

# our farm in malawi



## WHAT IS PROJECT MALAWI?

In cooperation with DanChurchAid the SANOVO TECHNOLOGY GROUP has decided to support the setting up of a egg laying farm in Malawi. The main product of the farm will be to produce and sell eggs to local institutions or on the local market.

The project includes a proper supply of feed, education of the local staff and vaccines for the chickens. Everything will be handled by a group of preselected local women

who in the process will receive training.

So far the SANOVO TECHNOLOGY GROUP and DanChurchAid have committed five years to the chicken project starting December 2007. The project will be followed closely with exchange of information and know-how, and we invite everybody to follow the story of the Malawi project at our website:

[www.sanovogroup.com](http://www.sanovogroup.com)



## Chicken project rescue Malawi women from poverty

*By Joseph Scott, Communications Officer, Dan Church Aid Malawi*

With the ever changing weather patterns, rural farmers in Malawi are struggling to cope with an unpredictable rainfall pattern that has seen a reduction in harvest for the largely agricultural based economy.

In a country where agriculture is mainly dominated by women, the burden of fending for the family is largely borne by this group. And in these hard times, chickens have become Malawi's women best friends.

Dan Church Aid (DCA) with financial support from SANOVO TECHNOLOGY GROUP is helping women groups in Lilongwe to rear chickens as one way of protecting them from the perennial shocks that come with changing climatic conditions.

### FACTS OF MALAWI

- ▶ *Malawi is one of Africa's poorest and most densely populated countries.*
- ▶ *More than 80 percent of its 15.2 million inhabitants live in the countryside and live off agriculture.*
- ▶ *Women in Malawi are the backbone of development in the country and often involves the entire responsibility to support the family.*
- ▶ *53 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. This means that every day they have to survive on less than \$ 1 a day.*
- ▶ *Life expectancy is 53 years.*
- ▶ *1 million. out of population of 15.2 million are infected with HIV and about 800,000 children have lost one or both parents.*

# THE CASE OF TIKONDANE WOMEN GROUP

*“As women, we face so many problems in the village because it is difficult to start a business due to lack of capital,” says Violet Kaphuka, secretary of Tikondane Women Group. “The coming in of the chicken project has helped us to generate income to supplement on our meager harvest.”*

Tikondane, which, in the vernacular means ‘Lets love one another’, is one of the four women groups in Lilongwe that has benefitted from DCA relationship with SANOVO TECHNOLOGY GROUP. Formed in 2006, the group started as a loose network of 36 similar minded women coming together to share ideas on good farming practices.

*“Our relationship with DCA dates back to our formative years in 2006. And in all these years we have received different support which range from crop production to goat farming. The chicken project is the latest addition to a long list of support from DCA,” says Kaphuka.*

In 2010, DCA through its local partner- Evangelical Lutheran Development Services (ELDS) supported Tikondane Women Group with 300 chickens on a revolving scheme. The chickens, which are egg layers, were meant to empower the women economically through egg sales and to increase their self reliance.

*“Before we received the chickens, ELDS trained us in feed production and general hygiene in chicken farming,” says Kaphuka. “The training helped us to cut rearing cost and also losses due to death of the chickens,” explains the group’s secretary.*

In the same year, DCA through ELDS also supported the group with soya and maize seed to kick start the production of chicken feed. Apart from the seeds and chickens, the group also received support in the form of cement to construct their fowl house.

*“We moulded bricks on our own and every member contributed some money that we used to hire builders to construct the chicken house,” says Kaphuka.*

## COOPERATION AND UNITY

On care of the chickens, the women divided themselves into groups and allocated tasks on a weekly basis. The division of labour helped reduce the number of deaths to the chickens and only 20 died. Within a period of six weeks, the chickens started laying eggs. On average, the group was getting 250 eggs per day and selling 25 kwacha each. And on a monthly basis, the women would get close to 20,000 kwacha (aprox 58 EUR<sup>1</sup>) from the sales.

<sup>1</sup>100 Malawi kwacha = aprox 0,29 EUR (pr. 11 June 2012)



The Tikondane women group in front of the chicken house.

Picture: Dan Church Aid



*"We banked all the money realised from the egg sales in our account. Early this year, we sold the chickens because they were past the egg laying stage and realised 110,000 kwacha (aprox 319 EUR), which we also put in the group's bank account,"* says Kaphuka adding that they only shared the eggs amongst members on one occasion for consumption.

*"We didn't want this to become a habit,"* explains Kaphuka. *"The profits are so marginal so every egg counts. Sharing the eggs now and then means*

*our business won't thrive. However, as a token of appreciation, we agreed that each member get 500 kwacha from the profits as motivation. In the future when our bank balance grows, we will get a much better amount than 500 kwacha (aprox 1,47 EUR)."*

So far, the group has withdrawn 70,000 kwacha (aprox 203 EUR) from its account to buy soya and maize for feed. According to Kaphuka, the group's soya and maize crop did not do well due to unreliable rains hence the need to buy from the local market.

