
REPORT OF CONSULTANCY SERVICE

**ARTS FOR CLIMATE ACTION IN LOSS AND DAMAGE PHASE II
PROJECT IN THE NSANJE AND ZOMBA DISTRICTS OF MALAWI.**

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TO:
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I. Abbreviations

SCIAF	Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
ArtGlo	Art and Global Health Centre Africa
CADECOM	Catholic Development Commission in Malawi
CARD	Churches Action in Relief and Development
GVH	Group Village Headman
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
NELD	Non-Economic Loss and Damage
TFD	Theatre for Development
VCPC	Village Civil Protection Committee

II. Acknowledgement

The Art and Global Health Centre Africa (ArtGlo) extends our heartfelt appreciation to the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) for their generous financial contribution provided through Trócaire. This support has been instrumental in our efforts to foster community awareness through participatory arts, significantly amplifying the interventions of CARD in Nsanje and CADECOM in Zomba.

We are equally grateful to Trócaire for the consultancy fund, which has empowered ArtGlo to engage communities effectively and creatively. The insights and experiences shared by CARD and CADECOM at the grassroots level have been invaluable, enabling us to craft messages that resonate deeply within the communities we serve.

Our profound thanks also go to the communities, local leaders, and their members whose dedication and support have been the backbone of this initiative. Through their active participation in the refresher trainings, Theatre for Development (TfD) performances, Umunthu circles, and case studies, they have played a crucial role in raising awareness and enhancing support for the vital activities carried out by CARD and CADECOM in both Zomba and Nsanje districts in Malawi.

We wish to reiterate our sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of this project. Your unwavering commitment has not only made this initiative possible but has also ensured its success. Thank you.

III. Executive Summary

Building on the foundational insights and achievements of Phase I, Art and Global Health Centre Africa (ArtGlo), in partnership with Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD), Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM), and supported by the Scottish International Aid Fund (SCIAF) through Trocaire, embarked on "Arts for Climate Action in Loss and Damage Phase II." This initiative aimed to address the extensive, yet often overlooked, non-economic loss and damage (NELD) resulting from human induced climate change.

Phase I, titled "Amplifying Loss and Damage Community Voice through Art in Climate Action," laid the groundwork by identifying the multifaceted impacts of climate change that extend beyond monetary losses. These included the lost of cultural heritage, increased gender-based violence, marital challenges, community displacement, and mental health problems. Phase II was motivated by the urgent need to further explore these impacts and raise awareness on the measures taken to address some of the devastating impacts using participatory arts approaches (Theatre for Development and Umunthu circles), thereby fostering community resilience and adaptation strategies. The project sought to raise awareness on mental health detection and referral systems and reinforce community support for CARD and CADECOM's initiatives, such as utilization of micro-grants, vocational training, and bamboo/tree planting. Methodologically, the project combined qualitative and quantitative data collection, including Umunthu circles, TfD, and case studies, to capture a comprehensive understanding of community engagement and knowledge.

Key findings of the project include high levels of community engagement and awareness, with approximately 2683 participants in Nsanje and 819 participants in Zomba. The project highlighted significant concerns related to human-induced climate change disasters and emphasized the vital role of community-driven adaptation strategies. Critical psychosocial impacts were identified, underlining the necessity for enhanced support systems.

To build on the successes of the project, recommendations include strengthening and diversifying climate resilience measures, enhancing psychosocial support systems, increasing access to micro-grants and financial support for community-led projects, actively involving youth in climate action, and promoting volunteerism, transparency, and gender equity in project implementation.

In conclusion, the "Arts for Climate Action in Loss and Damage Phase II" project has significantly contributed to raising awareness and fostering community resilience in the face of climate change. Acknowledging the crucial support from partners, participants, and funders, the project underscores the importance of continued efforts in climate action. Moving forward, it is imperative to amplify the participatory arts model, advocate for supportive policies, and prioritize sustainable, community-driven strategies in our ongoing battle against climate change. By fostering robust community structures that are embraced by everyone in the adversely affected areas, we can collectively pave the way towards a more resilient, adaptable, and sustainable future.

IV. Delimitation:

The charts and figures presented in the "Key Issues and Findings" section aim to measure awareness levels concerning the principal topics that stem from the project objectives in the Nsanje and Zomba districts. The methodologies employed to raise awareness, the subjects addressed, the count of GVHs engaged per district, and the time designated for these activities vary significantly for the two districts. Consequently, this variability prevents the application of thorough analytical methods for comparing data between districts or even within the same topics. Therefore, we recommend that individuals utilizing this data proceed with caution.

1. Background

Recognizing the multifaceted impacts of the climate change that extended beyond monetary losses to encompass the erosion of cultural heritage, GBV, Marital challenges, community displacement, etc, a strategic alliance of ArtGlo, CARD, and CADECOM, facilitated by Trocaire sought to leverage innovative participatory arts, Theatre for Development (TfD) and Umunthu circles (a concept that embraces the universal sense of oneness, interdependence, and shared humanity), as tools for awareness creation and taking resilient action on both the quantifiable and delving into the unquantifiable and often overlooked effects of the devastating climate change disasters that occurred in the Nsanje and Zomba districts of Southern Malawi. The initial project conducted in the affected areas, hinged on community-defined perceptions of NELD and historical precedents to gauge the extent of loss and damage incurred. Findings highlighted the catastrophic toll of extreme weather events on these communities, manifesting not only in tangible economic and material losses but also in a cascade of psychosocial repercussions. Among these were heightened instances of gender-based violence, social upheaval, sexual and reproductive health rights issues, dwindling hope and dignity, the destruction of significant cultural and historical sites, and a surge in mental and physical health issues. These revelations underscored the critical importance of addressing the broader spectrum of climate-induced losses to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Prior to this project, the Art & Global Health Centre Africa (ArtGlo) in collaboration with Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) and Catholic Development Commission in Malawi (CADECOM), and supported by the Scottish International Aid Fund (SCIAF) through Trocaire, embarked on a project to tackle the profound but often overlooked non-economic loss and damage (NELD) issues highlighting the climate change impacts including frequent and severe droughts, floods, mudslides, and erratic rainfall patterns amongst many. These phenomena threaten food security, water availability, hygiene, and livelihoods, exacerbating poverty levels in the area. The geographical positioning of Nsanje and Zomba, along with their socio-economic conditions, amplifies their vulnerability, making it imperative to prioritize climate adaptation and resilience strategies.

Participatory arts serve as powerful instruments for communicating complex climate change issues, transcending language barriers, and reaching a broader audience. Through creative expressions such as music, Theatre, visual arts, and storytelling, the arts evoke emotions, stimulate discussions, and inspire individuals to take action. By engaging the community through artistic expressions, the project aimed to foster a deeper understanding of climate change impacts and stimulate collective efforts towards mitigation, adaptation, or resiliency.

In response, Phase II of the project dubbed “Arts for Climate Action in Loss and Damage” aimed to utilize innovative participatory arts to mobilize communities, enhance awareness, and foster community unity, providing essential support for mental health detection and referral systems, while reinforcing community rebuilding, acceptance, interest, and support for both CARD and CADECOM’s activities, including the use of the micro-grants, dykes construction, vocational training, and bamboo planting to shield vital areas in Nsanje and Zomba from future climatic [change induced](#) threats. In addition, the project enhanced coping

mechanisms and spotlights survivor narratives, fostering meaningful change at individual and collective levels and strengthening the community's resilience against climate-related challenges. This project strategy was driven by the need to not only confront the immediate aftermath of climate-related disasters such as Cyclone Freddy but preempt future losses by building a community resilient enough to navigate the challenges posed by an ever-evolving climate landscape. In doing so, ArtGlo and its partners aspired to make significant strides toward fortifying the protective measures of six (6) Group Village Headmans (GVHs) i.e. 4 GVHs in Nsanje and 2 GVHs in Zomba districts of Malawi.

1.1 Project Objective

The project's objectives were; (a) to provide awareness on the availability of the trained psycho-social support and referral structures in the communities, (b) to provide awareness on the provision of micro-grants in the communities, (c) to provide awareness on vocational trainings, (d) to reduce climate-induced trauma , (e) to bring unity between GVHs which was lost due to climate change, and (f) document case studies. The section on key issues and findings that came out of the community engagement on each objective can found in the section "Main Discussions and Highlights".

2. Community Engagement Approaches

A key initiative by ArtGlo was separate partner meetings held with (CARD) and CADECOM, which established a foundation for collaborative efforts to address community psychosocial issues and raise awareness about the micro-grants. These meetings focused on debriefing about the micro-grant, construction of dykes, bamboo planting, cultural festival and vocational skills training, to enable the development of culturally sensitive and targeted messages that will promote open dialogue and encourage acceptance and active participation of the communities involved. These partnerships were pivotal, providing technical support and leveraging networks to enhance the awareness reach and impact.

2.1 Theatre for Development Performances

An essential component of our strategy was capacity strengthening particularly through refresher training for Drama Clubs. These clubs played a crucial role in disseminating awareness messages through their performances. The training aimed to enhance their skills in conveying complex issues accurately and impactfully, thereby equipping members with the knowledge necessary to raise awareness about mental health detection and referral structures. This initiative is part of a broader effort to create a supportive environment where psychosocial problems are both recognized and effectively addressed through Village and disaster response committees (VDRC) and faith leaders. Emphasizing the importance of early detection, these creative expressions sought to empower community leaders to guide individuals to appropriate support services.



