

INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

The benefits and costs of building resilience for food security in Malawi



Photos: Marcus Perkins / Tearfund



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If another big drought hit, it wouldn't be like before. Ample food would still be available within the community, since some farmers have greatly increased their production and those using soil and water conservation techniques may get a good harvest despite drought. We also now have savings from previous years. We are much more secure now.

Community member from Jobe Jere village

Background

Small-scale farmers in developing countries are vulnerable to more frequent and intense droughts, which are predicted impacts of climate change.

Donors and governments don't always prioritise preventative investments in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation, despite the benefits they promise, notably minimising the loss of livelihoods and health, enhancing food security and building climate resilience.

A community-based cost benefit analysis was carried out on a DRR / food security programme implemented by CCAP, a Tearfund partner, in 53 farming villages in Mzimba District, Malawi (funded by DFID 2006–2010).

Methods

The cost benefit analysis (CBA) is based on making quantitative estimates of the following project benefits:

- increased crop production
- increased livestock production – goats
- avoided loss of education (from drop-out/hunger/lack of school fees)
- avoided loss of life (from malnutrition or hunger-related mortality).

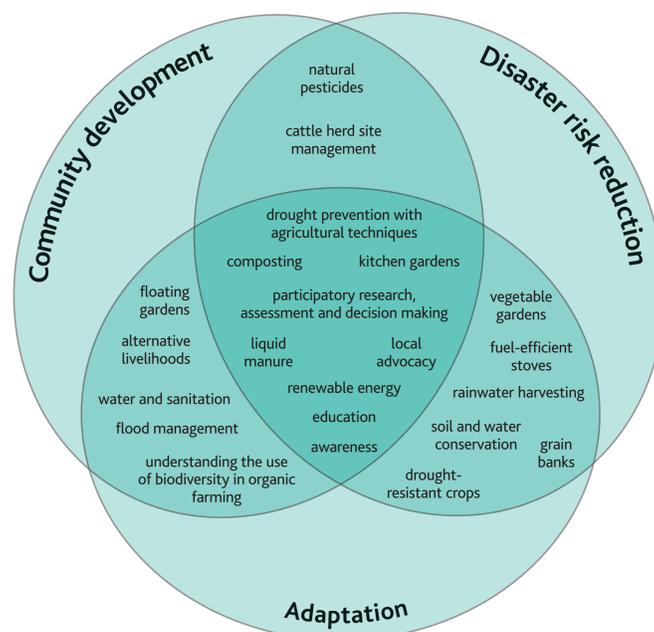
A review of the government of Malawi's policy and practice on food security and risk management was also carried out.

If the rains are bad, those with early-maturing varieties may harvest 50 per cent as much as in a good year, while others may harvest just five per cent, since our traditional varieties require lots of rain.

Community member from Mzuku Mabaso village

Results

- For every US\$1 invested, the project activities delivered at least US\$24 of net benefits for the communities, to help them overcome food insecurity while building their resilience to drought and erratic weather.
- This positive financial return on investment provides a powerful argument for investing in preventative activities in vulnerable small-scale agricultural communities.
- The programme's highly positive impact on communities includes a secure food supply; a healthy, nutritious diet; surplus income to increase assets and for school fees; better soil fertility; savings for contingencies; and reduced mortality rates.



A tool to discuss the overlaps between activities and approaches

Recommendations [see the full report](#)

Governments, donors, UN agencies and NGOs should:

- integrate CBA, risk analysis and resilience-building activities into development planning and implementation to address underlying risk factors
- integrate DRR into central policy and programming such as the national agricultural policy
- increase investment in reducing the risks of severe food insecurity and preventing food crises – ie: at least ten per cent of humanitarian aid budgets
- promote strong linkages and coherence between climate change adaptation, DRR, poverty reduction and national sustainable development plans
- strengthen local adaptive capacity, ensuring that funding reaches the poorest and most vulnerable communities
- support effective partnership between civil society and government at local and national levels to increase transparency and accountability of resources for intended beneficiaries.



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