperatives.

All the business entities registered through the SVTP will select a farm enterprise to undertake. Potential enterprises are crops, livestock and fisheries. 45 engagement meetings were conducted with 4,188 livestock farmers in Chikwawa (2529 male, 1659 female) as part of awareness raising on choice of farm enterprises. Farmers are hopeful that adequate capacity development and collaboration will transform the agriculture sector in the Shire Valley.

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## First CCA established in the Elephant Marsh

Story by: Alice Kaunda

"It is very important for us to conserve the Elephant Marsh as a key resource for our livelihood. We cannot be selfish and only think of our needs only but we also need to think of future generations," said Cecilia Nyakhuwa, a member of the Elephant Marsh Association.



**Nyakhuwa: It is important to conserve the Elephant Marsh**

Malawi designated the Elephant Marsh as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on 1st July 2017. The Marsh is endowed with birdlife, populations of hippos, several species of fish and crocodiles among other species present.

The SVTP is working in collaboration with communities around the Elephant Marsh on issues of conservation as the marshes have been affected by non-systematic cultivation of crops, harmful fishing practices, and excessive bird hunting which poses a threat to the beautiful biodiversity in the Marsh.

The Programme is supporting the establishment of CCAs in the Elephant Marsh as it plays an important role in maintaining the valley's hydrological regime through flood control, water storage and supply of nutrient-rich sediment. Chikwawa and Nsanje District Councils have endorsed the need to establish the CCAs for the sustainable management of the Elephant Marsh.

Divisional Manager for Parks and Wildlife for the Lower Shire, Wisely Kawaye underscores the importance of conserving the Elephant Marsh for future generations.



**Kawaye: The Elephant Marsh is like a bank account**

"The Elephant Marsh is like a bank account for our communities because it is their source of livelihood hence needs conservation. Different government ministries are working in collaboration with support from the SVTP to ensure that this great resource is conserved," he said.

The first CCA to be established in the Elephant Marsh is Mbenje. This is the first public-private-community CCA model established in the country. Communities in the area are working with Agricare's Kaombe Ranch on conservation issues under the CCA. Two Committees were established, one at Mbenje and another at Ntchenyera to support interventions in the CCA.

Before the establishment of the CCA, an assessment of 40 biodiversity hotspots was conducted to establish the status of the wetland resource for both flora and fauna. Some of these hotspots will be included in the CCA sites.



**Community members developing a map**

In the Mbenje area, community members in collaboration with the SVTP developed a community map showing all places proposed to be incorporated into the CCA including Gong’o wamkulu, Gong’o wamng’ono, Nyang’ona, Chiwonambwadza, Chisamba, Bulawayo, and Chimbvuli Beach. The map was vetoed by the whole community and other stakeholders and submitted to the Department of Lands for processing of the title deed for the CCA. So far communities under Mbenje CCA have contributed 2,164 hectares of land for conservation.

Some areas have been identified and earmarked for possible sites for the establishment of CCAs. These areas are those with high biodiversity under anthropogenic threats. In TA Mlolo which is in the central-eastern zone of the Elephant Marsh, villages such as Mchacha Jemusi, Msambokulira, Chinzeti, Yokonia and Nyangu have been identified as the stretch that will house the first public community CCA model. The next CCA to be established in the Elephant Marsh will be Msambokulira in GVH Chapinga in TA Mlolo in Nsanje district.



**Snr Group Mbenje: We will continue engaging communities**

Traditional leaders in the Elephant Marsh cite the need for good governance and mindset change if the Elephant Marsh is to be conserved for future generations. Harrison Lapken (Snr Group Village Headman Mbenje) expresses concern over destructive practices posing a threat to the existence of the Marsh.

“Indeed, old habits die hard. People in this area have been practising harmful fishing and farming practices for many years. This has become a norm. This is negatively affecting natural resources in the Marsh,” lamented Snr GVH Mbenje.

Snr Group Mbenje commits to ensuring that the Elephant Marsh is conserved.

“We will continue to engage communities on conservation of the Elephant Marsh. Regular engagement is key to this process. The training we attended has equipped us with skills to engage our communities as we enforce compliance with the set bye-laws. It is our responsibility as leaders to ensure that this is done,” he said.

“We are not barring people from utilizing the Marsh, but we are encouraging people to utilize these resources sustainably,” added Snr Group Mbenje.



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## Malawi making strides in updating the IUCN Red List

Story by: Alice Kaunda

“Protecting rare species we have as a country is critical for development. Decisions we make as a country should consider the biodiversity we have. Development should not negatively affect our rare resources.”