GVH Mtemangawa Tfd performance

GVH Mbenje Tfd performance

Finally, the initiative focused on co-developing community-centered action plans by employing creative participatory methodologies to identify and strengthen indigenous coping mechanisms. This approach acknowledges the value of local knowledge and practices in psychosocial support, aiming to enhance the community's resilience and self-reliance in managing mental health challenges.

2.2. Umunthu Circles

Umunthu is a Pan-African philosophical concept of humanity often defined in the phrase, “I am because we are.” Offering a local approach to advocacy, Umunthu respects and celebrates the interconnectedness

and interdependence of humanity with emphasis on tolerance, togetherness, diversity, co-existence and unity. It acknowledges every person's role in a broader community and the impact of their actions and decisions on those around them. This philosophy emphasizes the significance of cooperation, compassion, respect for others, and the need for individuals to contribute to the common good. It promotes the values of empathy, kindness, and shared responsibility for creating a better world.



Survivors of loss and damage from GVHs *A survivor of loss and damage from GVH Ngabu*

Mambundungu and Mtemangawa dancing *narrating her story at the Umunthu Circle*

The Umunthu circle was used to delve deeper into individual experiences by mobilizing community members to share lived experiences, it provided a platform for ecological-grief and allowed people to express their fears, anxieties, hopes, inspirations and contextual understanding on NELDs.

During the three-hour discussion, survivors used hand-drawn pictures to express their NELD issues. This approach helped participants to express emotions that cannot easily conveyed through words. Survivors then utilized the Umunthu philosophy to identify practical solutions for addressing and preventing existing and future losses and damages.

2.3. Cultural Festival

Additionally, a cultural and recreational festival was utilized as a platform for easing climate - induced trauma, restoring the communities' lost cultural heritage, and fostering unity between GVHs Mbalu and Makawa in addressing climate change. This activity was done at Ma Tambala ground in Zomba in collaboration with CADECOM. There was a good turnout of community members and stakeholders from both GVHs. In attendance were also 10 district stakeholders, ArtGlo staff members, CADECOM staff members and the media team from Radio Maria and Times. The event also got spiced up by a professional comedy acting duo of Ching'aning'ani and Anganga Ajabilu. The event was very informative, entertaining, fun and engaging. The cultural festival eased the communities' climate-induced trauma, attempted to restore the communities' lost culture and it brought unity between the two GVHs.



Display of traditional herbal medicine



Cultural Festival coverage in 'The Daily Times'

Some of the traditional performances focused on sensitizing the community on the importance of conserving and preserving the environment. There was an outcry in one performance on the scarcity of traditional herbes in the community. The performance therefore urged the community to conserve and preserve the environment as it has a history provides them herbs that are needed for several illnesses.

3. Main Discussions and Highlights

3.1. Activity Evaluation

To assess community awareness and understanding of the activities, our data collection employed both qualitative and quantitative methods. Umunthu circles and Theatre for Development (TfD), and case studies were utilized in this endeavor. This dual approach allowed us to capture the community's level of knowledge and engagement with the project activities.

The awarenesses were conducted in the GVHs where the Loss and Damage project phase I was implemented in Nsanje and Zomba districts, except for three GVHs, Kathebwewe, and Magoli in Zomba and GVH Mbangu in Nsanje. The communities that were targeted in this phase are GVHs Mbenje and Ngabu under T/A Ngabu, and GVHs Mambundungu and Mtemangawa under T/A Malemia in Nsanje and GVHs Makawa and Mbalu under T/A Mwambo.

These communities were selected to support CARD and CADECOM's Loss and Damage Phase II implementation which aimed at providing psycho-social support and referral structures training to the stakeholders, providing micro grants to the communities, providing vocational skills training to the victims and survivors of climate change in communities, reducing trauma experience due to climate change, restoration of culture and bringing unity among communities.

Quantitative data was analyzed using excel, while qualitative data was transcribed to identify concepts.

Drama club members we worked with were the ones we worked with participants who were previously involved in the NELD research. Participants for Umunthu circles were identified by the stakeholders we worked with and these were survivors of natural disasters. Respondents for the semi-structured

questionnaire were randomly selected from the TFD audience. A total of 117 participants, 16 drama club members, 28 participants for umunthu circles and 73 community members were involved in the data collection.

To end, a mix of post-TfD interviews, and key informant interviews with survivors in both Zomba and Nsanje districts were used. These methods, along with case studies, desk reviews, and observations, enriched our understanding of community awareness, acceptance, and support for the resilience activities being conducted by CARD and CADECOM after the participatory arts performances. This approach allowed for deeper insights following the participatory methods employed. More so, all participants were briefed on the assessment objectives, and their informed consent was obtained before administering questions and the analysis. Through these material efforts, we were able to gauge the community's perceptions and reactions to the issues addressed through our artistic interventions.

3.2. Demographics

The participatory arts initiatives were conducted across six Group Village Headmen (GVH) areas: Ngabu, Mbenje, Mtemangawa, Mambundungu, as well as Mbalu, and Makawa covering the Nsanje and Zomba districts respectively. These arts performances successfully engaged an estimated 2683 participants in Nsanje and 819 participants in Zomba district GVHs in awareness creation activities. A total of 73 community members, comprising 34 males and 30 females, were interviewed to assess their understanding of various topics in their respective GVHs. The respondents, associated with participatory arts performances, ranged from 17 to 65 years old, representing a diverse range of perspectives on community issues.

The individuals are involved in various occupations and income-generating activities, primarily centered around farming, business, and manual labor, including piecework, bricklaying, tree

nursery management and fetching firewood for sale. Additionally, there are mentions of students and specific professions such as fish and pear selling. This diverse distribution reflects a community with a strong agricultural and entrepreneurial background, complemented by various forms of manual and casual labor. Roles like "Vice Chair Ngabu Tree Nursery management" indicate involvement in community or environmental initiatives. The following account provides details on community-driven activities, shared experiences, and strategic responses developed to address the adverse effects of climate change disasters and related psychosocial challenges.

3.3. Key Issues and Findings

Conversely, participatory arts performance feedback highlighted significant issues, with respondents attributing climate change disasters to human activities. The participants in Nsanje and Zomba districts mentioned similar climate-related disasters. The disasters included devastating floods, dry spells, cyclones, and strong winds. These have caused loss of soil fertility, food insecurity and diminishing agricultural productivity amongst many. Sporadic rains contributing to both droughts and flooding, alongside the specific mention of "Cyclone Freddy" as an extreme weather event, were noted.

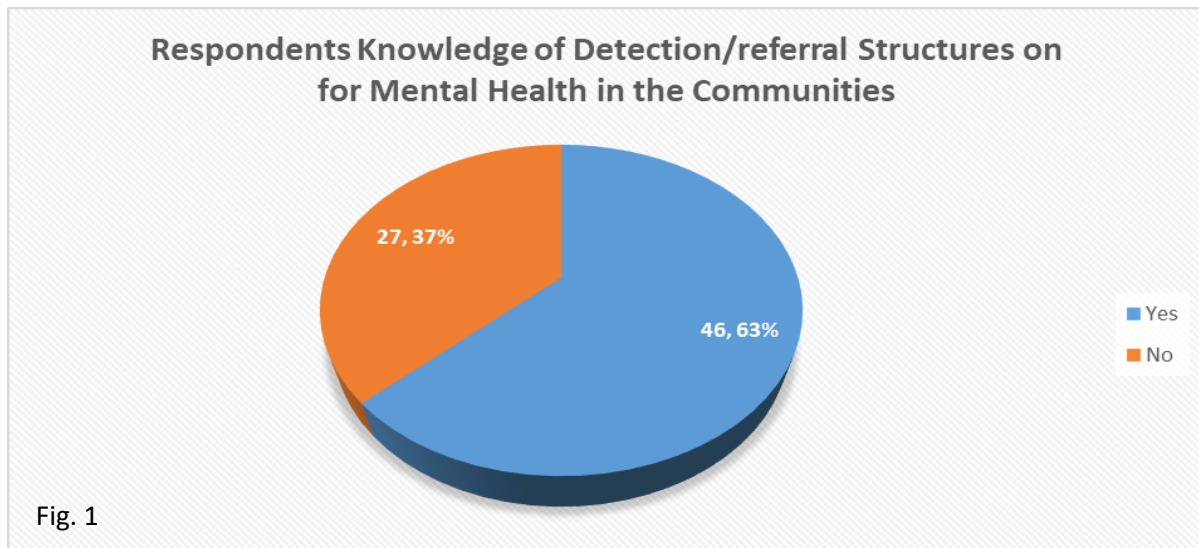
Importantly, participants viewed these climate-induced disasters as life-threatening, underscoring the need for urgent action to mitigate these impacts and foster community resilience.

While the participatory arts initiatives were to enhance community-wide awareness and strengthening of climate response community participation in resilience and adaptation initiatives, noteworthy mention was CARD and CADECOM. The two organizations actively engaged the communities in various environmental and development initiatives, including tree planting programs, dyke construction projects, and vetiver planting, with a significant focus on mobilizing volunteers and community participation. In gauging awareness, there was a specific mention of tree seedlings provision and a 3.4 million Kwacha Micro-grant contribution from CARD for the purchase of construction materials such as cement, shovels, etc to support the construction of dykes and promote reforestation efforts. Other entities like the World Bank and CADECOM have also contributed to aiding flood-affected individuals by desilting water courses and encouraging environmental conservation through reforestation and bamboo cultivation along water bodies like the Nyankotola, Nyamadzere, Magoma, Malindi and Gandali Rivers respectively. Specific mention of vocational skills training was cited by participants in the Zomba district and attributed to CADECOM initiatives. These initiatives underscore the collective effort towards environmental protection and community resilience, emphasizing the crucial role of proactive community work, awareness of psychosocial issues, and the strategic use of microgrants in driving these efforts forward.

