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Mid-term Evaluation of the Integrating Smallholder Farmers into Oilseed Value Chain Project

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ACRONYMS

ACE	Agriculture Commodity Exchange
CARD	Churches Action in Relief and Development
EPA	Extension Planning Area
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
GAP	Good Agriculture Practices
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAIP	National Agriculture Investment Plan
NAP	National Agriculture Policy
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NES	National Export Strategy
RAS	Rent-a-service
SPSS	Statistical Package of Social Scientists
TORs	Terms of References

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings, lessons learned and recommendations from a mid-term evaluation of a project that integrates smallholder farmers into oilseed value chains with the aim of improving their profits through value chain development.

The three-year pilot project under Economic Empowerment Thematic area of Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is being implemented in Kalulu Extension Planning Area (EPA) in Mchinji district. The project prioritized oilseed because of its potential to make significant economic contribution to marginalized rural youth and women farmers. The pilot is being implemented by Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) with Mikonga Cooperative as the primary beneficiary. The aim of the evaluation was to assess relevance of project and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives. It also made recommendations to provide the project team an opportunity to make modifications to ensure the achievement of the project objectives within the three years of implementation.

Key Findings from the Evaluation

To quantify the results of the evaluation the findings of this evaluation, which answered directly to the scope of work as detailed in the TORs for the evaluation, were graded into quintiles as follows: those falling in the first quintile as **Very Poor** (the results are well below target and likely to miss ultimate target by close of the pilot); those in the second quintile as **Unsatisfactory** (the results are not on target and may ultimately be achieved but not on planned time); those in the third quintile as **Satisfactory** (the results are on target and achieved ultimate target as planned); those in the fourth quintile as **Above Average** (the results are marginally surpassing target and ultimate target probably earlier than planned) and these in the last quintile as **Excellent** (the results are overwhelming surpassing target and ultimate target as planned). The following were the key findings from the evaluation:

a) **Project Relevance to Malawi Government Policies and Strategies -** NCA directly contributes to the objectives of the National Agricultural Investment Plan through up-scaling of Oilseeds value chain specifically soybean and Groundnuts. The project directly complements NAIP to achieve its 'Program C: Production and Productivity for Growth' and 'Program D: Markets, Value Addition, Trade and Finance for Transformation' outcomes through initiatives like increased adoption of Good Agriculture practices (GAP), market and value addition trainings and procurement of processing machines for the cooperative, members and non-members benefit.

b) **Relevance to NCA country strategy** - The project is in line with expected outcome of the Economic Empowerment thematic area in NCA 2016-2020 country strategy; Pathway 2 and Pathway 3.

c) **Relevance to CARD Strategic Plan** - The pilot is in line with two strategies of (i) promoting entrepreneurial, value addition and access to market for farmers and

(ii) promote development and use of inclusive climate smart technologies.

d) **Relevance to the beneficiaries and Community** - the project has worked to resolve most of the key challenges which were affecting the cooperative as well as its members that included access to market and acute skills gaps in processing and marketing that influences farming profitability.

e) **Value chain development has increased rights holders' profits** - holistic calculations show that the interventions under the project increased yield by an average 84.2% which in turn, coupled with an increase in prices, increased earnings for soya farmers by an average 142.2%.

f) **Rights holders have knowledge, tools and technology to add value to their products** - a total therefore of at least 169 members have been trained in various skills which once employed result in value addition to the output of cooperative.

g) **Rent a Service Model** - The model provides shelling, oil extraction and milling services to members and non-members. 100% of the respondents both members and non-members had used all the technologies available under the RAS model at varying proportions, however oil expeller services are in high demand in comparison with others. Due to the value addition at cooperative level the marketability and ultimate price of the primary agricultural products improved thereby directly increasing members' profitability. Further, the existence of the value addition equipment is a significant component in the financial sustainability of the cooperative. The key challenge of the RAS model is the frequent power black-out experience throughout the country.

h) **Winter cropping** - A total of 21 members (21 males and 13 females) at Mikonga are involved in winter cropping. These members planted a total of 38 acres using irrigation pumps supported by the project. The average yield (in MWK) per acre from winter cropping is approximately MWK346,710.52 and the average income earned by the farmers participating in winter cropping was MWK387,500.00.

From the results achieved so far, the study draws recommendations based on the premise that NCA and CARD will use for; learning from experience. The assessment informs both current and future project modifications, the following are the key recommendations:

a) Project programming - The project should be given number/percentage target which forms part of quantitative targets for entire NCA Economic Empowerment thematic area. The project should revise the framework to include the outputs for winter cropping and chicken layers.

b) Project Design - Future changes in the project design should not affect outcomes and outputs indicators. For the project under review, we recommend that NCA and CARD agree on the outcome(s) and outputs, update the framework and then implement up to the end of the pilot phase. Study further recommends that the modification of outcomes and outputs to incorporate the cooperative performance targets and put the cooperative as the key beneficiary while rights holders be secondary beneficiaries. The number and benefits that non-members

obtain as secondary beneficiaries should also be incorporated in the outputs.

c) Production technologies - The project team should explore other technologies that could enhance oilseeds productivity where possible those that could support production throughout the year.

d) Mobilization of new members - Membership increase in the Cooperative should be considered as a way of increasing capital generated from shares and increasing volumes of commodities from members.

e) Identification of linkages within the value chain - We recommend intensive handholding and mentoring in marketing activities in the initial phases. It will be helpful if CARD was to identify skilled negotiators who must work directly with the teams from the Cooperative in the seeking of market linkages within the value chain.

f) Market information - The project should strengthen use of radio to direct community and neighboring villages to the services and products provided by the cooperative that include RAS, cooking oil, groundnuts powder, etc.

g) Sustainability - NCA/CARD to consider having Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with line Ministries at EPA and district. This MOU should be for specified period where the Government should provide stipulated technical capacity, support and monitoring to the cooperative after the project while the cooperative is building up training and education fund in line with cooperative principles.

h) Processing Equipment - Technology analysis be performed before acquisition of new technologies like processing machines to ensure durability, easy to use, and availability of spare parts and back-up services. To avoid idling time for machines and loss of revenues for the cooperative during power blackout, the project should explore procuring technologies that can be powered by renewable energy sources or alternative energy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Context

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) under Economic Empowerment Thematic Area is implementing a three-year pilot project in Kalulu Extension Planning Area (EPA) in Mchinji district that integrates smallholder farmers into oilseed value chains with the aim of improving their profits through value chain development. The project prioritized oilseed because of its potential to make significant economic contribution to marginalized rural youth and women farmers. The project design responded to recommendation for skills demand and supply survey among rural youth and women in Malawi that pointed the processing and marketing as two stages that demonstrated skills gaps while investment in production was expected as a backward linkage. The baseline survey for the project further validated the need for value addition and marketing as key in line with the project design. The interventions implemented under the project included GAP targeting production stage of the value chain, value addition targeting processing stage and market linkages targeting market access stage. Various methodologies were envisaged to be used to operationalize these interventions that included trainings, policy advocacy, market linkages and market information. The pilot is being implemented by Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) with Mikonga Cooperative as the primary beneficiary.

"The pilot project is the response to the study on the Skills Demand and Supply Survey Among the Rural Youth and Women in Malawi (NCA, March 2017)".

"Midterm evaluation aimed to assess the continued relevance of interventions and progress made towards achieving planned objectives".

1.2 Purpose of the Mid-Term Review

The mid-term review has been instituted by NCA with the aim of assessing relevance of project and the progress made towards achieving its planned objectives. The review will make the recommendations to provide the project team an opportunity to make modifications to ensure the achievement of the project objectives within the three years of implementation.

1.3 Objective

The outcomes of this assignment will inform on the performance of the pilot so far. Additionally, the outcomes will provide lessons learnt and develop recommendations to enhance implementation and outcomes in the subsequent half of the pilot project.

