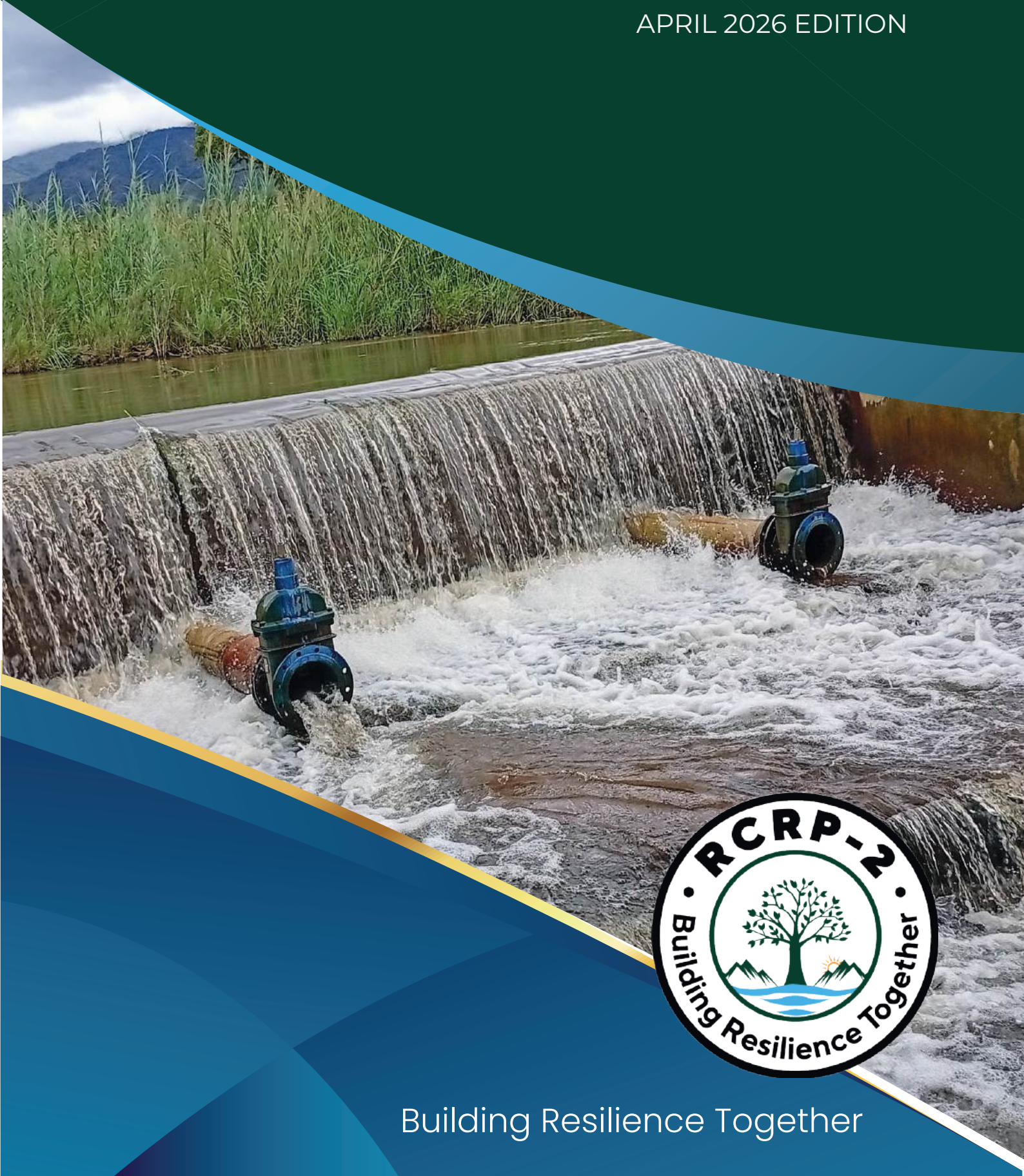


The Regional Climate Resilience Program

RCRP-2 NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026 EDITION



Building Resilience Together

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FROM THE PROJECT COORDINATOR



Dear Reader,

As we release the third edition of our newsletter, I am filled with pride and optimism at the steady progress we continue to make together in building a more resilient Malawi against the growing threats of climate change.

Since our last edition, the program has advanced significantly: from the successful rollout of Climate-Smart Urban Public Works in the cities of Zomba and Blantyre, to strengthened public buildings in communities and local authorities.

These achievements reflect the strong ownership, collaboration, and dedication across government ministries, district councils, local communities, and our key partner, the World Bank.

These milestones would not be possible without the tireless commitment of our implementing partners, including the National Local Government Finance Committee, relevant line ministries, district teams, and community stakeholders. I extend my sincere appreciation to each of you for your contributions to this shared vision of a climate-resilient future.

Looking ahead, RCRP-2 remains fully committed to scaling up resilient infrastructure, enhancing early warning systems, and fostering community empowerment so that no one is left behind. We invite continued collaboration, feedback, and active participation as we move toward greater impact in the months and years to come.

Together, we are not just responding to climate challenges, we are building back stronger, smarter, and more sustainably for generations to come.

#BuildingResilienceTogether

Best regards,

A. Zembele

Adwell Zembele

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Third Edition!

The Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2) continues to make tangible strides in protecting communities, strengthening infrastructure, and empowering local leaders to manage climate risks effectively.

This edition also features insights into our communication outreach, including radio campaigns and media collaborations designed to reach every corner of the country with life-saving information.

We are grateful to our contributors, district teams, line ministries, and implementing partners for sharing their experiences and expertise. Your commitment drives the program's success.

As always, we welcome your feedback, stories, and suggestions to make future editions even more relevant and impactful. Together, we are turning climate challenges into opportunities for a resilient, inclusive Malawi.

Happy reading,

Y. A. Sundu

Yvonne Akonda Sundu



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RCRP-2 hands over sites for designing of water supply rehabilitation works

About 47,000 people in three districts are set to benefit from the rehabilitation of three water supply schemes by the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2).

This follows the official handover of the three sites: Chididi in TA Malemia in Nsanje, Mfundazi in TA Mlauli, in Neno and Lichenya in TA Juma in Mulanje to a consultant for the detailed engineering design of the rehabilitation works.

Speaking during the handover, Chief Civil Engineer in the Department of Water Supply Services, Onances Nyirenda, said the intervention aims to enhance water security, support livelihoods, and strengthen local infrastructure.

