

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PRO-RESILIENCE ACTION MALAWI

30 September 2020

Presented by:

Natasha Siyumbwa, Idinsight

T. Arthur Chibwana, Christian Aid

IFPRI Malawi Virtual Brown Bag Seminar

AGENDA

1. Introduction to IDinsight
2. Introduction to Christian Aid
3. Overview of the SCTP
4. Overview of Pro-ACT
5. Motivation for the study
6. Study design
7. Key findings and recommendations
8. Conclusion

OVERVIEW OF IDINSIGHT

- IDinsight is an NGO that helps leaders make decisions using **data and evidence**
- IDinsight has worked in **20 countries** across **Africa** and **Asia**
- IDinsight is **embedded** in the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, and provides **technical support** to the SCTP on **data systems strengthening** and **social protection plus**
- IDinsight's work in Malawi includes:



The SCTP
MoGCD&SW



Social protection policy
MOFEP&D



FARMSE Graduation
Programme



The NGO Board

OVERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN AID

- Christian Aid (CA) is a partnership of people, churches and local organizations committed to **ending poverty worldwide**
- CA has worked in **37 countries** across **Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean**
- CA has implemented several **Cash+** interventions providing complementary services to **Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) beneficiaries**
- CA's work in Malawi focuses on three broad strategic areas:

Economic Justice

Social Protection, Inclusive Markets And Enterprise Development, Financial Inclusion, Social Inequality And Poverty Alleviation, and Accountable Governance

Health Justice

HIV/AIDS, Nutrition and Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health

Climate Justice

Climate Change Responses, Humanitarian, And Resilience

THE SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME

Programme	The SCTP provides unconditional cash transfers to almost 300,000 ultra-poor and labour-constrained households
Implementer	The Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
Goal	To provide consumption support to Malawi's poorest in order to build resilience to food insecurity
Timeline	2006 - present
Target group	Programme beneficiaries must be labour-constrained and ultra-poor

THE ACTION: PRO-ACT MLUMIKIZI

Programme

Pro-Resilience Action: Building Resilience to Food and Nutrition Security (Pro-ACT) Malawi is funded by the EU

Implementer

The programme is implemented by two consortia. The MLUMIKIZI consortia is led by Christian Aid (CA)

Goal

Reduce food and nutrition insecurity of 65,000 SCTP beneficiaries in the 7 targeted districts

Timeline

2017 to 2020

Target group

SCTP participants

BENEFICIARY PROFILING AND CLASSIFICATION

- SCT beneficiaries are categorized into **two primary groupings (PG)** based on their potential to **step out, step up, or remain** in need of safety-nets
- Beneficiaries **receive sets of interventions** that suit their capacities **based on their PG**
- The interventions cover **asset building, economic participation, mind-set change** and **community system strengthening**

PG-Category	Profile	Eligibility Criteria
PG-1	Hanging in	Have no land, have no labour capacity
		Have land, have no labour capacity
PG-2	Stepping up and out	Have land and labour
		Have no land, but have labour

A household has labour capacity if at least one member of the household is aged 19-64, is fit for work, and is not attending school.

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

- **Christian Aid** and **IDinsight** partnered to conduct a study assessing participant's experiences with three Pro-ACT interventions:



Lean season cash top ups
(CTUs)



Village savings and loans
(VSLs)



Climate smart agriculture
(CSA)

- The purpose of the study was to draw lessons that may **inform cash plus programming** for Pro-ACT as well as the numerous cash plus actors in Malawi
- Specifically, the learnings will be:

Incorporated into Pro-ACT's next phase, Social Support for Resilience (SoSuRe)

Shared with key cash plus stakeholders to inform cash plus policy and programme design

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Type of study	Descriptive study
Study sites	Neno district (Symon and Chekuchecku TAs) Mzimba North district (Mpherembe and Mtwalo TAs)
Timeline	March – June 2020
Sample	371 households 10 key informants
Tools	Household survey Key informant interviews