The survey aimed to achieve the following objectives;

- Assess the relevance of the project
- To collect midterm data for the project Outcome and output indicators and analysis progress towards achieving planned objectives
- Assess project and provide recommendations on the following;
    - Validity of design of the project
    - Efficiency of the project
    - Efficiency of resource use in the project
    - Effectiveness of management arrangements of the project

2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Identification of Key Stakeholders

The first step in rolling out the study was identification of key stakeholders involved directly in implementation of the project. CARD was identified as the implementing partner for the pilot while the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade were key stakeholders. During data collection, the cooperative leaders indicated that Chatera Commodities and Mzaliwa Traders are the principal off-takers of raw soya and groundnuts for the cooperative and Dambudzo Traders is one of the key buyers of sunflower seedcake. These traders were then added to the list of key stakeholders to be interviewed during key informant interviews.

2.2 Data collection

Both secondary and primary sources of data were used in the study.

2.2.1 Secondary data:

The evaluation reviewed a number of key documents accumulated by the project during the period of its implementation. These included but not limited to; project design document, results framework, reports (baseline, periodic and market analysis). From the review, the evaluators acquired a better understanding of the project objectives, how it has been implemented so far, what had been accomplished so far, what challenges were encountered during implementation and what lessons could be learnt.

2.2.2 Primary data:

The study collected first hand source of information from Mikonga Cooperative members, non-members, buyers; Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade officials in Mchinji. These done through Focus Group Discussions, Field survey (as described below), individual interviews and Key informant interviews. The research team further had discussions with NCA project team and CARD project team to have deeper understanding of project. The discussion with NCA team was to validate relevance and strategic fit of the project to NCA, validity of design and sustainability of the project. Research team further explored the progress the project made, effectiveness and management arrangements and efficiency use of resources.

2.3 Field Survey

2.3.1 Sampling

From the Cooperative membership, the population for the survey was 86 members of Mikonga cooperative, out of which the survey sought to achieve a 95% Confidence level and 5% margin error. To achieve that a sample of 70 members was required. The sample was then stratified proportionately as follows:

a) The overall context of the project singled out the youth as one of the key interest groups. For this reason the survey set out to solicit the inputs of the youth into

the evaluation and to achieve this, the sample was stratified between, the youth and the rest. The composition of the youth in the cooperative is 19%, therefore 13 respondents were to be drawn from the youth;

b) The remaining 57 respondents were stratified between male and female as per the cooperative's gender composition of adult members. 59% of the members of the Cooperative are female and therefore 41 respondents would be female and the rest 16 respondents being 22% of the members would be male; and

c) Preliminary information provided showed that members of Mikonga cooperative come from 19 villages; then the sample was further distributed proportionately to the villages. The Table 1 below shows the sample allocation per village. Details of the sample allocation are presented in appendix 1(a).

d) Further, the evaluation sought to assess the effects of the services the cooperative was providing to the community at large i.e. members and non-members, and therefore the inputs of non-members was sought. Due to limitations on the availability of population data for the services' catchment area on which to base the sample on, by observing the composition of the customers calling at the cooperative for the services the evaluators estimated that a sample of non-members must be the equivalent of 25% of the member's sample, i.e. 18 non-members. The respondents were identified randomly by simply isolating the non-member customers who had called to the services at the cooperative on the days when the evaluators were conducting field visits. A total of 16 non-members, being 89% attainment rate, were interviewed for this purpose as is presented in appendix 1(b).

2.3.2 Actual Sampling Results Achieved

During data collection, the desired 70 respondents were achieved however, the survey was unable to achieve the stratification as per design. This was due to unforeseen circumstances such as funerals that affected some members from other villages to be available for the interviews. Of the 13 youth respondents the survey only attained 8 respondents being 62% attainment rate; 35 respondents were female being 85% attainment rate; and 27 respondents were male being 169% attainment rate. Appendix 1(c) details the sample distribution per village of the actual results achieved.

2.3.3 Challenges encountered

The Survey Team encountered the following challenges during data collection especially in the field:

a) The approval process for use of the questionnaire for the mini survey was rather protracted and affected the original field visits schedule and resulted in reschedules which did not go well with some interviewees especially local leaders, with some not making themselves available for the rescheduled interviews.

b) In some instances, the arranging of meetings with groups and individuals were affected by unforeseen circumstances mainly funerals in the communities. This resulted in the restructuring of the sample sometimes when the team was already in the field. This affected the stratification of the respondents.

2.4 Data analysis

The qualitative and quantitative data collected during the study was captured in the Microsoft Excel and SPSS analysis package. These presentations were scrutinized in order to draw conclusions based on the behavior of parameters in the data. These conclusions then provide the key insights for the relevance and progress in achieving project targets. The aim of data analysis was to discover useful information from buyers, suppliers and other important players in the market. The findings provided a picture of the project implementation status which formed the basis for the recommendations suggested.

2.5 Limitations

The findings presented below are subject to the following limitations:

a) The stratification as envisaged during design was not achieved due to problems cited above, there is a possibility that the results may be slightly skewed towards some classes of respondents. However, the evaluation team is of the opinion that such a skewedness has not created any negative bias in the outcomes of the results.

2.6 Evaluation Criteria

From the data obtained and analyzed, main findings from the survey have been denoted. These findings answer directly to the issues isolated as to constitute the scope of work as contained in the project design and result framework. To quantify the results, the findings have been graded into quintiles as follows:

- Those falling in the first quintile as Very Poor (the results are well below target and likely to miss ultimate target by close of the pilot);
- Those in the second quintile as **Unsatisfactory** (the results are not on target and may ultimately be achieved but not on planned time);
- Those in the third quintile as **Satisfactory** (the results are on target and achieved ultimate target as planned);
- Those in the fourth quintile as G**ood** (the results are marginally surpassing target and ultimate target probably earlier than planned) and
- Those in the last quintile as **Excellent** (the results are overwhelming surpassing target and ultimate target as planned).

3. FINDINGS - RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT

3.1 Introduction

A project can be said to be relevant to the beneficiaries or community if it addresses the beneficiaries' or community needs. On the other hand, a project can be said to be relevant to the national goals if it is aligned to national priorities, in this instance mainly National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP-2017) which is the main implementation framework for the new National Agricultural Policy (NAP), National Export Strategy (NES) and the National Youth Policy.

Besides, relevance will be ascertained by evaluating strategies used to achieving project objectives/outcomes that they are in tandem with beneficiary and community expectation.

3.2 Relevance to Malawi Government Policies and Strategies

The central policies for Malawi government in respect to agriculture are enshrined in the National Agricultural Investment Plan. Out of the plan three areas stand out as areas where NCA directly contributes to the objectives of the plan, as follows:

a) NAIP aims at up-scaling selected crop value chains which include soybean and groundnuts; this is mutual priority with NCA. This survey has revealed that the implementation of the project has resulted in an increased interest in these crops by farmers from the project catchment area as witnessed by the following aspects:

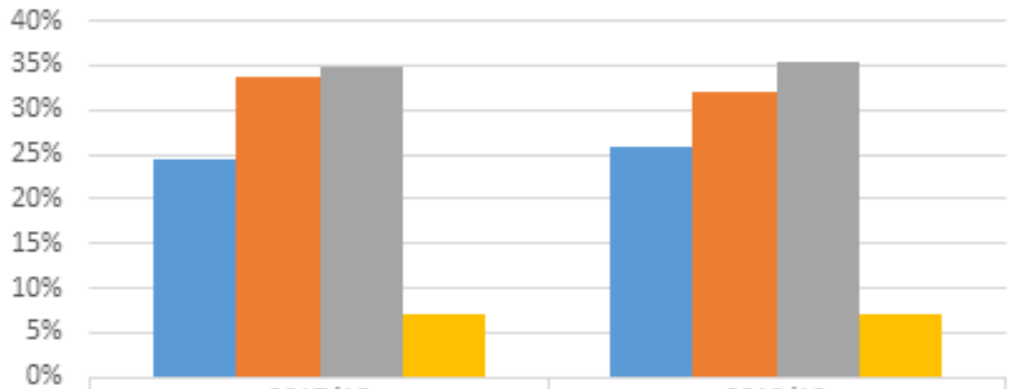
- The total average area of land under the oilseeds cultivation has largely been maintained. Currently land allocated for oil seed production ranges from 1 acre to 12 acres, with an average holding size of 4.17 acres. The majority of the respondents (61.4%), own between 2 and 4 acres of land. Table 1 below shows the spread of allocation of land to oilseeds by farmers of the cooperative. This demonstrates the interest the farmers have in the oilseeds value chain crops.

