



ICH LIEBE FISCH | I LOVE FISH PROJECT

REPORT ON FINAL DISSEMINATION MEETINGS

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1. SUMMARY

This report covers the dissemination meetings of the project 'Ich Liebe Fisch' From July 7 – 10, 2020 in Nkhotakota and Mchinji districts where the project had been implemented. This is part of the dissemination of knowledge and experiences, generated through the lifespan of the project, to various stakeholders in Malawi's aquaculture sector. The report covers the background of the meeting and takeaways from the meeting.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE DISSEMINATION MEETINGS

Malawi is divided into three regions (Northern, Central, and Southern) which are further divided into 28 districts managed by district councils headed by district commissioner under the policy direction of the central government. Malawi adopted a decentralized system of government where the district councils have some degree of independence from the central government on governance including financial management and implementation of development activities. The implication of this as regards to donor-funded projects such as Ich Liebe Fisch is that activities of the projects have to be reviewed and approved by the district councils before their implementation. This typically takes the form of a presentation of the project by the project team to the District Executive Committee (DEC) headed by the Director of Planning and Development (DPD) and comprises of various stakeholders including local chiefs. The Ich Liebe Fish Project underwent such scrutiny and got approval in 2016.

Following the completion of the project, it is also a requirement that a closing meeting is held with the DEC to share the findings of the project and disseminate information, lessons, and best management practices (BMPs) generated by the project. In this regard, such meetings were held to only merely meet an administrative requirement but also in keeping with the project's emphasis on having its impact sustained beyond its closure through knowledge and experience sharing. This would ensure sustainability by ensuring the DEC is well appraised of the impacts made and provide a roadmap for other future interventions. In addition, meetings were also held with the beneficiary communities to review the successes of the project and suggest areas for further improvement.

3. THE MEETINGS

The meetings were conducted for 4 days beginning in the Nkhotakota district. In each district, meetings were first held with the DEC, and thereafter meetings were held with the participating communities. During the meetings, PowerPoint presentations which included videos and photographs were beamed through

a projector. The presentation took a simple approach: the project team would outline the project goals stated in the meeting with the DEC in 2016, explain the approaches implemented to achieve the goals, the indicators for success for each goal, and the outcomes for each goal as determined by the endline survey of the project. The project team was liaising with the horticulture, nutrition, and fisheries offices at the district council levels during its lifespan. Representatives of each office were then asked to give an appraisal of the project's implementation plan and its impact in the district.

Meetings with farmers took a more participatory approach. Presentations were made on the successes of the project and emphasis was made on the following takeaway messages for the communities:

- i. The project has closed but support will continue through the PV hatchery at Bunda whose purpose is to provide cheap high-quality fingerlings to the communities.
- ii. A plea for the continuation of integrated fish and vegetable farming promoted by the project as it was shown to improve food and income security in the participating households.



4. COVID-19 PREVENTION MEASURES

The dissemination meetings were held as Malawi was grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic and as such, preventative measures were taken during the meetings as follows:

- i. Meetings at with the DEC were held outdoors where social distancing was observed.
- ii. Meetings with the communities were held in hired church halls which are larger than classrooms used before in previous meetings. Meetings were also held in sessions to reduce the number of participants at any given time so that social distancing could be observed easily
- iii. All participants were asked to wash hands. Masks and an alcohol-based hand sanitizer was provided for all participants.

5. FEEDBACK FROM THE MEETINGS

The project earned praises for its impact from both the DEC and the communities. DEC members all offered witness to the increased fish production by farmers in the districts as the farmers would sell their fish at the council offices which was a new development in the district. Farmers, on their part, were given a chance to each state what they see as a positive change in their livelihood as an impact of the project. Common responses were increased fish and vegetable consumption, a newfound desire to increase the number of fish ponds and develop individual ponds separate from the group owned ponds, ease of access to money for school fees for their children, and the switch from grass thatched to iron sheet roofed houses financed by the earnings from fish sales under the project. They all agreed to continue IAA farming. The project team meanwhile promised to be on hand to offer subsidized high-quality fingerlings and offer free technical advice whenever required.

6. OTHER DISSEMINATION EFFORTS.

The project continues to place great emphasis of sharing its lessons and successes. Following the dissemination with the district councils and communities, the focus is now on publication of the scientific findings obtained by the project.

I LOVE FISH PROJECT BOOSTS FISH PRODUCTION IN MCHINJI AND NKHOTAKOTA

The I Love Fish project has been applauded by Mchinji and Nkhotakota districts for boosting fish production in the two districts. This was said during a four-day dissemination workshop in July 2020 which took place in Nkhotakota and Mchinji districts respectively.

The dissemination workshop was aimed at communicating the project results and outcomes to the farmers and the District Executive Committees (DEC) of the two districts. Both the farmers and the DEC showed satisfaction with the project results and thanked the I Love Fish project for implementing the project in their districts.

In his remarks, the I Love Fish Project Assistant, Mr Apatsa Chelewani expressed his satisfaction with the project's results.

"I am greatly satisfied with how the project has been implemented. Before we intervened in the two districts, the production of *Oreochromis Karongae* (Chambo) was at 42.9% in Mchinji and 25% in Nkhotakota but since we started the implementation of the project, the production has increased to 70.3% in Mchinji and 43.5% in Nkhotakota. This shows that the farmers were utilising the knowledge we gave them," Chelewani said.

Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) The I Love Fish project was being implemented by the Fraunhofer Research Institution for Marine Biotechnology (EMB), the Gesellschaft für marine Aquakultur (GMA) and the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources College's Aquaculture and Fisheries Science department. The project started in 2016 and ended in 2019. The project has been working with groups of fish farmers from the two districts in different areas of fish production including integrated agriculture aquaculture, pond management, fish production, and fingerling production.

Speaking in an interview, Mr Goodwell Mwawa who is one of the fish farmers in Mchinji acknowledged the I Love Fish's efforts to improve fish production in his community.

"Before the project came to our village, we used to dig small fish ponds and we did not know how to make good fish feed. After the I Love Fish project came, we were taught so many things in fish production and now we have started bearing the fruits from the knowledge. We sell our harvest to people from Mchinji and even from Lilongwe," he said.

Adding on to what Mr Goodwell had said, Maurine White a fish farmer from Nkhotakota thanked the I Love Fish project for helping them improve fish production.

"I must thank the I Love Fish project for the help they have given us to improve our fish farming. We have benefitted a lot and we now have enough food for our families and our children are healthy. Even after the project ending, we shall continue utilising the knowledge and skills they taught us because we have seen the benefits," she said.

Speaking on the project's sustainability, the Bunda Fish Farm manager assured the farmers of continued support from LUANAR through extension services and also sale of cheap and quality fingerlings.

“We are ready to help the farmers with any challenges they meet despite phasing the project out. We shall also offer the farmers good quality fingerlings and a cheaper price because we still want them to be using good quality fingerlings for their increased and improved fish production,” Mofolo said.

The Assistant District Fisheries Officer for Mchinji, Alex Makanjira also assured the project that his office shall make sure the farmers sustain the good farming practices they had learnt despite the project ending.

“These farmers were trained in a number of areas be it feed production, fingerling production, pond management as well as vegetable production. So even after the project has ended, they will still have the knowledge and utilise it. As an office we will make sure that we still monitor them so that whatever they learnt is still being practiced,” he said.

The project was also working closely with the Food and Science department (LUANAR), the Department of Human Nutrition and Health (LUANAR), the Quantum for Urban Agriculture and Environmental Sanitation (QUALIVES) and the Innovative Fish Farmers Network Trust (IFFNT).