“The handover to EMD Consulting Engineers marks the beginning of works that will reach out to about 46,759 people in the three districts. The consultant has five months to have the designs ready, then we will go into the actual works, which are expected to start by October this year,” said Nyirenda.

This significant milestone marks a major step towards improving access to clean water and boosting community resilience.



An old storage tank at the Chididi Water Supply Scheme.

“Currently, the Chididi Scheme, which uses a gravity-fed system, serves a population of about 5,278 people. Once rehabilitated, the projected population to be served is estimated to be 8,559 people.

“Mfundazi Water Supply Scheme, on the other hand, serves a population of about 6,400 people, and once rehabilitation works are completed, the projected population to be served is expected to be 30,200. Lichenya supplies to 6,000 people, and the



Intake weir at Mfundazi Water Supply Scheme.

estimated number of beneficiaries is projected at 8,000,” stated Nyirenda.

The anticipated scope of work for the water supply systems varies, according to the Chief Civil Engineer.

In Chididi, the project will focus on rehabilitating the sedimentation tank, storage tanks, and solar pumping unit, and the installation of chemical treatment units. The works in Lichenya will include the rehabilitation of the intake pipe, screening



Current state of affairs on the pipeline of the Lichenya Water Supply Scheme.

tank, and storage tanks. Additionally, a chemical treatment unit will be installed to improve water quality. “For Mfundazi, the project includes the rehabilitation of the existing conveyance line and a 15 kms section of the pipeline. The intake pipe and screening tank will also be rehabilitated, while a chemical treatment unit will be installed alongside the maintenance of the existing treatment plant,” he stated.



Nyirenda: The number of beneficiaries will increase upon completion of the rehabilitation works.

RCRP - 2 ticks off consultancy agreement for disaster centre design

Design work for the Disaster Management and Climate Resilience Centre in Lilongwe has commenced.

This follows the handing over of the site in Area 20, traditionally known as Capital Hill, for the construction to a consultant for the design and supervision.

The Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2) is supporting the construction of this state-of-the-art facility, which will serve as a centralised hub, accommodating critical government departments including: the Departments of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA), Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCCMS), Water Resources (DWR) and the Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC).

By consolidating these entities under one roof, the centre aims to streamline coordination, improve disaster preparedness, enhance early warning

“WE EXPECT TO SPEND MORE TIME ON CONSTRUCTION THAN ON THE DESIGN PROCESS.”

systems, and strengthen overall climate resilience across Malawi, according to DODMA’s Chief Disaster Resilience Officer, Sam Gama.

“This is because, as a country, we are frequently impacted by cyclones, floods, droughts, and other climate-related shocks,” he said during the handover exercise.

Gama underscored the urgency of the timeline, stating: “We expect to spend more time on construction than on the designing process. This is a push to accelerate progress and prioritise the physical build phase.”



Gama: We need to move fast Picture by Yvonne Sundu

The consultant tasked with the design and supervision is Jose Ferraz & Associados S.A., a Portuguese engineering and consultancy firm with vast international experience, in a joint venture with local partner AWW Limited.

The design phase is targeted for completion by July 2026, paving the way for subsequent construction.

This development marks a significant step in Malawi’s broader efforts under RCRP-2 to shift from reactive disaster response toward proactive, multi-benefit infrastructure and institutional strengthening. It also aligns with national goals to better protect communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems against escalating climate risks.



Consultant for Mthawira Parkway mobilises for Detailed Designs

BCC Team and the Consultant at the South Lunzu Bridge. Picture by Chimwemwe Mndelemani.

In a significant step forward under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2), the Blantyre City Council (BCC) has confirmed that a consultant for the design and supervision of the rehabilitation and climate-resilient upgrades on Mthawira Parkway is on site.

This follows a recent handover of the site by the BCC to the consultant, Kandoli Consulting Engineers, in a joint venture with Advanced Engineering Solutions Limited and Ethio-infra Engineering PLC.

The road section under rehabilitation starts at the

junction with Chileka Road at Chirimba and ends at South Lunzu Area 12, four ways, 1.2 km after the Ndodo ADMARC junction.

Most sections of the road were heavily damaged by Cyclone Freddy in 2023, and according to Blantyre City's Risk Atlas (2024), the road lies along an area with a high risk of flooding. The road runs from Chirimba Industrial Area via Luwanda, Mthawira, and Machinjiri Area 5 to Machinjiri Area 12.

The 8.4 km road forms a loop that links Chileka Road to Zomba Road, crucially bypassing Blantyre and Limbe Commercial Business Districts (CBDs).



Mthawira Parkway is an arterial connector that links over 30,000 residents of Machinjiri and the surrounding areas to the rest of Blantyre while offering access to various social and economic services along its route, including South Lunzu Health Centre, Mthawira Market, and more than six public and private schools.

Additionally, the road provides access to Chirimba Industrial Area, home to warehouses and manufacturing infrastructure in Blantyre City, according to Engineer Chimwemwe Mndelemani, BCC's Director of Engineering Services.

"The appointed consultant has commenced immediate fieldwork, including comprehensive data collection and on-site surveys. These activities will gather essential information on terrain, soil conditions, hydrology, and existing infrastructure to inform robust, climate-adapted engineering designs", said Mndelemani.

The focus on a resilient approach is to mitigate the effects of future water-related climate shocks. "A key focus of the designs will be the intense socio-economic activities along the corridor. The road serves bustling markets, agricultural transport routes, small businesses, and daily commuter traffic, all of which drive local livelihoods.

By integrating these realities, the final designs aim to minimise disruptions during construction, enhance safety for pedestrians and vendors, and support economic growth while building resilience against future floods, heavy rains, and other climate shocks," he added.

To accelerate implementation, the consultant is prioritising and expediting the designs for critical elements, particularly drainage structures and priority road sections earmarked for Lot 1 works.

"This targeted approach will enable faster procurement and commencement of construction activities, ensuring timely restoration of reliable access for affected populations.

These efforts align with RCRP-2's broader goal of rehabilitating critical infrastructure damaged by cyclones and other disasters, while mainstreaming climate resilience into Malawi's transport network," said a representative of the consultant, Eng. Geoffrey Mwanjoka.

Lot 1 works of Mthawira Parkway involves rehabilitation of some selected culverts and bridges, and rehabilitation of the road section from Machinjiri Area 5 to Ndodo ADMARC.

Lot 2 involves rehabilitation of drainage structures and road pavement from the existing concrete pad near the junction with Chileka Road to Machinjiri Area 5," states Mndelemani.

Contractors are expected to start construction works in June 2026.