INTERVENTIONS OF INTEREST

Intervention	Activity	Outcome
Lean Season Cash Top-Ups (CTUs)	PG-2 participants receive CTUs during the lean season	Participants focus on farming and do not engage in negative lean season coping strategies
Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLs)	PG-1 and PG-2 participants are mobilized to join or form VSLs , and receive trainings	Participants accumulate savings and have access to financial services
Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)	PG-2 participants are encouraged to attend CSA trainings and adopt CSA practices	Participants improve their household's production for improved food and nutrition security


**** PG-1 is HHs with no labour capacity, PG-2 is HHs with labour capacity****



A household has labour capacity if at least one member of the household is aged 19-64, is fit for work, and is not attending school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

- 1 Are the programme households categorised and targeted as intended?
- 2 Are the key interventions likely to achieve their intended outputs and outcomes?
- 3 What are areas for improvements in the implementation of the programme?



Tool	Sample	Analysis	Output
Household interviews	371 HHs were selected using a two-stage cluster design. The sample was stratified on PG and TA	Stata was used to adjust final estimates with population weights and generate statistics	Beneficiary experiences
Key informant interviews	10 key informants, including implementing partners and government officers, were interviewed	Key informant interview notes were aggregated in Microsoft Excel and analysed thematically	Implementer feedback

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

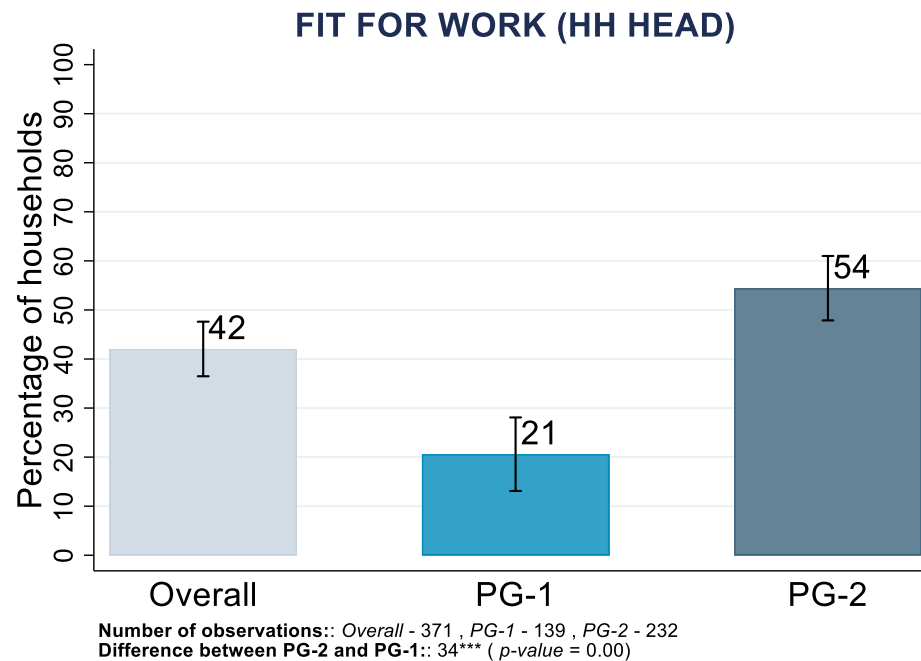
- The study **did not attempt** to determine whether the interventions had a **causal impact** on participants' livelihoods or resilience
- The results are **only representative of the Pro-ACT beneficiary population living in the selected TAs in the two districts**
- Due to unforeseen circumstances, such as funerals and COVID-19, the **survey team only reached 80% of respondents in three out of four TAs**, and we were **unable to conduct focus group discussions** with field workers

District	Traditional Authority	Clusters reached	Respondents reached
Mzimba North	Mpherembe	100%	83%
	Mtwalo	100%	81%
Neno	Chekucheku	100%	100%
	Symon	100%	82%