The creative arts expressions effectively exposed real-life challenges faced by communities, particularly problematic streams, rivers, floodplains and their associated climate-related disasters. The general conversations suggested construction of permanent dykes and the adoption of natural solutions like planting of trees and elephant grass. There was also emphasis on the importance of community participation in developmental initiatives and the need for collective action in addressing environmental concerns. Reference to the project objectives, below depict key highlights from the awarenesses created.

Awareness of the Availability of Trained Psycho-social Support and Referral Structures

The findings pinpointed several key entities, individuals, and services that community members turn to for mental health support.



As shown in fig. 1 above, it was found that 63.01% (46 out of 73) of respondents were knowledgeable about the existing support structures, which include health centers such as Mbenje Health Centre, local leaders like Chiefs, and various committees like the Village Civil Protection Committee (VCPC) and Village Development Committee (VDC). International and local NGOs such as the World Food Programme (WFP) and World Vision Malawi, along with specialized services like Psychosocial First Aid (PFA), were also mentioned.

The engagement with community support structures is high among adults, with 9 out of 10 being familiar with available resources. However, there was a concern about lack of youth engagement, attributed to their preference for activities like football over community meetings. Efforts to involve youth through various clubs aim to bridge this gap, recognizing the benefits of established community support structures.

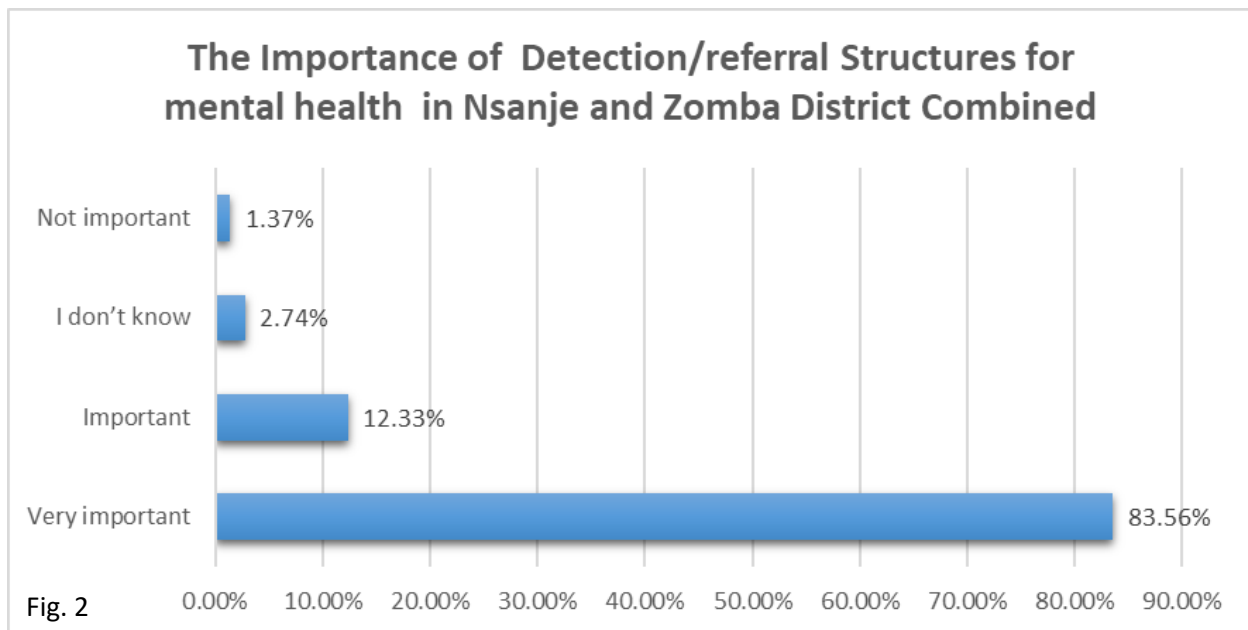
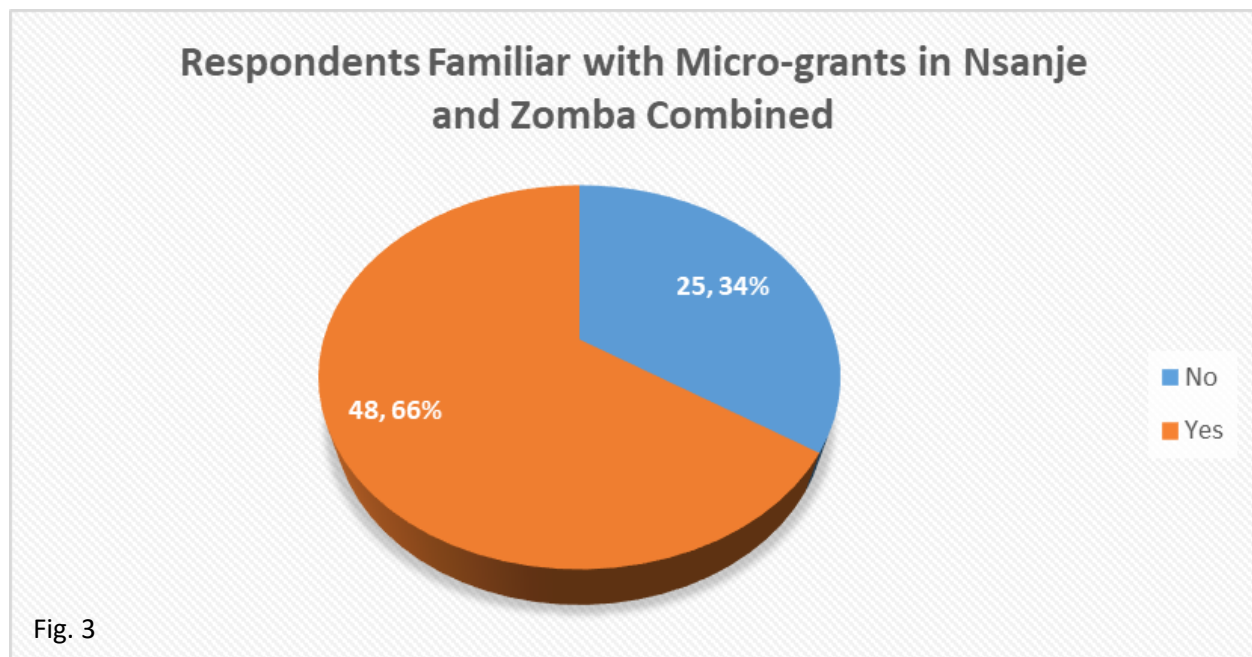


FIG. 2. Shows an overwhelming 95% of respondents put together ie. Both important and very important affirmed the critical importance of these structures in assisting those facing psycho-social issues.

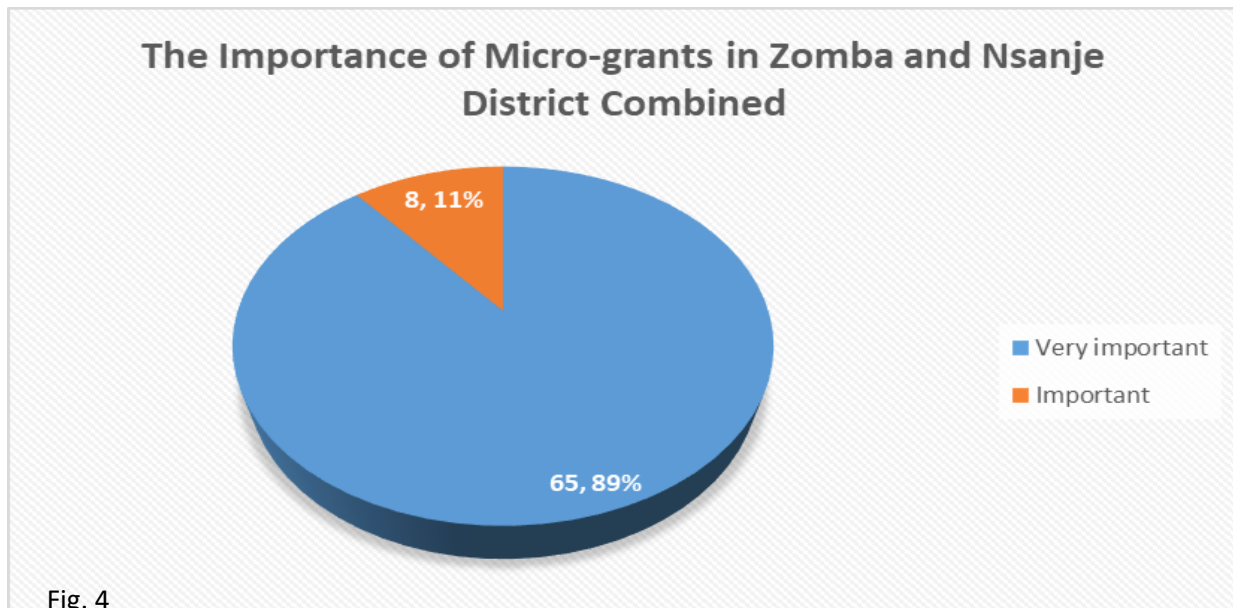
Natural disasters leave behind a trail of destruction that goes beyond the tangible damage to properties and economies, profoundly impacting the psychological health and communal ties of affected areas. The human stories from individuals in Mtemangawa and Mambundungu bring to light the severe psychosocial challenges encountered, ranging from disrupted family units to the loss of essential resources and livelihoods. In Mtemangawa, a female survivor shared her distressing journey following Cyclone Freddy, particularly highlighting the plight of Group Village Headman Thomson, who lost everything. In response, the community rallied around her, offering emotional solace, and companionship. Meanwhile, in Mambundungu, a female resident recounted the harsh reality of losing all possessions and facing the perilous task of fetching a local root-tuber locally known as “Nyika” from the Shire River, nervous with unseen dangers such as crocodiles. Despite these hardships, the strength of community support, significantly enhanced by CARD's initiatives, has been instrumental in building resilience and facilitating the path to recovery. The community's response, offering emotional and practical support, highlights the resilience and recovery efforts facilitated by initiatives like CARD's, despite the tangible and intangible losses experienced. Communal shared moments over soft drinks and acts of kindness like providing clothing played pivotal roles in her mental healing, said a survivor. The resilience and solidarity of the community, even in the face of minimal rewards are commendable.

