

Fish to feed HIV affected families in Malawi

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Background

In our last five updates, we have provided the impacts the **"Fish to feed HIV affected families in Malawi"** project is having on primary school going children, the orphaned and the elderly. The project which is implemented by WorldFish Center in collaboration with World Vision with funding through Global Giving in southern Malawi, helps HIV/AIDS affected and infected poor families to live a better life with nutritious food on the table and money in their pockets through appropriate adoption of Integrated Agriculture-Aquaculture (IAA) technologies.

This update provides successes of the project in alleviating lives of widows based on two case studies of Enelesi Jonasi and Asiyatu Kiri, a young and elderly widow respectively. In the center of food insecurity and economic hardships, widows are suffering from the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty. In sub-Saharan Africa women take the brunt of caring for the family even in the presence of husbands. In the context of HIV and AIDS, women's lack of ownership and control over economic assets such as housing and land often leave them impoverished. This is especially true in communities where AIDS-related stigma is high and widows can become socially isolated. Women who own or otherwise control economic assets are better able to prevail over such crises and transitions. With about \$300 which you contributed, the project constructed an earthen pond each to Enelesi and Asiyatu of about 250m², and bought 750 baby fish that were stocked in the ponds. The two ponds plus other agricultural activities linked to the ponds have improved the living standards of Enelesi and Asiyatu tremendously. Without your support, these people would've remained destitute.

Enelesi Jonasi, a widow with 5 children

Enelesi Jonasi, widowed on 12th January 2007, lives in Malundu Village in Chingale, Zomba. Having her husband dead, she thought her future was dark as she had to take all the responsibilities of providing and caring for her family of 5 children (three girls and two boys). Enelesi only relies on farming.

A sigh of relief

Enelesi looks proud for being a beneficiary of the project since 2008. *"It was all smiles when I was chosen by the committee to be one of the beneficiaries of the fund"*, says Enelesi.



Enelesi was chosen by an HIV/AIDS committee within the Chingale Integrated Aquaculture-Agriculture Framers Association (CIAAFA). The Village Extension Multipliers (VEM) provided onsite training on site selection, fish handling, feeding and general management of fish ponds. Funds from the project contributed through Global Giving were used to pay for labour for constructing a fish pond and buying of baby fish. She received her stock of tilapia (*Oreochromis shiranus*) fingerlings in March 2008. Like a new baby in her house, she started taking good care of the fish so as to ensure good harvest as trained.

From the pond, which she says is a "gift on time"; she is able to get nutritious food for the family. Enelesi also supplies fingerlings (baby fish) to other NGOs from which she gets money for other household needs. Realizing that her mind is in fact her map to success, Enelesi Jonasi also uses some of the proceeds from the ponds and invests in agriculture as demonstrated in the photos below.



She says that the pond and the integrated aquaculture-agriculture activities have moved her out of poverty. *"I used to work in other people's gardens to earn a living. Now, all my energy and mind is invested in my own activities for the betterment of my family"*, says Enelesi in conclusion.

Asiyatu Kiri, an elderly widow

Asiyatu's case is unique because of her age. She can't remember her birth date but she must be above 65 years. She lost her husband (not from HIV/AIDS related illness) some 5 years ago and was being taken care of by her daughter. Unfortunately the daughter died and left two children. Asiyatu has now taken the burden of caring for her grand children after the passing away of their mother.

Asiyatu comes from Chiunda Village in Chingale, Zomba. Seeing her plight the community constructed a 200m² pond for her at no cost. The funds contributed through Global Giving were used to add one more pond and buy baby fish for all the two ponds in an effort to help her have nutritious food on her table and generate income.



"Having someone helping me at this old age is something commendable. I need to eat fresh fish and other nutritious food so that I should maintain my body and be able to do some household chores on my own, I simply ask my grand children to catch 5 to 10 fish anytime I need it". Says Asiyatu.

While the management of these ponds is not the best, the ponds still provide fish and water for irrigating vegetables. Taking advantage of the high demand for fingerlings by many NGOs, Asiyatu also generates some income from fingerling sales and has used part of the income to pay for labour costs for her 0.8 hectare field from which she grows maize, pigeon peas, and sweet potatoes.

There are many people who face the same problems as Asiyatu in Malawi. These people require more support to improve their well being. It is important that the project increases the number of ponds and also develop systematic agricultural resource flow systems that can reduce both labour and external inputs. Your continued support can make this happen.



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