

NEWSLETTER

2023 Edition



**Centre for Environmental
Policy and Advocacy**



NATURE'S VOICE

Towards an environmentally sound and sustainable Malawi

CEPA'S NEW CHAPTER

**20 YEARS OF
ENVIRONMENTAL
ADVOCACY**

**A JUST
TRANSITION
FOR MALAWI**

An interview with
Herbert Mwalukomo

**POLITICAL
CORRECTNESS
FRUSTRATES THE
ENVIRONMENT**

Editorial





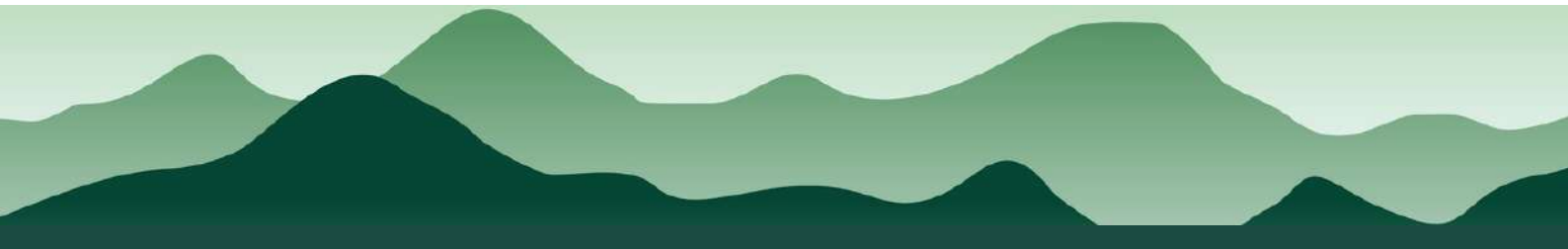
A Word from the Director



We welcome you to this re-launch edition of the Nature's Voice. Through the Nature's Voice, the Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) highlights issues on sustainability. We discuss topical issues and share experiences from our work and lessons from our interactions with diverse stakeholders.

In this edition, we are delighted to share with you CEPA's 20 years in environmental policy advocacy. While we celebrate this milestone, we are mindful of the need to do more in our quest to see environment and natural resources policies implemented for sustainable development. In addition, we are discussing about a just transition to a low carbon and climate resilient development, agricultural biodiversity and sustainable food systems. Finally, we are sharing tips on sustainable practices and we trust that you will find them useful.

Enjoy your reading!



CEPA 2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN IN SUMMARY

THE INSIGHTS OF OUR STRATEGY

By CEPA



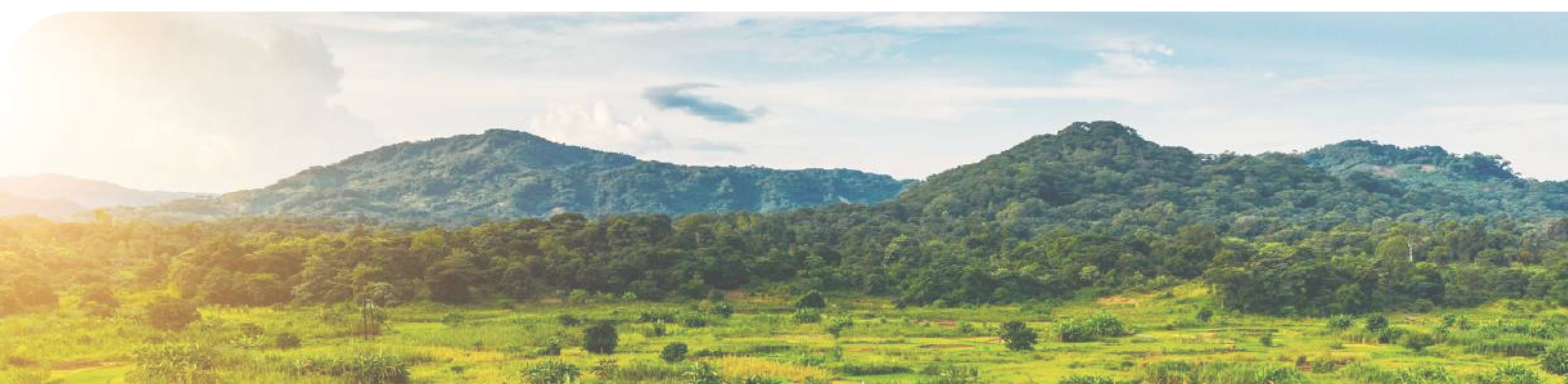
>>> INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) is a civil society, non-profit organisation and a think tank founded in 2002, which contributes to the development of environmental policy and best practices in Malawi and the Southern Africa Region. CEPA fills an existent gap in research and advocacy on environmental and natural resources management issues in response to local and global environmental challenges.

Through our work we have contributed to the reform in policy and legislative processes in the governance of natural resources such as land, forests, and minerals.

- We have shaped the policy agenda on climate change, disaster risk management, mining and agricultural biodiversity.
- We have facilitated access to environmental information, justice and public participation.
- We have mobilised and coordinated civil society and voices for sustainable development.