These are the words of Dr Tiwonge Mzumara Gawa, a Conservationist and Lecturer in the Biological Sciences Department at the Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST).



**Dr. Gawa during one of the sessions**

The Shire Valley Transformation Programme through the Environmental Affairs Department is working with top conservation experts in the country to update the IUCN Red List for Malawi. The list was last updated in 2002. The Red List provides the status of existing animal and plant species in the country. All the 86 classified species have been assessed.

Malawi’s biodiversity has been on the decline over the past few years. Rapid population growth, over-exploitation of natural resources, climate change and pollution are some of the factors putting pressure on Malawi’s biodiversity.

Davis Chogawana, Environmental Officer at Environmental Affairs Department underscores the importance of the IUCN Red List to national development.

“The Red List is a vital tool for species and ecosystem monitoring. It informs decision-makers on programs and projects to be formulated in biodiversity conservation, environmental impact assessments and land use planning. Since the Red List is a global inventory of conservation status of plant and animal species, knowing the status of species is important,” he said.



**Chogawana: Knowing the status of species is important**

Malawi boasts some unique endemic species which are important for global diversity. Some species endemic to Malawi are Mulanje Cedar, 47 species of molluscs, the world’s rare chameleon Chapman’s Pygmy Chameleon, seven amphibian species and over 800 fish species in Lake Malawi. In the quest to protect species in the country, legislations like the Environmental Management Act (2017), National Parks and Wildlife Act (2017) and Forestry (Amendment) Act, 2019 and related policies are in force. The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2025) is also under implementation.

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Chogawana explains the link between the Red List and the implementation of the SVTP.

“The project is being implemented on ecologically important areas covering Majete Wildlife Reserve, Lengwe National Park, Matandwe Forest Reserve, Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve and the Elephant Marsh. It is important to understand the operating ecosystem. By its nature, the SVTP is an agricultural project which will benefit from ecosystem services like water, pollination, pest control, disease control, nutrient recycling, and soil erosion control. These are functions carried out by various species and ecosystems.

Species need to be sustained for an ecosystem to function well,” he said.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species (IUCN Red List) was established in 1964 to assess the global extinction risk status of animal and plant species. The tool is crucial for informing global actions for biodiversity conservation and policy direction to protect natural resources.

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## DPNW engages communities on wildlife conservation

Story by: Alice Kaunda

**M**alawi is endowed with beautiful natural resources but these are at a blink of extinction due to human activity. Some national parks and wildlife reserves that were once known for diverse wildlife have not been spared from this plight. Lengwe National Park and Mwabvi Wildlife Reserve are some of these.

"The standard practice has been people going to the protected area to cut trees for charcoal and firewood. The population of animals has decreased as most people depend on Lengwe National Park for food," said Mary Santu of Ngabu in Chikwawa.

Lengwe National Park is home to the beautiful nyala, which is native to the Park. The Park also hosts antelopes, kudu, common duikers, bushbucks, warthogs, buffaloes and impala. The Park also boasts rare, impressive birdlife not seen elsewhere in the country. For many years, Lengwe National Park has been under threat of poaching, illegal logging and encroachment.



**Mary Santu during the pass-on event**

Similarly, the smallest Wildlife Reserve in Malawi, Mwabvi has been affected by human activity. Game sightings in the Reserve have been on the decline in recent years.

The DNPW is working with communities around the protected areas to conserve natural resources. The introduction of alternative livelihood programs in the communities is reducing over-reliance on natural resources in the protected areas.

The SVTP rolled out a goat pass-on program around Lengwe, Mwabvi and Matandwe Forest Reserve where 1750 goats were distributed to 341 beneficiaries of which 224 are women. Each person received five goats (4 female, 1 male). 14 goats were lost to Cyclone Ana around Lengwe National Park.

"We have been relying on the Park for our livelihood through cutting trees for charcoal and firewood and also killing animals. This initiative from the SVTP through Lengwe National Park will help to conserve natural resources. I believe that these goats will ease pressure on the Park as more and more people will be depending on goat farming as a source of income and food. I want to urge all beneficiaries to take care of these goats and continue to pass them on to others so that we all benefit and conserve natural resources," said Mavuto Olatiyo of Chapananga in Chikwawa.



**Olatiyo: These goats will ease pressure on the Park**

Community engagement is important in wildlife conservation.