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LABOUR CAPACITY IS AN APPROPRIATE CLASSIFIER FOR SCTP BENEFICIARIES

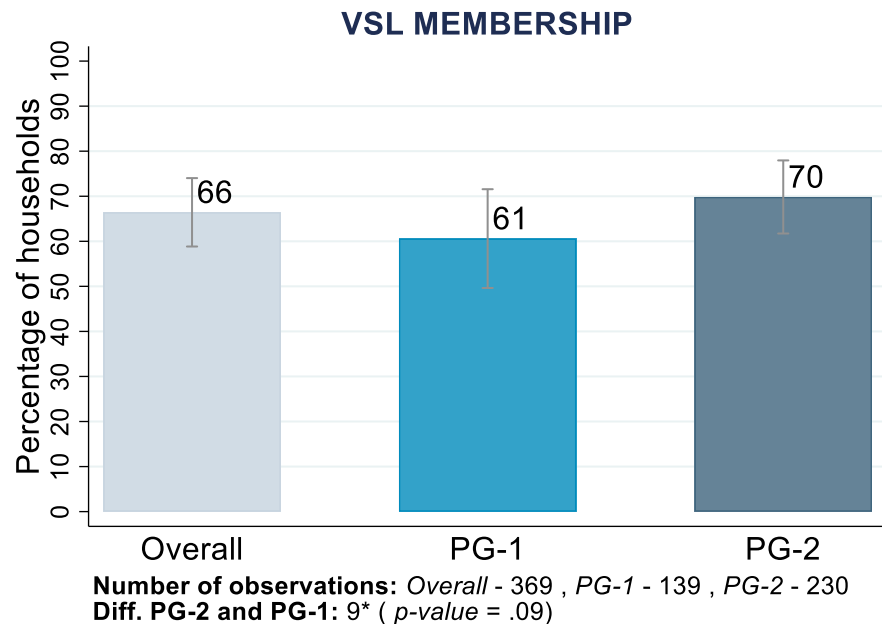
- 60% of households in the study have labour capacity but only 42% have HH heads that are fit for work (FFW)



Implementers should classify beneficiaries using characteristics that indicate whether they can fully participate in interventions

THE MOST VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS ARE NOT ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN VSLs

- 66% of participant households had **members in a VSL**
- 69% of the non-VSL beneficiaries did not join a VSL because they **could not afford the minimum contribution**, suggesting that the most vulnerable households are not joining VSLs



Implementers could encourage beneficiaries to save by offering sensitisation/coaching on financial literacy to beneficiaries at pay points

VSL MEMBERS HAVE ACCESS TO AND USE FINANCIAL SERVICES

- **92%** of VSL members **have access to a social emergency fund (SEF)** and **27%** withdrew money from it
 - Only **7%** of participants with access to a SEF felt that there was a time when they **should have received money from the SEF but did not**
- **62%** of VSL members have **requested a loan**, with **99%** of those **receiving it**
- **82%** of VSL members have **received their share-out** after a cycle of saving
- This is an indication that VSLs in communities are **well functioning** and **servicing their intended purpose**



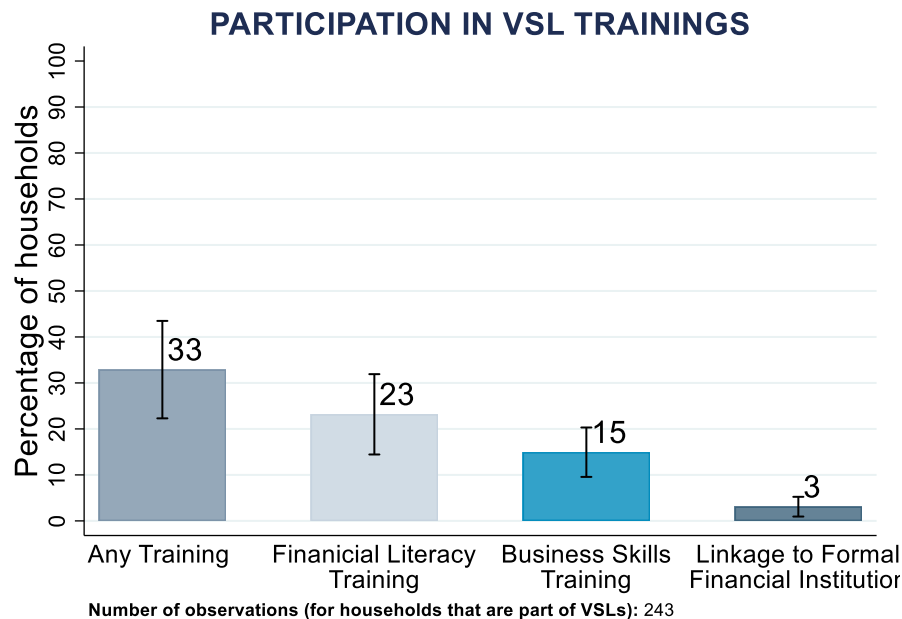
Implementers should continue to promote VSL membership as VSLs seem to be working well for those that join them