Our new strategy was developed based on the analysis of the organisational strengths and weaknesses; and on an assessment of the opportunities and threats (SWOT) in the environment. The definition of targets was guided by a review of the 2016-2020 strategic plan and assessment of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of CEPA's programme work in a changing context.



VISION

A JUST AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY THAT PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

MISSION

A THINK TANK AND ADVOCACY INSTITUTION PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.

GOAL

ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES POLICIES IMPLEMENTED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

>>> OUR 2 STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

POLICY RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

- ◆ **NATURAL RESOURCES**
CEPA will strengthen governance of non-renewable natural resources as a contribution to natural resource governance in Malawi.
- ◆ **BIODIVERSITY**
CEPA's work will improve implementation of biodiversity conservation and management policies.
- ◆ **CLIMATE CHANGE**
CEPA will enhance climate change policy implementation and learning.

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THEMATIC
AREAS

»»» OUR STRATEGIES



»»» CEPA'S FACE

We are pleased to inform you that CEPA now carries a new face. In order to align more with our new strategic plan, we have rebranded our logo!



»»» CEPA'S LIBRARY

Explore our Online library for the widest range of publications on environment and natural resources in Malawi!

<https://www.cepa.org.mw/Library>

»»» CEPA OFFICES

Apart from our office at the Raynor Avenue in Limbe, Blantyre, we have opened an office in the capital, Lilongwe! You will find us in Area 14.

»»» CONNECT WITH CEPA ON:



UNDERSTANDING A JUST TRANSITION FOR MALAWI

INTERVIEW WITH MR. HERBERT MWALUKOMO

By Gloria Majiga

In November 2022, a report titled *The State of Climate Action and the Scope for a Just Transition in Malawi* was launched through various online media platforms. The report considers what a just transition means for a global-south-country like Malawi, and how it may be incorporated into the national development framework and priorities. I sat down with CEPA's Executive Director, Mr. Herbert Mwalukomo, who was also the lead researcher, to discuss what the report is about, their findings and what follows next.

G: COULD YOU GIVE US SOME BACKGROUND TO THIS RESEARCH AND ABOUT CEPA'S INVOLVEMENT.

H: The report is a product of a partnership between CEPA and Climate Strategies under a project titled *South to South Just Transitions* with support from the European Climate Foundation and Porticus. The project has been working with other countries in the global south such as Colombia, Argentina, Indonesia, Vietnam and Ghana to understand what a Just Transition would mean for such countries. In the current phase, they have engaged Malawi, Kenya and Bangladesh in research towards understanding the national context for a just transition in these non-industrialized country contexts. Climate Strategies is working with research institutions in these countries to understand just transition issues at national level, which is how CEPA has come to undertake this work. Through the project, we have been researching what a just transition to a low carbon and climate resilient economy means to Malawians, especially to the most vulnerable.

G: WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT "JUST TRANSITIONS"?

H: This concept is rooted in a discussion that has been happening largely at international level regarding a shift to a global economy that should take into account the impacts of climate change. This discussion considers the need to shift our energy policies and ensure that they are more climate compatible or resilient, and the implications that come along with that because in the global context, much of it is linked to energy.



Herbert
Mwalukomo

“...the discussion has been dominated by industrialised countries, despite this requiring a response from countries coming from both global north and south.”

There has been a realisation that such a shift would have winners and losers. It considers what the implications would be, for example, on workers if you must replace technology that is carbon intensive - are we not going to have people losing jobs?

This discussion is not new, it has been there from as early as the 70's with the rise of the environmental movement. It was referenced in the preamble to the [Paris Agreement](#), where parties agreed to take into account "... the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities." In this preamble, the Paris Agreement recognises the anticipated impacts of the transition to a low-carbon economy, and the resulting need for global and national responses to ensure that people are provided with decent work and quality jobs within this framework.

The interesting part of this is that the discussion has been dominated by industrialised countries despite this requiring a response from countries coming from both global north and south. In not-industrialised countries, we have our own context of changing systems and practices which may or may not create winners and losers. The question therefore is, what does a just transition look like in this low-income country context.

G: HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS AND WHAT DOES YOUR RESEARCH TELL US ABOUT THE MALAWIAN CONTEXT?

H: We tried to understand the scope of our national development agenda and the climate response framework; and whether what we are planning and doing in specific sectors is in line with a just transition. The [Malawi Vision 2063](#) has aspects of climate change under environmental sustainability as one of the enablers. Within the climate change world, we have plans and strategies such as the Nationally Determined Contributions which were developed and submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat in 2021. This was the starting point for understanding these issues for Malawi. While we could talk about Climate Change in all the sectors of the economy, we focused on the sectors where issues of Climate Change tend to be more dominant i.e agriculture- because of our dependency on rainfed agriculture; and forestry because of its closeness to agriculture and energy issues which tend to characterize the poverty levels in the country; and the implications of the growing levels of deforestation on national development.

Our energy source is largely hydro-powered as opposed to fossil fuels.