Awareness of the Provision of Micro-grants:

Findings indicate that a significant majority, around 66% (48 out of 73) respondents confirmed awareness of the micro-grant concept as highlighted in fig. 3 below. This suggests a notable level of understanding of - and their potential benefits within the communities. Conversely, 34% of the respondents expressed unfamiliarity with micro-grants, indicating a substantial portion of the population may lack awareness of these financial aids aimed at supporting various initiatives. This disparity highlights an opportunity for enhanced education and outreach regarding the availability and utilization of micro-grants in community development or individual projects.



As depicted below in fig. 4, responses concerning the importance of micro-grants revealed a strong consensus, with a significant 89% (65 out of 73) respondents rating them as "Very Important." This underscores the perceived critical role of micro-grants in supporting community projects, fostering development, and enabling small-scale initiatives that might otherwise struggle for funding. While only 11% (8 out of 73) respondents classified micro-grants as "Important," this still acknowledges their value, albeit to a lesser degree. In affirming knowledge of micro-grants, community leaders referenced a 3.4 million kwacha micro-grant from CARD for building a dyke along the Magoma River.



While some community members possess detailed knowledge about the grant's intended uses such as drift/bridge construction, and dyke building, others were hearing about it for the first time or had limited information. Concerns were raised regarding nepotism in project participation and management, indicating a need for equitable and competent oversight over the micro-grant utilization. These feedbacks reflect a community at different levels of engagement and awareness, united by an interest in the positive impact of the micro-grant on environmental and infrastructural development, albeit accompanied by challenges in communication and governance.

Awareness of the vocational trainings:

In exploring the perceptions of community members regarding the effectiveness of vocational training centers in mitigating the impacts of non-economic losses and damages (NELD) within their community, the consensus highlights the significant, life-changing benefits of such initiatives. Community members emphasize the vital role these centers play in providing individuals with not only a productive occupation but also a sustainable source of income. Learning vocational skills offers a resilient advantage that remains intact even in the face of natural disasters. The importance of expanding these training opportunities to include more participants was underscored, to maximize the benefits for the entire community. In the areas of GVH Mbalu and Makawa, under TA Mwambo in Zomba, which are primarily cereal farming communities, the need for alternative livelihoods has been made starkly evident following the destruction caused by Cyclone Freddy. The cyclone's devastating effects on infrastructure, agriculture, and daily life have underscored the urgency of finding sustainable livelihood alternatives.

GVH Mbalu and Makawa, located in TA Mwambo, Zomba, are communities predominantly engaged in cereals farming. This area is highly vulnerable to climatic shocks, notably highlighted by the recent devastation caused by Cyclone Freddy. The cyclone wreaked havoc on infrastructure, agriculture, and the daily lives of the inhabitants, underlining the urgent need for sustainable livelihood alternatives. A human-centered story, told by Eliza Chipungo, a 32-year-old widow and mother of four from Mwanyumbu Village in GVH Mbalu, shares a deeply personal narrative. As a rice farmer, her life was drastically altered by Cyclone Freddy, which ravaged her crops and destroyed her home. This experience propelled her to seek out more resilient avenues for her livelihood. She narrates “In the aftermath of Cyclone Freddy, and through my involvement in the Titukulane Youth Club and Mwambo 1 Youth Network, I was introduced to vocational skills training offered by CADECOM. Opting for a tailoring course, I recognized the enduring value of vocational skills that remain unaffected by natural disasters, unlike agriculture, which is highly susceptible to climatic variations”. Chipungo's engagement in the tailoring course has transformed her family's life. She has acquired the ability to mend and create clothing, which has practical everyday benefits and provides a stable source of income. Furthermore, her involvement in Theatre for Development (TfD) through the Arts for Climate Change Project has enabled her to effectively communicate and sensitize her community on various pertinent issues, including Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and cholera prevention. The story of Eliza Chipungo exemplifies the profound impact the vocational and TfD skills can have on individuals and communities affected by climate change. These skills not only offer a sustainable source of income but also empower individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities' well-being. This narrative and many other drama performances enhanced awareness of vocational training in the communities underscoring the importance of community engagement, the value of youth clubs as platforms for awareness, and the need for continued support and expansion of such programs to enhance resilience and sustainable development in vulnerable communities.

Reduction of climate-induced trauma:

The activities that were conducted under this project, Umunthu circles, cultural festival and as well the Theatre for Development performances, did more than just awareness. They were also a tool that advocated for the ending of GBV and also provided a platform for dealing with psychosocial issues.

The Umunthu circles were therapeutic in nature as it allowed individuals to reflect and deal with particular issues that they are struggling with. With the utilization of artistic methodologies such as songs, dances, drawings and just providing that platform for one to bear their minds, a shift of energy in the room was evident. This was also evident during the TFD performances and cultural festivals. One Umunthu circle female participant commented that, *“this was very helpful, if we can have platforms such as these often, they can help alot.”*

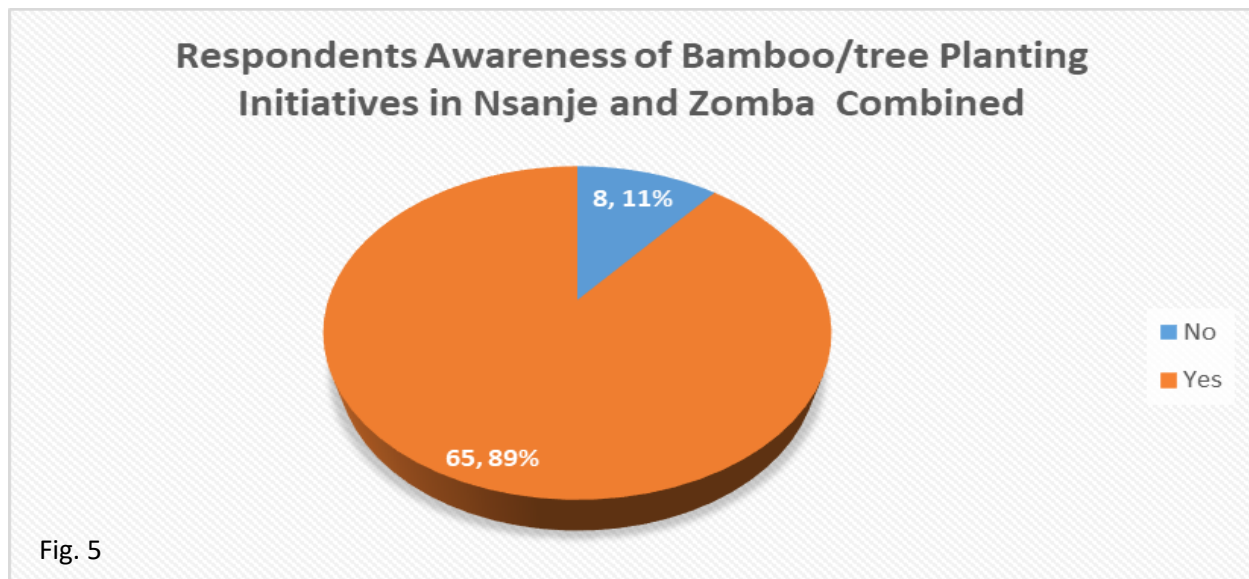
On GBV issues, most of the performances portrayed the victimization of women as another effect of psycho-social issues. Realizing that these issues if not addressed can be misinterpreted as legitimization of GBV, the performances were addressing them at the very end. There would always be a time where such acts would be condemned in the strongest sense so that, even if the GBV is not directly linked to climate change disasters, the take home message regarding it would be condemnation.

