

Shire Valley Transformation Programme to delay— Experts

By Eric Msikiti

The multi-billion Kwacha Shire Valley Transformation Project (SVTP), which is expected to transform agriculture in Malawi, will delay by about a year after Tropical Storm Ana-induced floods destroyed some structures of the project.

The SVTP is one of the biggest irrigation projects in Africa covering about 135 kilometers on 43,370 hectares of land in Chilkwawa and Nsanje districts of Southern Malawi.

The initiative is being financed by the World Bank, African Development Bank, the Global Environment Facility and the Malawi Government to the tune of \$223 million.

It will see water from the Shire River flowing by gravity through canals to provide water for irrigation to 223,000 subsistence farmers in the area, with the intention of transforming them



DAMAGED— Part of the structure— Picture by Eric Msikiti

into commercial farmers.

However, heavy rains that occurred from January 24 to 25 threaten progress of the project, which has already faced delays due to Covid-related challenges.

The heavy rains resulted in the Shire River breaking its banks,

partially damaging a section of the 750-metre siphon which connects the intake to the main canal.

But experts say the project is still on the right course despite the damage to some structures.

“Of course, we should expect the project to delay because of

the massive rehabilitation works we need to embark to repair the damaged facilities,” said project engineer Martin Chizalema.

Director of Irrigation Geoffrey Mamba toured the facility on Saturday and said there was no cause for worry as the project was still on course.

“In fact, this is a blessing in disguise because, now, we have the opportunity to re-design the intake so that the next structure should be stronger,” Mamba said.

Meanwhile, The World Bank, a major financier of the project, has pledged to provide more resources to cater for the rehabilitation works.

Visiting World Bank Lead Irrigation and Drainage Specialist Joop Stoutjedijk expressed optimism that the project would be completed on time.

“We remain committed to providing more funds so that this important project can be completed on time so that Malawians can start enjoying the benefits,” Stoutjedijk said.



UNITY OF PURPOSE— Legal Affairs Committee members and Mhango (second from left) — Picture by Thomas Kachere

Legal Affairs Committee wants action on death sentence

By Thomas Kachere

The Legal Affairs Committee of Parliament has said it is high time stakeholders came up with a concrete decision on the death penalty.

Committee chairperson Peter Dimba said this during a visit to Zomba Maximum Security Prison as part of their ongoing inquiry into the abolition of the death sentence.

“Today, we have seen for ourselves that the conditions are not good. These people face psychological torture knowing that they are on death sentence and that anytime they can be killed,” he said.

Centre for Human Rights Education, Advice and Assistance Executive Director Victor Mhango said they organised the visit to enable legislators to interact with those on death row to appreciate their concerns as the inquiry into the death sentence continues.

“We, as human rights organisations, believe that the death penalty is cruel and against international standards,” Mhango said.

During the visit, lawmakers heard directly from prisoners, who shared their experiences on the death sentence.

There are 22 prisoners who are on death row in the country.

By Isaac Salima

After going for three weeks without running water, residents of Nthukwa in Chilimoni Township, Blantyre, hailed Blantyre Water Board (BWB) for supplying piped water to them on Saturday.

Blantyre City Council, which has hired a contractor, is upgrading the Nthukwa-Hema-Mboni Road using funds from Roads Fund Administration, with project works set to take six months.

However, according to BWB officials, the project has led to the damage of water pipes, leaving residents with no choice but to search for water from open sources such as rivers and broken pipes.

The Malawi Defence Force has been supplying water to residents through the provision of a bowser but residents say the water is not enough.

Some residents accused the contractor of delaying construction works, further accusing BWB officials of not doing enough to restore water supply.

However, the residents had

Chilimoni residents hail Blantyre Water Board



FLASHBACK— Residents scramble for water at a burst pipe— File photo

a pleasant surprise on Saturday, when some people were able to get running water.

“This is good. I hope Blantyre Water Board will be supplying us with water every two days or so for all of us to be having access to potable water. The water bowzers that were coming to the township were not bringing enough water,” said Elube Sande.

Another resident, Siyeni Matiyasi, said it was a relief to finally get water from the taps.

“I am relieved. I was able to store enough water and we hope

this will continue,” she said.

The United Nations established 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with SDG six focusing on making available “clean water and sanitation for all”.

According to the global body, State parties have an obligation to “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”.

Last week, BWB spokesperson Evelyn Khonje said they were discussing the possibility of putting in place

temporary pipes through which water could be supplied to the affected areas.

“Currently we have been supplying water to residents using water bowzers.

“However, we are discussing the possibility of putting in place temporary pipes so that the residents can be supplied with potable water,” Khonje said.

She added that water supply would return to the pre-road-construction-work situation once the contractor was through with road works.