G: DID YOU CONSIDER ENERGY IN YOUR RESEARCH?

H: We touched on Energy but we did not develop that further, but it is something of equal interest considering that the global conversation is also centered around a just energy transition. Our dynamic is a little different because in the global north, Climate Change means changing energy systems. For us, the energy scope is quite narrow and it is still not considered as something that is heavily contributing to Climate Change given that our energy source is largely hydro-powered as opposed to fossil fuels.

G: WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT?

H: The report highlights 8 key messages and makes specific recommendations for the 2 sectors of focus, Agriculture and Forestry.

One notable discovery from the research is the fact that Malawi is making considerable strides towards addressing climate change impacts and building resilience through policies and development strategies. However, a one size fits all approach has been taken and these plans do not go as far as determining the impacts of these interventions on specific groups of people in the society, especially the vulnerable. Certain strategies may be good on paper but may actually be causing more harm in practice by creating or worsening social inequality, widening the inequality gaps or heightening people's vulnerability through job losses, restrictions on natural resources use or higher energy costs.



Agriculture




Forestry

A clear example is the drive for agriculture commercialization in the MW2063 which is a good policy direction considering that Malawi largely depends on the Agriculture sector. However, there is no discussion on the vulnerabilities that this strategy creates through its requirement for land if we are going to make land available for agriculture. We should be asking ourselves who will give away their land to make this possible? Who will implement these commercial investments? Who has the capacity to commercialize? Will this not create winners and losers? How do you ensure that the people who give away their land are not left behind or made worse off in that process? This is the same way we should talk about people that have been working in the carbon intensive industries which are now giving way to cleaner technologies for the general good while they lose their livelihoods.

G: SO WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE? WHAT COMES NEXT?

The report calls on stakeholders and communities to enter a conversation on how to address these issues by creating opportunities for a win-win situation as far as is practically possible. The issue of Just Transitions has a human face and talks about how these issues will affect real people. As a country we need to get into this discussion especially because it doesn't clearly come out in any of our policies. We tend to look at issues from a superficial end of point and it is time for us to begin to dissect this issue to ensure that no one is left behind and that we don't create more vulnerabilities as we intend to do good in addressing the climate crisis.

This is particularly important in the Malawian context because we have already decided to focus on wealth creation rather than poverty alleviation. For now, this is still very theoretical. We have to be deliberate in ensuring that indeed what we are saying is going to happen in practice. There is a possibility of creating a highly developed economy with very big inequalities. We wouldn't want to have that situation. The report does not have all the answers, but it calls for that discussion to start happening.

There are many platforms that create a collaboration point on convening this discussion. We have already interacted with the National Technical Committee on Climate Change and they received it very well and discussed how this can trickle down into policy processes as well as into local communities. We look forward to further engaging with these partners and ensuring that Malawi can work towards achieving a Just Transition. 



EMPOWERING THE SMALL-SCALE SECTOR

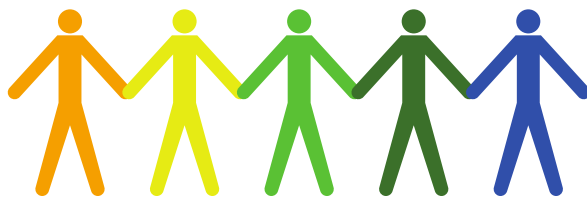
NATURAL RESOURCES

By Cliff Kawerani

For many organisations, 'team work makes a dream work,' is not just a beautifully crafted rhyme. It is rather a principle that propels an organisation forward, and those that embrace it, can testify to its effectiveness. However, in Malawi, this is a river whose waters many are still reluctant to test. Many Malawians operating at small-scale still operate as individuals in all sectors. This was the case in Group Village Headman (GVH) Chitimbe in Balaka, where gold mining takes place.

In GVH Chitimbe in Balaka, most of the local population engage in gold mining as a source of family income and for a long time, they have been doing so as individuals or families. However, a beam of light shone when Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) with funding from IM Swedish introduced the Sustainable Artisanal and small-scale Mining Applied for Livelihood Advancement (SAMALA) project in 2019.

SAMALA Project has been working to enhance the capacity of small-scale miners in responsible mining and increase access to reliable markets. CEPA mobilized and organized both small-scale gold miners into cooperatives. Some advantages of operating as a cooperative are that members benefit through having access to information and training, having access to better markets by having a better bargaining chip as well as standing a chance of getting support.



For example, members of Chisimbwiti and Tagwirizana cooperatives in Balaka have undergone training on formation and management of association as well as sensitization on mining policy, safety and health among others.



Cliff Kawerani

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Team work
makes a
dream work



They also have had several engagements with the market sector including the participation at a trade fair to show-case their products and engaging with potential buyers. Tagwirizana cooperative has now started buying gold from members to be sold in bulk to the Export Development Fund (EDF). These small scale miners are able to access such benefits only because they operate as cooperatives.



Against Child labour.

One of the chronic conditions in gold mining in Balaka has been the involvement of children into mining activities. Like in any other small-scale mining, the main driving factor for engaging in gold mining in Balaka is poverty.