## CHALLENGES: RISING PRODUCTION COSTS

As the group prepares for restocking, there are fears that the amount in their account will not be sufficient as prices of chicks and feeds have gone up.

*"We were buying one chick at 500 kwacha (aprox 1,47 EUR) but it's now at 650 kwacha (aprox 1,89 EUR). Although we can manage to buy some, the main challenge will be feeds and other chemicals we use to keep the chickens disease free,"* says Kaphuka.

In light of the challenges, the group is

contemplating on buying near mature chicks to cut on rearing costs. This means instead of buying day old chicks, the group will have to procure 14 weeks old chickens, which will lessen the costs on feed. When fed appropriately, the chickens start laying eggs in week 19.

Kaphuka concludes: *"Our only plea is that we do a refresher training on chicken feed production. The last time we were trained is in 2006, so most of the knowledge has been lost or forgotten through the course of time."*



Members of the Titukulane women group with the purchased corn, they have to make chicken feed.  
Picture: Dan Church Aid

## THE CASE OF TITUKULANE WOMEN GROUP

Like so many women in rural Malawi, the women of Mtoso village in Lilongwe were reeling under the pangs of poverty until DCA, through its local partner, ELDS came in the picture with a chicken project in 2008.

Faced with a myriad of problems and little or no alternatives for survival, the chicken project brought considerable hope to a community beset by poverty. And two years down the line, the women of Mtoso have so many stories to tell on their change of fortunes.

*"In 2008, ELDS supported us with 170 chickens and from there on, we never looked back,"* says Joyce Bruwadi, vice secretary of Titukuke Woman Group. *"ELDS trained us in how to take care of the chickens and now with little help from extension officers, we can safely say that we are moving in the right direction."*

ELDS also helped the women with starter up

chicken feed to see them through the first phase of the project. According to Bruwadi, the chicken feed support agreement stopped when the chickens started laying eggs: "By the time ELDS stopped supporting us with feeds, we were quite comfortable because we had started selling the eggs and could afford the chicken feed," she adds.

During the same period, the group also underwent training in chicken feed production. These skills were later to help the group in increasing their as saved much from buying expensive feeds. *"The quality of our feeds is as good as those in the shops,"* boasts Bruwadi.

On average, the group was getting about 150 eggs per day and selling each at 25 kwacha (aprox 0,73 EUR). When the chickens became off layers, that is they could not lay eggs as expected, the group sold them for meat.

*“From the 170 chickens, we made 218,000 kwacha (aprox 632 EUR), which we put in the group’s bank account. We also shared 1,000 kwacha amongst the members from the egg sales. And this was done only once in late 2010. We are still growing and need to accumulate better capital before we start sharing,”* explains the vice secretary of the Titukulane Women Group.

In the same year, DCA also supported the women with 500 chickens. And when they sold the chickens after they became off layers, the women got 126,000 kwacha (aprox 365 EUR), which they also deposited in the group’s account. The women also shared 5,000 kwacha (aprox 14,50 EUR) each from the profit of egg sales.

According to the group, the 5,000 kwacha they shared came at an opportune time as it helped some members to buy farm inputs such as fertiliser and seeds.

*“We had a good harvest that year as we had better inputs,”* says Bruwadi. *“We also managed to buy some uniforms for the group to foster unity, with some of the money from egg sales. After balancing our books, we also procured 220 chickens for our project but 23 died.”*

The new batch of chickens did not perform as expected. The quality of eggs was not up to the group’s expectations, something they blame on the poor standards of feeds. This, according to the group, also led to poor sales of the off layers.

*“We managed to get 275,800 kwacha (aprox 800 EUR) only from the sales of the off layers,”* says Bruwadi *despite the figure being one of the best they have banked so far. “We feel we could have done better with the experience we have gained along the years.”*



Chickens recently sold by the Titukulane women group  
Picture: Dan Church Aid

## CHALLENGES:

### RISING PRODUCTION COSTS AND LACK OF MARKETS

As the group prepares to restock, market forces have acted against their favour. The recent devaluation of the kwacha, which is the local currency, has eaten into their savings.

*“We could have restocked soon after selling the off layers but the prices of chicks and feeds have risen sharply in the past month or so,”* says Bruwadi. *“The amount we have in the bank can*

*only buy half of what we used to with the same money due to inflation.”*

Bruwadi concludes: *“In the hope that we will restock, we also need to look for better markets for both our eggs and chickens. We have had problems in the past, which has seen us losing eggs.”*