

AACES

AUSTRALIA AFRICA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHEME

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Cover Photo: AACES partners during the Annual Reflection Workshop in Lilongwe, Malawi in May 2015. From Left: David Mwamba (Oxfam Zambia), Marshal Mpokonya (Caritas Tanzania) and Daud Gambo (World Vision Tanzania)
Photo by Douglas Waudu, AACES Resource Facility.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the 8th edition of AACES newsletter – a quarterly publication for AACES partners. We hope that this publication will be useful in sharing information, program highlights and approaches, and lessons learnt. We thank partners who shared with us stories, photos and highlights published in this edition. We also welcome comments and suggestions regarding issues dealt with in this edition. If you have stories, information, photos or ideas you would like published, feel free to contact the editor, Douglas Waudo on: d.waudo@acbf-pact.org

AACES Partners Annual Reflection Workshop

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AACES held its 4th annual reflection workshop on 26-28 May 2015 at the Sunbird Hotels and Resorts in Lilongwe, Malawi. The two and half day workshop brought together staff with responsibility for AACES in Australia and 11 African countries where the program is being implemented. The purpose of the annual reflection workshop is to enable AACES partners take stock of implementation progress, discuss, learn and brainstorm on various program themes and issues.

This year's workshop focused on the successes / benefits of engaging with civil society – the AACES partnership. A 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) process was used as a key methodology. MSC is a qualitative and participatory technique involving the collection of stories of significant change. The following was achieved during the workshop that was attended by over 50 participants:

- Participants reflected on experiences (individually and with others) about working with the AACES program.
- Participants collected stories about the significant changes that they felt were important to them individually. They discussed what they collectively valued and why. It emerged that the partnership model was a worthwhile investment that has yielded paid huge returns.
- Participants identified lessons learned and good practices that could inform what will be done in Year 5 and/or apply to their broader work, including future projects and programs.
- The group discussed how to use the diverse story collection. Suggestions included publishing an AACES MSC story compilation, using select stories in annual reports, and producing a video documentary.

NOTE: The **workshop notes and photos** have been posted on Yammer in All Network under the topic: *Malawi Annual Reflection Workshop Notes May 2015* and *Photo Gallery*, respectively. **Below:** AACES partners pose for a group photo at the reflection workshop.



Unlocking the Potential of Marginalised Communities in Malawi

Prior to the AACES Workshop in Lilongwe, Malawi in May 2015, AACES Malawi partners organised field visits to their various project. The visits aimed at learning and sharing of experiences within AACES. This is a story told by Douglas Waudu (AACES Resource Facility), who together with Lillian Charles (Marie Stopes Tanzania) and Charles Mubururu (Plan International Zimbabwe) visited AFAP's project activities in Thyolo district in Blantyre, Southern Malawi.

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Located some 47km south of Blantyre, Thyolo district boasts of picturesque landscapes, beautifully embedded within the tea estates on one side, and the amazing mountainous ranges on the other. AFAP through its partner Concern Universal are implementing a five-year Shared Futures Project (SFP) from July 2011 to June 2016 in Traditional Authority Mphuka, Thyolo district, where the project targets 3,000 households.

The project is underpinned by strategies aimed at building sustainability and developing capacity locally. AFAP works in the areas of food and nutrition security, water sanitation and hygiene as well as governance, capacity building and local level advocacy where they tackle gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health rights, and environmental governance.

Our first stop was at Didi where a mind-boggling 92ha irrigation scheme has been constructed benefitting about 400 households. From our interaction with farmers, it immediately became clear the impact that AFAP was having in the community. AFAP through Concern Universal are certainly giving farmers hope and the belief to be self-reliant as they improve their income and agricultural productivity. The project has supported 1,250 farmers with irrigation inputs and they have registered positive changes in their lives as a result. The project contributed to making Mphuka the source of beans named 'Thyolo Beans' with over 30 metric tons of beans harvested in 2014 earning farmers about Malawian Kwacha 12 million (US\$31,921).

Farmers such as Cornelius Munembo (pictured left), aged 43 and a father of 5, have significantly benefitted from the project with extension services and farm inputs using the vouchers system, and more importantly with water for irrigation. Two months before our visit, Cornelius had harvested 70 kilograms of beans from his 0.3ha piece of land earning him Malawian Kwacha 40,000 (US\$90). "I never knew that one day I will make money from my farm and become totally independent" says a visibly happy Cornelius who is proud to show us around his newly planted beans farm. "I always believed that my land was not good for farming, but after the project provided us with water for irrigation and extension services, everything changed for the better," he adds.



Frankly speaking, there was so much to take in at the Didi irrigation Scheme with every farmer jostling to tell his or her success story of food security, abundance and enlightenment. Unfortunately, we didn't have lots of time. It was time to move to the next site. Our next and last stop was in Mpukha, where we were scheduled to meet the Mphuka Community Based Organisation (CBOs) with the aim of understanding how AFAP's focuses on building existing capacities through strength-based approaches working in partnership with CBOs.

Mphuka, we were told was only a 10 minutes drive from Didi irrigation Scheme. However, a bridge connecting the two

areas had been swept away by the rains the previous night, meaning we had to drive for almost an hour using a longer route. However, that didn't dampen our spirits in the least.

