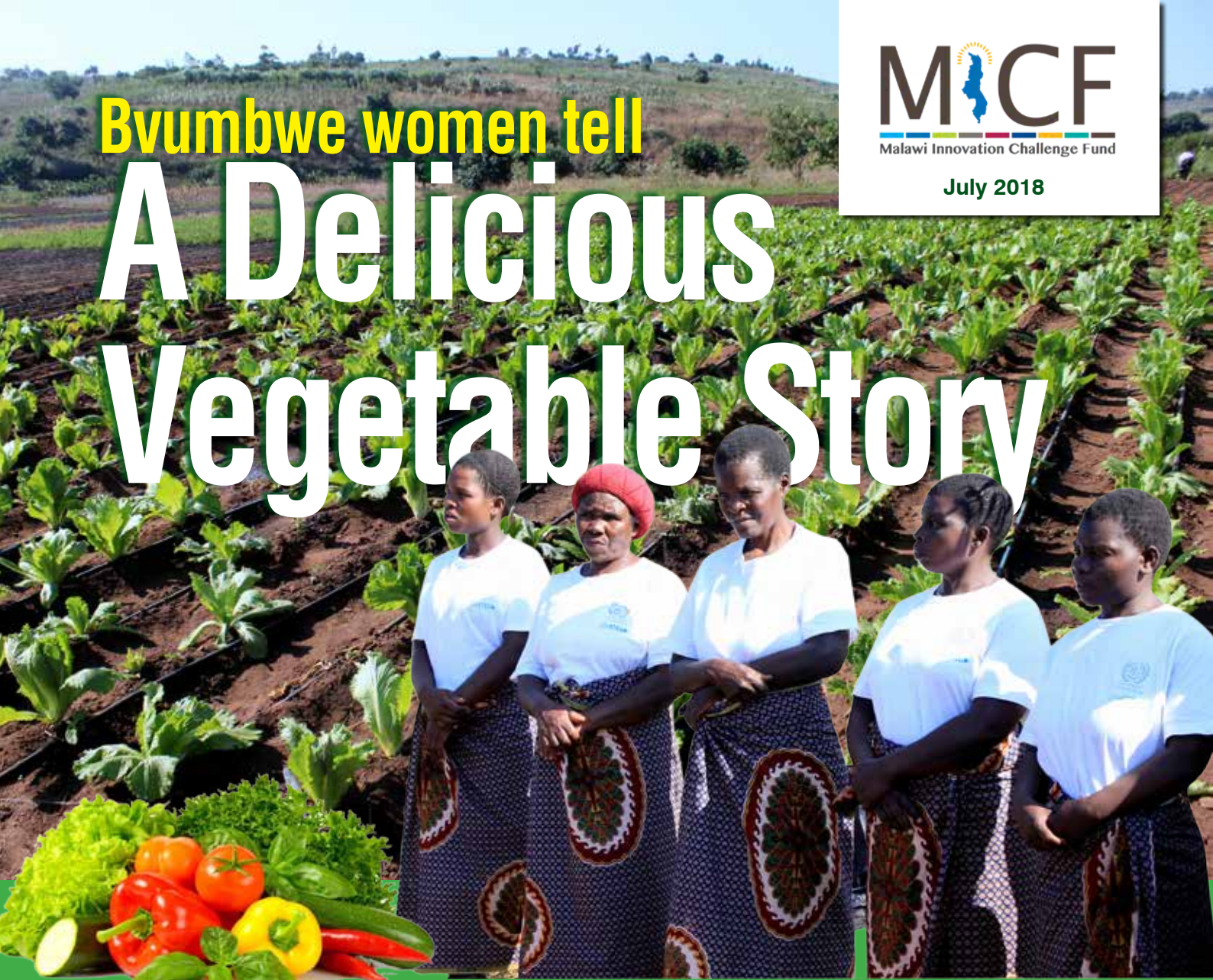


Bvumbwe women tell

A Delicious Vegetable Story



“Women in this area, and like most other areas of Malawi, have been left behind doing domestic chores while the men have ventured out to earn a living to provide for their families, take care of their needs and to put their children through school.”

It is almost midday on a Thursday but still unpredictably cold in Thyolo District, southern Malawi. But for 34-year-old Chifundo Mmane, it is an ideal weather for her horticulture business.

She defies all odds and goes to water her vegetable garden, about 40 meters away from her home.

