Enlarging Community Resilience Program (ECRP)

About ECRP
Malawi is highly prone to the adverse impacts of climate change, often experiencing droughts, heavy rainfall and floods. CARE Malawi's ECRP is helping to reduce extreme poverty and hunger in the 11 districts most prone to natural disasters and climatic hazards. The program uses a holistic and comprehensive array of interventions to directly improve food security, reduce vulnerability and strengthen the resilience of approximately 305,000 Malawians. ECRP has five major components: local empowerment, improved and resilient livelihoods; improved coordination and information flow; enhanced early-warning response; and informed policy.

OBJECTIVES
- To reduce extreme poverty and hunger in Malawi
- To halve disaster losses in line with the Hyogo Framework of Action by 2015 and increase communities' resilience to climate change

STRATEGY
- **VSLA:** VSLA is the most successful component of the program. CARE is 1.5 times more effective at setting up VSLAs than any other partner in the program and acts as the technical lead; providing technical leadership in VSLA to other partners in the program. VSLA is a critical component of the “no-handouts” approach, where instead of buying inputs for communities, the program encourages them to invest the VSLA money into inputs and reinvestment in small scale businesses.
- **Advocacy:** ECRP has been able to influence 11 national policies with 15 publications to date. The percentage of decision makers who are taking advice and evidence from ECRP rose from 24% in 2011 to 85% in 2014.
- **A comprehensive package:** The capacity building package includes VSLA, gender training, conservation agriculture, fuel efficient stoves, small scale livestock, small scale irrigation, seed multiplication, post-harvest management, and agroforestry. This combination approach produces a return of $29 per $1, as opposed to the $3.17 return on the crop-based intervention alone.

Program Name: Enhancing Community Resilience Program (ECRP)
Program Country: Malawi
Timeframe: Sept 2011 – Mar 2017
Budget: £4.4 million
Donors: DFID, Irish Aid and the Norwegian Embassy
Member Partner: Christian Aid
Implementing Partners: CADECOM, Heifer International, ADRA, MALEZA, Emmanuel International, and District Councils in each district
Beneficiaries:
Direct beneficiaries: 26,000
Indirect beneficiaries: 1,300,000
From worries to smiles
When Enifa got divorced she lost her financial security – she and her five children had always relied on her husband’s income. She felt hopeless. A friend told her about the local VSLA – part of ECRP – and, after watching the annual money sharing, she decided to sign up. She began practicing conservation agriculture to grow maize by her house, tripling her usual harvest with the improved techniques. With her profits she has bought iron sheets for her house to help it withstand strong winds and has also purchased two goats. Now she feels empowered and is able to provide for her family.

ECRP is helping communities in Malawi improve their resilience to the effects of climate change. In this way, events such as widespread flooding like that in early 2015, now have smaller, less severe impacts on the lives of smallholder farmers.

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IMPACTS

- **Food security has more than doubled:** The percentage of families that could go for 9 months on their own food supplies went from 15% to 35%. The food insecure population in the area dropped by 166,000 (more than 23%).
- **Emergency reserves have increased by 50%:** The amount of time a family could live off of their food reserves went from 2 months to 3 months on average.
- **Families’ income and capital assets have doubled:** Families’ income has gone up by 125%, and the value of their assets has gone up by 151%.
- **Communities’ ability to respond to climate change has improved:** 40,000 more people are now using at least 3 strategies to adapt to climate change—an increase of 37%. The most popular strategies are diversifying crops, planting more trees, and using conservation agriculture techniques. 2015 data suggests that ECRP families were much better able to respond to the flooding that hit their region hard this year.
- **Families have been protected against recession:** In 2013-2014, Malawi had a variety of economic shocks that raised the poverty rates in relevant districts by nearly 12%. ECRP beneficiaries saw no rise in their poverty rates, which the evaluator attributes to the program’s activities cushioning families from shocks.

**Through ECRP, CARE Malawi is providing a 2,900% return on investment**