

KULERA BIODIVERSITY PROJECT PROFILE

Introduction and Problem Statement

The Biodiversity APS clearly articulated the problem to be addressed. It is reiterated in the context of this proposal to provide the background for our recommended strategy and implementation plan. We have entitled the program the “**Kulera Biodiversity Project**” after the Chichewa term Kulera - to nurture, look after, enrich – a description that aptly reflects the project’s goal from a Malawi perspective which is fully aligned with current policies and strategies of government, USAID and other key donors. Assessments reveal that mounting population pressures have led to severe degradation of the country’s natural resources from unsustainable land-use practices and encroachment into key protected areas. The challenges to address these problems are exacerbated by a host of shortcomings: poor governance, inefficient value chains, weak market linkages, gender inequality, HIV/AIDS, flimsy support services, and limited opportunities to generate income. The results are eroding the capacity of agriculture and the natural resource base to support Malawi’s dense and growing population.

The Kulera Team

The team assembled by Total LandCare (TLC) comprises local and international organizations with the experience, capabilities and background to tackle the diverse challenges and opportunities articulated in the APS. Key partners include Washington State University (WSU), CARE International and Terra Global Capital (TGC). This core team is complemented by an impressive group of specialized partners to support distinct components of the project. With its wealth of experience, diverse capabilities and strong local presence, the Kulera team is uniquely positioned to deliver quality results on a scale that will provide an attractive return to USAID. Of special note is the immense leverage from 1) agreements and GDAs with Kulera’s private partners, 2) existing programs and operations around the targeted areas (e.g., TLC’s MACC Project with the Norwegian Government and FAO’s Cassava Food Security Project, 3) close relationships established with communities, and 4) long-standing partnerships forged with Government, donor, NGO and private sector institutions. These attributes offer tremendous value for swift and efficient mobilization under a structured plan of operation to produce lasting impacts.

Consultations and Assessments

TLC’s proposal was developed through a highly collaborative process, involving senior technical staff from all TLC Team Partners. This process included extensive consultations with officials from all relevant GOM Ministries and Departments to incorporate their respective visions into our approach and to ensure alignment with key national and international policies and strategies¹. Consultations also involved leaders of community-based organizations around protected areas and local private sector firms to better understand the challenges and opportunities from their perspective. Assessments of development initiatives in Malawi and elsewhere were undertaken to document key accomplishments, successes, and lessons as a foundation for the project’s strategic focus. Given the crosscutting nature of the project, and the need to establish links with broader development initiatives, extensive consultations were made with USAID/Malawi, other donors and implementing organizations engaged in Malawi’s development agenda. Strong interest was expressed to forge linkages with the TLC Team, notably with the World Bank, Norwegian Embassy, and the EU based on new or recent initiatives by these organizations in or around the target areas.

¹ Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Malawi’s Agricultural Development Program (ADP); Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and New Partnerships for Africa Development (NEPAD).

Technical Approach

Kulera is targeting 45,000 resource poor households around 4 protected areas (PAs), 3 of which are mentioned in the APS: the Nyika-Vwaza complex, Mkuwazi Forest Reserve and Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve. Ntchisi Forest Reserve was also included because of its proximity to Nkhotakota and because TLC has established operations in that area. Collectively, these PAs encompass 6102 km², which excludes the 10 km border zone around their perimeter.

Building on achievements, lessons and institutional structures established to date, the biodiversity challenges in these areas will be tackled from a community-based cross-sectoral, perspective. The aim is to create synergies for increased effectiveness and impact under a strategy comprising 3 inter-linked objectives:

1. **Improved governance of PAs** through a participatory, decentralized structure that provides economic incentives to support sustainable natural resource management.
2. **Improved rural livelihoods** around the borders of protected areas under a framework that promotes increased food security, diversification, sound resource management, village savings and loans, and incomes. The ultimate goal is to transform livelihoods from subsistence survival to thriving rural enterprises that are self sufficient.
3. **Increased rural incomes** from eco-tourism and enterprises among local producers and entrepreneurs to produce, process and market agricultural and natural products. A value chain approach will be used to evaluate the progress and status of products and enterprise initiatives to date to target interventions that address critical weaknesses or gaps.

Important cross-cutting initiatives are being incorporated under this framework with emphasis on a) development of carbon markets and related revenue streams, b) potential alternative energy sources, c) mainstreaming issues of gender, HIV/AIDS, and disaster risk reduction and response, and d) support to households dependent on exploiting reserve resources by efforts to offer alternative livelihood strategies. All project activities will include robust monitoring systems to track project impacts on natural resources and livelihoods.

Personnel

Our Chief of Party, Dr. Michael Whiteman, will be backed by Dr Trent Bunderson and Zwide Jere to coordinate partner responsibilities and field programs. Dr Whiteman fully meets the requirements of this position with the requisite leadership skills and experience in project management, USAID program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, and communications. Similarly, all key personnel and short-term specialists are exceptionally qualified to fulfill the needs of the project. In short, Kulera has assembled a formidable team of professionals, which will culminate in a highly successful project.

Institutional Capabilities and Management Systems

Capability statements and past performance reports of key partners confirm a track record of responsive performance and superior technical implementation with projects of similar size and complexity. Management systems are in place to satisfy the full range of project needs by USAID. These systems include built-in features for coordinating the multiple responsibilities of different partners, problem-solving, timely submission of reports, vigorous accounting and cost-control measures, and responsive backup support to all partners and collaborators.

For more information, contact us at total.landcare.mw@gmail.com