Unpacking Urban Public Works Program

The Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2), through the National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC) Project Implementation Unit (PIU), is implementing an Urban Public Works Program (UPWP) intervention. Apart from greening the cities involved, it gives a temporary source of employment to the vulnerable. Mateso Kazembe (MK) is the NLGFC's UPWP lead and sheds more light about the UPWP to our editor, Yvonne Sundu (YS).

YS: What is the UPWP?

MK: Urban Public Works Program (UPWP) is a Government of Malawi initiative that will provide temporary employment to the poor and vulnerable but labour-capable households in the cities of Blantyre and Zomba. Through labour-intensive public works, participants will earn income while working on activities that improve their communities – such as environmental restoration, climate-resilient infrastructure, and city cleanliness. The program will reach about 13,000 households, helping families meet immediate needs while also strengthening urban resilience and promoting greener, safer cities. The safety net program is implemented by the Government of Malawi in Blantyre and Zomba cities.

YS: May you please expound on the targeting and participation modality apart from what you have touched on in the target group?

MK: Participation in the UPWP is based on self-targeting and community validation. This means the opportunity is voluntary and designed in such a way that it naturally attracts households that genuinely need support. The wage rate is set at MWK 2,300 per day, which helps ensure that the program reaches the ultra-poor while discouraging competition from people who already have stable or higher-paying employment. Eligible households are those that are ultra-poor but labour-capable. Once registered, the participants will work for 90 days per year, implemented as three continuous months of employment. At the end of the 30-day work cycle, a household will earn about MWK 69,000, providing a predictable income to help families buy food, pay rent, and meet other basic



Kazembe - NLGFC's UPWP lead

needs. Importantly, beneficiaries who remain eligible will continue participating throughout the lifespan of the program under the RCRP-2.

YS: What will participants actually do?

MK: UPWP is organised around six categories of climate-smart and environmental works, including: drainage management, runoff control, rehabilitation of minor infrastructure, urban greening and beautification, waste management and sanitation improvements. So households are not only earning income, they are protecting their city from floods, improving sanitation, and making urban areas safer and more liveable.

YS: Why does UPWP include Climate-Smart elements?

MK: UPWP includes climate-smart works because every rainy season, people lose homes and roads to floods and erosion. If we only provided income without fixing these environmental problems, communities would continue to lose houses, roads, and livelihoods every rainy season. So the program deliberately combines temporary employment with long-term protection of the city. For example, participants work on runoff control by constructing check dams, stone barriers, and silt traps, and by planting trees in erosion-prone areas. These measures reduce soil loss, slow down water flow, and protect infrastructure. We also support slope stabilisation through terracing, soil compaction, and planting indigenous grasses and trees. This helps prevent landslides, safeguards homes, and improves land stability

YS: What will the UPWP do on Urban greening?

MK: Urban greening is a major part of the UPWP because it helps us fight deforestation, erosion and rising urban temperatures. Under UPWP, communities will plant and maintain trees along roads, footpaths, schools, clinics and markets. Participants will also establish nurseries, water and prune young trees, and protect them so they survive. Beyond tree planting, we will turn degraded or unused land into green public spaces through grass laying, soil improvement and creation of small community parks. These areas act as cooling zones and help absorb stormwater during heavy rains. We are also promoting waste-to-green initiatives. Organic waste from markets will be composted, and materials such as old tyres and containers can be reused for planting. This reduces waste while improving soil fertility. Another important activity is the restoration of riverbanks and wetlands, including planting indigenous vegetation, creating protective buffer zones with vetiver or bamboo, and removing plastics and invasive species. This helps reduce erosion, improve water quality and manage flooding. So again, households earn income while at the same time making the city greener, cooler and more resilient.

“ONCE REGISTERED, PARTICIPANTS WILL WORK FOR 90 DAYS PER YEAR.”

YS: In short, UPWP is green jobs for resilient cities?

MK: Yes. UPWP creates green jobs, but at the same time, it protects homes, roads and communities from

climate shocks. It is income support today and resilience for tomorrow.

RCRP-2 trains councils in Environmental and Social Framework

THE Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2) has trained all district councils across the country in Environmental and Social Framework (ESF).

ESF is one of the requirements of the program’s development partner, the World Bank’s due diligence, as well as the standards that countries must meet when seeking project financing.

Speaking during the training at Nsanje District

Council, one of the RCRP-2’s Social Safeguards Specialists, Chimwemwe Chisenga Tembo, said the ESF provides a comprehensive set of policies and standards to address a broad range of environmental and social risks of investment projects.

“ESF establishes protections for people and the environment across a range of issues, emphasises capacity and institution-building, and country ownership of projects, and promotes enhanced

efficiency, flexibility and proportionality,” she said. Chisenga Tembo added that, considering that a proportional number of interventions under the project are being implemented directly by district councils, it was imperative to build their capacity.

“ESF also recognises the need for policy consolidation and harmonisation among donors and financiers and requires transparency, accountability, non-discrimination, and public participation,” she stated.

The framework uses various instruments, which, if

not in place, a project is not approved by the World Bank.

Explained Chisenga Tembo: “Some of the instruments include Environmental and Social Management Framework, Labour Management Framework, Resettlement Planning Framework, Environmental and Social Commitment Plan and Grievance Redress Mechanism.”

The ESF training is targeted at members of the District Environmental Sub-Committee.



Nkhotakota District ESF training in progress. Picture by Yvonne Sundu.

Malawians urged to explore carbon trading

The Environmental Affairs Department (EAD) states that carbon markets and carbon trading present both an opportunity and a responsibility for Malawi to contribute to mitigation actions for climate change.

The Department’s Director of Natural Resources, Tawonga Mbale-Luka, says properly designed and governed, carbon trading can help mobilise much-needed finance for conservation, restoration, clean energy, and climate-smart livelihoods.

Speaking at a Carbon Trading Media Orientation Workshop, Mbale Luka added that it can also contribute to the achievement of Malawi’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and long-term climate-resilient and low-carbon development strategies.

“Malawi is among the countries that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We are experiencing increased frequency and intensity of floods, droughts, and extreme weather events, which continue to threaten livelihoods, food security, infrastructure, ecosystems, and our national development aspirations.

“At the same time, Malawi possesses significant natural assets such as forests, agricultural landscapes, wetlands and renewable energy potential that can contribute meaningfully to global climate mitigation efforts while generating development benefits for our people,” she said.