We were determined to go to Mphuka. After what seemed like we were literally driving around one huge mountain, finally we arrived at Mphuka

where in typical Malawian style we were gladly received with pomp, song and dance. Now, this is where it got interesting. You see, no one had warned us that we were going to an elaborate exhibition attended by over 200 people, where we also happened to be guests of honour.

"I was shocked to hear that the community had gone directly to the District to demand for the construction of bridges. I had never seen communities initiating meetings with the district and this is really good news and a new way of working between community and the local governments. Whatever you are doing in the project, you should keep doing it,"

Thyolo District Planning and Development Director (DPD).



A bridge constructed through advocacy initiatives in Mphuka. **Photo by Blessings Kambombo, Concern Universal, Malawi.**

That aside though. Interacting with different CBOs, people and leaders and hearing stories of how the AACES program is changing lives and transforming communities in villages literally cut off from modern civilisation as we know it is what put smiles on our faces. We interacted with different CBOs working with AFAP who are promoting integrated farming, which included crop husbandry, livestock farming, and bee keeping among others. Others were involved in peer-to-peer approach to ending gender-based violence, local level advocacy, promoting nutrition, adult literacy, tackling HIV/AIDS, environmental management as well as WASH.

We learnt in the course of our interaction with the community that over 1,572 marginalised households benefitted through the project with livestock (pigs and goats), contributing to the increase in livestock ownership from 52 percent at baseline to 79 percent in 2014. In addition, dietary diversity has improved from 33 percent of household in 2011 to 65 percent in 2015 as a result of diversified crop production and nutrition education. Also notably, the project has supported over 33,371 people (18,398 women) to have access to sustainable safe water. This represents 92.7 percent of the project target, up from 47 percent at baseline.

Honestly, I don't have space to write about the awesome innovative initiative that the community with support from AFAP are doing in the production of energy efficient stoves as economic and environmental management strategies to complement forestry governance. Maybe that would be a story for another day.

All in all though, as we left Mphuka that evening – okay, it was getting dark and we had three hours of drive back to Blantyre – we couldn't help but marvel of how the AACES program is truly making a difference in the lives of the marginalised people by giving them sustainable access to the services they require.

Members of Mphuka CBO display their energy efficient stores during the exhibition in Mphuka.



How AACES is Transforming and Savings Lives



A group of AACES partners interacting with the local community at a water source supported by ACCES in Kamwangala village, Nkhotakota in Malawi during a field visit organised by WaterAid Malawi in May 2015. **Photo by Soma Kone, DFAT Australia.**

Seventeen year-old Emily, a volunteer Farmer-to-Farmer trainer with CARE is reaching out to farmers and sharing knowledge about modern agriculture techniques in Dowa District, Malawi. "Improving my village's understanding of new farming techniques and increasing production is a very big job, but I hope to do it well", she says
Photo by CARE Malawi



A latrine under construction in Volivo Yeti in the Shai Osudoku District of the Greater Accra region in Ghana. Using the community led total sanitation approach; communities are building and encouraging the use of latrines, preventing the occurrence of diseases such as diarrhoea. **Photo by WaterAid Ghana.**

New PSC Chair and Vice Chairs



Barbra Babweteera (Plan International Uganda) is the new Program Steering Committee (PSC) Chair, while Sally Henderson (ActionAid Australia) and Lemekeza Mokiwa (CARE Malawi) are the new Vice Chairs. The three were unanimously elected during the PSC meeting held in Lilongwe, Malawi in May 2015. The PSC expressed their gratitude and thanks to the outgoing Chair and Vice Chair, Matthew Phillips (Oxfam Australia) and Martin Mazinga (Caritas Malawi), respectively.

Find all your AACES Photos on Yammer

The Resource Facility is glad to inform partners that we have revamped and updated the Photo Gallery on Yammer, making it easier for you to find all your AACES photos. The Photo Gallery has ALBUMS, which include:

- **AACES Partners** – contains sub-folders of all AACES partners' photos.
- **AACES Workshops** – contains photos from all annual reflection and thematic workshops.
- **Annual Report** – has photos from all the annual report launches.
- **DFAT** – contains photos of DFAT field visits, including visits by the High Commissioner.
- **Field Visits** – has photos of all AACES Partners' field visits.
- **PSC Meetings** – this includes photos from the AACES PSC meetings.
- **Resource Facility** – this contains photos from the RF including trainings and visits.
- **Social Events** – has photos from all the AACES social events during the workshops.

To access the photos:

- On the AACES homepage on Yammer, click on **Photo Gallery** on the right under Network Resources.
- Alternatively, you can click on this link:
<http://s1343.photobucket.com/user/Aaces1/library/?sort=2&page=0>

Don't hesitate to contact the Resource Facility in case you have difficulty accessing the Photo Gallery. Remember you can also still share photos of your project activities on Yammer the same way you upload files on Yammer.

Maternal mortality are being prevented by AACES partners enabling women to have better access to health care services to prevent or treat complications associated with pregnancy and birth. **Photo by World Vision, Rwanda.**





AACES partners interacting with the local community in Dowa District, Malawi during the field visit organised by Caritas Malawi in May 2015.

EVENTS:

- 26 September 2015 World Contraception Day.
- 16 October 2015: World Food Day.
- 26 November – 10 December 2015: Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.
- 30 November – 2 December 2015: AACES Workshop in Livingstone, Zambia.
- 3 December 2015: Program Steering Committee in Livingstone, Zambia.
- 3 December 2015: International Day of People Living with Disability.

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