Table 1 : Total land allocated to oilseeds in acres

Land size (Acres)	2017/2018 Season			2018/19 Season		
	Sunflower Farmers (%)	G/nuts Farmers (%)	Soya Farmers (%)	Sunflower Farmers (%)	G/nuts Farmers (%)	Soya Farmers (%)
.0	54.3	38.6	18.6	37.1	24.3	1.4
<1	7.1	2.8	11.4	8.5	5.7	12.9
1.0	34.3	34.3	35.7	44.3	48.6	45.7
1.5	0.0	7.1	8.6	4.3	7.1	8.6
2.0	4.3	12.9	17.1	4.3	8.6	20.0
2.5	0.0	1.4	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
3.0	0.0	1.4	2.9	1.4	1.4	7.1
4.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	4.3	2.9
>4	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
	100.0	**100.0**	100.0	100.0	**100.0**	100.0
Average land size	**1.02**	**1.41**	**1.45**	**1.08**	**1.33**	**1.47**

- The average land size holding for farmers in Mikonga is 4.17. Out of total average land, in 2018/19 season, 1.08acres, 1.33acres and 1.47acres were allocated to sunflower, groundnuts and soya cultivation respectively. As can be seen from Figure 1 below in both 2017/18 and 2018/19 growing season, an average 93% of the land, that is 3.88 acres was used in the cultivation of oilseeds, this signifies the importance which the farmers attach to oilseeds.

Figure 1: Land Allocated for Cultivation of Oilseed by Farmers



	2017/18	2018/19
sunflower	24%	26%
G/nuts	34%	32%
Soya	35%	35%
Other Crops	7%	7%

- Increase in yield per acre. The project through its interventions that include training in Good Agricultural Practices and provision of improved technologies such as certified seeds has increased the yield per acre of the farmers from the cooperative by an average 84.2% as can be seen in Table 3 below.

b) The project directly complements NAIP to achieve its 'Program C: Production and Productivity for Growth' and 'Program D: Markets, Value Addition, Trade and Finance for Transformation' outcomes. The project has implemented initiatives which auger well with the NAIP programs as follows:

Program C – Production and Productivity

- **Increased productivity and production of priority value chains.** This has been demonstrated above with good results;
- **Timely access to a broader range of quality inputs enhanced.** Under the project farmers have been exposed to improved farming technologies. The technology that has been used by the majority of the respondents (80.0%) is Mbeya fertilizer making, followed by 5.7% who used double row planting technology and 1.4% of them used Treadle pump and chemical weeding. Also included is the provision of seeds e.g. a majority of the respondents (98.6%) grew the Tikolore variety of Soya provided by the Cooperative, 44.3% of the

respondents got the CG7 groundnuts seed from the cooperative.

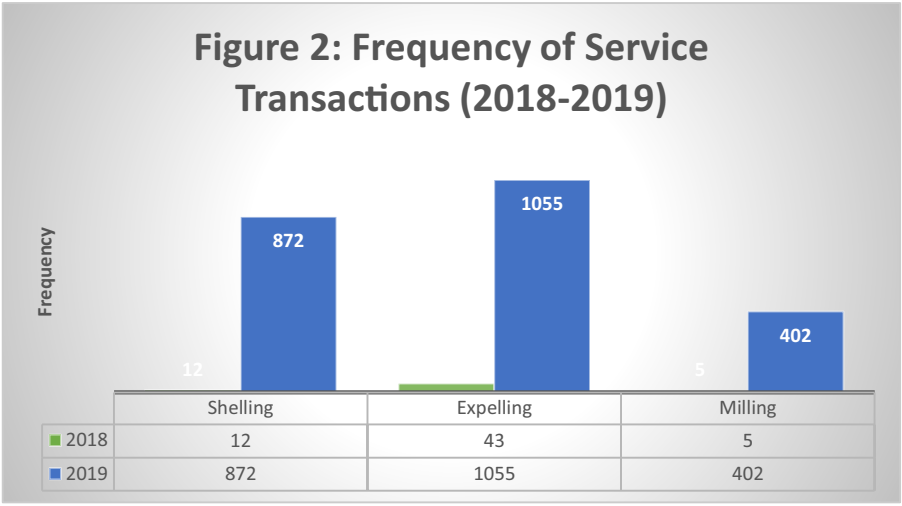
- **Increased adoption of GAP and technologies generated.** Under the project 2.5% beneficiaries indicated that they had received GAP training which is in line with this outcome.

Program D – Value addition, processing, marketing, trade and finance

- **Greater efficiency and transparency of agricultural markets and better market access.** The project is actively working to inform the beneficiaries as to how they can identify, negotiate and reach out to markets. This is being done through various market related trainings, 67.1% of the respondents received training on marketing related issues, 70.0% received training on contract negotiation, and about 35.7% were trained in market events. 31.4% received training on buyer-seller agreement and 34.3% got trained on product presentation including packaging and layout so that products are attractive to the buyers.

Further, through the project beneficiaries are now able to access market information. The results on sources of market information showed that a majority of the respondents (48.6%) got market information mainly through the radio. Only 17.1% of them received market related information from the cooperative and 25.7% receive market information via radio and agricultural commodity exchange (ACE). A relatively small proportion (5.7%) of the respondents receive information from the agricultural extension workers, and only 1.4% received information exclusively from ACE.

- **Increased agricultural value addition and processing.** The majority of the respondents have received value addition training (71 members trained – 39 in Total quality management and 32-Machine operations) and are actually engaged in value addition activities. All members of Mikonga cooperatives got involved in different value addition activity provided as a service by the cooperative. Since 2018, the cooperative has experienced sharp increased demand of value addition activities from both members and non-members as seen on the Figure below;



- **Post-harvest losses reduced.** The beneficiaries received training on post-harvest management which they feel has positively impacted storage and maintenance of

quality of crop produce. The majority of the respondents (51.4%) indicated that training on post-harvest management has helped them to improve or preserve the quality of the crop produce, 47.1% reported that the training helped them to reduce post-harvest losses, while 1.4% of them have benefitted through enhanced capacity to increase the shelf-life of the commodities. Only 1.4% indicated that the training did not benefit them

- Overall therefore the project is in tandem with key Government agricultural objectives as has been demonstrated by alignment to Programme C – Increased Production and Productivity and Programme D - Increased Value addition, processing, marketing and finance of NAIP. The project is relevant to a key Government policy and there is no belief that there is any part of the project which is working in conflict with government policies and therefore it can be scored as **Excellent.**

3.3 Relevance to NCA Country Strategy

The project was designed to contribute to the expected outcomes of the Economic Empowerment thematic area in NCA 2016-2020 country strategy. Pathway 2 specifically on rights holders have established profitable businesses and bottleneck for women and youth entrepreneurs are removed and Pathway 3 of rights holders gain access to local or domestic market. The strategy also indicated districts of focus in which Mchinji is included. The project's geographical location, main targets and the main outcome of profitability is in line with NCA Country Strategy and therefore can be scored as **Excellent.**