Awareness of Human-Induced Climate Change Disasters:

The performances aided community members to vividly describe their encounters with devastating human-induced climate related disasters, such as floods and cyclones, with Cyclone Freddy being a notable example from the respondents. These catastrophic events have led to the loss of homes, livestock, and essential food supplies. A specific instance highlighted was the flooding of the Magoma River, causing disruptions of schooling activities at Mchere Primary School within the Mbenje GVH area. Traditional mitigation efforts, like the construction of simple dykes, were overwhelmed, particularly by the ferocity of Cyclone Freddy. With ArtGlo’s awareness creation and the support from CARD, efforts are now focused on enhancing ecological resilience. Human activities, including deforestation and charcoal burning for household fuel, were identified as exacerbating factors for these natural disasters, alongside prolonged drought conditions attributed to human environmental activities. Similarly, in Mtemangawa and Mambundungu, the community attempted to construct temporary dykes using sacks filled with sand in Thomson village. This community-led initiative, however, faced sustainability challenges as the sacks deteriorated over time, and community members, prioritizing basic needs like food, could not afford replacements. A community member from Mambundungu recounted the destruction of these temporary dykes by Cyclone Freddy, underscoring the need for more durable solutions. In response, a tree nursery was established, and bamboo and vetiver were planted along Gandali and Malindi Rivers to control water flow in GVHs Mambundungu and Mtemangawa respectively. Furthermore, check dams are under construction in Chitsa village in Ngabu as part of broader efforts to mitigate flood risks.

Awareness of Environmental Restoration Approaches:

The awareness creation initiative has effectively heightened community consciousness about the critical role of bamboo planting in safeguarding the environment. As shown in fig. 5 below, awareness of bamboo/tree planting initiatives in the community is high, with 89% (65 out of 73) of respondents, indicating they are aware of such initiatives. However, 11% of respondents are not aware, highlighting a significant majority recognition but also a small margin that may benefit from increased information and engagement on these environmental efforts. See fig. 5 below.



The disparity highlights the successful outreach and impact of bamboo/tree planting initiatives in engaging a vast majority of the community members, while also pointing to the potential for further efforts to ensure full community awareness and participation. Participants in response mentioned CARD and CADECOM in Nsanje and Zomba districts respectively, of initiating steps to conduct tree planting along river banks and community members taking an active role in their upkeep. The importance of bamboo/tree planting in the community is multifaceted. Primarily, respondents emphasize environmental protection and economic benefits. The collective feedback underscores bamboo and tree planting as important for mitigating adverse weather effects, such as acting as barriers against heavy winds and rains, reducing flooding, controlling water flow in rivers like Nyakotola and Nyamadzere, binding and protecting the soil from erosion, thereby preserving land fertility and reducing water runoff speed, which in turn, protects infrastructure and houses from being washed away or damaged. Additionally, the vegetation serves as a sustainable resource, providing materials for construction and roofing, and enhancing soil fertility, which could translate into income-generating opportunities for the community said by the participants. Some community members have expressed their willingness to engage in more specific tasks, such as transplanting native trees to riverbanks, managing nurseries, and mobilizing resources for irrigation and maintenance of planted areas. While there is a strong collective drive towards contributing to climate change mitigation through environmental restoration and construction projects, a few responses indicate limitations due to age or health and skepticism regarding the inclusiveness of initiatives. Nevertheless, the overwhelming inclination towards active involvement in tree planting and

supporting infrastructure improvements reflects a communal resolve geared towards sustainability and resilience against climate change impacts.

3.4. Documentation of Case Studies:

3.4.1 NSanje Case Studies

Trauma separates children from their mother and threatens their once bright future_ Mtemangawa:



Tongoloti narrating her sad story

Sarah Tongoloti (46), a widow and single mother of seven, was once a successful business woman and a model for both the young and the old on top of being a Village Headwoman of Thompson village under GVH Mtemangawa in Nsanje. She also set an example to fellow local leaders to be self-reliant and not to depend on fines and government allowances. Tongoloti was trading second-hand clothings business from where she was making 100% profits after sales and would get her supplies from Blantyre City. Sadly, Cyclone Freddy

happened and left her with completely nothing to sustain herself and her family which is the genesis of her mental health problems that have refused to let her be.

“I was sleeping and I suddenly heard a strange noise outside and decided to check what was happening. Upon opening the door, water entered into my house and by the time I was about to escape, I was swept away but by God’s grace I was held on some small tree,” narrates Tongoloti.

By the time people heard her screaming for help since she was staying at a relatively higher ground, she was found almost naked and as the waters had swept away the wrapper she was putting on. She was home alone since her children had gone to school. Tongoloti had also withdrawn MK 2.5 million to purchase supplies in Blantyre for her business very early on the 14th of March 2023, a day ahead of the fateful day. This has rendered her unable to take care of children and provide their school needs. “As they were rescuing me, covering my nakedness and taking me to an evacuation camp, I had lost my cognitive ability and a number of attempts by members of the Village Civil Protection Committee (VCPC) as well as a representative from the District Social Welfare Office proved futile.” Recalls Tongoloti.

Within a few days, her situation had worsened and she was taken to the hospital where they found her without any physical illness, but a mental health problem due to overthinking and stress. The people that took her to the hospital were advised to closely monitor her situation and not to leave her unattended for a long time since the hospital could not admit her. Tongoloti was experiencing persistent headaches due to overthinking and this has been the case to date. This has rendered her unable to take care of children and provide their school needs.

Tongoloti’s first born son who was in senior secondary school class at one of Malawi’s best private schools, was forced to drop out. His mother was not able to afford to pay for his education needs even in the least expensive public schools. Due to desperation, the young man accepted an offer by one of his mother’s friends to join them in Nkhotakota to lessen Tongoloti’s pressure and support the education needs of her son.

“My son was promised to be supported in his education but to my surprise, he called me about a week

ago informing me that he would like to come back home because he has not been going to school and that he is being used as a laborer in the field.” lamented Tongoloti.

This has added another burden to Tongoloti as she has no money to bring back her son and regrets why she trusted her old friend. Tongoloti is also at the Mercy of her landlord who has still allowed her to stay in their house although three months have passed without settling the rentals. She has to figure out how to feed her remaining five children including all the other basic necessities and school needs. During the time of our engagement, one of the older daughters of Tongoloti was at home because her mother cannot afford to pay for her school fees. Another daughter also left the house and is currently staying with another family, within GVH Mtemangawa, but dropped out of school as well.

Despite her destitute status, she sometimes visits her former colleagues at the market to pass time as well as help out in their businesses. She believes that providing her with a loan to resuscitate her business would be the only solution to minimize the trauma that she goes through because her condition comes up when she thinks of how to resolve her daily challenges that were not a problem at all before the disaster.

On the other hand, Tongoloti commends CARD Malawi for the Psycho-social training that some local leaders in GVH Mtemangawa have gone through. She believes that this will help in providing the prompt support to survivors of climate-induced non-economic loss and damage. She cited that she has also benefited from the visits by some members of the VCPC who regularly check up on her.

Day-in, day-out stress and fear: Sungafisi’s rude awakening_Mbenje:



Sungafisi standing in front of the ruins of his house

Moses Sungafisi (55), a father of five, recalls his traumatic experience with the flooding of Nyampotolwa river in GVH Mbenje of the Nsanje district, which swelled from a narrow stream to a wide river due to the devastating Tropical Cyclone Freddy. The river found its way to people’s houses and Sungafisi’s retirement home was not spared. This happened at a time he was preparing his house to be connected to electricity. “Around 2am, flooding waters started to enter my house and the moment I went out to check what was

happening, my whole compound was filled with water. I managed to escape with my family and from afar, we saw the house disintegrating and all my property including livestock getting washed away,” explains Sungafisi.

Fortunately, the tree coverage around his house and the surrounding areas held them from getting swept away by the rough waters. This has left the once self-reliant household destitute and struggling to make ends meet considering that Sungafisi is elderly and has also lost his farm land to the floods. The raging waters brought a lot of sand in the area and rendered some farms uncultivable. Farming was the most

stable source of income for the family which now relies on the scarce piece works and donations from well-wishers. “When I think about the things I used to have in my house and my years of work in Blantyre to construct it, I sometimes question why I should continue living. I most of the time develop courage and assurance that God spared my life and family for a reason,” laments Sungafisi.

He further adds that he is also stressed by daily thoughts on how to feed his family as well as settle house rentals. Although he has an understanding landlord who allows him to stay for some months without settling his rentals, he has constant fear that this privilege can be taken away at any time. To make matters worse, he receives no support from his son who resides in Blantyre City while the other three are not capable as they also struggle to make ends meet in their respective families.

Currently, Sungafisi stays with his wife and last-born child who is still schooling. He is also troubled about how to support the education of his daughter with the current state of the family. He also disclosed that nepotistic tendencies local leaders have left people like him and his family trapped in poverty because relief fails to reach the intended beneficiaries.

Sungafisi is grateful to the Village Civil Protection Committee (VCPC) Chairperson who occasionally visits survivors of climate change induced non-economic loss and damage (NELD) through encouraging talks aimed at lessening the psychosocial burden they experienced. The VCPC provides first line support to community members affected by natural disasters through early warnings, rescue, documentation of affected households, first aid and support during distribution of relief items. “The encouraging talks and words of comfort from members of the VCPC has prevented me from executing extreme thoughts that I sometimes have. This has also helped to keep on going with life,” explains Sungafisi.

In 2023, ArtGlo found out that survivors of climate-induced NELD lack formal psychosocial support to respond to the traumatic experience that they go through. Our implementing Partner, CARD Malawi, engaged a number of stakeholders including Village Civil Protection Committees (VCPCs), Child Protection Workers (CPWs), Village Development Committees (VDCs), Local and Religious leaders in GVHs Mbenje, Ngabu, Mtemangawa and Mambundungu through a psychosocial training to provide this support in Nsanje district.