The soil in this area is not suitable for most crops and hence most families resort to gold mining for income generation. Others resort to charcoal production which leads to deforestation and air pollution. Gold mining is done using rudimentary tools, and being labor intensive, most miners engage children to increase labor force. Children see this as an opportunity to make their own money, consequently most pupils shun school to engage in gold mining. However, team interventions by CEPA, Balaka CSO Network, Balaka labor office, social welfare, police and other government offices have greatly contributed to alleviating this problem. By December 2022, 19 children had gone back to school. Nevertheless, the battle is not all won. Roots of poverty run deep and children still need to be supported with education materials.

Cooperatives have the potential to stand up for several challenges in their communities and by collaborative efforts, they can uplift their livelihood. It goes without saying that even donors or project implementers nowadays seek to work with people who are well organised. Cooperatives are one way of organisation at community level.



Text:

They are a step towards formalising the Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) sector which will help to reduce illegal mining, environmental pollution and loss of revenue through smuggling of minerals, thereby contributing to pillar 2 and Enabler 7 of the Malawi 2063 vision. Cooperatives are one way of organisation at community level. They are a step towards formalising the Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) sector which will help to reduce illegal mining, environmental pollution and loss of revenue through smuggling of minerals, thereby contributing to the Malawi 2063 vision (pillar 2 and Enabler 7).



SALT, BUT IT IS GOLD

NATURAL RESOURCES

By Charles Kabambe

HISTORY

Salt mining in the Lower Shire dates back to over 50 years, forming part of tradition of the Sena Tribe that occupies the districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje. These districts extend along the Shire river in Malawi towards the Mozambique border. The two flat and climatically hot districts are believed to be endowed with mineral riches of various types.



The oral history of salt mining in Nchalo, Chikwawa traces its origin back to as far as 1970's when a migration of commercially charged miners from other parts of the district settled in a village, which was then called Chigweshe for salt. The Malawian government through, by that time, the Malawi Industrial Research and Technological Development Centre (MIRTDC), initiated a project aimed at developing locally inspired technologies to support mining and processing salt in Nchalo.

Solar equipment, biogas and processing infrastructure were erected then to support the miners work (Salt Technology Development, Kafatia, 1995). The efforts also included a market study for salt within and outside Chikwawa to understand the market potential for the locally produced salt within the industrial and household markets. Additionally, the Industrial Research project engaged the services of Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS) to ascertain if the salt was within the legal requirements appropriate for human consumption.



Charles
Kabambe

Salt mining
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Unfortunately, the project stopped without achieving the envisioned success, leaving behind the ruins of the infrastructure on site (Market Research Report for Salt Project, J.R Kamanga 1995).

In 2017, the Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) initiated a fact-finding mission in Nchalo. The mission was aimed at identifying the status of salt mining in Nchalo, Chikwawa as a potential area of work within its Natural Resources thematic area.



With funding from IM Swedish, CEPA mobilised interested salt miners on the potential to revive salt mining in Nchalo, GVH Chavilakale, Chikwawa District. In 2022, a Market Assessment Study was instituted by CEPA through the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Initiative (SMEDI). The aim of the study was to identify the marketability and demand for salt (iodized and unionized) in the country. The market assessments done in 1995 (MIRTDC) and 2022 (SMEDI) discovered that the salt in Nchalo GVH Chavilakale did not meet the MBS standards. It was revealed that the salt samples did not have adequate iodine hence falling short of the prescribed MBS levels for human consumption (MS 188). This qualified the salt only for industrial purposes like treating fish and animal hides and not for human consumption.



A tradition salt processing unit and system in GVH Chavilakale in Nchalo, Chikwawa District, 2022

Surprisingly, both market assessments revealed that Malawi offers a huge market for salt. Nevertheless, if there is potential for salt from Chikwawa, it should meet MBS standards (MS 188). To meet the demands of its growing population, Malawi imports all of its salt from other countries like India, China, Zimbabwe, Netherlands, Germany, and Botswana. According to (tridge.com/intelligence, overview of salt market in Malawi), Malawi imported 15.05 metric tons of salt in 2021. According to salt imports data from (volza.com/salt-imports-in-malawi), the country had 783 shipments of salt in 2022.

Meanwhile, the results of the market study and the data on Malawi's salt imports inspired one salt miner named Hastings James to declare the "Yes it is salt, but it is gold" statement, referring to the economic potential the salt market is offering to them. As a premise to revive the salt business for Nchalo Salt Mining Cooperative, CEPA facilitated interface meetings between Nchalo Salt Mining Cooperative and potential buyers in Malawi. The miners were able to engage Trogon Company in Liwonde demanding 15 tons of iodized salt every month, Rambo Salt in Blantyre, demanding 30 tons/month and Star Salt Industries, 40 tons of iodized salt/month. These figures confirm the huge potential iodized salt has, to satisfy the local market and to replace the huge quantities of salt Malawi is importing from abroad, consequently saving billions of Kwachas in imports.