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## A talk on wildlife with Brighton Kumchedwa



**N**atural resource degradation continues to be a threat to the social and economic development of Malawi. Human activities are, without doubt, the major contributor to the rapid declining ecosystem in the country. Deforestation, habitat loss through encroachment, over-fishing, illegal logging, poaching, illegal wildlife trade and pollution are some ways in which human activity is extensively affecting the environment.

***SVTP Communications Officer Alice Kaunda speaks to the Director of Parks and Wildlife Brighton Kumchedwa about natural resources management interventions implemented with support from GEF-6 through the SVTP and the challenges with pangolin trafficking, and measures put in place to curb this malpractice and plans for the future.***

**Alice Kaunda:** There are a lot of natural resource management-related interventions implemented through the SVTP. What are some key highlights of progress made?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *Through the SVTP, we have developed and launched the Access Benefit Sharing Guidelines for Malawi which will assist the country to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. We have also developed Community Conservation Area (CCA) Guidelines for the Elephant Marsh, the first of its kind in Malawi. The first CCA has been established around the Elephant Marsh.*

*The IUCN Red List for Malawi is being updated. The List provides a classification of threatened species available in the country. 86 species of plants and animals were identified and assessed. The List was last updated in 2002.*

*Management plans have been developed for Lengwe National Park, Mwabvi and Matandwe, Thambani and Thyolo Forest Reserves. Law enforcement has been strengthened in the protected areas in collaboration with surrounding communities and capacity has been strengthened in the management of these protected areas. Roads have been graded to provide access for patrols, infrastructure is being developed and equipment has been provided.*

**Alice Kaunda:** Why is it important to implement natural resource management related initiatives in this project?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *The SVTP is an irrigation project which seeks to transform agriculture in the Shire Valley. Natural resources cushion development against devastating impacts of climate change and natural disasters like cyclones Ana and Gombe that affected the Shire Valley this year.*

**Alice Kaunda:** As strides are being made in natural resource management and wildlife conservation, a new challenge has risen, a shift from ivory to pangolin trafficking. Some experts say the pangolin is likely the most trafficked mammal in the world. What is the magnitude of this problem in Malawi?

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**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *Correct! There is a shift from ivory trafficking to pangolin trafficking. The pangolin is indeed a heavily trafficked mammal globally and in Malawi, this has become a common occurrence. There are 96 recorded cases of pangolin trafficking since the first case was reported in 2017. 178 people have been arrested and 117 pangolins have been rescued.*

**Alice Kaunda:** Why this sudden interest in trafficking and illegal pangolin trade?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *Several reasons account for this situation. Pangolins are easy to conceal. Some people from the far East use pangolin meat as food while the scales are used as medicine and for manufacturing products like perfume. High levels of poverty in this country are driving some people to engage in this illegal trade.*



**Alice Kaunda:** How close are pangolins to extinction?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *Pangolins are difficult to count, hence there is no known pangolin population in this country. The illegal trafficking in this country may not lead to the extinction of the species because these animals are traded live so once rescued they are put back into the wild.*

**Alice Kaunda:** What efforts have been put in place to ensure the protection of these critically threatened wildlife species?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *Knowing very well that this is a listed species according to the Convention in International Trade in Endangered Wild Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), these endangered species need to be protected. We have intensified law enforcement at both local and regional levels. We are also conducting sensitization campaigns on pangolin conservation.*

**Alice Kaunda:** What stiff penalties have been put in place to deal with perpetrators of pangolin trafficking and how many people have been arrested for pangolin-related offences?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *The Wildlife Law prescribes a maximum of 30 years in jail with no option of a fine. 178 people have been arrested since 2017.*

**Alice Kaunda:** What policy instruments have been put in place to deal with perpetrators of pangolin trafficking and wildlife crimes in general?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *We are promoting a multi-sectoral approach to tackle the problem through an Inter-Agency Committee for Combating Wildlife Crime (IACWC). We are also working with our neighbours Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique to tackle cross border wildlife crimes at the regional level.*

**Alice Kaunda:** Any advice to the general public?

**Brighton Kumchedwa:** *According to the revised Wildlife Law in Malawi, perpetrators caught in possession of pangolins or any of their derivatives face a prison sentence of up to 30 years, with no option for a fine. The general public is, therefore, urged to desist from the pangolin trade. Instead, should report these criminals to appropriate law enforcement agencies (Police or DNPW). It is the responsibility of every Malawian to take part in the protection of this rare animal.*

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## “Irrigation is our lifeline”-Chief Singano

Story by: Gospel Mwalwanda



**SGVH Singano with some of his subjects at the shrine**

People of the Shire Valley see the Shire Valley Transformation Programme (SVTP) as their lifeline and have vowed never to allow anything to stand in its way.