3.4 Relevance to CARD Strategic Plan

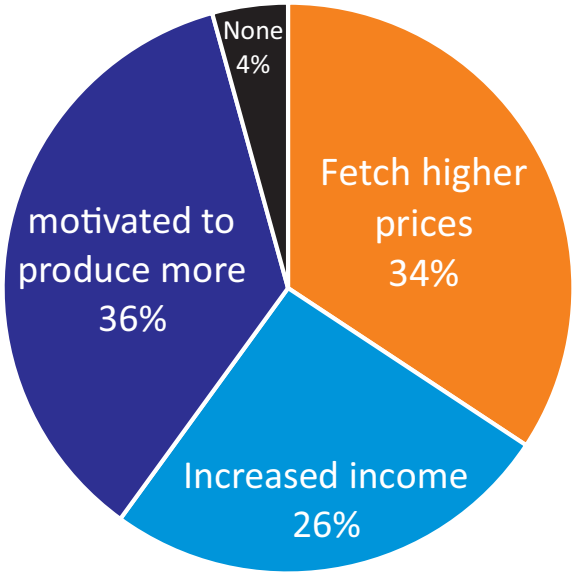
CARD designed the project to respond to the thematic area of Agriculture Resilience. Specifically; the project is in line with two strategies of (a) promoting entrepreneurial, value addition and access to market for farmers and (b) promote development and use of inclusive climate smart technologies. In section 3.2 above the successes on the project so far in respect to these strategies has been demonstrated and shows positive results. There is no belief that there is any part of the project which is working in conflict with CARD's strategic objectives and therefore it can be scored as **Excellent.**

3.5 Relevance to the beneficiaries and Community

During the baseline study which guided the design of this project, it revealed that the cooperative faces the following challenges: include lack of proper storage/warehousing facilities, lack of purpose built production units for value addition, lack of appropriate technologies for value addition, lack of access to stable structured markets, lack of price negotiating skills and lack of business, finance and marketing skills. The effect of these challenges of the cooperative transcended onto its member farmer in the community and thereby retarding economic empowerment of the community.

To obtain a sense in which the project has contributed in eradication of these challenges and thereby meeting the aspirations of the beneficiaries and community, the cooperative leaders were asked during FGDs to provide some insights to that effect. The leaders indicated that farmers are now able to use technologies in production, value adding for own products and capacity building in different areas aimed at increasing their productivity and market access. The project is on track since the members have registered the increase in average soya yield from 273 kilograms per acre in 2017/18 to 503 kilograms per acre in 2018/19 as can be seen on Table 5 below. Value addition has helped the farmers through the cooperative to increase income from sales of their value added products. From the Figure below, 60% members confirmed that value addition provided by the cooperative increased their income as well as fetching higher prices, 36% indicated that they were motivated to produce more since the cooperative has become reliable market and 4% could not comment since they were relatively new.

Figure 3: How Value Addition Helped Farmers



Before the project, vendor used to take advantage of their ignorance on marketing of their produce by buying their produce at very lower prices. Therefore, the processing interventions has provided reliable market. The capacity building interventions have equipped them with knowledge on how they can sell their produce at a profitable market and now they are realizing more income from their farming enterprise, solving the market challenge.

Overall therefore the project has worked to resolve most of the key challenges which were there prior to its implementation and were affecting the cooperative as well as its members. There is no belief that there is any part of the project which is working in conflict with objectives of the Cooperative and therefore it can be scored as **Excellent.**

3.6 Conclusion

From the effects of the implementation of the project so far the relevance of the project to the Government, NCA country strategy, CARD strategy, the Cooperative as well as the community at large is unquestionable.

4. FINDINGS - THE PROJECT OUTCOME AND OUTPUT INDICATORS

4.1 Introduction

The project had the factors detailed in Table 2 below as its outcomes and output indicators

Table 2: Project Outcomes and Outputs

Outcomes	Outputs
Outcome 1 - Value chain development has increased rights holders' ***profits***	a) Output 1.1 – rights holder **organized in groups** b) Output 1.2 – Increase in ***production*** has increased rights holders' participation in value chains c) Output 1.3 – Rights holders have knowledge, tools and technology to ***add value*** to their products
Outcome 2 - Rights holders have gained access to ***domestic markets***	a) Output 2.1 – ***Linkages*** along value chains have been developed b) Output 2.2 – Rights holders have access to relevant ***market information***

This study set out to measure the performance of the project on these factors against set targets as well as against baselines positions.

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Value chain development has increased rights holders' profits

To measure this data obtained from the surveys, FGDs and interviews, coupled with secondary data was used to calculate profitability positions for soya (since soya is the dominate crops) for the members of the cooperative for the years 2017/18 and 2018/19. Table 3 below details the calculations:

Table 3: Comparison of Yield Growth and Profitability

Factor	Growing Season				Growth in Actuals (%)
	2017/18		2018/19		
	Benchmark (MK)	Actual (MK)	Benchmark (MK)	Actual (MK)	
Cost of soya seed 30 kgs	27,000[1]	5,820	N/a[2]	7,650	31.4
Cost of inoculants (3satchtes of 100g)	3,900	3,900	4,500	4,500	15.4
Average Labour Costs (land clearing, weeding, ridging and banking)	59,400[3]	15,373	59,400	21,538	40.1
Average Costs per Acre	**90,300**	**25,093**	**N/a**	**33,688**	**34.3**
Average Yield per Acre (kgs)	1,000*	273	1,000	503	84.2
Average prices	220	194	240	255	31.4
Average Revenues	**220,000**	**52,962**	**240,000**	**128,265**	**142.2**
Average Profit	**129,700**	**27,869**	**N/a**	**94,577**	**239 .4**

[1]Seed from CARD; [2]Used recycled seeds; [3]Ministry of Agriculture estimates; *Tikolore Yield per Acre by African Seed Access Index

From the cooperative perspective, Mikonga has been able to generate revenues from provision of services – Rent a service and also selling processed products. The cooperative also incurred different expenses in processing of oilseed from month to month. Table 4 below shows that in a random peak month, the cooperative is able to generate average profit of K257,042 with the cooperative generating half of the revenue during the lean period.

Table 4: Profitability of the Cooperative

Revenue Streams	Total (MWK)	Expenditures	Total (MWK)
Cooking oil	206,492	Electricity	42,900
Groundnut flour	64,600	Machines maintenance	19,100
Expelling	39,040	Factory expenses	57,070
Milling	10,020	Rent (warehouse)	10,000
Sheller	25,970	Watchmen Salaries	60,000
Seed cake	100,000		
Total Revenue	**446,112**	**Total expenditure**	**189,070**
		Profit	**257,042**

From October 2019 monthly report

Generally, the business is profitable, as was established that the business activities for the month of October 2019, had total sales of MK446,112 (MK271,092 from direct business and MK175,020 from the indirect business) against expenses totaling MK189,070. The existence of the equipment therefore is a significant component in the financial sustainability of the cooperative.

It can be seen from the calculations that holistically the interventions under the project increased revenue streams for the cooperative and increased yield by an average 84.2% which in turn, coupled with an increase in prices, increased earnings for soya farmers by an average 142.2%, which is an Excellent Score.

4.2.2 Rights holders organized in groups

The principal grouping for the rights holders in this respect is the cooperative itself. Results from the survey and FGDs indicate that there have been steady increase in the number of rights holders who are members of the cooperative over the past two years as can be seen from Table 5 below.