Front view of the Salt Storage Unit, 2023

To support the steps towards increased production and meeting the MBS (MS188) standards, CEPA with funding from IM Swedish has constructed a flood proof processing and storage facility for Nchalo Salt Mining Cooperative at a cost of 14.5 Million Malawi Kwacha. The facility offers the miners a safe storage and working environment in contrast to the unreliable open makeshift structures that would be destroyed yearly due to floods.

In February 2022, Nchalo Salt Mining Cooperative lost over 3 tons of salt from floods due to Cyclone Ana, and in 2023, Cyclone Freddy hit the Cooperative, hence the structure offers them a reliable and safe storage environment.

Finally, CEPA has engaged a consultant who is working on developing a design for improved mineral extracting and processing equipment for salt to be used by Nchalo Salt Mining Cooperative. It is expected that when the equipment is installed it will increase salt production capacity, reduce the pressure on the surrounding forest resources as the design will incorporate energy saving technologies used in processing salt.



MALAWI AGRO-BIOSIVERSITY NETWORK- PROMOTING SEED SOVEREIGNTY AND FARMERS RIGHTS

BIODIVERSITY

By Ellen Kapeleta

The Malawi Agro-biodiversity Network (MAgNET) is a network of Civil Society Organizations, international and national non-governmental organizations dedicated to the conservation and promotion of Agrobiodiversity in Malawi. Agrobiodiversity refers to the diversity of plant and animal species that are used for food and agriculture. Furthermore, Agrobiodiversity is an important feature of overall biodiversity. As a member based network MAgNET always relies on the collaboration with like-minded institutions in all its activities to accomplish its goal namely, seed and food sovereignty.

Seed sovereignty is the right of farmers and communities to save, breed, and exchange seeds without the interference of corporations. It is a crucial aspect of food security, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable agriculture. However, achieving seed sovereignty requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including farmers, researchers, policymakers, and consumers.

Collaboration is essential in seed sovereignty for several reasons. First, seeds are not just commodities, they are living organisms with complex genetic traits that interact with the environment. Thus, developing and maintaining diverse, resilient, and adapted seed varieties requires sharing knowledge, skills, and resources among different actors. For instance, farmers are encouraged to contribute their traditional knowledge of seed selection, conservation, and adaptation, while researchers ought to provide scientific expertise on plant breeding, genetics, and biotechnology.

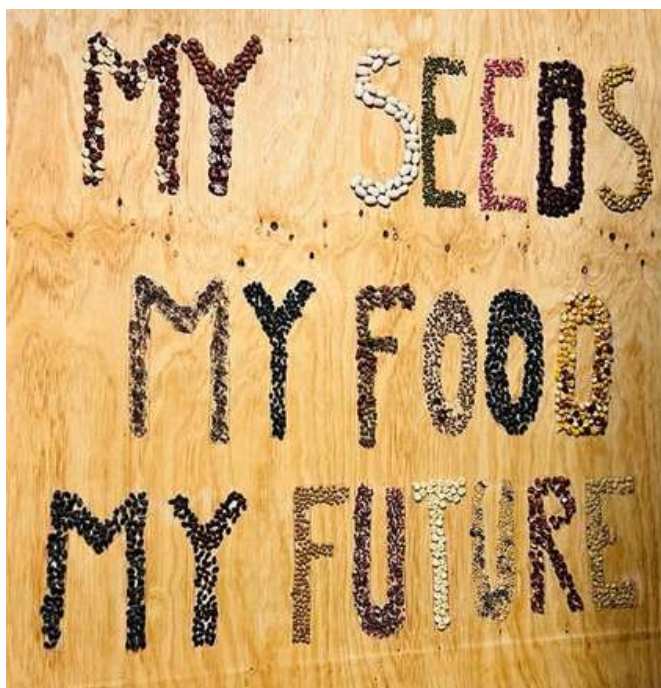
Second, to achieve seed sovereignty, collective action is required to overcome the legal and institutional barriers of seed saving and sharing. Last year, Malawi revised the Seed Bill, which is very restrictive and silent on the local varieties just like many countries in Africa. Restrictive laws and regulations that favor the interests of seed companies and commercial seeds limit the rights of farmers and communities to access and use their own seeds.



Ellen Kapeleta

“Seeds are not just commodities, they are living organisms with complex genetic traits that interact with the environment.”

Therefore, in 2022 MAgNET worked tirelessly in advocating for policy reforms, building alliances with other social movements, and engaging in public awareness campaigns. These are critical strategies to promote Farmer Managed Seed System and Farmers' Rights. The network wrote position papers on how the Seed Bill ought to be revised so as to incorporate the local varieties.



MAgNET believes and demonstrates that achieving Farmers' Rights is a community-based endeavor that depends on social networks, trust, and reciprocity. Seed saving and sharing are not just technical processes but cultural practices that reflect the values, beliefs, and identities of farmers and communities. By collaborating with other players who share this mindset, MAgNET managed to strengthen our social capital, enhance the Farmers' sense of belonging, and preserve their cultural heritage. This was done through engaging existing members and new members in dialogues for their input as well as sharing lessons on what they have done so far.