She acknowledged that carbon markets are complex, as they involve a range of scientific and technical methodologies, evolving international rules, community engagement, procedures, and safeguards to ensure environmental integrity and social equity, among other considerations, hence the need for media orientation.

“Without a clear understanding and accurate information, there is a risk of misinformation, unrealistic expectations, and even exploitation of

communities. This is why your role as journalists is absolutely critical. You are not only messengers of information, but also shapers of public understanding, accountability, informed debate, and participation,” she said.

The Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2) is supporting the EAD to strengthen national Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems to facilitate Malawi’s access to climate finance.

According to Chief Environmental Planning Officer Boniface Chimwaza, the successful implementation of this subcomponent will make a significant contribution to building climate resilience at national and local levels through several interrelated pathways.

“Enhanced MRV capacity will improve Malawi’s ability to generate, account for, and monetise verified emission reductions, thereby increasing potential revenues from carbon trading. The Government will make deliberate efforts to channel such revenues towards adaptation-relevant sectors, in line with national priorities outlined in the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the NDCs.

“Also, a strengthened MRV system will support the development of high-integrity carbon and nature-based projects that deliver measurable ecosystem and livelihood co-benefits. These co-benefits, including improved ecosystem services, diversified livelihoods, and increased income security for vulnerable communities, are critical for enhancing both ecosystem resilience and community adaptive capacity,” he said.

The subcomponent will also contribute to improved

environmental and ecosystem governance by promoting transparency, accountability, and compliance with environmental and social safeguards.

“Strong governance frameworks are essential to ensure equitable benefit sharing, protection of community rights, and long-term sustainability of carbon market and climate finance interventions.

“While the primary objective of carbon trading is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and contribute to climate change mitigation, it also represents an increasingly important financing mechanism for climate-resilient building,” he said.

Added Chimwaza: “Through strategic investment of carbon revenues, strengthened institutions, and robust safeguards, carbon trading can play a complementary role in advancing Malawi’s resilience objectives.”



Mbale-Luka: Malawi possesses significant natural assets. Picture by Yvonne Sundu.

Malawi urged to explore nature-based solutions

Malawi, a country in the Zambezi River Basin, faces escalating climate threats, from devastating cyclones to prolonged droughts and intense floods.

Cyclone Freddy in 2023 claimed over 1,200 lives and caused hundreds of millions in damage. This, alongside recurring drought-flood cycles through

2025, has highlighted the urgent need for resilient solutions.

Farmers, many of them women, have lost land, livestock, and livelihoods, while communities grapple with water scarcity and biodiversity decline.

However, not all hope is lost as opportunities like the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) Nature, People, and Climate (NPC) Program are offering a promising path forward.

As one of the largest implementing agencies for CIF-NPC globally, the World Bank is advocating for nature-based solutions (NbS) in vulnerable countries like Malawi.

These solutions, according to World Bank Senior Climate Finance Specialist Zhihong Zhang, focus on protecting and restoring ecosystems to address climate change, water issues, and biodiversity loss simultaneously.

“In Malawi, NbS provide cost-effective ways to enhance climate resilience, improve health and well-being, secure food and water, and generate economic opportunities for communities,” says Zhang.

Malawi participates in the CIF NPC through the regional Zambezi River Basin program, alongside Zambia, Mozambique, Namibia, and Tanzania,

rather than a standalone national initiative.

In early 2025, CIF endorsed a \$60.35 million investment plan for the region, with the World Bank leading about \$19 million in locally focused efforts for community and ecosystem resilience in Malawi.

Says Zhang: “These investments emphasize participatory planning, multi-hazard early warning systems, and strengthened land-use and water regulations to curb overuse and degradation. A key focus is the transboundary Shire River Basin, critical for water security, livelihoods, and economic growth in the region.

“Targeted watershed and catchment management will protect vital infrastructure, reduce human and economic losses from floods and droughts, and build capacity in vulnerable communities,” he explained.

The big question is, can large-scale NbS be able to mitigate the impacts of events like Cyclone Freddy? While no solution eliminates all risks from extreme weather, the CIF-NPC initiatives can noticeably



Chiremba (left): The bank is always willing to support Malawi. Picture by Yvonne Sundu.

lessen deaths and losses by improving land management, enforcing regulations, enhancing monitoring, and establishing early warning and preparedness systems.

These efforts, Zhang argues, can help communities better anticipate and respond to hazards.

“Upstream ecosystem restoration and catchment protection slow runoff, reduce erosion, and buffer against flood peaks—potentially saving lives and safeguarding assets that were devastated in recent disasters. Every CIF project must deliver both climate adaptation, which is building resilience to impacts, and mitigation, which is about reducing emissions,” he states.

Zhang says NbS excel when healthy ecosystems sequester carbon while providing adaptive benefits like flood regulation, where a concrete example for Malawi is a hybrid green-grey infrastructure.

“This approach combines traditional ‘grey’ engineering, like concrete drains, levees, or pipes for immediate flood control, with ‘green’ natural elements, including restored wetlands, reforested catchments, or raingardens.

“In flood-prone areas, grey structures offer quick protection, while green components deliver long-term advantages like filtering water, supporting habitats, improving soil stability, and enhancing overall ecosystem resilience,” he says.

Integrating wetland restoration along riverbanks with engineered drainage channels could manage excess water more sustainably than grey infrastructure alone, reducing flood risks while providing co-benefits like cleaner water and biodiversity support.

Through CIF-NPC, Malawi has opportunities to advance these integrated approaches, fostering sustainable development amid climate pressures. By investing in nature today, the country can build a more resilient future for its people and ecosystems.

Currently, CIF-NPC does not have any investments within the Malawi portfolio, but World Bank Malawi Office’s Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist, Kondwani Chirembo, says there are opportunities.

“RCRP-2, with a core objective of building resilience at the community level, there are several activities that would align with what a CIF-NPC investment would finance. Looking at sustainable erosion control works, or catchment restoration works or development of green spaces or restoration of wetlands and many others would be activities that could be financed,” he says.

Chirembo says the Bank has always been supporting Malawi on various adaptation strategies towards management of climate change effects, and in many of the past and present investments, integration of NbS has been a part of them.

Under RCRP-2, use of NBS as part of the interventions is an acceptable activity that would get financing under several of the activities. The Bank has a climate co-benefit requirement on every investment, but how this is achieved is more in line with how projects are designed, which falls within the realm of the government of Malawi,” states Chirembo.

When the wind returns: Rebuilding schools to stand their ground



Progress of the staff house at Mseru Primary School in Lilongwe. Pictures by Yvonne Sundu.