Table 5: Growth in Membership of the Cooperative

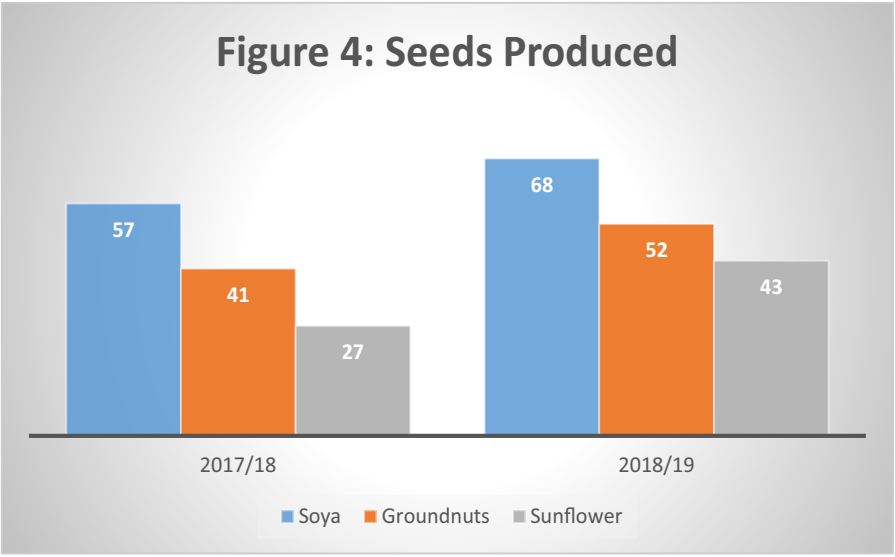
Benchmarks		Performance		Mid-term Growth	
Baseline (2017) (No. of Members)	Mid- term Target (No. of Members)	Year 1 (2018) (No. of Members)	Year 2 (2019)	Against Baseline (%)	Against Target (%)
72*	75	83	86	19.4	14.7

*Refer to baseline report for 2018.

From the Table above it can be seen that the cooperative has achieved growth when compared to both its baseline position as well as the target set. This manifests that there is growing interest in the cooperative within the community, hence evidencing that the right holders are properly organized in groups, which is an **Excellent score.**

4.2.3 Increase in production has increased rights holders' participation in value chains

The survey sought to understand the participation of the rights holders in the three oil seeds value chains (soya, groundnuts and sunflower). Figure 4 below shows the growth in output for the crops over the two growing season.



From the Figure above, Soya seed production was higher with 57 and 68 respondents having grown it in 2017/18 and 2018/19 seasons respectively. Groundnuts is the second largest grown seed with, 41 and 52 respondents in 2017/18 and 2018/19 respectively while sunflower was grown by 27 and 43 respondents in 2017/18 and 2018/19 respectively. Generally, the production of all the seeds targeted registered positive growth pattern of 19%, 27% and 59% for soya, groundnuts and sunflower respectively.

Further there is participation by the rights holders upstream in the three value chains through their interaction with the cooperative as the cooperative add value to the oil seed by crushing and producing crude oil.

4.2.4 Rights holders have knowledge, tools and technology to add value to their products

The project targeted to train 150 members so that they acquire knowledge, tools and technology to add value to their products. At the mid-term point therefore the expected attainment rate is at least 75 members trained. The following has been the actual attainment under this initiative:

a) Some Rights holders received GAP training, however results mentioned in reports but actual number trained not reported in 2018. Members associated the impact of the GAP trainings to the yield increase attained.
b) 26 members trained in feed making and layers management. This is associated revenue stream that has increased the demand for soya for members, the impact of this training is that members used it to make feed for their business.

c) 71 members trained as follows: 39-Total quality management, and 32-Machine operations. These trainings helped the members to meet quality requirements in processing while machine operations helped members to be able to service and maintain their processing machines.

d) 72 female and male right holders were trained in less costly basic agricultural technologies. The impact of these training is use of less costly technologies such Mbeya fertilizer that increase productivity.

In total therefore at least 169 members (not necessary several) have been trained in various skills which once employed result in value addition to the output of cooperative. This is a 225.3% achievement above target and therefore an Excellent score.

4.2.5 Rent a Service (RAS) Model

The rent a service model which targets both the Cooperative members as primary beneficiaries and the surrounding communities as secondary beneficiaries, allows access to the processing machineries and services offered by the Cooperative at a fee. Under the arrangement, the surrounding community has had access to groundnut shelling, roasting, milling and oil pressing technologies at a fee. To date 100% of the respondents both members and non-members had used all the technologies at varying proportions except the roaster. As at December 2019, the cooperative provided shelling services to 884, oil expelling services to 1,098 and milling services to 407 clients from 2018. The oil expelling services are in high demand demonstrated by high number of transactions conducted.

The value addition enabled households to effectively consume their primary agricultural products in a form which would have been expensive hence increasing household expenses. The value addition has improved marketability and ultimate price of the primary agricultural products thereby directly increasing profitability. Table 6 below details the markets to which the respondents sold their value added products. From the Table it can be seen that the farmers through their cooperative; with their primary agricultural products value added can sell within their local market which usually is not the case. Further the results show that due to the availability of processing equipment farmers are selling less to local traders.

Table 6: Markets for value added products

Market for Value Added Product	Type of Value Added Product			Average (%)
	Shelled groundnut (%)	Milled products (%)	Oil (%)	
Cooperative	40.0	5.7	4.3	16.7
Surrounding Community	35.7	41.4	54.3	43.8
Local traders	2.9	0.0	0.0	2.9
Home Use	21.4	52.9	41.4	38.6

From the Cooperative's perspective the equipment is used to generate income both directly and indirectly. Directly, the cooperative undertakes value addition activities on agricultural commodities which it procures from its members while indirectly it receives fees from the RAS model activities as described above. Generally, the business is profitable, as was established that the business activities for the month of October 2019, had total sales of MK446,112 (MK271,092 from direct business and MK175,020 from the indirect business) against expenses totaling MK189,070. The existence of the equipment therefore is a significant component in the financial sustainability of the cooperative. Power blackout was identified as key challenge for RAS model since the machines are powered by grid electricity which faces frequent power-cut.

Overall therefore the RAS model has been successful and therefore can be rated with an **Excellent** score.

4.2.6 Winter Cropping

The project facilitated the adoption and promotion of winter cropping for the cooperative members to be investing in agricultural related activities throughout the year. The cooperative members targeted grew high value crops like onions, tomatoes, cabbage and carrot on a 3 ha (7.5 acres) of land. These crops were chosen based on market demand from the surrounding communities and other distant markets by the Cooperative members. A total of 21 members (21 males and 13 females) at Mikonga are involved in winter cropping. These members planted a total of 38 acres using pumps supported by the project. Crops members have been growing include onions, tomatoes, green maize, water melon and different types of vegetables. These crops are in line with the recommendations of the skills demand and supply survey that pointed vegetables as another value chain that should be focused on due to returns on investments that is shorter, and therefore could allow the project to have picked lessons within the pilot phase. In this regard a total of 34 members, 21 males and 13 females engaged in winter cropping cultivating a total of 47 acres of land of which 38 acres were planted with various types of horticulture crops. The farmers were watering their crops using treadle pumps which they were hiring from the cooperative. Table 7 below shows the type of crop grown, the total output attained by the farmers and the average prices obtained on the market.

The case: Mr. Fillias Siveriano is Mikonga cooperative member. He ventured in onion production in 2019 winter cropping on 1-acre piece of land. He has managed to raise MWK 200, 000.00 from sales of onions to vendors from Santhe and Lilongwe. He has managed to buy 2 bags of fertilizer and pay school fees for his children. He also transplanted onions which were expected to mature in February 2020.

Table 7: Output for winter cropping

Type of Crop	Output (Kgs)	Average Price (MK/kg)	Total amount Realized (MK)
Onions	7,200	600	4,320,000
Tomatoes	9,500	500	4,750,000
Green Maize	5,100*	50[1]	255,000
Water Melon**	3,600**	1,000[2]	3,600,000
Leaf Vegetables	500	500	250,000
Total			**13,175,000**

*Number of cobs; **Number of melon heads; [1] Price per cob; [2]Price per melon head

The average yield (in MWK) per acre from winter cropping is approximately MWK346,710.52 and the average income earned by the farmers participating in winter cropping was MK387,500. Winter cropping can be viewed as the initiative that has brought to their households' revenue during off season of the oil seeds business at comparable levels. The cultivated land target set of 7.5 acres was surpassed by over 400% showing the enthusiasm which members of the cooperative have in winter cropping. The winter cropping initiative has been a success and therefore can be rated with an Excellent score.

