

**Whose Resilience Matters?
Lessons From Irrigation
Development in Malawi**

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Resilience and Food Security

- Resilience of food supply an important priority, especially in response to stressors including climate variability.
- We suggest a need to examine resilience at different sites and levels
- Our case: irrigation development for food security and income growth in Malawi, Nsanje District.
- Asking at what (and whose) cost is resilience achieved?



Muona Irrigation Scheme

- 450ha mainly under rice.
- Constructed late 1960s, recently rehabilitated under World Bank/IFAD project.
- Land 'owned' by around 2500 farmers.
- Poverty and vulnerability
- Water Users Association manages the scheme.
- Water from Tangadzi River: problems of heavy siltation.
- Siltation linked by some to political regime shift.
- Flooding risk and reduced cropping area.



Muona scheme continued

- Rehabilitation included construction of bund
- Bund promotes resilience of scheme at expense of some adjacent villages
- Awareness of threat, but no action taken
- Flooding in adjoining villages, Spring 2014
- Farmers in affected area also refused access to their farmland due to new scheme construction... increased vulnerability





Makhapa flooding

- Roads become impassable



Houses destroyed.....









Unpacking the politics

Whose interests counted? A complicated picture – not **simply** the powerful at the expense of the weak

- Upstream and downstream issues – the problems on political boundaries
- ‘Community’ in resilience thinking? The WUA as representative.
- Agency and vulnerability in Makhapa
- A distant donor?

Implications for resilience thinking

- Change in political regime may have ecological consequences and affect agriculture.
- Actions to improve resilience for some may undermine resilience and increase vulnerability for others.
- Understanding social relationships may give indication of winners and losers, but needs to operate at diverse sites: geographical, social, institutional.

Some questions to consider

- What does resilience mean to different people and how do planned actions affect different groups of people?
- Against which stresses is resilience being promoted? (e.g. drought/flooding/food markets)
- What constrains exercise of agency and responsiveness to change?
- Who is more resilient and why? How do institutions shape this?