

Local lobby Case Study

I'd like to talk about the woman pictured here [motion to the picture]. She's doing some fantastic work leading women in her area turn climate change into an opportunity with the help of a charity we support, Progressio.

So this is Betty Mkusa. Betty is 55, and leads a quiet revolution in Chilhambi, southern Malawi.

The majority of small-scale farmers in Malawi are women just like her. But unlike the rest, Betty knows a thing or two about three plants, Jatropha, Neem and Moringa. In fact, she knows so much they call her 'Mamma Jatropha'. Climate change has led to decreasing yields for small-scale farmers like Betty, so she's learned about more resistant crops – she's adapting to climate change and changing her life for the better.

"I learned that from these three plants – which are easy to grow in our difficult climate – you can make oil for lamps or to run engines, soap for the home, fertiliser for crops, and moisturiser for the body.

"If you are HIV-positive you can boost your immune system with powder extract. One of the plants is particularly good for heart disease and eyesight problems."

The three plants are beginning to be seen locally as some kind of miracle, with Betty spreading the good news of their powers and profitability to local women, neighbours across the district and much further afield.

Busloads of curious community groups from other districts of southern Malawi regularly converge on Betty's home for tours of her garden and to hear her stories.

Progressio's development worker, Innocent Ogaba, has been working with local partner Environment Africa to help people like Betty identify the potential for marketing the various products that the three miracle plants produce.

"Before you go into production on a large scale", he says, "you need machines to extract the oil or for making the soap to sell. We are doing a lot of work on exploring potential markets for the products."

Betty thinks that the future looks bright for many women like her. "Day-to-day living is going to improve around here," she states. "Most years we face drought. In the long term this project will change many lives."

Betty's doing great things with the help of Progressio. It would be hard for her to go it alone. That's why we think it's important to support developing countries adapt to climate change, champion new sources of finance; and guarantee UK money will be provided as grants.

And at home we feel that we need to continue to lead by example, to set legal minimum energy efficiency standards, to push for a strong Green Deal to ensure there are no homes below Band D by 2020 and to introduce a strong CO2 Emissions Performance Standard (EPS) for fossil fuel power stations, to enable delivery of a decarbonised electricity supply by 2030.