4.2.7 Rights holders have gained access to domestic markets - Linkages along value chains have been developed

The project had set to establish at least 2 linkages with off-takers along oilseeds value chain, at mid-term at least 1 linkage. Since the cooperative already does produce crude oil, the off-takers were largely for the crude oil. The Cooperative visited Mount Meru to explore market for crude oil, but despite the availability of the market, the Cooperative opted local market as there was no price incentives for market outside in Mchinji.

Further to this, 108 members were trained in buyer-seller market interface, marketing and value addition. With skills acquired the cooperative is in a position to continuously seek for linkages within the value chain.

The Cooperative failed to establish any formal linkage within the value chain, however there is still hope to achieve the same as the right holders have been ably prepared to undertake this task. Therefore, this was **Unsatisfactory** score.

4.2.8 Rights holders have gained access to domestic markets - Rights holders have access to relevant market information

The study further explored with the members the source of their market information, the type of information and the frequency it is provided. Tables 8 and 9 below details the types and sources of market information made available to the rights holders.

Table 8: Sources of Market Information to the Cooperative

Source of Market Information	Frequency	Percent
Extension worker	5	7.1
Radio	34	48.6
ACE	1	1.4
Cooperative	12	17.1
Other	18	25.7
Total	**70**	**100.0**

Generally, the findings point to the fact that, as with most other rural Malawians, radio remains a preferred medium for communication for most mainly due to its convenience as it does not require the recipients of the massage to move a distance to obtain the massage. The Cooperative is the second preferred avenue through which members received message, and despite that radio does not offer similar advantages as to those which may be obtained by using the cooperative or extension workers in that the farmer does not have a means to ask questions if addition clarity is required and also by using the cooperative as a media for messages group dynamics are enhance.

Table 9: Type of Market Information received by the Cooperative

Type of information received	Frequency	Percent
Price updates	9	12.9
Buyers available	1	1.4
Products demanded	2	2.9
Price, buyers and product demanded update	23	32.9
Price and buyers update	35	50.0
Total	**70**	**100.0**

4.3 Conclusion

We can therefore conclude that Project's performance during the first phase of the project was Good since the results on most targets were attained. The exceptions was with the 'Linkages along value chains have been developed' which had unsatisfactory score.

5. FINDINGS – ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT

5.1 Assessment of Validity of Project design

5.1.1 Process for project design

Integrating smallholder farmers into oilseeds value chain project design was informed by the recommendations of Skills Demand and Supply Survey among rural youth and women in the agriculture sector in Malawi. The study recommended investment in oilseeds where majority of women and youth participate. The oilseeds production is seasonal and could allow pilot project to draw enough lessons within three years of implementation. This is a **Good result** since the project was informed by the analysis that validated the need for project interventions.

5.1.2 Justification of the project:

The project was designed to break the market bottlenecks that affect women and youth in oilseeds sector. These market bottlenecks affected the extent to which the targeted beneficiaries could realize profits out of their farming businesses. The project followed value chain approach by implementing inter-linked interventions from production to market. This approach was adopted to ensure that expected profit increase is achieved. This is **Excellent result** since both NCA and CARD found the project to be responding to beneficiaries needs and contributing to their organizational goals. NCA and CARD also supported the choice of focusing on one cooperative at a pilot as a way of ensuring efficiency and value for resources available for greater impact.

5.2 Project Changes and Modifications

The changes in the project are based on project design of 2017 and the project framework of the same time. The assessment found the following changes in the project design, outcomes and outputs. Project had set out to follow the models as detailed in Table 10 below.

Table 10 a : Project change models

Proposed model at design stage	Observation from the ground
• Warehouse receipt model promoted by Commodity Exchange Companies • Anchor farm • Inclusive Business Model	Only inclusive business model was traced where Cooperative engaged the larger and high value-adding oil processors to supply crude oil. For this to happen, the project has provided resources which make their product penetrate this market easily.
The project decided to drop business models that were not viable at the point of implementation. This is a **Good approach** since the cooperative business is able to generate income for the members and also provide benefits in form of services to the community at large.	

There were also changes in the Theory of Change which affected the way of reporting in the project as presented below;

Table 10b : Project change models

Proposed Interventions at design stage	Interventions Used
• Post-harvest loss management • Value addition • Backward and forward linkages	• Production • Processing and, • Marketing
The project incorporated production intervention as a response to assessment that was conducted before project implementation which revealed that farmers still use primitive production practices and technologies. Post-harvest management was incorporated in production intervention. This is a **Good result** since the project follows value chain development approach that could be viable if required support begins from production to ensure quantity and quality of oilseeds.	

Theory of change results chain was further used to identify the changed in the outcomes and the outputs. The Result Framework as shown in table 10 below and the project reports were used to identify outcomes and outputs.

Table 11: Result Framework

Outcomes at Design	Outcome 1 - Value chain development has increased rights holders' ***profits*** Outcome 2 - Rights holders have gained access to ***domestic markets***	**Outcomes reported**	**2018** Outcome 1 – Value chain development has increased rights holders' ***profits*** by 2020. **2019** Outcome 1 – Value chain development has increased rights holders ***profit*** by 2020
Outputs at Design	Output 1.1 – rights holder **organized in groups** Output 1.2 – Increase in ***production*** has increased rights holders' participation in value chains Output 1.3 – Rights holders have knowledge, tools and technology to ***add value*** to their products Output 2.1 – ***Linkages*** along value chains have been developed Output 2.2 – Rights holders have access to relevant ***market information***	**Outputs Reported per Year**	**2018** Output 1.1 – Increased right holders' ***profits*** through establishment of processing plant. Output 1.2 – ***Marketing skills*** for the enhancement of transformation of subsistence farming to commercial status developed. Output 1.3 – ***Climate smart*** value chains at Cooperative level developed and facilitated. **2019** Output 1.1 – Increased right holders' ***profits*** through establishment of processing plant and livestock production. Output 1.2 – Increased right holders access to sustainable ***domestic markets*** Output 1.3 – To develop ***partnerships*** with other service providers and other stakeholders
It is observed that the theory of change was somehow not consistently maintained as number of outcomes decreased from two to one while outputs were expounded over the years. It was further observed that other outputs had slightly different output indicators, other output i ndicators were misplaced under not very related outputs. The project that recognizes the needs of the beneficiaries and make relevant changes to the project is a **Satisfactory result** however, any change should assist greater achievements of the targets. Major changes made needs to inform targets changes in the project result framework.			

5.3 Assessment of effectiveness of project

The assessment of effectiveness of the project mainly concentrates on the key areas presented in Table 12 below;

Table 12: Key effective assessment areas

Achievements of targets	Out of 7 output indicators, the project achieved 3 (43%) but there is a good progress on activities implemented in all outcomes expected in the project. The score is based on the five key outputs as per resul ts framework. This is **Unsatisfactory result** since the score is below the average.
Quality of the outputs	Most of the immediate outputs that the rights holders received from the training has been commended by right holders and key stakeholders that were delivered with quality. The testimony was given by the right holder indicating that the GAP training was good, useful and was ready to share similar knowledge with other beneficiaries. However, t he rights holders, CARD and Ministry pointed on the poor quality of the machine procured which breaks down frequently. This is **Unsatisfactory results** since the un -functional machine also affected achievements of other outputs.
Quantity of the outputs	Project was designed to mainly target youth and women; the project has registered total member of 45 males (including 13 male youths) to 41 females (including 18 female youths) . The total youth and women are majority at 54 in Mikonga. This is **satisfactory results** since th e number of women to men is above average.
Responding to right holders' needs	CARD confirmed that the project emanates from the rights holders and the role of CARD is always to ensure that the ir needs are incorporated in the annual project proposals submitted to NCA every year like introduction of chicken layers . This is a **Satisfactory result ,** however it is important that emerging initiatives remain aligned to the project outcome.
Stakeholders involvement	Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Agriculture have been involved in the project to support in different activities that include mainly trainings to the members. The result here is **Good** since their involvement will facilitate their carry-over of the project when the project end.