Senior Group Village Headman (SGVH) Singano of Chikwawa says to the people of the Shire Valley, that the SVTP is their only means of escape from the poverty in which they have been trapped for years.

“It surpasses all development projects we have had in any way you can think of. It is a priceless gift from the government and will be treasured by generations,” SGVH Singano says.

The cultural heritage sites need to be preserved in compliance with Malawi’s Monuments and Relics Act (2001). The Act stipulates that all development initiatives must ensure that from planning stages to implementation, all monuments and relics are protected. And in this regard, the SVTP engaged the Department of Monuments and Museums which has been conducting a cultural heritage impact assessment since the feasibility phase of the project in 2016. The engagement of the Department of Monuments and Museums is to ensure that construction works do not destroy cultural heritage sites that are along the path of the canal.

The site may be where people once lived, a graveyard or a shrine where locals go to give offerings to their ancestral spirits in a time of suffering brought about by a pandemic or natural disaster.

The Department of Monuments and Museums has identified 19 sites in the first phase area of the project. Excavations and assessments of samples are ongoing. The Department has recovered samples like pottery, bones, and charcoal which are being analysed.



**Dr Malijani at a shrine in Chikwawa**

The Department of Museums and Monuments commends the SVTP for engaging it before implementing the project and encourages other developers to emulate them.

“We have lost many cultural heritage sites in Malawi because of development projects. What this irrigation project has done is what all developers ought to do,” says Dr Oris Malijani, Principal Geo-Archaeologist responsible for research in the department.

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SGVH Singano says that as per their culture, there are places in the project area they consider as sacred where they go with offerings to pacify the spirits of their ancestors during difficult times.

Locals led by their chief place various items at the shrine depending on what they want. The chief then recites an incantation, repeatedly asking their ancestral spirits for help.

SGVH Singano says the sites have existed from the time of their ancestors and are regarded with deep respect, adding: "This explains why we have always been protective towards them."

However, he says that much as they appreciate the government's desire to preserve tangible cultural heritage within the SVTP, the irrigation project is of greater importance to the people.

"There's no denying that cultural heritage places have to be preserved, but as the saying 'necessity knows no law' goes, these sites will have to give way to this vital project," says SGVH Singano.

The chief likened the SVTP to a scenario where one is compelled to offer assistance to a person in distress even if it means breaking the law.

"Imagine you are riding a bicycle with a single crash helmet. You find a person lying in the middle of the road because he is sick. Naturally, you show humanity and take him to the hospital," he says.

"If you meet the police, you tell them you found the person sick lying on the road, and you are taking him to the hospital. They will tell you to proceed yet they know you have broken a traffic rule."

SGVH Singano says likewise and out of necessity, the people of the two districts will give the SVTP priority.

"We have suffered for a long time and the SVTP will give us a new lease of life," he says.

SGVH Singano, 73, says the Shire Valley has every reason to be excited about the irrigation project, considering that almost every year the area experiences hunger due to either floods or drought.

"When we chiefs heard that the SVTP would, at last, be implemented, we sat down and agreed that if a shrine or any other revered thing or place was in the canal's path, it had to give way," he says.

The SVTP was conceived in 1941 as part of an integrated macro development plan under the colonial government aimed at stabilizing the level of Lake Malawi, generating hydroelectricity on the Shire River and constructing an irrigation scheme in the Shire Valley.

"We are tired of going around with a begging bowl every time there is a natural calamity. This project will put a stop to our shameful practice of begging," says SGVH Singano, born Fegeson Singano.

"We will no longer rely on erratic rains for our agricultural activities, and it's all thanks to the SVTP. We will prosper and command respect. That is why we are saying the project has to be prioritized."

*He adds: "It is our lifeline."*

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## Women defying odds in a male-dominated industry

Story by: Alice Kaunda

It has always been the trend for women to shy away from tasks and roles traditionally associated with men. Through the SVTP, some women in Malawi are changing the status quo.

The construction of the SVTP canal has opened up job opportunities for people in the Shire Valley and the whole country.

Some courageous, daring women have decided to face the challenge and undertake tasks many think are male-dominated in nature.



