

PROJECT PROFILE

Ethical Tea Partnership



Location	Malawi
Project duration	September 2023 to December 2024 (ETP will continue this work after WOW Programme closure, until 2027)
Activities	Agroforestry programme including tree nurseries, training and planting Family Business Management Training Beekeeping Training
Partners	UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) Tata Consumer Products Limited Ringtons Taylors of Harrogate Agroforestry CRUs for the Organic Restoration of Nature (ACORN), an initiative of Rabobank
Delivery partners	Fobreco Imani

The WOW programme aims to improve economic opportunities for women working in global value chains. The programme has developed business partnerships to reduce the barriers that prevent women from securing dignified, equal and economically empowering work. It is being delivered by an alliance of experts, led by PwC, working with CARE International UK and Social Development Direct.



This WOW project was undertaken with the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP), the tea sector’s global membership organisation. It aims to drive systemic change, through initiatives focused on gender equality, mitigating the effects of climate change and providing additional sources of food and income.

ETP had started working with the carbon credit project developer ACORN (Rabobank) to assess the possibility of establishing a 'Payment for Ecosystem Services' (PES) programme amongst smallholder tea growers. WOW 's participation sought to ensure this programme integrated a strong gender component to ensure women farmers would benefit.

During the ETP and WOW partnership, the programme assessed the feasibility of establishing a gender-sensitive PES programme amongst smallholder tea farmers in Malawi's two primary tea growing districts (Thyolo and Mulanje). A pilot scheme was implemented, engaging 1,704 farmers.

As part of these activities, Family Business Management training was offered to the farming communities to support the involvement of women in household and financial decision making, and to support a more even split of household responsibilities. Beekeeping training was also offered to provide a new skill and alternative source of income, whilst deterring deforestation activities.

This profile looks at the project's activities and its impact on the lives of the smallholder farmers, their families and communities.

Project activities

“We realised that planting trees is not only beneficial for us but also for future generations.”

Male participant

“Beekeeping is now a family venture, and we harvest honey together to sell in the market.”

Male participant

The Agroforestry programme

Smallholder farmers were invited to participate in an agroforestry programme, whereby farmers established tree nurseries and planted trees within their tea crops. These trees provide climate adaptation benefits by preventing soil erosion, reducing wind damage and creating shade for the tea plants. They also provide an alternative income and food source.

In time, it is hoped that communities will also receive income through carbon credits. Carbon removal units (CRUs) are carbon credits that absorb carbon from the atmosphere as opposed to avoidance credits which avoid carbon being emitted. ETP is continuing to explore crediting opportunities in the Voluntary Carbon Market.

This project was aimed at smallholder tea farmers under the Thuchila Tea Association and Sukambizi Association Trust in Malawi, with the goal of enhancing climate resilience and improving household incomes. There was a specific focus on gender equality: women were encouraged to take key roles in the project activities and they were supported financially through access to Village Savings and Loans Associations.

Family Business Management training

To maximise the impact of the agroforestry programme, training was provided to the farming communities on

family business management. It aimed to highlight the benefits of women's equal participation in financial decision-making roles and to demonstrate how domestic responsibilities could be split more evenly between family members.

The training gave the farmers practical tools and planning processes for household budgeting. It also encouraged a culture of leadership amongst women farmers that is accepted by both men and women. District and community-level frontline mobilisers were given training which they could then pass on to the farmers.

Beekeeping training

Local farmers were helped to install beehives on their land to create additional income and food sources, foster environmental conservation and promote biodiversity in the area. Activities included beekeeping training, facilitating connections between farmers and experienced beekeepers and providing the equipment needed to begin their apiary journey.

Training courses covered beehive management, processing and sustainable practices. Women's participation was actively encouraged, making up 50% of training participants, breaking down traditional barriers that have prevented women from beekeeping.

Impact

The project's training programmes have empowered women and engaged men in gender equitable practices. They have also enhanced household incomes and fostered environmental sustainability, with the potential for these activities to have long-term change.

