

# Launching Road-Run Off Water Harvesting Campaign for 2017/18 Season in Malawi

*(Mitundu and Chiwamba EPAs , Lilongwe District, Central Malawi)*

## Introduction

While the onset of rains marks the beginning of the cropping season in Malawi, it also brings a lot of challenges like flooding, soil erosion and damage to infrastructure including roads. Road run off if not properly managed is a hassle for many farmers whose fields lie along or nearby water ways, roads or footpaths. To avert these, farmers of Mitundu and Chiwamba Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) and Rainwater Harvesting Association of Malawi (RHAM) through the flood Based Livelihood Network Malawi Chapter (FBLN - Mw) on 1<sup>st</sup> December, 2017 launched *roads for water* activities for the 2017/2018 growing season. In total 86 farmers are participating in the programme this year up from 17 farmers who were trained last year. These farmers also testified the impact of rain water harvesting for the 2016/17 growing season.



Water Absorption Trenches (WATs), Chiwamba EPA.

## Benefits from Road Water Harvesting

The Group Village Headman Kanyumbu outlined some of the benefits from road runoff harvesting. These include farmlands having reduced soil erosion, less wash away of roads and more ground water recharge. Overall there is improved crop production due to increased soil moisture.

## **Refresher Training**

At the beginning of the Campaign, a refresher training on road run off harvesting was conducted in Mitundu EPA. Farmers were taken through the various technologies for harvesting road run off. Farmers also gave account of the technologies that they implemented last year and how they have benefited from them. Some of the technologies used by farmers include infiltration pits, farm ponds, Swales, Contour continuous trenches CCTs and Water Absorption trenches (WATs).



Mitundu Farmers with their Work-plan

## **Progress made**

### **Mitundu EPA**

In Mitundu EPA, the number of farmers participating in road water harvesting has increased from 17 last year to 44 this growing season. All these farmers are those whose farms were being eroded as they lie within an extensive water way covering the 27 Ha. In total 146 pits of various sizes have been excavated for harvesting road run off. These farmers are directly benefiting from the interventions.

The community has formed *Kagwanupenya Rainwater Harvesting Club* which has an executive committee and its chairperson is Watson Wister. The group has raised 100 tangerine seedlings which they plan to plant this growing season to reinforce road water harvesting structures. The group has this year been supported with shovels and hoes to enable them excavate the water harvesting structures on a larger scale.

### **Chiwamba EPA**

Farmers in Chiwamba EPA have been introduced to road run off harvesting this year and they have already started excavating various pits for harnessing and storing road run off.

Though this is the first year, farmers have shown a lot of enthusiasm to harness road run and turn its destructive effects into an opportunity. 41 farmers have so far been trained in this area and have already started work in their fields.



Roadside Pits (Chiwamba EPA)

### Impacts

The techniques are making a significant impact by protecting the roads from damage and also enhancing ground water recharge. The following pictures illustrate the impacts;



*Condition of road before implementation*



*The place after road run off harvesting*



*Road side pits*



*In-field infiltration pits*



*Before*



*After*

## **Way Forward**

A number of activities have been planned to upscale the practise in the two EPAs. Field day will be conducted in January 2018. Farmer exchange visits have also been scheduled so that the farmers can visit each other and learn from each other on how they are harvesting road run off.

In order to increase awareness, journalist from various media houses will be taken on a field visit to project sites s that they can appreciate the impact of the technologies and play their part in promoting the practice.