Local psychosocial support keeps Million Going_Mambundungu:



Million pointing where her house was



Million narrating her story

Cyclone Freddy has transformed some children and infants into orphans and the responsibility to take care of the same has been left on the elderly. Rute Million (56), is one of these elderly people who apart

from being a widow who struggles to raise her 7 children, is also keeping one orphaned granddaughter who is now 18 months old. Million's daughter left the infant after she was swept away by some flooding water in March 2023. "My daughter had gone to sell firewood at Nsanje Port where fishermen purchase wood to smoke fish along the Shire River. As she was about to leave the place, she was swept away by flooding water that had suddenly come from the bushes around the area," narrated Million.

She adds that the floods also killed four other people. The young woman was trying to assist her mother to make ends meet for the family which was in dire poverty since they have been residing at an evacuation camp for almost 2 years now. The family lost all its household possessions after Cyclones Ana and Gombe in 2021 also caused havoc in the area of GVH Mambundungu where a small perennial stream had swelled almost 20 times its original size. "Being newcomers in the area, we never knew that where the Malawi government had bought us land in 2016 would be inhabitable as well. Now we lost everything including the little land where we could grow crops due to floods that have also brought excess sand." Lamented Million.

GVH Mambundungu and his people had settled close to Shire River and they were highly susceptible to floods every year. Responding to the risk, the government came to their rescue by procuring land at a higher ground but their misfortune continued as cyclone induced floods has also left them homeless and camping at an evacuation camp for more than 2 years. The desire to move out these camps has been hampered by worsening poverty and the inability of the community members to generate enough income to procure land.

Being part of this community, Million ventured into a firewood business with assistance from her departed daughter. The family was collecting firewood from their nearest forest and was surviving on the same. Upon the death of her daughter, Million was so depressed and highly stressed about how she will raise a toddler who was still suckling as well as the other remaining 7 children. Life at the camp is also not conducive for child growth but they have no other choice and this has worsened her stress. "Members of the VCPC, the Village head and GVH Mambundungu cheered me up and advised me to remain calm because my children and granddaughter need me to be psychologically well so that I can be a good guardian for them. This has kept me going..." expressed Million.

According to Million, she took heed of the advice and always tries her best to make sure that they are happy although they earn very little. Some members of her community have also shared with her some porridge flour and monitored her visitations at the under-five clinics for her granddaughter. She is highly appreciative of this support and believes that the Psychosocial training that some members of her community have received will amplify the impact to other people in a similar situation.

Meanwhile, Million joins other women to harvest wild and bitter tubers called 'Nyika' so that her children at least have food due to the worsening national hunger situation. The process of acquiring these tubers is very risky as they grow beneath the Shire River where there are high chances of drowning due to entanglements with other weeds and the threat of crocodiles that are found in the water body.

Grief and more grief: loss of personal dignity and the pain of survival_Mtemangawa:



Mailosi in front of his compound left in ruins



Mailosi burning charcoal

Climate change-induced disasters such as tropical cyclones leave pervasive scars and traps people in abject poverty overnight. This is the predicament that Henderson Mailosi (35) and his family, from GVH Mtemangawa, have to endure as a result of the 2023 novel Cyclone Freddy which brought unprecedented pain and loss to Malawians in Nsanje district. Standing close to the ruins of his house which was well built with strong materials such as cement and burnt bricks, Mailosi gives an account of the fateful day and how the livelihood of his family dramatically changed for the worse.

“I was organizing burial arrangements for my uncle who we had just lost when I received a call informing me of the horrible state of affairs at my house and my village. Fortunately, my neighbors assisted in rescuing my wife and my five sons,” narrated Mailosi.

He vividly recalls what happened in the afternoon of the 13th of March 2023, a day that also marked the beginning of a fortnight long flow of water high volumes in a seasonal river, Nyamadzere. Within the same period, survivors of the storm spent more than seven days on an empty stomach as they desperately waited for relief at Kapalakonje Primary School which set out as a temporary evacuation camp when Mailosi and his family also took refuge.

Before the disaster, Mailosi was saving some money to finalize some processes to attain a drivers’ license in Blantyre City to diversify the sources of revenue for his household. Sadly, all his savings including livestock to complement the same was washed away. The family had a three-bedroom house, a kraal for cattle (5), a kraal for goats (10), as structures housing a cumulative total of 20 ducks and chickens which were all gone in a few minutes after 2pm on that day.

“I was so devastated and wished to maybe throw myself in the river considering how I as the breadwinner would support my family. To date, I still get so depressed when I think about how to meet the educational needs of my elderly sons who are approaching examination classes,” laments Mailosi.

Mailosi was relying on his livestock to settle tuition, examination fees and school materials for his three

elderly sons whom one of them will be writing this year's Junior Certificate of Examinations (JCE). These are national exams where candidates register and pay for at least 11 subjects to progress to the senior classes of secondary education in Malawi. Mailosi fears that his charcoal burning business for logs of fallen trees buried by the Cyclone is way too far from meeting these needs.

The situation in GVH Mtemangawa is dire as piece works are scarce due to the loss and damage that the cyclone, that was preceded by two other storms, has left in the area. The land in the area is no longer suitable for maize cultivation and the area faces persistent dry spells due to its geographical positioning.

"I am forced to do things that I have never imagined doing like digging out logs of trees and producing charcoal out of them which takes four days just to get less than MK 5, 000. Sometimes I get lost in the moment and in my thoughts even when I am around other people due to thoughts about my loss and how to continue surviving." Expresses Mailosi.

Mailosi applauds CARD Malawi, our implementing partner in the Trocaire Loss and Damage project, for training some community duty bearers to offer psychosocial support to survivors like him. A prior attempt was made by the District's Social Welfare Office which sent a representative two days after the flood but was not able to address the psychosocial needs of people camping at Kapalakoche Primary School. Mailosi believes that this will help people like him to access psychological relief right in their communities.

Some of the initiatives that people in GVH Mtemangawa have been able to implement to minimize loss and damage has been planting trees along Nyamadzere river and mobilizing empty sacks which are filled with sand to construct barriers that prevent flooding waters from invading households. Nevertheless, Cyclone Freedy managed to destroy these temporary structures and a majority community members including Mailosi, cannot afford to contribute empty sacks to reconstruct. Mailosi pleads for more support for the Microgrants initiatives that the community is implementing with support from CARD to achieve meaningful impact.

Currently, Mailosi and his family are temporarily residing in a house of a well-wisher who moved out of the area. Nevertheless, this is another cause for stress because the owner of the house can demand it back any time they wish. His wife spends each and every day searching for the scarce piece works as his husband is burning charcoal. Spending a night on empty stomachs has become normal for them as they earn very little to adequately meet their needs.

The family resides in Thompson village in GVH Mtemangawa, has been left in ruins due to the change of course of Nyamadzere River to people's homes. Mailosi's old house is about 100 meters from the river and one would expect the forest, in the intermediary, to act as a relief but the waters swept all the tree cover along a stretch of about 600 meters.

Going into the deep for survival_Mambundungu

For the past 7 months, Malawi has been facing diminishing stocks of its staple grain, maize, due to a

number of both natural and artificial factors. This has resulted in the use of desperate measures among the poor who are unable to afford the little available maize on the market whose price has risen with a 400% price hike during this period. In the Lower Shire districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa, people are harvesting bitter tubers, called 'Nyika', found in Shire River for both consumption and sale. ArtGlo had a chance to interact with some widowed women from GVH Mambundungu in Nsanje, who gave an account of the psychological trauma they go through as they risk their lives daily for their families.

Dorica Billy (63), has exhausted all the possible means for the survival of her family from picking wood and charcoal for sale, to diving into the Shire River in search of Nyika. She is keeping 2 of the 4 children left by her son who was killed by Cyclone Freedy induced floods last year. After the passing away of her son who was swept away by floods in Makhanga area, she assumed the responsibility of raising her grandchildren. The mother of these children abandoned them due to the death of their father who was the provider of the house.

"I sometimes wish I was the one who should have died that day because my son was the only one who was taking care of all my needs and now has left me the burden of raising his children whom I am failing to provide for their basic and school needs." Lamented Billy.

Billy disclosed that she is failing to pay a school development fund fee at Ndindi Primary School for her children who have been chased out of their respective classes. Every year, primary school learners are required to pay MK 1000 to support development initiatives. During the time she was selling forest products, she was able to afford some of their household needs and would send the children to school but this was not sustainable. This was because of the running battles she used to have with the Department of Forestry Officers who would confiscate any firewood and charcoal that anyone is found with ferrying it to the market.

Another widow, Fainesi Lazalo (48) is failing to have peace of mind because she is struggling to educate and provide the basic necessities for the seven children which was not the case the past 3 years. Both Billy and Lazalo are survivors of the 2021 Cyclone Anna which saw the tremendous swelling of a small stream, sweeping away a new settlement that the Government of Malawi had bought the community. Now, some members of this community, especially the ultra-poor are trapped in adverse poverty and are failing to leave the temporary tents that were constructed for survivors of the tropical storm.

"As each day passes, I am always sad and stressed because my daily challenges continue to persist both in the night and day. The firewood I collect from the forest is not enough to feed my children who cannot be going to school on an empty stomach and without settling their school development fund. That is why I spend most of my time fetching for Nyika." Lamented Lazalo.