Policy makers should continue to promote VSLs as a means of financially including the poor and the ultra-poor

VSL MEMBERS FOUND SUPPLEMENTARY TRAININGS USEFUL

- Only **33%** of VSL members participated in supplementary trainings, but **100%** who participated in them found them useful.



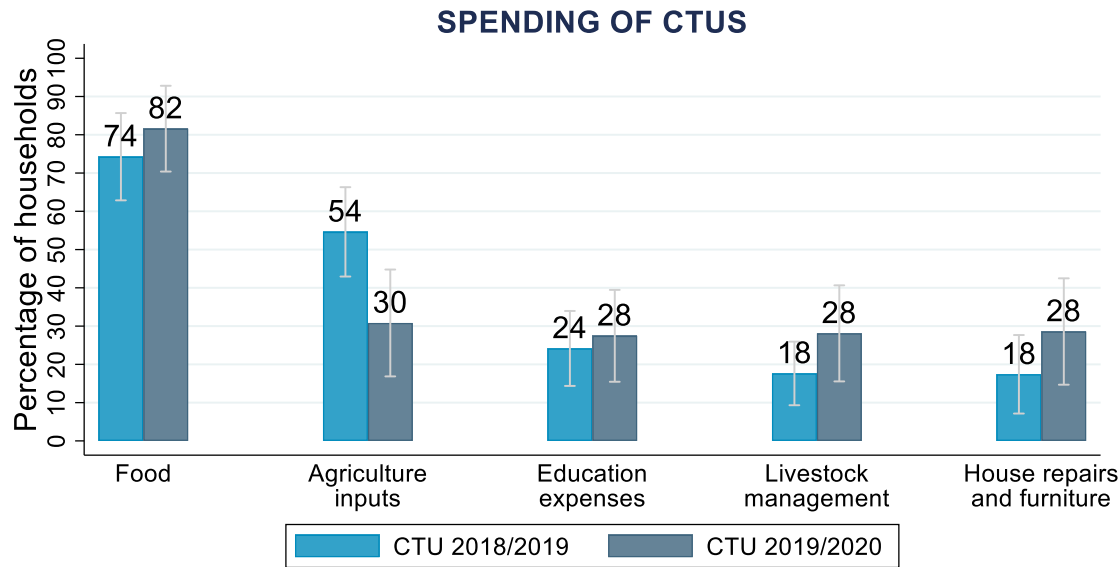
Implementers should sensitize beneficiaries on VSLs and the available trainings in their area during cash transfers



Implementers should further investigate barriers to beneficiaries' participation in supplementary trainings

CTU RECIPIENTS SPEND THEIR TRANSFERS AS INTENDED

- Households spend CTUs on consumption as well as productive activities such as agriculture inputs and livestock management, as intended by the programme