**Alice Kaunda, SVTP Communications Officer chats with some inspirational women working on the frontlines of the construction of the Shire Valley Irrigation Scheme under the project's two contractors Conduril and Sinohydro. Here are their stories:**



**Chrissy Katunga-Human Resource Officer, Conduril:** Chrissy is responsible for all human resource operations at the Conduril Site Office in Chikwawa. She oversees over 300 staff members on site. She coordinates with the Chikwawa District Labour Office on staff recruitment, manages employee grievances, identifies human-resource-related issues and gaps for management consideration and facilitates linkages between the Workers Union and Management to address concerns. "My work requires a lot of patience and empathy as I am dealing with people. It is the type of work that needs courage and dedication," she said.



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**Dacia Thindwa-Civil Engineer, Conduril:** Dacia is the only female civil engineer in all the SVTP construction sites. Her motto in life is 'go big or go home'. She believes that one has to move away from their comfort zone. Giving up is not part of her DNA.



"My work involves monitoring the targets set on site ensuring that they are met. Quality and time are paramount in this type of work. You have to put in 150% effort to show the world that you can do this. It's not about being a man or a woman, it's about hard work and determination," she said.

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**Hanna Mandalasi-Social Safeguards Officer, Conduril:**

Hanna is responsible for dealing with social issues on-site and acting as a liaison between the company and the communities in the surrounding villages. She is also in charge of the Grievance Redress Mechanism at Conduril, works on GBV issues at the workplace and manages coordination between the Workers Union and Management. "It's not an easy task dealing with people. One has to be courageous, patient and approachable in this kind of work," she said.



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**Joyce and Rose Kapichi-Steel Fixers, Conduril:**

Joyce Kapichi and her younger sister Rose are the only two female Steel Fixers at Conduril. Joyce describes her work as the type of work that demands one to have an interest. "This job needs one to be hard working and confident. Once you master this work, you get used to it. It's quite simple. I am so glad that while here I can earn a living and support my parents back home."



"I learnt this type of work from my older sister Joyce. She inspires me to work hard. We will continue to work hard," said Rose.

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**Ethel Kalolokesya-Dumper Truck Operator, Conduril:**

25-year-old Ethel Kalolokesya is a Dumper Truck Operator at Conduril. She is one of the two female heavy-vehicle drivers at the company." I don't look down on myself. Whatever a man can do, I can do as well. It is high time women pluck up enough courage to take up these tasks. This is the simplest of jobs you can find. I am glad my male colleagues don't underrate me. We work as a team," said Ethel.





**Rhoda Molandi-Environmental, Health and Safety Manager, Sinohydro:**

Rhoda is responsible for environmental management which includes managing environmental risks and ensuring compliance with environmental laws and regulations. Rhoda is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP). "We need to protect the environment because where there are construction works, there is interaction with the environment. All impacts to the environment from construction activities must be minimized," said Rhoda.



**Chikondi Msamba-Welder, Sinohydro:** Chikondi is the only female welder in all SVTP construction sites. She comes from Chikwawa. She joined Sinohydro in 2022.

"Welding is not a difficult job. All you need is patience and determination. Anyone can learn vocational skills. Remember, we cannot all work in an office. I have been able to open my own side welding business and a hair salon back home through money earned from my welding jobs," she said.



**Aina Malonje-Excavator Operator, Sinohydro:** 30-year-old Aina comes from Chileka in Blantyre.

She learnt how to drive an excavator from friends in Nchalo, Chikwawa.

"I got interested in driving this machine after seeing some friends driving. Driving heavy vehicles is not for men only. Anyone can drive these machines. All you need is courage and interest to learn," said Aina.



**Tina Kampaundi-Survey Assistant Sinohydro:** 19-year-old Tina is one of the new employees at Sinohydro. She comes from Dyeratu in Chikwawa. Fresh from secondary school, she decided to look for work at the construction site as part of fundraising for her college education. She plans to become a nurse someday. "My role is to assist the Surveyor in taking various measurements on-site. I am learning a lot in my work. I came on a mission to learn and to save for my tertiary education. My appeal to my fellow youth in Chikwawa is to challenge yourself and seek opportunities like these," she said.



1. *Chikondi Msamba working on a construction vehicle*
2. *Joyce Mukwiche Conduril's Lab Data Entry Assistant busy at the lab*
3. *Aina Malonje operating an excavator*
4. *Joyce Kapichi fixing steel at the siphon*
5. *Tina Kampaundi working at the canal*
6. *Dacia supervising works on site*

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## Refrain from GBV-Construction workers advised

Story by: Daniel Chisoni



**An engagement with construction workers at a Sinohydro Campsite**

"We are sensitizing the workers on GBV forms and risks and provisions of Child Protection and Gender Laws of Malawi. Our call to action is for the workers to refrain from engaging in abuse and exploitation. We are also imploring the workers to report any GBV-related ordeals through grievances boxes placed in all campsites," said Lewis Msiyadungu, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) Chikwawa Diocese Projects Coordinator.