Through the Network, a Model Policy on Farmer Managed Seed System was developed and all institutions were urged to provide input and to seek support on how the tool can be utilised in engaging the Malawian government. We believe collaboration is a fundamental principle of seed sovereignty that enables farmers and communities themselves to reclaim their rights to seeds, knowledge, and culture. MAgNET encourages farmers to work together, build resilient, diverse, and equitable food systems that benefit both people and the planet.

Through its work with local communities, MAgNET is raising awareness to the public on the importance of reviving traditional agricultural practices and promoting the use of locally-adapted crop varieties that are well-suited to the local environment and climate through training. This helps to conserve agrobiodiversity by ensuring that these valuable species are not lost and that they continue to be used and valued by local communities.

Malawi Agrobiodiversity Network is playing a crucial role in promoting and conserving agrobiodiversity in Malawi. Through its work with local communities, government agencies, and other partners, the network will continue to organise the members and supporters locally and internationally to conserve the valuable biodiversity that is so essential to the country's food and agricultural systems.



JUST CLIMATE FINANCING IS CLIMATE JUSTICE

CLIMATE CHANGE

By Ellen Kapeleta

Climate financing refers to the resources mobilized and invested to support the fight against climate change and to finance low-carbon, climate-resilient development. In Malawi, advocating for climate financing is crucial to mitigate and to adapt to the impacts of an increasingly changing climate.

The impacts of climate change in Malawi are severe, including increased frequency and intensity of climate induced disasters, reduced agricultural productivity, and increasing risk of water scarcity. Climate financing can help address these challenges by providing resources to support climate-resilient infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy.

However, despite the urgency of the climate crisis, Malawi faces significant obstacles in securing climate financing. There is a limited understanding of the financing mechanisms available, and the country lacks the capacity to develop and to implement effective climate financing strategies. Without fast decisive action, things are set to get worse because we are clearly not on the right course for cutting global emissions. There is a need to cut global emissions by 45% by 2030 and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommends that temperature should not rise to more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The global south, including many countries in Africa, are the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and are in greatest need of financing to support their transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future. Furthermore, southern countries have barely contributed to climate change.

However, despite repeated commitments from industrialised countries to provide financing to support these efforts, the level of actual funding has fallen far short of what is needed. This raises the question of whether northern countries will ever honour their commitments to climate finance for the global south.



Ellen
Kapeleta

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Despite the urgency of the climate crisis, Malawi faces significant obstacles in securing climate financing.”

While the answer to this question remains uncertain, it is clear that African countries and other countries in the global south must take steps to advocate for the financing they need and to develop the capacity to effectively use these resources. This will require a number of actions, including:

1. Building strong partnerships with international organizations, development banks, and philanthropic organizations to leverage additional resources and expertise to support the development of effective climate finance strategies.
2. Engaging with the government and private sector to ensure that climate financing is integrated into national development plans and budgets. This includes working with relevant government agencies and private sector partners to prioritize climate finance and to develop policies and programs that effectively channel resources to the areas where they are needed most.
3. Raising public awareness about the importance of climate financing and the impacts of climate change. This includes engaging with civil society organizations, the media, and other stakeholders to educate the public about the importance of climate finance and to mobilize public support for policies and programs that prioritize climate financing.
4. Developing investment-ready projects that can attract private sector investment and support the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient future. This includes building the capacity to effectively plan, design, and implement projects and to secure the financing required to make these projects a reality.



Mobilising for climate financing is crucial to address the impacts of climate change in Malawi and to support the country's transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathway. Through effective advocacy and partnerships, it is possible to increase the availability and effectiveness of climate financing and to support the development of a more sustainable future for all. Industrialised economies must honor their commitments to climate justice. Our planet is facing a climate crisis and we need to act now to prevent catastrophic consequences.

These economies must take responsibility for their disproportionate contribution to climate change and provide adequate funding to low-income countries to address the increasing impacts of climate change. Failure to do so will have far-reaching consequences for the planet and future generations.



POLITICAL CORRECTNESS FRUSTATES THE ENVIRONMENT

OPINION

By Reginald Mumba, CURE

When Ndirande Forest in Blantyre suffered plundering in 1992/93, no forestry official could dare stop people from illegal harvesting of the trees. It was all about political correctness that justified illegal harvesting.

Thirty years down the line, the Ndirande Forest and the Hill lie bare, with protruding rocks. This has also affected the Mudi Water catchment which provides water to 20% of Blantyre residents. Other hills such as Mpingwe, Bangwe, Soche and Mthawira (including the Michiru hill) where there is a Roman Catholic Shrine, have joined the chorus of bareness, looking almost lifeless. It is now the crop gardens and human settlements that have replaced the previous forest land use.

Houses have mushroomed up the hills, and now they look like the head of the famous "Mtchona" Cartoon – with the top being bare while the surrounding bottom being covered with household forests and trees. People cannot be displaced because they are ring-fenced by political correctness for votes.

Can political correctness assess the risks associated with bareness of these hills?

In the 2022/2023 season, Blantyre received the heaviest rains ever for decades. Is political correctness going to support the loosely supported rocks in the deforested hills once we have subsequent rains in future which is likely to result in flash floods?

