



Enhancing commercial farming in Malawi's Shire Valley

Project implemented from: March 2022 to Dec. 2024
Sector: Agriculture
Agency: British Council



Opportunity

Malawi is experiencing an increase in both national and international **investments** in the agricultural sector which is set to generate around 18,000 jobs in the country. The government is dedicated to attracting diverse investments, including from the EU, aligned with its strategic vision for the sector.

This growth is largely attributed to the **Shire Valley Transformation Programme (SVTP)**, a 14-year initiative transitioning smallholder farms to commercial farms, implemented by the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Agriculture, with support from the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Although the agricultural sector is expanding and over 80% of Malawians are actively engaged in agriculture, there is a **shortage of technical agricultural skills** attributed to a lack of training providers and relevant agricultural TVET (ATVET) programmes, as well as to the prevailing emphasis on subsistence-oriented agriculture.

VET Toolbox formalises the VET offer to equip the local workforce with the necessary skills for **commercial agriculture**. Through targeted demand-driven skills development and sectoral public-private partnerships, the project aims to meet current and future skills needs, enhance sector **productivity**, stimulate the local labour market, and lay the foundation for **future investments** and **job growth** in Malawi's evolving agricultural sector in line with its vision for agricultural productivity and commercialisation.



Achievements

VET Toolbox collaborates with public and private partners to increase the local benefits of national investment programmes in the agricultural sector. It guarantees new employment opportunities for the local workforce. Notable accomplishments include:

- Piloting two **fundamental training courses** in Irrigation Infrastructure and Farm Machinery that directly respond to job opportunities linked to the SVTP.
- Developing **occupational standards** and **curricula** for the two training courses to close the identified skill gap in response to private sector needs.
- Formalising **public-private dialogue** (PPD) through a sector-specific local Technical

Working Group linked to the national platform (PPSDF). The Technical Working Group facilitates dialogue in demand-driven skills development between employers and Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs), to enhance commercial farming in the Shire Valley. It fosters collaboration between employers, VTIs and governmental Ministries, Departments and Agencies, regulatory bodies, and other relevant stakeholders, and it collects and shares knowledge and best practices.

Key targets



200 people trained

140 graduates employed



Private partners

- The **Small-holder Owner Commercial Farm Enterprises (SOCFEs)** provide employment for trained graduates and are leading the dialogue in the local Technical Working Group.
- **SOCFE Development Service Providers** support the project by providing labour market information and identifying skills needs for developing market-relevant training. They also participate in the local Technical Working Group.
- **Farmer cooperatives** in the Shire Valley such as Phata Cane Growers, Kasinthula Small-holder Cooperative provide work experience learning opportunities for students and participate in the local PPD.

Public partners

- The **Ministry of Agriculture** and the **Ministry of Labour** endorse the project and support the formalisation of sector-specific VET training, partnerships and dialogue.
- The **TVET Authority (TEVETA)** is responsible for the development and validation of training offers and participates in the local dialogue forum.
- The **Chikwawa District Council** provides an enabling environment for local dialogue and project implementation and participates in the local dialogue forum.
- The **SVTP** participates in the local dialogue forum, supports skills needs assessment and carries out stakeholder engagement.
- **Gower College UK** supports the capacity building of the Technical Working Group and PPD, as well as VTIs on topics such as sustainable funding and employer engagement.

VET providers

- **Three VTIs** (DAPP Mikolongwe Vocational Training School, Magomero Community Development College and Stephanos Vocational Training Centre) deliver training programmes and facilitate work experience learning and job placements. They are supported by a mentoring partnership with Gower College UK.





Key success factors

- The project objectives are aligned with the **national agenda "Malawi 2063"** and the SVTP, ensuring government endorsement and engagement.
- The local Technical Working Group is linked to the national public-private skills dialogue forum, backed by the Ministry of Labour and TEVETA, ensuring **strong visibility** of the project at **governmental level**.
- Active and inclusive **stakeholder engagement** has led to **synergies** being

highlighted amongst stakeholders (e.g. SOCFEs and VTIs) through aligned interests and formalised agreements.

- The project serves as a model for dialogue fora for demand-driven skills development and **informs governmental plans** towards the establishment of sector skills bodies or councils (including in the agriculture sector), while using synergies with other projects, such as the EU-funded project Zantchito Skills for Jobs.



Upscaling and sustainability

- The **SVTP** will generate agricultural investment in commercial farming in the Shire Valley over a period of 14 years which promises the creation of 18.000 jobs in the area, providing **sustainable employment** for graduates.
- Embedding the Technical Working Group in the national PPSDF has the potential to ensure the **impact and sustainability of PPDs** beyond

the end of the project. Moreover, the tested PPD format may be replicated and applied to other sectors.

- The **four-year Zantchito Skills for Jobs project**, led by the British Council and funded by the EU will leverage best practices from the VET Toolbox project to improve the sustainability of training programmes, dialogue fora and partnerships.



VET Toolbox is a programme developing opportunity-driven skills development initiatives aligned with investments' needs, supporting the private sector with local job creation. For additional information, please visit www.vettoolbox.eu.

A partnership project

Co-funded by
the European Union