Women's leadership and financial independence

Since the WOW programme activities:

- Women have taken more leadership roles in community groups, farming initiatives and beekeeping clubs.
- Financial literacy among women has improved, enabling them to start businesses, save money and contribute to family income.
 - Before the training, only 47 % of the female participants had created a household budget, this increased to 99% after the training.
- Women have joined Village Savings and Loans groups, leading to investments in livestock and household assets.
- Families now operate as cohesive business units, jointly making decisions to save, invest and start small businesses such as tree nurseries, fish farming and beekeeping.
- Many men have embraced traditionally female roles such as cooking, cleaning and childcare, breaking entrenched gender stereotypes and reducing the unpaid care workload on women.
 - Before the Family Business Management training, only 12% of male participants shared that they were 'very supportive' of their spouses taking up leadership roles. Since the training, 79% of the male training participants now feel this way.

Farming practice, energy and climate change

Since the WOW programme activities:

- Men and women have acquired practical skills in modern farming, tree planting and beekeeping, enhancing productivity and resilience.
 - 750 farmers (587 of whom were female) received specific training on tree planting and management.
- They have adopted tree planting as a business and begun selling fruits, seedlings and honey to supplement their income.
 - 135,624 tree seedlings (including fruit trees) have been planted.
 - 3,002 farmers (1,622 of whom were female) planted tree seedlings.
- The farmers are actively planting and caring for trees to combat deforestation, reduce soil erosion and improve agricultural productivity.
- They have also adopted climate-resilient practices such as mixed cropping and irrigation, which mitigate the risks of drought and erratic rainfall patterns.
- Both men and women have gained knowledge about climate change and the role of trees in carbon sequestration and environmental protection.
 - 1,700 farmers on the PES programme received awareness training through their block leaders, lead farmers or community mobilisers on climate change, its impact and how to tackle climate issues.
 - After the training, more than 83% of the training participants were found to have a good understanding about climate change, its negative impact and how as a family they needed to work together to tackle issues of climate change.

"It is no longer about 'a man's job' or 'a woman's job.' We do everything together."

Male participant

"We planted mango trees, and now we sell the fruits to buy school supplies and other household needs."

Female participant

1,704
farmers

(65% women) have benefitted from the PES programme.



120
individuals

(50% women) have taken the Family Business Management training.

90
individuals

(50% women) have taken the Beekeeping training.



4,000
tea growers

(50% women) have benefitted from the seedling distribution and tree planting activities.

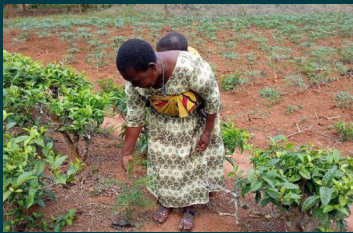
Thoko's story

Thoko is a 43-year-old married mother of six who took part in the Family Business Management Training. The training, which took place over five weeks, covered topics like working together as a family, living in harmony and planning for change. Thoko, a smallholder tea farmer from Kashoni Village, attended the training with her husband. She believes the training will improve family interactions, reduce conflicts and lead to better management of household responsibilities and finances. Thoko hopes this will lead to a stronger family bond and ensure her children complete their studies.



“It is my hope that will now enjoy quality time together as a family, with less conflict and a better understanding of each other.”

Lucy's story



Lucy is a 54-year-old single mother of four from Bango Village. She is a member of the Thuchila Tea Association and was elected chairperson of the Sukamaere block in September 2024 which has over 300 members. Her interaction with the project has boosted her confidence and leadership skills. Lucy has benefited from the project by receiving tree seedlings and beehives. She believes these initiatives will help her increase her revenue and better support her family.

“I am a tea farmer and a beekeeper, and I am also planting trees that will give me fruits and even make money in future when they grow. I also understand that these trees absorb carbon dioxide which purifies the air and addresses climate change.”