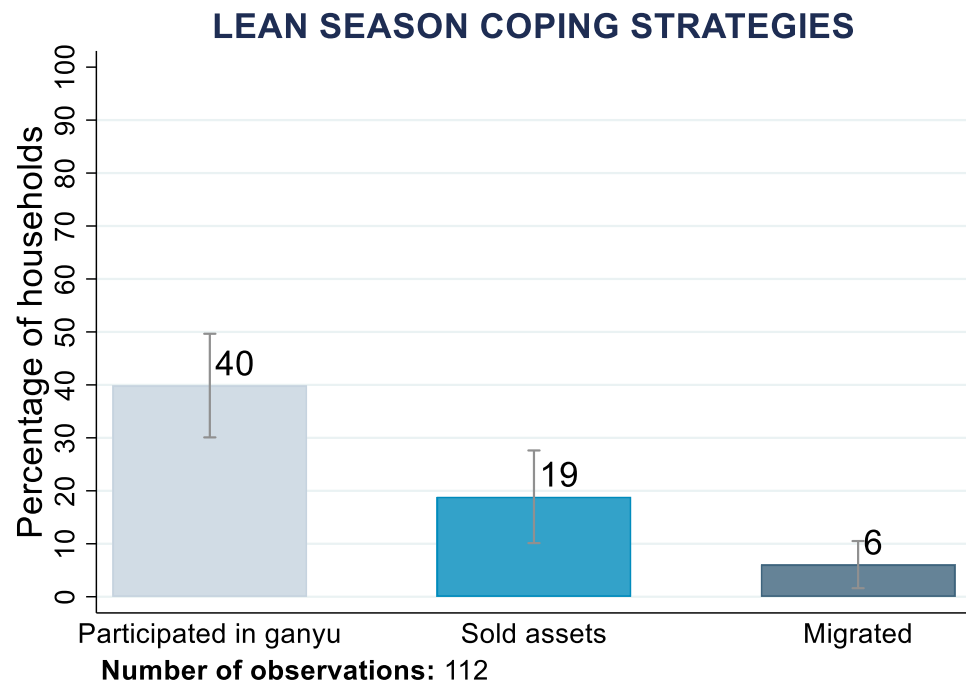
Number of observations: CTU 2018/2019: 75; CTU 2019/2020: 72



Implementers should further promote productive-oriented CTUs (in addition to consumption-oriented CTUs)

CTU RECIPIENTS PARTICIPATED IN NEGATIVE LEAN SEASON COPING STRATEGIES

- **19%** of CTU recipients **sold assets** and **40%** engaged in **ganyu** due to the lean season
- Key informants also reported that beneficiaries' main complaint via the GRM is insufficient CTU levels



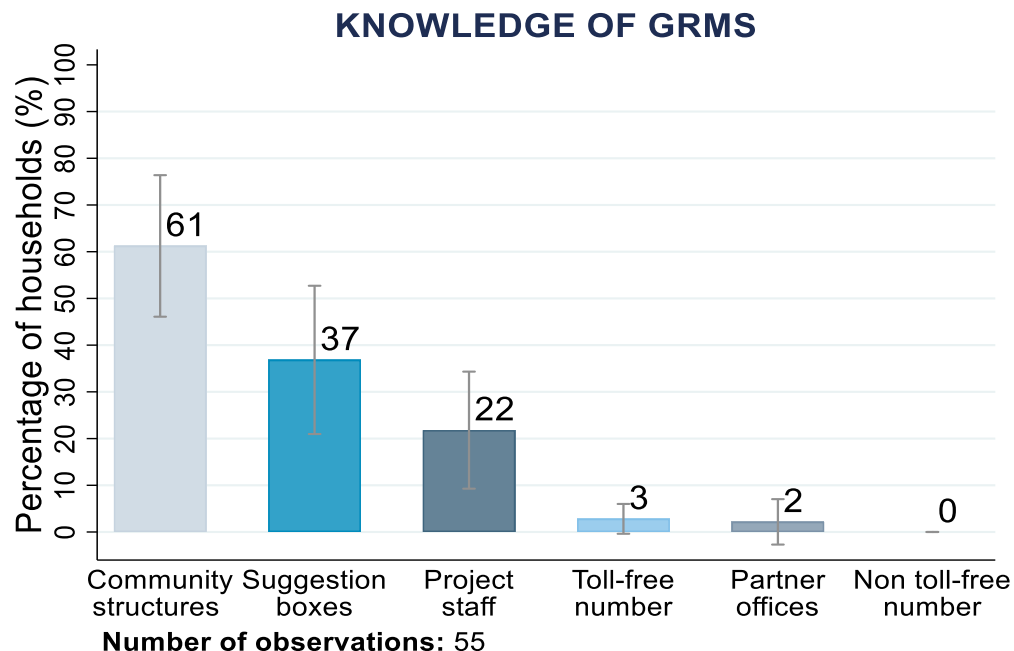
Implementers should promote interventions that reduce the number of food deficit months to reduce participation in negative coping strategies