At Mseru Primary School, the wind does not arrive quietly. It comes carrying memory of ageing timber, tired nails and walls never designed for a climate that now tests every assumption.

When storms last swept through this part of Lilongwe, they lifted two classroom blocks clean off their foundations, leaving behind silence, fear and empty spaces where learning once lived.

Established in 1940, Mseru School has seen Malawi change many times. What it was never built for is an era of unpredictable and unforgiving weather. For years, learning unfolded inside fragile structures that weakened as enrolment grew and seasons hardened. When the roofs finally gave way, parents withdrew their children, and teachers struggled to cope.

Head teacher Alfred Nkhata remembers the aftermath clearly – 881 learners shared a few classrooms and just four toilets. Meanwhile, only one permanent house was available against a teacher population of 12. Ultimately, the majority of them walked seven kilometres to and from school each day.

“When a teacher is tired,” Nkhata says, “teaching becomes a struggle before the lesson even begins.” What happened at Mseru is not unique. Across Malawi, schools are among the most exposed public structures, standing unshielded against stronger winds and heavier rains. As climate change intensifies floods, droughts and cyclones, classrooms increasingly sit on the frontline. When

storms strike, education is often among the first services to fracture.

That same vulnerability is visible in Dowa, where damage has built up over time as wind and rain exploit old weaknesses. At Chigongolelo Primary School in the district, a damaged classroom block is being rehabilitated. At Chimpeni, a teacher’s house is being rebuilt. At Mponda, another classroom block is rising where learning had stalled. Together, the three projects, valued at 631 million kwacha, represent an effort not just to restore what was lost, but to break a cycle of repeated destruction.

It is against this backdrop that Malawi’s engagement with the Regional Climate Resilience Program for Eastern and Southern Africa, RCRP-2, takes on meaning.

RCRP-2 is a five-year, 250-million-dollar World Bank-supported initiative helping countries withstand climate shocks, particularly floods, droughts and cyclones. Malawi has been allocated about 240 million dollars, part of a broader response to extreme weather, including the



The dilapidated state of the inside of a classroom at Mseru Primary School. Picture by Yvonne Sundu.

devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Freddy.

While some interventions target large-scale water and flood systems, others, like the works at Mseru and in Dowa, confront a quieter threat, the steady erosion of everyday public infrastructure.

At the centre of this approach is a shift from rebuilding to resilience.

Flemmings Nyirenda, a Deputy Project Coordinator with the National Local Government Finance Committee, describes resilience as refusing to build for failure.

“We do not want to keep reconstructing the same structures every 15 years,” he says, adding, “When we build, it should last for 50 years. After that, focus should be on maintenance, not replacement.”



Progress of the school block at Mseru Primary School in Lilongwe.

Pictures by Yvonne Sundu.

The change is visible on the ground. Steel trusses replace timber. Cement blocks are sealed and reinforced. Slabs are widened and anchored deep into the earth. Buildings are designed to absorb stress rather than surrender to it.

Project implementation happens through district councils using structured resilience grants. Each year, projects are proposed and assessed before funding is released. There are five annual cycles, and 74 projects are underway nationwide in the first cycle alone.

Kondwani Chirembo, a Senior Disaster Risk Management Specialist with the World Bank, recently visited sites in Lilongwe and Dowa to assess progress.

“What we are seeing is a good start. District councils are taking responsibility, and the works show intent to build infrastructure that can endure. Malawi has many priorities. districts have to decide what can be done now and what must wait,” Chirembo notes.

RCRP-2 recognises this pressure. Beyond infrastructure, the program strengthens planning and maintenance systems, improves disaster preparedness and early warning and integrates climate considerations into development decisions. It also supports community awareness

and adaptive social protection, helping people live with risk rather than constantly rebuild.

In districts where wind is the main threat, resilience is layered. Buildings are oriented according to wind flow. Foundations are strengthened. Steel trusses replace vulnerable roofing systems. Around schools, trees are being planted to grow into living windbreaks.

At Mseru, efforts are underway to plant 1 000 trees before the rainy season ends. “The trees are part of the protection. They

“WHEN WE BUILD, IT SHOULD LAST FOR 50 YEARS.”

are an investment in the future,” Nkhata says.

Community ownership underpins the effort. Before

construction begins, communities are sensitised to project goals. Committees are trained to work with contractors and safeguard materials. Chiefs and residents monitor progress, helping prevent conflict and delays.

Still, Chirembo offers a caution. “We want resilient infrastructure,” he says, “but not at the cost of safety, the environment or inclusion.”

Meanwhile, the impact is already visible. Learners are returning. Teachers look forward to living closer to their work. The school feels steadier, both in structure and spirit. And the change goes beyond results. It is about dignity restored and a school no longer waiting helplessly for the next storm.

The wind will return. Climate science makes that certain. But this time, classrooms are



Nkhata: Teaching should not be a struggle. Picture by Yvonne Sundu.

anchored, trees are growing, and learning is no longer expected to surrender at the first gust.

RCRP-2, a Government of Malawi initiative supported by the World Bank, aims to strengthen local infrastructure and governance systems to better withstand the impacts of climate change.

Resilient classroom blocks restore learners' hope in Mchinji



A classroom block at Tiwonge Primary School. Picture by Vincent Khonje.

Two primary schools in Mchinji District have acquired a safer and more conducive learning environment following the construction of resilient classroom blocks under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2).

Kadagwantipenya in Traditional Authority (TA) Zulu and Tiwonge Primary Schools in TA Ndawambe have benefitted from durable infrastructure designed to withstand harsh weather conditions under the RCRP-2.

At Kadagwantipenya, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairperson, Leonard Tambula, said the new classroom block has significantly improved both learner motivation and school enrolment.

“Previously, learners were learning in makeshift structures made of reeds, which were not safe, especially during adverse weather. The durable and resilient structure has brought a new sense of



A structure which was used as a classroom due to the shortage of classrooms at Kadagwantipenya.

Picture by Vincent Khonje

motivation among learners who now feel secure and eager to attend classes,” said Tambula.

He added that the improved infrastructure has contributed to increased enrolment, as parents are now more confident in the safety of the learning



Tembo: RCRP-2 initiative is playing a critical role. Picture by Vincent Khonje.

environment.

At Tiwonge Primary School, the impact of climate change had been deeply felt when a rainstorm in 2024 blew off the roof of one of the classroom blocks, instilling fear among learners and disrupting classes.

Head teacher Gilbert Thebulo said the incident negatively affected both attendance and enrolment at the school.