5.4 Assessment of efficiency of resources use

The study further assessed the project in terms of the achievement of economic resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) efficiently are converted into results. The assessment concentrated on the following key areas as detailed in Table 13 below;

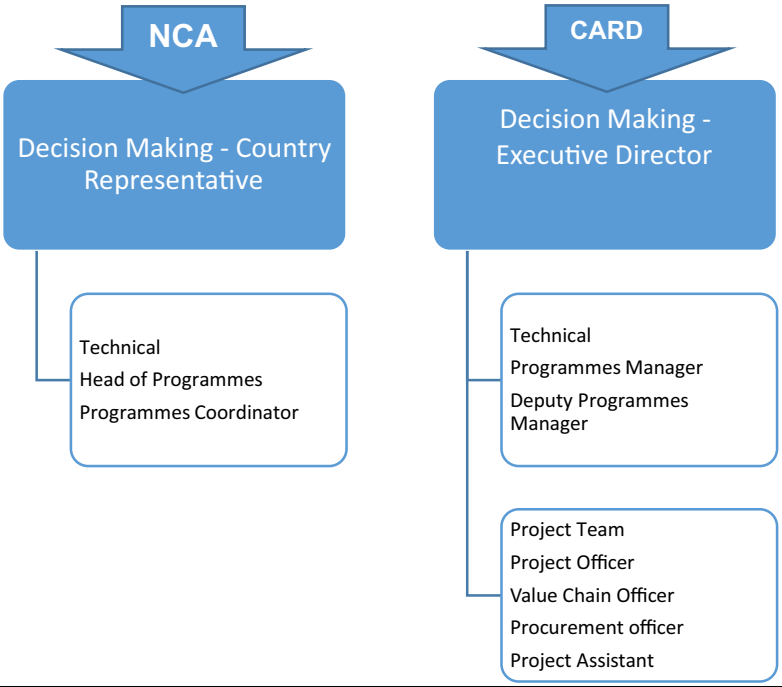
Table 13 : Key efficiency assessment areas

Resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.)	The project made a strategic choice in terms of geographic concentration and also working with one parent in the project. This has reduced fragmentation of resource input and anticipate greater outputs. CARD also have adequate human resources on the ground supporting in the implementation of the project and as well as the cooperative, providing real-time support. The processing machines for value addition which was key in the project design were installed later in the year 2018, therefore making processing to happen in 2019. This timing had a bearing on other targeted results. The result of the resource efficiency is **Good** since most of the indicators assessed are positive and also more financial resources are spent on activities that will benefit the rights holders.
Results achieved Versus the costs incurred	Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Agriculture officers had a positive remark on the project that it provides value for money to the members and entire community. The officers looked at the major project activities such as building Integrated processing unit that commands larger funds which the progress tallies with the financial budget allocated and disbursed. This is an **Excellent result** as it has been able to bring out the result equivalent to the financial investment made.
Timely delivery of activities	Most of the key activities that include training, inputs support and other technical support were delivered on schedule. Timely delivery was different on activity for operationalizing processing machines that delayed significantly making the final result of **Good**.

5.5 Assessment of effectiveness of management arrangements

On this component, the study assessed the extent to which management capacities and arrangements put in place supports the achievement of results. The assessment has been divided in three key areas as detailed in Table 14 below;

Table 14 : Key management effectiveness assessment areas

Project management arrangement (roles andresponsibilities)	The key decision makers giving direction on strategic direction in the project and the Heads of Institutions are the ones playing this role, Heads of progreammes make technical decision and monitoring of project team while project team key role is to implement the project as per design provided. Both NCA and CARD indicated that the staff complement in the project is adequate and all are executing their roles as expected. Below is the summary of managements arrangents in pictorial form; 
Communication between the project team	Communication between the project team was found to be more between the Project Officer and the Programs Coordinator. This is because the Project Officer is on the ground and always has information that may be required from time to time. This is an **Excellent result** since the long structure can be bureaucratic and could delay decision making.
Monitoring of project performance	Information that tracks rights holders' information is captured on daily basis at the cooperative's level using mobile data platform. This information is reported on monthly basis. NCA and CARD make monthly visits to validate on the data given in the report as to check if the project building activities are on track. the mobile data platform is an **Excellent initiative** that could collect all information in line with the project framework.

5.6 Sustainability of Project Interventions

Under sustainability, the study looked at link between project interventions, exit strategy, community ownership, durability of the project achievements and results and possibility of replication/scaling up.

Link between project interventions	The project follows the value chain approach with interventions from production, processing and market. These interventions are linked; the project managed to implement adequate activities under each with the aim of influencing project results. For instance, provision of certified soya increased the productivity of farmers, cooperative managed to buy soya as primary market for farmers, soya was used to process chicken feed, the members and community are the market for the eggs. The r esult is **Excellent** since most of the activities assessed are positively related within the interventions.
Exit Strategy	CARD has employed fulltime staff members that provide to the cooperative management support on daily basis. The staff members work with different committee members on different issue s to provide technical guidance in terms of coaching and mentoring business management best practices to the cooperative. Members commended this as they felt they would be ready to take respective roles and responsibilities after the project. The project has also engaged Government staff at district and EPA level to provide support to the cooperative. This is a good approach in ensuring sustainable technical support however the project team were not sure if the cooperative could sustain allowance required by Government officials whenever technical support is required. This is a **Good** exit strategy that facilitates independence of cooperative.
Community ownership	Through FGDs members of Mikonga are highly involved in all activ ities at the cooperative level. They provide time, labou r, land and buy -in to cooperative at all time. Their active participation is due to the fact that the project delivery empowered them through continuous additions of activities that responds to their needs and they see longtime benefits hence active participation and ownership. In-kind contribution and buy-in of members is a clear demonstration of ownership which is an **Excellent** result.
Durability of results	Members have received different trainings that include GAP, total quality control, machine oper ations and marketing and value additions. These trainings were in line with the three interventions of the project. Knowledge and skills members benefited from these trainings will be useful in their farming activities, operationalizing processing machine and quality requirements in value added products in their cooperative for lifetime. This is an **Excellent** result since the project provided life skills that will be in possession of members even after project.
Scalability or replicability of project	Project document showed that there were other cooperatives that were earmarked in Mchinji. At the time of review, the project had registered good impact on productivity, processing and community market for processed products and good numbers on demand f or RAS model. The project is also about to complete the integrated facility which will allow the cooperative to have its own factory, warehouse and offices. The project can easily take experiences and results from this cooperative to implement to other cooperatives. This is **Excellent** result since the social and economic benefits generated can also be embraced by other cooperative.

6. CONCLUSION

The assessment of the pilot project followed the Theory of Change approach by reviewing from the inputs to the outcomes expected. The following are the conclusions drawn from the assessment:

6.1 Relevance of the project

The study found that project is well aligned to the Malawi Government Policies and Strategies guiding the oil seeds sector that included, NES, NAIP and NAP. It was also further seen that the project is relevant to the NCA country strategy in terms of expected outcome of increased profit, main target group for women and youth and project being implemented in the district within geographic areas of influence. The project is also in line with CARD's strategic direction since the project is the strategic fit and able to add value to the implementing partner. The study therefore draws the conclusion that the project is logical and coherent.