Implementers should weigh the trade-off between increasing CTU levels and increasing coverage

HALF OF CTU RECIPIENTS ARE NOT AWARE OF WAYS TO FILE THEIR GRIEVANCES

- **52% of CTU recipients** were unaware of ways to file their grievances about the programme
- Of those that were aware, the most commonly known mechanisms were **community structures (61%)** and **suggestion boxes (37%)**



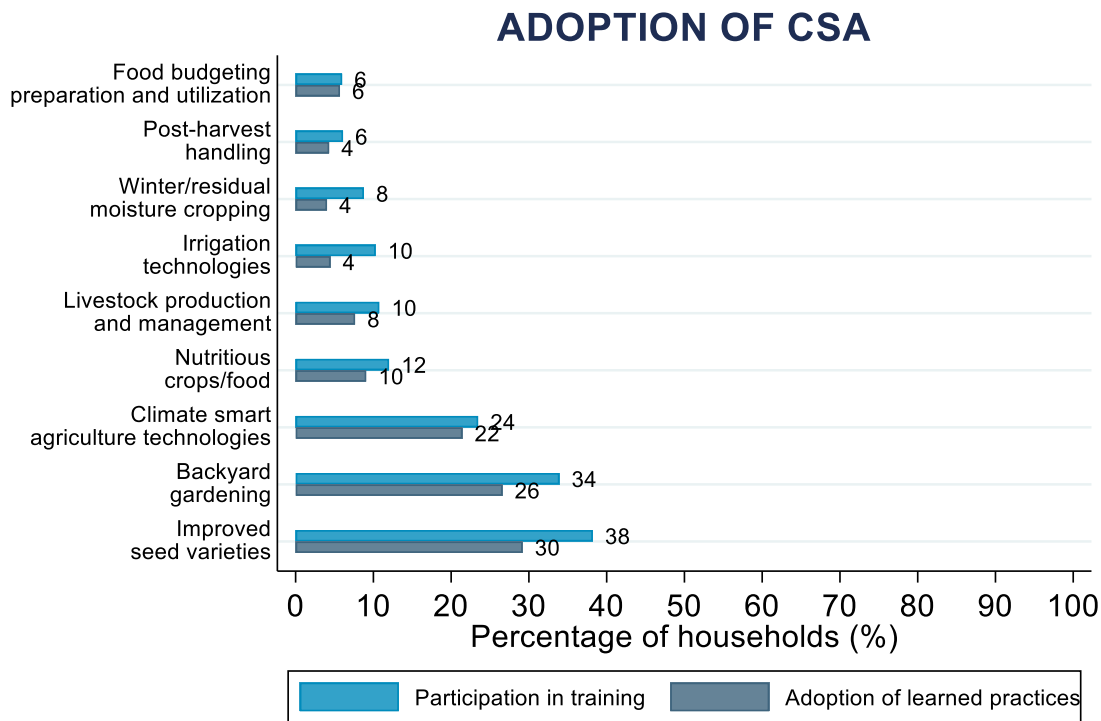
Implementers should prioritize sensitizing programme participants on available grievance redress mechanisms



Policy makers should consider integrating NGO programmes into the new harmonized grievance redress mechanism

CSA TRAINING ATTENDEES ADOPTED THE TECHNIQUES TAUGHT

- 59% of programme participants **attended at least one training**, and **most attendees report adopting the practices** and techniques taught
- This shows that if participants attend trainings, they are likely to adopt the practices taught