A teacher admires a new classroom block at Kadagwantipenya Primary School. Picture by Vincent Khonje.

“Learners were scared to come to school after the incident, and it affected our operations. However, the construction of a new resilient classroom block, which is nearing completion, has restored hope and confidence among both learners and teachers,” said Thebulu.

He added that the improved learning environment is expected to further boost learner motivation, building on the school’s recent academic success, where it achieved a 100 percent pass rate in the Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education, with all learners selected to secondary school.

Mchinji District Director of Public Works Ellis Tembo said the RCRP initiative is playing a critical role in strengthening infrastructure in vulnerable communities.

“The program is helping schools to have durable and resilient structures, and this is key in ensuring continuity of learning even in the face of climate-related challenges,” said Tembo.

RCRP-2, a Government of Malawi initiative supported by the World Bank, aims to strengthen local infrastructure and governance systems to better withstand the impacts of climate change. Mchinji is benefiting classroom blocks in four primary schools, namely Nkhomphola, Chioko, Tiwonge and Kadagwantipenya.



Another view of a classroom at Kadagwantipenya Primary School. Picture by Vincent Khonje

Dowa council commits to improving teachers’ welfare

Dowa District Council Chairperson Billy Mtika has asked teachers to remain dedicated to their work, saying the council remains committed to improving their welfare.

Mtika made the remarks in an interview following the handover of an MK178 million teachers’ house at Chimpeni Primary School, constructed under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2) with funding from the World Bank.

“You are the backbone of education delivery in the country. Learners depend on you, the council, the ministry and stakeholders depend on you to provide quality education to our children.

“But we understand the challenges you face, which

include accommodation. That is why we remain committed to providing you with these so that you work in a conducive environment,” he said.

Mtika added that, apart from motivation, the house will ensure the safety of the occupants as it has been constructed to withstand harsh weather conditions.

“I also expect this to improve school management affairs as the headteacher will be residing within the school premises. We expect the headteacher to be exemplary amongst teachers and learners by reporting in time to school, and also running school affairs orderly, which was challenging when he was residing far.



Senior Chief Mponela (4th Left), flanked by Dowa Council Chairperson Billy Mtika (3rd Left), receives the structure on behalf of the community. Picture by Sylvester Kumwenda.

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“But most importantly, we expect to see an improvement in learner performances,” said Mtika. Previously, one of the teachers’ houses at the school collapsed due to strong winds and heavy rains.

In his remarks, Senior Chief Mponela committed to mobilising the community to safeguard the structure.

“If we damage it, we will need funds to rehabilitate the house, funds which would have been used for another project, and that is detrimental to development. So we are thankful for this development, which will go a long way in improving education standards here, and we will make sure this lasts a long time,” he said.

Parliamentarian challenges Dowa communities to promote education

Dowa East parliamentarian Richard Chimwendo Banda has challenged people in the area to ensure all children attend education, saying infrastructure development alone is useless if communities do not take a strong interest in sending children to school.

He made the remarks in an interview when the Dowa District Council commissioned an MK172 million-worth classroom block at Mponda Primary School in Senior Chief Chiwere, constructed under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-

2), with funding from the World Bank.

“This classroom block is a commendable development, as it is a huge boost in access to education for children in Dowa. The government might fulfil its responsibility of providing the required infrastructure to promote education, but these are only enablers to quality and access to education. Infrastructure on its own cannot bring results. We need parents to send their kids and keep them in school so that at the end of the day,

“THIS CLASSROOM BLOCK IS A COMMENDABLE DEVELOPMENT, AS IT IS A HUGE BOOST IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN DOWA.”

we see the genuine impact of this infrastructure,” he said.

RCRP-2 District Engineer Yotamu Nkhonya said the classroom block has been constructed to withstand harsh weather conditions.

“This is a durable infrastructure that has been constructed to withstand heavy winds and rain. It has used durable materials to enhance quality and lifespan,” he said.

Speaking through a representative, Senior Chief Chiwere said the classroom block was long overdue, as the damaged structure had brought challenges at the school.

“Some learners used to absent themselves from school out of fear, and others opted to look for other schools which are far from their homes. But this classroom block will motivate learners to come to this school, reduce absenteeism and also the teacher-to-learner ratio,” he said.

He committed to ensuring the community takes care of the infrastructure so that it outlives its lifespan.

The double room block at Mponda Primary School has been constructed to replace one which was blown away by heavy winds

Weathering the storm: Kasungu gets climate-resilient schools

In recent years, Kasungu has repeatedly endured destructive storms that have left schools among the hardest hit, disrupting teaching and learning for thousands of pupils.

In December last year, Cyclone Chido brought heavy rains and strong winds that damaged homes and public infrastructure, including at least 51 primary schools where hundreds of structures had their roofs blown off.

The destruction forced learners into overcrowded

classrooms and strained already limited resources.

Schools such as Kadamnsana Primary in Sub-Traditional Authority Suza were severely affected, losing most of their classroom blocks and teachers’ houses. Earlier, in October 2023, Kakwale Primary School in Kasungu North Constituency also suffered extensive damage when storms destroyed two classroom blocks and six teachers’ houses.

Head teacher for Kakwale, Profer Mwandira, recalls how the disaster reduced learning space to

just four classrooms.

“Learners were forced into shifts, while others were accommodated in a nearby church. The situation disrupted lessons and affected both learners’ performance and teachers’ welfare,” he says.

The district continued to face similar challenges during the most recent rainy season, with storms damaging infrastructure and affecting about 980 households.

According to Director of Planning and Development at Kasungu Council, George Mtengowadula, the district remains highly vulnerable to climatic shocks such as strong winds and droughts.

He attributes this vulnerability to rapid population growth, weak infrastructure, poor settlement patterns, environmental degradation and limited early warning systems, all of which increase the impact of disasters on communities and public facilities like schools.

Kaphaizi Primary School in Kasungu Central Constituency is another example of the damage caused by extreme weather. Storms destroyed



Climate resilient block at Kaphaizi Primary School.

Picture by Wanangwa Tembo.

“THE NEW BUILDINGS FEATURE REINFORCED WALLS AND STRONGER ROOFING DESIGNED TO ENDURE FUTURE STORMS.”

a classroom block, forcing learners to study under trees or in overcrowded rooms, a situation that negatively affected academic performance.

However, the situation is steadily improving following interventions under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2). Through the initiative, the government, with support from the World Bank, has constructed modern, climate-resilient classroom blocks at both Kakwale and Kaphaizi primary schools in the first phase of implementation.