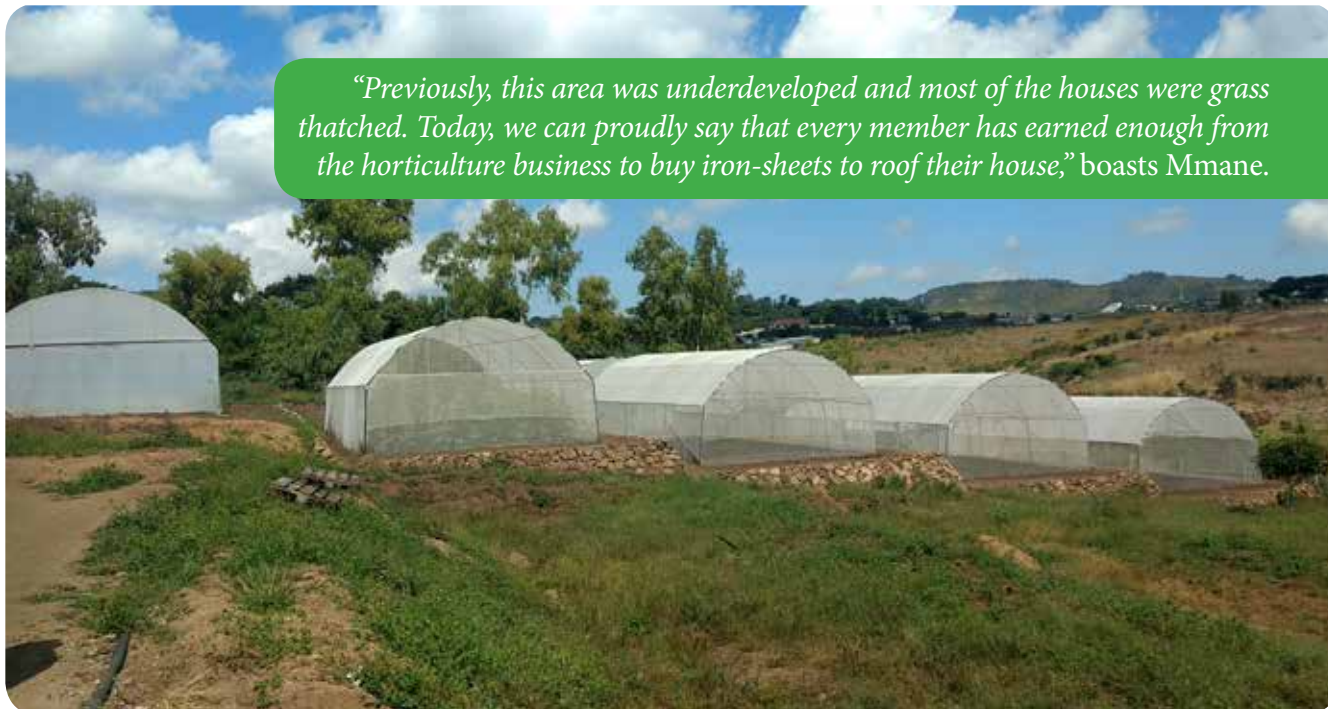
From afar, the garden is vividly

green, a true gem amidst dry uncultivated land. Chifundo, a single mother, is using drip irrigation with modern but basic machinery.

She is amongst 20 women farmers singing songs of joy from Chinkwende Village, in Traditional Authority Bvumbwe's area, Thyolo district.

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Women in this area, and like most other areas of Malawi, have been left behind doing domestic chores while the men have ventured out to earn a living to provide for their families, take care of their needs and to put their children through school.

But through the smallholder irrigation initiative set up in the area by the Roseberry Farms, a for-profit private sector operator in the horticulture industry, their story has completely changed.

“Every member of the group has greatly benefited,” says Mmane.

According to Ruth Kalima, Roseberry Farms Manager, through the horticulture business each member earns between 100,000 - 150,000 Malawi Kwacha a month, compared to an average 30, 000 Malawi Kwacha they earned prior.

Depending on the combination of vegetables grown, farmers can fetch up to 250,000 Malawi Kwacha per month as confirmed

by one of the beneficiary farmers that had a combined basket of cauliflower and butternut.

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The project that is being implemented by Roseberry Farms involves establishing a dual supply chain which produces high value vegetables for the retail

market directly aimed at import substitution.

While the anchor farm will produce various high-quality horticulture products using greenhouse technology, the smallholder supply chain will produce the remainder using a combination of open land and drip irrigation.

“The rationale behind this business model is to develop women and previously disadvantaged people and to establish Malawi as a net exporter of horticulture products,” according to Kalima.



The company is able to procure on average 100 Metric Tons of vegetables per month from the out-grower farmers. Initially, before the company installed drip irrigation infrastructure on the land, farmers would only harvest 80 tons per annum.

The project is supported through the Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund (MICF) – a US\$21 million competitive, transparent mechanism that provides matching-grant finance for innovative projects proposed by the private sector active in Malawi’s agricultural, manufacturing and logistics sectors.

Supported by the United Nations Development Programme, UK Aid and KFW, the MICF is designed to be a quick, responsive mechanism that is not overly bureaucratic and one that understands the needs of the private sector.

According to Kalima, there is still need for more investment to include more women and underprivileged people to further attain the goal of turning Malawi into a high value horticulture exporting nation.

The initiative is currently utilising retail outlets such as Peoples and Shoprite to sell its vegetables.

Perishables Manager at Peoples Supermarket, Chancy Chimchere says “this has helped us in terms of meeting the standards. Roseberry supplies us on a daily basis and the vegetables are of high quality and fresh.”

To date, for the first time in Malawi, Roseberry has replaced the imported English Cucumber with a locally produced cucumber.

The country is more than capable of producing high quality products for its domestic market whilst reducing imports.

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Operations, Kasia Wawiernia is happy with the impact the project is having on the vegetable supply chain.

“Strengthening the out-grower program by providing the farmers with targeted technical backstopping, access to inputs and the creation of an irrigation scheme will enable the company

(Roseberry Farms) to build partnerships with the contracted farmers. This is good news,” says Wawiernia.

According to her, UNDP and partners are “looking forward to seeing this model being successfully replicated across the district and the region.”

While advocating gender equality, obviously, the project is also moving the goal posts with regards to sustainable economic development for the smallholder farmers.



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Project Building Blocks

Organising initial 40 farmers and establishing out-grower contract scheme



Establishment of an out-grower training program and setting up of the irrigation system for out-growers on 5 hectares; setting up of a traceability system for produce - field to super market shelf



Setting up of pack house and cold chain with capacity of 5MT per day



Setting up of 7 Greenhouses and establishing an irrigation scheme on 5 hectares on the anchor farm



100 MT of high volume horticulture produce procured from contracted farmers per month.



40 farmers have an increase in income by 75% to US\$2,100 from horticulture farming per annum. 60 new jobs to be created.



Empowered lives
Resilient nations.

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