Number of observations: 345



Implementers should prioritize encouraging participants to attend trainings

GOVERNMENT AND NGO DSA GUIDELINES DO NOT ALIGN

- Key informants (KIs) reported that Government, and cash plus implementers have **faced challenges in aligning government and NGO daily subsistence allowance (DSA) guidelines**
- Tensions arise because **NGOs provide higher DSAs** than the government or other NGOs
- These tensions can lead to **delays or weaknesses in programme implementation.**
- The government and donors have **co-signed harmonized DSA** guidelines for all donor-funded projects



District councils should prioritize enforcing the harmonized DSA guidelines for all NGOs in the district and sensitize government workers on the rates

THE PROGRAMME FACED CHALLENGES IN DELIVERING INTERVENTIONS TO ISOLATED PARTICIPANTS

- Pro-ACT and the SCTP **deliver interventions at cluster level** to keep **logistics simple** and **implementation affordable**
- KIs reported that it is **difficult and costly to deliver trainings** or **conduct monitoring** in **isolated clusters** or **clusters with few participants**
- This created **barriers for participants on the outskirts of the cluster** to access the interventions, and is a **common problem** faced by both the SCTP and other cash plus implementers.



Implementers should accommodate beneficiaries located far away from implementation sites by enhancing lead farmer or para-extension models



Implementers should explore alternative ways to deliver extensions services, including using radio, phones, and information fliers

THE SCTP AND CASH PLUS IMPLEMENTERS FACE SIMILAR CHALLENGES IN PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

- The challenges identified are **not unique to Pro-ACT**; other cash plus stakeholders face similar challenges
- The SCTP is considering including a learning agenda in its **5-year strategy** enabling NGOs to align their studies with **government priorities**
- The government could also **keep track of evaluations** to allow for NGOs to **coordinate and share learnings** more easily



Once the government implements the learning agenda, implementers should take government priorities into account when designing evaluations



The social protection policy holder can prioritize soliciting learnings from well designed evaluations to better guide implementers to maximize impact

CONCLUSION

- There are **strong indications** the three interventions are **achieving their intended outputs and outcomes** in Mzimba North and Neno:



Only 19% of CTU recipients reported selling assets and 7% reported migrating due to the lean season, which are negative coping strategies



66% of participant HHs have members that are part of VSLs and almost all VSL members access loans and many use other VSL financial services



59% of participant HHs have members that attended CSA trainings and most that attend report adopting the practices taught and find them better than their usual practices

****The study did not attempt to determine whether the interventions**
had a causal impact on participants' livelihoods or resilience**

CONCLUSION

- The study also identified **areas of improvement** for future resilience programmes, such as **SoSuRe**, and **cash plus programmes** more generally
- Cash plus programmes should:



Continue to promote VSLs by utilizing pay points for sensitization and investigate remaining barriers to beneficiaries joining VSLs and attending VSL supplementary trainings



Prioritize coordination between government and NGOs at community, district and central level to align on DSA, GRMs, monitoring and evaluations



Design programmes to include innovative means (such as para-extension models and multi-media) to reach beneficiaries in hard to reach areas

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CASH PLUS IMPLEMENTERS

- Many cash plus implementers face **challenges in meeting the requirements for rigorous impact evaluations** once they reach the **evaluation stage** of the project plan
- Rigorous impact evaluations (IEs) generally require **randomising** who receives the programme **prior to the programme beginning** (Random Controlled Trial)
- Impact evaluations can be **costly** and so must be **budgeted** for well in advance



Cash plus implementers should design the project and monitoring framework, with the appropriate budget to allow for the desired evaluations to take place



Cash plus implementers should publicize key learnings and make the data available to fellow implementers where possible

THANK YOU!

For more information contact:

Natasha Siyumbwa, IDinsight: Natasha.Siyumbwa@IDinsight.org

and

T. Arthur Chibwana, Christian Aid: achibwana@christian-aid.org

The study is conducted with financial support from Christian Aid Innovation Funds