Mtengowadula says the initiative goes beyond simply replacing damaged structures. It is aimed at building durable infrastructure that can withstand harsh weather conditions while providing a safe and conducive learning environment.

“The new buildings feature reinforced walls and stronger roofing designed to endure future storms,” he says.

Director of Education for Kasungu, Votie Mboweni, says the development reflects the government’s commitment to strengthening school infrastructure and improving education outcomes.

He notes that investing in resilient buildings is critical to ensuring uninterrupted learning,



Mwandira points at the ruins of cyclones

Picture by Wanangwa Tembo.



New block at Kakwale Primary School. Picture by Wanangwa Tembo.

improving learner retention and enhancing overall education quality.

“The focus is on constructing durable classrooms and teachers’ houses that can withstand extreme weather while supporting effective teaching and learning,” he says, adding that improved infrastructure is key to motivating both learners and teachers.

Local leaders have also welcomed the development, describing it as a timely intervention. Traditional Authority Kalikokha says improved infrastructure will help reduce absenteeism and school dropout rates while ensuring learner safety.

At Kakwale Primary School, the impact of the new structures is already evident.

Mwandira, the headteacher, says learners are now studying in safe and adequate classrooms,

restoring normal learning conditions and boosting morale among both pupils and staff.

“The new blocks have brought dignity and stability to the school. Teaching and learning are now progressing without the disruptions we experienced before,” he says.

RCRP-2 is designed to enhance Malawi’s resilience to climate change by strengthening infrastructure, improving disaster risk management and supporting community adaptation strategies.

In the education sector, the program is playing a crucial role in safeguarding learning spaces against climate-related shocks.

As more schools are earmarked for similar interventions, the program is emerging as a key pillar in building a resilient education system in Kasungu District.

M’mbelwa District Council impressed with classroom block construction

Director of Lands and Public Works for M’mbelwa District Council, Allan Chitete, has expressed satisfaction with the progress of construction works at Kabowoza Primary School, being funded under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2).

Chitete made the remarks during a media tour

to the construction site in Traditional Authority Chindi in Mzimba District. He said the project is on track and being implemented according to the agreed standards, adding that upon completion, the structures will greatly improve the learning environment for pupils at the school.

“As council, we are happy with the quality of work

that is being done here. The contractor has followed specifications, and the pace of construction is encouraging. Once completed, this school will provide a safe and conducive learning space for learners,” said Chitete.

He added that the project is part of the

government’s commitment to improving climate-resilient infrastructure in schools that are prone to environmental challenges such as strong winds and heavy rains.

Kabowoza Primary School suffered a disaster that reduced the number of classrooms for learners to



Progress of the school block at Kabowoza Primary School in Mzimba. Picture by Joel Phiri.

get their education in a good learning environment.

According to Chitete, under RCRP-2, the council also received funding to construct a double VIP pit latrine, tank stand, water supply and some solar electrification aimed at enhancing the learning and teaching environment at the school. The works are to the tune of K283 million.

Kabowoza Primary School Deputy Head teacher, Ishmael Kumwenda, welcomed the construction of classrooms, saying it has come as a great relief to both teachers and learners.

“For many years, our pupils have been learning under trees due to inadequate classroom space. During the rainy season and periods of strong sunshine, learning was being disrupted. This development means a lot to us,” he said.

He further hailed the construction of modern toilet facilities at the school, describing them as

long overdue.

“Previously, we had very poor sanitation facilities, which posed health risks to our learners. The new toilets will promote hygiene and dignity, especially for our girl learners. The solar will enable our pupils, especially Standard 8 pupils, to study even at night, hence increasing their chances of performing better during national examinations,” he said.

Standard Eight learner, Isaac Phiri, also expressed excitement over the project, saying he looks forward to learning in proper classrooms.

“I am very happy because we will no longer be learning outside. Sometimes rain would force us to go back home before finishing lessons. When these classrooms are finished, learning will be easier and more comfortable,” said Phiri.

RCRP-2-funded classroom block takes shape in Nkhata Bay



Progress of works at Mkuluzi Primary School in Nkhata Bay. Picture by Yvonne Sundu.

Construction of a new under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2) is progressing well in Nkhata Bay, with works having reached 63 percent completion just 45 days into a 90-day contract period.

The two classroom blocks are being constructed at Mkuluzi Full Primary School in the area of Senior Chief Fukamapiri in the district.

In an interview during a Public Works Service Committee visit to the construction site, Acting Director of Public Works for Nkhata Bay District Council, Thomas Mpama, expressed satisfaction with both the pace and quality of the works, describing the progress as encouraging.

“The contractor was given 90 days to complete this project, but in just about 45 days, the work has already surpassed 63 percent completion. This clearly demonstrates commitment and efficiency,” said Mpama.

He further noted that the quality of workmanship meets the required standards and that the structure has been designed to withstand climate shocks, which is a key objective of the RCRP-2.

“This facility is being constructed with climate resilience in mind. Previously, the school had a classroom block that developed cracks following an earthquake, rendering it unsafe and unusable. As a result, learners were forced to study under trees, which negatively affected learning outcomes,” he explained.

Mpama added that the new block demonstrates how resilient infrastructure can help communities adapt to climate-related risks and ensure long-term safety for learners.

However, he pointed out that accessibility to the site remains a challenge, as poor road conditions often affect the timely mobilisation of construction materials, especially during adverse weather conditions.

The Mkuluzi’s Head teacher, Stanley Folodi, said school management is working closely with the contractor to ensure that quality is not compromised.



Some of the classroom structures at Mkuluzi Primary School in Nkhata Bay.

Picture by Chisomo Kambandanga

“We are working hand in hand with the contractor to make sure that quality standards are fully adhered to. From what we are seeing, the work is progressing very well, and we are optimistic that the project will be completed before the agreed period, which is a big plus for us,” he said.

He further disclosed that the school has an enrolment of 299 learners, supported by 11 teachers, but has only one teachers' house, stressing the urgent need for more classroom blocks and staff houses.

The classroom block is being constructed with support from the World Bank through the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2), with funding channelled through the National Local Government Finance Committee, at a total cost of K204 million.

Rumphi rehabilitates K114 million irrigation scheme to boost food security



Part of the Tchecheche Irrigation Scheme. Picture by Manase Nyirenda.

Rumphi is set to boost food security with the rehabilitation of a K114 million irrigation scheme, aiming to increase crop yields and improve livelihoods for local farmers.