To make matters worse, it is not all days that Lazalo is able to collect enough Nyika since she is not the only one fetching Nyika in Shire River. Sometimes she needs to dive deeper to find these tubers and she collects only a few in this scenario. The only piece of land they would have been cultivating is their old



Nyika, a bitter tuber found in Shire River, now a common food in Nsanje.

home close to Shire which is now an island and waterlogged due to excess waters brought about by Cyclone Freddy. The land around where the community is camping, has sandy uncultivable soils and barely receives rains but flooding waters descending from the mountains. Nevertheless, these two women believe that the Psychosocial training, provided by CARD Malawi, that some people in their village received will help in the delivery of support on another level. The two have benefitted from the psychosocial support that members

of the Village Civil Protection Committee (VCPC), Village Headmen and GVH Mambundungu has been rendering before the training. They also believe that the Tfd performances that ArtGlo held in the area will help those who were suffering in silence due to lack of knowledge, to start reaching out.

Nursing multifaceted impacts of loss and damage_Ngabu:



Almondo narrating at the Umunthu Circle in GVH Ngabu

Loss and damage induced by climatic shocks has worsened the psychosocial wellbeing of some survivors who barely have access to support for the same. This is so because Malawi only has one public Mental Health Institution based in Zomba City which most of the poor cannot be able to access. As a result, patients and their guardians normalize their helpless estate and take each day as it comes. Rose Almando (72) from Gilbert Village, GVH Ngabu in Nsanje,

gives an account of her daily struggles as a mother, grandmother, breadwinner and a guardian to both her physically and psychologically challenged husband and sister respectively. “As the breadwinner of my house, I am always worried about how to fend for my family and ensure that my sister’s and my children go to school.” Laments Almando.

Almando’s sister developed a mental health problem after she lost her house and all possessions. She had to automatically bear the responsibility of taking care of her sister and her children although she is also a survivor of non-economic loss and damage in the area. The piece works that she relies on is barely enough and difficult to come by. “In the wee hours of one unfortunate morning, the river swelled and my

household was filled with water. We had no chance to carry along our belongings because we wanted to save our lives.” She narrates.

She further said that she cannot be able to replace her livestock and other possessions since she does not have a permanent and sustainable source of income. On top of that, she is worried about her son’s education who is in his second year at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) who sometimes stays home when his scholarship is delayed. She sometimes fails to even raise transport fees for her son to travel to the school located in Blantyre City.

The Inclusion of her sister and her children to the family has made matters worse for her and she is most of the time stressed about how to make ends meet. She is however appreciative of the Umunthu Circles dialogue that ArtGlo had with the survivors of NELD. At this engagement, she learned that there are some people in her community who received psychosocial training to assist survivors like herself and her sister.

On some climate change mitigation interventions in her area such as tree planting and management, she promised that she will be mobilizing her children to patronize such initiatives since she is elderly and cannot partake in heavy activities. She also believes that the microgrants provided by CARD such as dyke construction and provision of tree seedlings will go a long way in reducing the impact of floods in the area.

Community embarks on tree planting and management_GVH Ngabu

After years of havoc and disturbance of livelihoods due to climatic shocks, people from villages along Khulubvi River in GVH Ngabu have taken matters into their hands to mitigate the impact of the same. The community now has a nursery for trees and plants and manages the same. ArtGlo had a chance to appreciate these restoration activities where community members braved the fear of rain on the material day.

“My concern over floods that disrupt our livelihoods by destroying crops, houses and sometimes loss of life, motivated me to be part of this initiative. Although it is on a volunteer basis, my participation would not only be for me and my family, but the whole community.” said, Lovemore Winji.

According to Winji, trees provide ground cover, enrich soil fertility and reduce run-off considering that the area has flat terrain and is susceptible to flash floods. Women in the community trek for almost 500 meters to draw water from a borehole for irrigation since the Khulubvi river is perennial and by the time of our visit, was still trying. The volunteers utilize a duty roster for each village to ensure equal amounts of effort towards the same.

“I saw it as a great opportunity for me to be part of this tree planting initiative considering the floods that have been happening in our area that has also contributed to widening of rivers due to lack of vegetative cover along river banks.” Explained Chrissy Elias.

Elias added that lack of tree coverage leaves the primary school, community hospital and our crops vulnerable to floods. She believes that this initiative will help to reduce the fear and stress that she has

every rainy season because the trees that we are planting will increase vegetative cover and reduce the impact of floods.



Women watering trees



Elias sharing her motivation

Both Winji and Elias concurred that they plant trees based on the duration of maturity since there is need for a sustained water supply for young trees to survive. The two are appreciative to CARD Malawi for providing more seedlings and tubes for transplanting from their nursery. Early maturing trees and drought resistant species like 'Nimu' have a high survival rate.

Meanwhile, the people from GVH Ngabu chose the construction of a dyke along Khulubvi and a drift to protect a community hospital and Khulubvi primary school and ensure an interrupted flow of goods and services in the area respectively. All this will be made possible through the MK 3.4 million microgrants that CARD Malawi has committed to these projects. Art and Global Health Center held TfD performances to raise awareness and amplify this effort to everyone in the community.

3.4.2. Zomba Case Studies:

Vocational and TfD skills are more sustainable', Says Eliza Chipungo_GVH Mbalu

People that reside in GVH Mbalu are often hit by climatic shocks since the area is low lying and is where one of the major rivers in Zomba feeds into Lake Chilwa. A majority of people are into farming and the

major crop produced in the area is rice. Eliza Chipungo (32), a widow and single mother of four from Mwanyumbu Village under GVH Mbalu in TA Mwambo, is one of these farmers whose livelihood was disrupted when Cyclone Freddy destroyed both her house and crops in the field. Despite this tragedy, her membership in the Titukulane Youth club and Mwambo 1 Youth Network has paved a way to a transformed livelihood for her family through vocational skills training.

After Cyclone Freddy devastated the area, she was among the people placed at an evacuation camp where names of youth club members who were heavily affected were recorded for specialized support. She lived a stressful life as she had to think about how her life would return to normalcy since the crops that she invested in were washed away which heavily affected her family's food security. The education of her children was also disrupted due to damaged roads, bridges, school materials and suspension of classes to accommodate survivors of the storm. With the passage of time, the youth club members who survived the storm were called by CADECOM at TA level to fill applications for interest in the vocational skills training program.

"I applied to do the Tailoring course because I saw it as a great opportunity for me considering that no amount of natural disaster can take away such skills provided that you are alive and well. This is in contrast with farming which only brings trauma due to its susceptibility to climatic shocks." Expressed Chipungo.



Chipungo performing as a TfD actor

Chipungo was so excited upon hearing that she has been considered in the vocational skills training course of her choice. She believes that this would not have been possible if she was not a member of a youth club in her area and urges young people not to ignore such associations since they are the spaces where people expose themselves to life changing opportunities. On December 11th, 2024, all the successful

applicants were called to fill forms of admission and the training commenced four days later.

“Due to my commitment to these training sessions, I am now able to mend my clothes as well as those of my children who used to put on torn clothes due to my inability to raise money to fix the same. I have also managed to design and produce skirts and a women’s guild uniform for myself.” Said Chipungo.

Apart from tailoring, she is also passionate about Theatre and she was one of the TfD actors that captivated the audience in both the two phases of the Arts for Climate Change Project. She has been able to apply the TfD knowledge and skills that she acquired through Art and Global Health Center Africa (ArtGlo) in to sensitize and engage participants in different spaces. Together with her colleagues at her Youth Club in 2023, she has engaged the youth and the community in issues to do with Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Cholera prevention campaign among others.

During the first Phase of the Arts for Climate Change project, it was discovered that lack of a stable source of income for survivors of climate change induced loss and damage contributes to psychological trauma and disrupts the performance of children and quality of education. After consultation with community members, our implementation partner is Zomba, CADECOM, identified youth from registered youth clubs in TA Mwambo to benefit from the Vocational Skills training initiative.

Stakeholders agree that first aid psychosocial support is the responsibility from everyone_GVHs Mbalu and Makawa:

A majority of people in Malawi, regard underlying mental conditions as a least concern which according to the Malawi Police Service (MPS) has led to a spike in suicide cases from 135 cases to 253 cases in the first half of 2022 and 2023 respectively. Survivors of psychological trauma induced by loss and damage due to climatic shocks, are susceptible to executing such thoughts when they fail to access psychosocial support in time.

Art and Global Health Center Africa, engaged duty bearers and the youth from GVHs Mbalu and Makawa to unearth their lived experiences with regard to psychosocial support systems at their disposal in their communities. In these interactions, participants emphasized that it is the duty of everyone to take part in assisting people that find themselves mentally distressed due to climate change induced loss and damage to avoid execution of rational decisions which has far reaching implications to their immediate surroundings and the nation at large.

“It took the effort of some community members who upon noticing a change in the social behaviour of one of the survivors of loss and damage, to reduce the depression he was in. The farmer started self-isolation and was not cheerful in jovial moments as he was previously doing ever since his field of rice, ready for harvest, was submerged by flooding water.” Explained Mapiri, Thondwe Youth Club member.



