



GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

MAY 2008



USAID's support for natural resources management in Malawi has proved to be indispensable in not only preserving vital carbon sinks, but also in stimulating economic development. Through improved management practices, training, and technical assistance, the people of Malawi have learned the importance of undertaking income creating sustainable development measures.

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<http://www.usaid.gov/mw>

BACKGROUND

The southern African country of Malawi faces environmental challenges such as deforestation, land degradation, water pollution from agricultural run-off, and siltation of spawning grounds that endangers fish populations. Coupled with a low capacity to confront these challenges and ongoing political transformation, Malawi is in need of international assistance. In response, USAID began its program of assistance to Malawi in the early 1960s, and is working to help the country achieve sustainable economic growth. This is being accomplished, in part, by increasing agricultural incomes and enhancing the management and conservation of natural resources. Natural resources such as forests, for example, are beneficial to the climate because they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store carbon both above ground in their biomass and in the soils below. USAID helps protect Malawi's resources against further environmental degradation by building local capacity to manage forest and agricultural resources in a more sustainable manner. USAID works with many sectors of society to achieve these goals.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVITIES

To increase community and private sector involvement in natural resources management, USAID has worked with the government of Malawi to strengthen the institutional framework within which community-based natural resources management programs are designed, implemented, and monitored. Training and technical assistance have been provided in enterprise development, sustainable agricultural practices, forest management, wildlife conservation, soil erosion control, water conservation, fisheries, and geographic information systems (GIS). As a result, through support for Community Partnerships for Sustainable Resource Management (COMPASS), land use and forest management activities have succeeded in protecting wildlife reserves and natural ecosystems from illegal harvesting, while providing income-earning opportunities to rural communities.

In 2007, COMPASS II, the follow-on to COMPASS, continued to promote decentralized natural resource management and an increase in sales of natural resources-based products originating from communities living in or close to forest reserves, national parks and wildlife reserves. Specifically, the project has facilitated the development of small businesses with formal linkages to national and overseas markets. By continuing past initiatives that provided legal rights to the households that harvest these resources, people have gained a greater sense of ownership and

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Formalizing Community Management of Natural Resources:

The Department of Forestry approved a streamlined methodology for establishing community management of customary land forest, issuing a Technical Order to all departmental personnel to implement the methodology, and sign a draft amendment to the Forest Rules legislation to legalize the approach. Improved property rights give people incentives to utilize sustainable natural resource management practices and preserve carbon stocks.

Preserving a Major Wildlife Reserve:

USAID/Malawi and the African Parks Foundation developed a public private partnership to restore, develop and manage the Majete Wildlife Reserve aimed at biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource utilization. By investing in infrastructure and training, and involving neighboring communities, USAID has helped to preserve 70,000 hectares of the only remaining major natural forest ecosystem, and major carbon stock, in Malawi.

PARTNERS

USAID's partners in climate change activities in Malawi include:

- African Parks Foundation
- Development Alternatives, Inc.
- Malawi Department of Fisheries
- Malawi Department of Forestry
- Malawi Department of National Parks and Wildlife
- The Coca-Cola Company
- Total LandCare
- Washington State University

Because partners change as new activities arise, this list of partners is not comprehensive.

responsibility for what was previously perceived as government land. For many households, maintenance of the natural resources has become a more economically attractive option than continued exploitation. Tangible benefits include a reduction in logging (for high value timber and firewood), burning, and clear felling for agriculture. Over 127,000 hectares of land is in the process of shifting under improved management, ultimately leading to the conservation of forest ecosystems and the carbon stocks that they retain.

USAID/Malawi has implemented a similar community based natural resource management approach to restore, develop, and effectively manage the 70,000 hectare Majete Wildlife Reserve. The strategy includes prioritized community participation, capacity building of game scouts, and investing in reserve infrastructure. The project has already achieved significant results. For example, an improved ecosystem is evidenced by an increase in all animal species populations; the incidences of wild bushfires and poaching have decreased; and no wild fires and logging occurred inside the 14,000 hectare sanctuary in 2006/2007.

The Chia Lagoon Watershed Project, a program dedicated to increasing rural livelihoods, addressed many issues relevant to climate change including the problems caused by overuse of land, cultivation on steep slopes and stream banks, poor farming practices and increased incidents of insect-borne diseases. A diverse partnership between local non governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector trained the community to improve its use of water, soils, forests, fisheries and wildlife, as well as diversify its income base through small-scale irrigation, beekeeping, agro-processing, tree nurseries and agro-forestry, and soil conservation. Nearly 8,000 farmers have adopted new agriculture conservation practices such as no-till farming which has reduced soil erosion, improved water quality and sequestered carbon in the soil. In order to contribute to improved smallholder agricultural productivity and food security, the Malawi Agroforestry Extension Project promoted agro-forestry projects among communities. The USAID-supported Resource Center not only provides information on best practices in agro-forestry technologies, it also has sold over 30 tons of tree seeds for replenishing degraded forests. Diversification of livelihoods and increase in per capita income can be expected to increase the resilience of local communities and lower their vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change.