Let us learn from the experiences of the natural infrastructure protection that Mangrove forests provided during the tsunami disasters. Mangroves provide natural infrastructure and protection to nearby populated areas by preventing erosion and absorbing storm surge impacts during extreme weather events such as hurricanes. We learned that coastal areas where mangrove forests were degraded, the damage was much more devastating than where there was mangrove forest. This would be the same in our fragile hills where there are no trees.



Reginald
Mumba
CURE

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People cannot be displaced because they are ring-fenced by political correctness for votes.”

It is very likely that the recent heavy downpour of rains has set danger for people who have settled at the foot of such hills, oftentimes occupied by the economically vulnerable. When disasters such as flash floods and mudslides strike, the proponents of political correctness coil in their mansions, watching the economically vulnerable that have been affected, and they get busy sharing the disaster events on social media.



Political correctness has become a danger to environmental conservation. We need to strengthen the grassroot structures with resources, knowledge and understanding that degrading such fragile areas is like digging an own grave. Strengthening the grass-root structures would also ring-fence them against succumbing to the false messages of political correctness.

Let us all stand firm and vigilant against irresponsible political correctness which harms the environment and natural resources therein, and people too, at the end. 

TURNING PROBLEMS INTO SOLUTIONS

OPINION

By Kristof Nordin, NeverendingFood

Agroecology celebrates the interconnections between living organisms and the diversified agriculture which we use to produce highly nutritious foods. One agroecological approach is the agricultural design system known as Permaculture. Permaculture comes from the combination of the two words 'permanent' and 'culture'. The term was coined in the early 1970's by two Australians, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. At that time, they were studying the incredible productivity of natural systems and comparing it to the problems which have become increasingly inherent within modern systems, especially agriculture.

They recognized the resilience and abundance which is found within natural occurring ecosystems (e.g., forests, wetlands, prairies, etc.), and found out that very little compares to the productivity of forests, which are estimated to contain nearly 90% of the world's biodiversity. They also understood that if we can learn to apply the lessons of nature, we can replicate these resilient solutions to create highly sustainable systems of food production.

Robert Hart, one of the earliest pioneers of Forest Farming in the United Kingdom, wrote about the importance of these natural systems, especially forests:

"The 'tool' with the greatest potential for feeding men, women, children and animals, for regenerating the soil, for restoring water-systems, for controlling floods and droughts, for creating more benevolent microclimates and more comfortable and stimulating living conditions for humanity, is the tree. Of the world's surface, only eight to ten percent is at present used for food production... With the aid of trees, at least three quarters of the earth could supply human needs, not only of food but of clothing, fuel, shelter and other basic products.



Kristof
Nordin

“The 'tool' with the greatest potential for feeding men, women, children and animals, is THE TREE.

The foundation of the Permaculture design system is based upon three *ethics*: Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share. In addition, it relies on *principles* to help guide its implementation; one of the most important principles being: 'Turn problems into solutions.'

We could be doing a much better job with this principle. There is a saying which states: 'It is a terrible thing to be born with sight, but to lack vision.' It seems that many people these days can see problems, but are lacking the *vision* for solutions. Despite repeated failures within conventional agricultural systems, ever-increasing climatic changes, unacceptable levels of malnutrition, chronic 'hungry seasons', and the high costs of commercial inputs, we keep repeating the same mistakes. As Albert Einstein once said, "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

In August of 2022, it was reported that in Malawi: "Between June and September 2022, an estimated 2.6 million people representing 13% of the country's population are experiencing high acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3, Crisis)... A further 6.5 million people are in IPC Phase 2 (Stress) and require action for disaster risk reduction and livelihood protection.



Key factors driving this situation are: the various climatic shocks experienced in the country. Between October 2022 and March 2023, the situation is expected to deteriorate, with 3.8 million people in Malawi (20% of the population) expected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3).

Unfortunately, this is a press release which keeps repeating itself. So, how do we go about turning these problems into solutions? The first step is to recognize that there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship to many of our current challenges. What we do, as humans, directly impacts the outcome of our actions. The second step is to assess the resources which we have at our disposal.

For Malawi, this requires a recognition of the fact that we have a tropical climate and abundant rainfall. It also takes an understanding of the resources which have helped to sustain life throughout Malawi's history. In 1938, a botanist named Jessie Williamson joined a team of researchers involved in conducting a national survey of agriculture, nutrition, and natural resources.

The results of this survey were eventually published as the Nyasaland Survey Papers, and Williamson's work was published in 1955 as *Useful Plants of Malawi*. The third revision of this book was published in 2005 and lists over 550 useful plants which have been used for generations.

Unfortunately, much of Malawi's agricultural focus has now become solely focused on the production of maize, one crop which was introduced from the American continent. This over-reliance on a single crop to meet the year-round food security needs of a nation has locked many into a cycle of input-dependency and malnutrition. The fixation with obtaining a year's worth of food in a single harvest has also led to the creation of annual 'hungry seasons,' which ironically occur during the most agriculturally-productive time of the year—the rainy season.