6.2 Progress towards achieving the outcomes and outputs

Table 14 below provides a visual presentation of the opinion of the Evaluation Team regarding progress made by the projects towards the achievement of the outcomes and outputs. It can be seen from the table that the performance of both the Project so far is 80% to 85% range, which is an Excellent score. The project has only been rated unsatisfactory in one area, Rights holders have gained access to domestic markets - Linkages along value chains have been developed which significantly underperformed. This area require some adjustments as recommended in this report, to ensure excellent results by close of the project.

Table 14: Performance matrix for the first phase of the project

	Area Assessed	Score				
		Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very Poor
1	Value chain development has increased rights holders' profits					
2	Rights holders organized in groups					
3	Increase in production has increased rights holders' participation in value chains					
4	Rights holders have knowledge, tools and technology to add value to their products					
5	Rights holders have gained access to domestic markets - Linkages along value chains have been developed					
6	Rights holders have gained access to domestic markets - Rights holders have access to relevant market information					
7	**OVERALL**					

Legends

No	Score	Narration
1	Very Poor	the results are well below target and likely to miss ultimate target by close of the pilot
2	Unsatisfactory	the results are not on target and may ultimately be achieved but not on planned time
3	Satisfactory	the results are on target and achieved ultimate target as planned
4	Good	the results are marginally surpassing target and ultimate target probably earlier than planned
5	Excellent	the results are overwhelming surpassing target and ultimate target as planned

Although there is one prominent issue that need addressing in order for the project to operate at the anticipated level in line with the desired results, it can be concluded that the project is on course and is likely that they will ultimately achieve the project outcomes stated above. The evaluation team is confident that if corrective action is taken as outlined in the recommendation herein, the project outcomes and outputs will be achieved to a large extent by the end of this project.

6.3 Assessment of the project

a) **Efficiency of the project** – The study draws the conclusion that project efficiency has been to a lesser extent with project not being able to track output indicators properly, quality and quantity not having performed well. On the other hand, the project has done well responding to the needs of right holders and stakeholders' involvement.

b) **Efficiency of resource use in the project** – The study draws conclusion that there is generally efficiency in the use of resources in the project demonstrated by bigger percentage of investments going to the rights holders.

c) **Effectiveness of management arrangements** – The study draws conclusion that there are adequate management arrangements in the project to support its implementation, communication not bureaucratic; however, there is a need to relook into the monitoring system to capture the indicators in line with project framework.

d) **Sustainability of the project** – The study draws conclusion that the project is sustainable with interventions well linked, community ownership is encouraged, and capacity building trainings providing lifetime skills, however there is a need to relook into exit strategy especially on strategies that the cooperative could get support from Government staff without incurring larger costs that could provide hiccup to their business sustainability.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study draws recommendations based on the premise that NCA and CARD will use for; Learning from experience. The assessments assist to reveal successes and shortfalls with interpretation and meaning. The assessment informs both current and future project modifications and therefore recommend the following;

The assessment is recommending the following:

7.1 Project programming

- The project should have deliberate number/percentage which forms part of quantitative targets for entire NCA Economic Empowerment thematic area.
- The project should revise the framework to include the outputs for winter cropping and chicken layers.

7.2 Project Design

- Future changes in the project design should not affect outcomes and outputs indicators. For the project under review, we recommend that NCA and CARD agree on the outcome(s) and outputs, update the framework and then implement up to the end of the pilot phase.
- Since the project is being implemented at the cooperative level, we recommend modification of outcomes and outputs to incorporate the cooperative performance and put the cooperative as the key beneficiary while rights holders be secondary beneficiaries.
- The number and benefits that non-members as secondary beneficiaries should also be incorporated in the outputs.

7.3 Production technologies

- We recommend that the project team should explore other technologies that could enhance oilseeds productivity where possible those that could support production throughout the year.

7.4 Mobilization of new members

- We recommend membership increase in Mikonga Cooperative so that more capital is generated from shares and volumes of commodities increased from its members.

7.5 Identification of linkages within the value chain.

- Despite the fact that the Cooperative has received various training related to markets, their skills set is still inferior when compared to their colleagues (mainly their buyers) with whom they will be negotiating with. For this to be successful, there is a need for intensive handholding and mentoring in the initial phases of the exercises. It will be helpful if CARD was to identify skilled negotiators who must work directly with the teams from the Cooperative in the seeking of market linkages within the value chain.

7.6 Market information

- The project should strengthen use of radio to direct community and neighboring villages to the services and products provided by the cooperative that include RAS, cooking oil, groundnuts powder, etc.

7.7 Sustainability

- We recommend NCA/CARD to have Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with line Ministries at EPA and district level. This MOU should be for specified period where the Government should provide stipulated technical capacity, support and monitoring to the cooperative after the project while the cooperative is building up training and education fund in line with cooperative principles.

7.8 Processing Equipment

- To avoid frequent breakdown, it is recommended that technology analysis be performed before acquisition of new technologies like processing machines to ensure durability, easy to use, and availability of spare parts and back-up services. In addition, the cooperative personnel should be adequately trained in machine use and maintenance for routine checks.
- To avoid idling time for machines and loss of revenues for the cooperative during power blackout, the project should explore procuring technologies that can be powered by renewable energy or alternative energy sources.

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APPENDIX 1:
SAMPLE ALLOCATION RESULTS

Appendix 1(a): Population and Sample Allocated

Villages	Population			Sample Allocation			
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male Youth	Male	Total
Chikoti	11	1	**12**	11	1	0	**12**
Tsengo	2	2	**4**	2	1	0	**3**
Panye	2	13	**15**	2	0	5	**7**
Dambe	4	2	**6**	4	0	1	**5**
Nthema	5	9	**14**	5	2	4	**11**
Salima	2	2	**2**	2	1	1	**4**
Mchilumba	3	0	**3**	3	2	0	**5**
Mkulera	6	1	**7**	6	1	0	**7**
Kapamba	2	4	**6**	2	4	0	**6**
Dzama	2	6	**8**	2	0	3	**5**
Mphanda	2	7	**9**	2	1	2	**5**
TOTAL	41	45	**86**	41	13	16	**70**

Appendix 1(b): Actual Non-Respondents Interviewed

Non Members Villages	Respondents by gender		Total
	Male	Females	
Chikoti	1	1	**2**
Mchilumba	0	2	**2**
Mkulera	0	1	**1**
Nthema	3	2	**5**
Panye	2	2	**4**
Tsengo	0	2	**2**
Total	**6**	**10**	**16**

Appendix 1(c): Actual Respondents Achieved

Right Holders Village	Respondents by gender			Women, Male Youth and Male Achieved			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Male Youth	Female	Total
Chikoti	1	9	**10**	1	0	9	**10**
Chilumba	1	0	**1**	0	1	0	**1**
Chimatilro	1	0	**1**	0	1	0	**1**
Dambe	2	2	**4**	2	0	2	**4**
Dzama	1	1	**2**	1	0	1	**2**
Kaliyekha	1	0	**1**	1	0	0	**1**
Kapamba	0	1	**1**	0	0	1	**1**
Kapanda	1	0	**1**	1	0	0	**1**
Kwaloza	1	0	**1**	1	0	0	**1**
Maliketi	0	1	**1**	0	0	1	**1**
Mchilumba	1	1	**2**	1	0	1	**2**
Mdzibwa	0	3	**3**	0	0	3	**3**
Mkulera	1	5	**6**	1	0	5	**6**
Mphanda	5	1	**6**	4	1	1	**6**
Nene	0	1	**1**	0	0	1	**1**
Nthema	7	3	**10**	4	3	3	**10**
Panye	10	5	**15**	10	0	5	**15**
Salima	2	1	**3**	0	2	1	**3**
Tsengo	0	1	**1**	0	0	1	**1**
Total	**35**	**35**	**70**	**27**	**8**	**35**	**70**

December, 2019

Norwegian Church Aid
Plot No. 4/180, Area 4
Ex- G4s Offices
Near Old Town Mall
P.O. Box 30793, Lilongwe 3