Stakeholders breaking the ice through dance

Stakeholders sharing their perspectives

He further said that some friends of the farmer approached duty bearers to summon their friend who was not giving them a clear explanation for the sudden change. After the cause was identified to be loss of the rice field which was the source of his livelihood, he was also told that a majority of people are in a similar predicament but are living positively as each day passes. He finally accepted his fate and resumed his normal life.

Mapiri himself lost his field and house but did not let that loss overwhelm him for he was assured that it is not only him who lost the source of their livelihood. Some people in his community react by letting it out through crying, especially women, which sometimes call public attention whilst men suffer in silence. It was also shared that some men abandon their households when they face similar situations.

“After observing that he has overstayed at the lake, his wife sent his sons to check up on him but he bluntly told them that he cannot go back to a place where he has no reason to stay at.” Said Mr Jimu, a member of GVH Mbalu Village Disaster Response Committee (VDRC).

It has been the tendency of some men in the two GVHs to overstay in temporary shelters around the shores of Lake Chilwa as fishermen and not return back to their families. They do this either unwillingly or deliberately due to persistent climatic shocks that lead to loss of agricultural investments considering that the area is one of Malawi’s rice rich hotspots. This has had ripple effects to the abandoned families where the burden is left on women who are overwhelmed with the responsibility of raising children. This also translates to rising cases of school dropout due to lack of financial support towards educational needs especially among young girls who resort to forced or voluntary early marriages.

“One of the women in Jalasi village married off her 15 years old daughter to a young man citing that she cannot be able to pay for her secondary education when she gets selected. After learning about the matter, we consulted the Child Protection worker (CPW) and the Jali Police Officer to thoroughly investigate the issue since the mother was not forthcoming on the same.” Narrated Mr Saidi, Village Disaster Response Committee Chairperson for GVH Makawa.

Saidi added that the intervention led to the woman confessing that she indeed forced her daughter into marriage and the matter was taken to the police station. Upon knowing that the law enforcers are hunting for the young man who married the girl, he escapes to Blantyre and the marriage is ended. The girl is now back to school after missing classes almost the whole of 2023 and will be seating for this year's Malawi National Examinations Board's (MANEB) Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (PLSCE).

It is therefore worth noting that the psychosocial training that some members of these communities received, is a step in the right direction as it will amplify and strengthen the community led initiatives on the same. Our implementing partner, in the Arts for Climate Action Phase II, CADECOM, provided the training to representatives VDRCs, Village Development Committees (VDCs), community and religious leaders.

4. Key Outcomes

These outcomes reflect the success of the activities in fostering community engagement, addressing climate-related issues holistically, and promoting resilience-building initiatives in the face of environmental challenges.

1. **Community-wide Engagement in Climate Action:** The TfD performances successfully engaged over 2683 individuals across four Group Village Headmen (GVH) areas in Nsanje District through participatory arts initiatives, significantly raising awareness and knowledge about climate change and its impacts. The initiative successfully brought together a total of 819 community members of Mbalu and Makawa to participate in dissemination of messages on vocational trainings, as well as detection and referral support structures thereby enhancing participant understanding of support networks.
 - a. The active involvement of community members during performances and other project activities has been a key factor in the project's success, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to climate action.
2. **Collaboration to Prevent Corruption:** The Village Civil Protection Committee (VCPC) and Village Development Committee (VDC) in both districts have pledged to work together to prevent any corrupt practices or misuse of resources throughout the dyke construction project, ensuring transparency and accountability.
3. **Intensified outreach and awareness efforts:** The trained religious leaders in GVH Mbalu and Makawa conducted an awareness meeting in the community to make people aware of the available psycho-social response structures. Inter-faith conversations have been fostered and dialogues centered on mental health and well-being encouraged in various religious settings in the communities.

Members of the drama clubs in Nsanje and Zomba, among others, are inspired to disseminate psycho-social insights through dramatic expressions.
4. **Enhanced Psycho-social Support and Resilience Awareness:** The activities in Nsanje and Zomba have highlighted the importance of mental health, especially in the aftermath of floods, with training provided by CARD and CADECOM to address mental health issues. Community leaders and members have committed to supporting those affected by mental health challenges, recognizing the serious impact of such issues, with notable intent to bridge the gap in youth engagement.

Significant strides in demystifying mental health issues as not taboos, leading to a more empathetic community culture. A heightened focus on communal support, encouraging individuals to look out for one another.

5. **Community Mobilization for Resource Gathering:** Community members in Nsanje have agreed to mobilize necessary resources such as sand, water, and stones, and to assist builders during the dyke construction process, demonstrating strong communal support for the project. There was also re-invigorated community participation.

6. **Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Mental Health:** The awareness has brought to light the intertwined issues of GBV and mental health, with participants actively discussing and recognizing the importance of addressing these challenges as part of the broader climate action and resilience efforts.

5. Key Challenges

In the process of awareness creation and documentation of case studies we noted the following challenges;

1. **Gendered Distribution of Labor:** In the discussions with drama club members and stakeholders it was noted that there are predefined roles for youth and men to assist builders and fetch stones and sand, alongside women fetching water and sand. This presents a challenge as it might not take into account individual capabilities or preferences, potentially limiting effective participation and engagement. However, the performances discouraged such practices.
2. **Lack of Trust:** In the course of a performance in GVH Mbalu, it was noted that the majority of the community members that patronized the performance showed lack of trust in one of the trained religious leaders. This presents a challenge because prevailing lack of trust in certain faith leaders could deter community members from seeking necessary support for mental health issues. In addition, during the performances in Mbenje and Ngabu, participants showed lack of trust emanating from insufficient participation in planning and utilization of funds in the past, but our performances encouraged transparency through the discussions and action plans that were formulated.
3. **Absenteeism:** In the discussions with drama club members and stakeholders from Makawa and Mbalu, participants shared some challenges in the vocational training program. They mentioned notable absenteeism of the trainees from vocational skills training sessions due to daily struggle to meet basic needs such as food for their families.
4. **Insufficient Exemplary Leadership:** In both districts, community members through post performance interviews revealed that some leaders are not participating in community activities; however, ArtGlo anticipates that the performances will lead to leadership showing commitment by participating in communal activities.
5. **Lack of participation of the youth:** During Umunthu circle with members from Mtemangawa and Mambundungu, it was mentioned that there is a general disinterest among the youth in participating in community engagement activities. Our engagement encouraged utilization of spaces where youth are present to disseminate the information.

6. Key Recommendations

Addressing the challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes fostering open communication and engagement strategies, implementing transparent financial and project management practices, reconsidering labor distribution strategies to accommodate diverse capabilities of the genders, improving community mobilization and engagement, and providing adequate support and preparation for participatory arts performance groups. Implementing these recommendations can help build on the successes of the "Arts for Climate Action" project, ensuring sustainable, and community-driven responses to climate change that are informed by local knowledge, priorities, and capacities. They include;

1. **Strengthen and Diversify Climate Resilience Measures:** As one way of ensuring sustainability, investigate and integrate traditional ecological knowledge and modern techniques to address climate change impacts more comprehensively, by going beyond strategies such as dyke construction and bamboo planting.
2. **Enhance Psycho-social Support Systems:** Develop and implement more structured psychosocial support programs to address the mental health needs arising from climate-induced disasters. This should include training more community members in psycho-social support, establishing clear referral pathways to professional mental health services, and integrating mental health awareness into all community engagement activities.
3. **Increase Access to Micro-grants and Financial Support:** Scale up the provision of micro-grants and explore additional funding mechanisms to support community-led climate resilience projects. Enhance community understanding of micro-grants and their application processes to ensure broader and more effective utilization of these resources.
4. **Youth Engagement and Inclusion:** To address the issues of low patronage among the youth, design targeted initiatives to actively involve youth in climate action and decision-making processes. Leverage interests such as sports, music, technology, and social media as platforms for engagement and education on climate resilience and sustainability. Thus, encourage active youth participation, recognizing their role as agents of change and future leaders.
5. **Ownership:** Encourage dedication and a sense of ownership among community members, particularly highlighting the impact on future generations' education and development. Approach the dyke building project with a spirit of volunteerism, emphasizing the collective responsibility of the villagers in mitigating flood risks.
6. **Expand Participatory Arts for Community Engagement:** Continue and expand participatory arts programs across additional communities. These initiatives have proven effective in engaging diverse community members, raising awareness, unearthing deeper issues, and fostering collective action on climate change resilience. Tailoring arts programs to local cultures and contexts can further enhance participation and impact.
7. **Engagement and Participation Variability:** Ensuring consistent engagement and participation across different GVHs can be challenging, with factors such as cultural differences, climate change skepticism, and competing daily survival priorities influencing participation levels. Tailoring approaches to meet local contexts and finding ways to directly connect climate action with community members' immediate concerns and needs are crucial for overcoming these barriers.

8. **Utilize Cultural Festivals to Bridge Community Divides:** Leverage cultural festivals as a strategic approach to alleviate existing tensions between Mbalu and Makawa. Ensuring equitable hosting opportunities can foster unity and attendance from both communities.
9. **Extend the Implementation Period for Cultural Festivals:** Recognize that cultural festivals encompass various activities beyond a single day's event. A longer implementation period should be considered to fully engage the community and achieve optimal outcomes.
10. **Advocate for Policy Support and Collaboration:** Engage with policymakers, NGOs, and other stakeholders to advocate for supportive policies and collaborative efforts that bolster community resilience to climate change. Highlighting the project's successes and challenges can help inform policy development and encourage the allocation of resources towards community-based climate action initiatives.