Msiyadungu was speaking during one of the sensitization meetings for construction workers in Chikwawa.

The SVTP GBV Service Provider, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) conducted sensitization meetings with 168 construction workers in three construction sites belonging to Sinohydro, the company constructing the remainder of Main Canal 1 and part of Main Canal 2 in Chikwawa.



**Msiyadungu: Report GBV**

The sensitization meetings are part of GBV prevention measures by the SVTP in consideration of labour influx in communities surrounding the construction sites and potential human rights violations in the workplace.

"Labour influx in communities around the construction sites has potential to improve livelihoods of the people through increased economic activities however, the threat of GBV is also high. The risks for GBV are even more pronounced as the host populations are poor and regularly affected by disasters and hence quite susceptible to abuse and exploitation," added Msiyadungu.

The meetings provided an opportunity for the workers to seek clarity on several GBV issues. Labour Unions were formulated in the three campsites and leaders were elected following these meetings. A similar exercise was conducted in 2021 for Conduril construction workers working on the intake plus the first 6kms of the Main Canal and another special meeting was held targeting all female workers at the company.

The SVTP engaged the CCJP to implement gender-based violence prevention initiatives in the impact area.

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## CCJP builds capacity of stakeholders in GBV prevention

Story by: Daniel Chisoni

In a bid to enhance community response to issues of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), the SVTP-GBV Service Provider, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) Chikwawa Diocese, engaged different stakeholders at local and district levels in Chikwawa.

The Service Provider engaged community Police Fora in four Traditional Areas Maseya, Ndakwera, Kasisi and Katunga in Chikwawa. These meetings were aimed at strengthening community policing structures in SVTP-1 host communities as part of GBV prevention. The engagements were conducted in coordination with the Police, Gender and Social Welfare offices, and saw over 140 Community Policing members being capacitated in GBV prevention in their respective communities.

Speaking during one of the engagements, District Community Policing Coordinator for Chikwawa Rodney Mvuthe urged the community police to be committed to safeguarding the welfare of the people. He stated that the district Police largely depend on community policing structures for information.

“We expect community policing structures to be conducting surveillance, investigations, and to report cases to the nearest police station. Always remember that your number one role is to prevent crime or GBV from happening therefore always participate in raising awareness on GBV,” Mvuthe said.

The Service Provider also held three engagement meetings with Group Village Heads in the areas of Traditional Authorities Ndakwera, Katunga and Maseya amidst the influx of people to the three areas following the construction of three campsites for Sinohydro. The meetings provided an opportunity for CCJP to sensitize opinion leaders on GBV and provoked a discussion on how GBV risks can be minimized. GBV Champions were also engaged in different communities on issues of prevention.



**Top-Bottom: Engagement with chiefs**

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CCJP Project Coordinator Lewis Msiyadungu is quite optimistic that enhanced coordination between chiefs and community policing structures would help prevent the occurrence of GBV-related cases within the SVTP-1 impact area.

“We are involving chiefs as key opinion leaders that can play a significant role in intensifying sensitization and community GBV case management. There are structures such as GBV champions and Community Policing that the chiefs can coordinate with in conducting surveillance, investigations and case referrals to relevant district authorities. These structures are critical for reducing GBV-related risks, especially in the SVTP impact area,” he said.

Msiyadungu implored chiefs to follow the referral pathway when handling criminal cases.

“Cases of defilement and sexual abuse are not within the jurisdiction of chiefs. Any occurrences of such should be reported immediately to relevant district authorities like the Police,” he added.

One of the chiefs present during the engagement, Senior Group Singano concurred with the Service Provider over the need to improve the coordination of stakeholders. He urged the Service Provider to strengthen coordination between the chiefs and authorities from the construction company for ease of problem-solving when the need arises.



***Clinician training in session***

In the bid to improve GBV case management in Chikwawa District, the CCJP revamped the One-Stop Centre which is a centre point for GBV survivors to receive assistance from service providers. The service providers include the Police, Social Welfare, the Hospital and Judiciary. 15 clinicians under the Chikwawa District Health Office were trained in GBV case management to strengthen their capacity to handle cases at the district One Stop Centre. The training focused on the examination, treatment and counselling of GBV survivors.

Coordination is key in the fight against GBV.



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