The Tchecheche Irrigation Scheme, covering 31 hectares, is expected to benefit about 2,000 people and currently has 72 registered individual farmers utilising the facility for year-round farming, reducing reliance on rain-fed agriculture.

Speaking during the handover ceremony of the irrigation scheme to Nkhomboli Village Development Committee in the area of Senior Chief Mwalweni, Rumphi District Commissioner Thomas Chigwenembe said the scheme will help enhance food security at both household and national levels.

“Government is championing the attainment of food security at the household and national level.

I, therefore, urge the benefiting community to fully utilise the scheme to improve their livelihoods,” said Chigwenembe.

He further advised members of the community to take care of the infrastructure so that it serves them for a long period.

Chairperson of the Tchecheche Irrigation Scheme, Fredrick Sambamo, states that the rehabilitation will improve water supply and increase the number of farmers benefiting from the facility.

“Apart from enhancing food security, the scheme will also increase income generation in the area as households will sell surplus produce for their economic empowerment. We expect the number of individual farmers utilising the scheme to increase from the current 72 due to improved water supply,” said Sambamo.

Senior Chief Mwalweni said the irrigation scheme will help improve food production and support development activities in the area.

“People will be harvesting more than once annually, hence contributing to sustainable food security in the district,” said the chief.

The World Bank funded the project through the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2), which is strengthening disaster risk management, enhancing water-related climate resilience and improving early warning systems against climate shocks.

Box culvert restores connectivity along Kambwe–Silu road in Karonga



Completed Kambwe-Silu Road Box Culvert. Picture by George Mponda.

Karonga District Council has constructed a box culvert along the Kambwe–Silu road under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2), restoring access for communities that had been cut off due to flood damage.

The project, implemented by the council with funding from the World Bank to the tune of K111 million, comes as a relief to residents whose livelihoods and access to essential services had been disrupted after a bridge was washed away by floods.

Speaking in an interview, Group Village Head Fundamaso Mwanyongo hailed the development, saying it has reconnected communities to the main road and improved mobility in the area.

“For a long time, people here struggled to cross, especially

during the rainy season. A majority of people in this area are rice farmers, and we were failing to access markets with our produce after the bridge was destroyed,” said Mwanyongo.

“People were even failing to go to the hospital.”

He added that people from Silu and surrounding areas also faced challenges accessing healthcare services, often being forced to use longer alternative routes at a higher

cost to reach Karonga District Hospital.

“Some people were even failing to go to the hospital in time because of the long distances and transport costs. This culvert has eased those challenges,” he said.

Karonga District Council Acting Director of Public Works, George Chanya, said the council prioritised the construction of the box culvert to address persistent connectivity challenges caused by climate-related disasters.

“We decided to construct this box culvert after noting that floods had severely affected this section of the road, cutting off communities and disrupting socio-economic activities.

This intervention is aimed at providing a durable solution that can withstand harsh

weather conditions,” said Chanya.

RCRP-2 Karonga District Engineer, Innocent Ngoma, said the project is part of broader efforts under the program to strengthen infrastructure and enhance community resilience to climate change.

“The objective of the RCRP-2 is to support communities in adapting to the impacts of climate change by investing in resilient infrastructure

such as roads and drainage systems. Projects like this culvert are meant to ensure continued access to markets, health facilities and other essential services even during extreme weather events,” explained Ngoma.

The construction of the culvert is expected to boost economic activities in the area, particularly among rice farmers, while improving access to healthcare and other social services for communities around Silu.

Guardian shelter construction to ease congestion at Karonga District Hospital



Ring beam formwork installation at Karonga Guardian Shelter. Picture by George Mponda.

Picture by George Mponda.

The Chairperson for the Guardian Shelter at Karonga District Hospital (KDH), Walusungu Kalambo, has commended the District Council for constructing an additional guardian shelter and four new toilets at the facility.

Kalambo said the development will greatly help address long-standing sanitation challenges at the hospital. He noted that the previous limited number of toilets had been a serious concern, sometimes forcing guardians to resort to improper disposal of human waste around the shelter area.

The Karonga District Council has embarked on the project specifically to reduce congestion and improve sanitation standards at the hospital.

A beneficiary at the facility, Memory Mwalwanda, also welcomed the initiative, saying the new infrastructure will significantly improve the welfare of guardians who often endure overcrowded and difficult conditions while caring for patients.

“This is a welcome development because we have been staying in congested spaces, which made life very difficult, especially for those caring for patients over long periods. The additional shelter will bring dignity and comfort to us,” said Mwalwanda.

The project is being implemented by Steady Builder under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2), with funding from the World Bank. The total cost of the project is K172 million.

Meanwhile, Acting Director of Public Works for Karonga District Council, George Chanya, explained that the council decided to build the additional guardian shelter to ease congestion and improve sanitation and hygiene at the facility.

Chanya added that the project forms part of the council's broader efforts to enhance public health infrastructure and improve overall service delivery at health facilities in the district.

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NWRA sets up Shire Basin Committee

The National Water Resources Authority (NWRA) has set up the Shire Basin Catchment Management Committee (SBCMC).

This follows the district sensitisation meetings that NWRA has done with Area Development Committees (ADC) in all 11 districts under Shire Basin, according to the authority's Director of Water Resources Management and Development, Toney Nyasulu.

"About 57 ADC have been sensitised, and 57 representatives have been nominated by communities to be represented in the Shire

Basin Catchment Management Committee. This means that each ADC under Shire Basin will be represented in the committee and will have a voice and vote when the committee is meeting and make resolutions," he said.

Under the Regional Climate Resilience Program (RCRP-2), the NWRA is consolidating Catchment Management Plans for the Shire Basin. The role of the SBCMC is the voice and guide for water management in the Shire Basin in the districts of Chikwawa, Nsanje, Blantyre, Mwanza, Mangochi, Balaka, Machinga, Zomba, Neno, Ntcheu and Thyolo.

RCRP-2
Regional Climate Resilience Program

Yetu Community Radio
Love FM
Kuwala Radio
Times Radio
Bembeke FM
Umunthu FM
Dzimwe Radio
Timveni Radio
MBC
Zodiak
Radio Maria
Chirundu FM
Chisomo FM
Umoyo FM
Lilanguka Radio
Lingamamba Community Radio
Yoneco Radio
Chanco Community Radio
Likoma FM
Linga FM
Nyanthepe Radio
Chibvomelezi Radio
Neno FM
Nyungwe Radio
Times Radio
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Mzotu Radio
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