Turning these problems into solutions is as simple as learning to re-value Malawi's traditional resources. If people were to switch agriculture's focus from maize to the hundreds upon hundreds of local resources, we could quite literally double the size of our research institutions, create value-added products, expand export markets, create employment opportunities, mitigate climate change, reduce poverty, and bring an end to things like food insecurity, 'hungry seasons', and malnutrition.

The **integration of local resources into sustainable food systems** can easily give people daily, year-round, and seasonal access to highly-nutritious foods. This is already being demonstrated by Permaculture institutions throughout the country such as *Never Ending Food* in Chitedze, *Permaculture Paradise Institute* in Mchinji, the *Area 25 Health Centre* in Lilongwe, and *Ecolodgy* in Blantyre, just to name a few.

Malawi has access to everything it needs to maintain healthy and sustainable lives. All we need to do is to listen to nature, learn its lessons, and then apply these lessons to begin **turning problems into solutions**.

Kristof Nordin is the co-founder of Never Ending Food, a community-based initiative which uses Permaculture design principles to teach people how to find solutions to current challenges. He holds a diploma in Permaculture Design and has been living and teaching in Malawi for over 25 years. For more information, visit: www.NeverEndingFood.org.

CEPA IN A SNAP...



Performance during the launch of POSSIBLE project



High-level dialogue on Just Transitions in Lilongwe



Demonstrations on alternative energy technologies in Lunzu, Blantyre



Advocacy during the 2023 World Environmental Day commemoration



Training Customary Land Committees in Kasungu



Women are leading the seed movement.



Mapenenga dance during sensitization on mining related issues in Karonga



National Management Information System (NAMIS) Training for Dowa District Council

... AND IN THE WORLD



➤➤➤ AFRICA CLIMATE SUMMIT, KENYA

In September, 2023 CEPA represented by the Executive Director, Herbert Mwalukomo participated in a civil society side event during the Africa Climate Summit, hosted by the government of Kenya and the African Union. In an interview, CEPA called on the need for Malawi to make the correct efforts to build resilience to climate shocks through increasing capacity to adaptation, instead of relying on external assistance exclusively.

➤➤➤ PWPYP AFRICA CONFERENCE, SENEGAL



CEPA's Executive Director, Herbert Mwalukomo, was part of the Side Session "Securing Safe Civic Space for a Just Energy Transition" at the Publish What You Pay Conference Africa 2023. He highlighted the importance of raising awareness on how shrinking civic space affects the work of CSO's for a just energy transition.

➤➤➤ GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM ON FARMERS RIGHTS, INDIA

CEPA was among the stakeholders at the First Global Symposium on Farmers Rights with the support from Development Fund of Norway, which was organised by the Secretariat of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and hosted by the Indian government.

QUOTES AND TIPS

➤➤➤ SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

"We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."-
Native American Proverb

"Be part of the solution, not part of the pollution."-Anonymous

"You are not helping the planet, you are not helping nature, you are the planet, you are nature, you are helping yourself."-Bangambiki Habyarimana

➤➤➤ DAILY HABITS

- Turn electrical items off completely, rather than leaving them on standby.
- Switch lights off when leaving the room.
- Only boil as much water as you need in your kettle, as it will boil quicker and use less energy.
- Refuse what you do not need e.g. thin plastics. Instead carry a shopping bag.
- Reuse what you can e.g. bottles, cans, cartons etc.
- Compost all biodegradable/food waste.
- Consume, what you really need.
- Eliminate useless E-mails.

WHERE WILL WE GO?

By Cliff Ceekay

When like father Christmas
Cyclone the dictator becomes so generous
And pays each one of us a visit
Washes our homes away
And turns our fields into badlands
Where will we go?

When one day the mean plastics
Take over all the rivers and oceans
Enslaving and killing all water bodies
The same water that keeps us alive
How will we survive?

When all the trees are lost
And oxygen becomes a ghost,
No longer free nor everywhere
The earth will be inhabitable
Where will we go?

When global warming becomes intense
That no aircon will cool it off
Not only melting ice, but our hearts too
When climate change becomes
irreversible
That not even technology will save us
What will we do?

When this loving and caring environment
That has looked after humanity ever since
Decides to punish us for our sins
What will we do, run?
But where will we go?

[Discover more](#)

Did you know?



By turning off the tap when brushing your teeth just once, you can save up to 12 lt. of water. Imagine how much water you could save in a year!



WHAT'S NEXT

Watch out for our next edition and **write us** what we should cover!



FOSSIL FUELS, NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Learn about the real international solution to Climate Change.



WHO FEEDS YOU

Small holder farmers feed the world, learn more facts about the most important job in the world.



COP28, REAL CLIMATE ACTION?

Global leaders have met at COP28. Which results on climate financing and loss & damage can Malawi count on?



INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW

What are the boundaries and challenges faced by environmental efforts at a global level?





The Climate crisis is the greatest challenge humanity has ever faced, collective action is the only way to go, let's be part of the solution!



"Towards an environmentally sound and sustainable Malawi."

2023

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