Evaluating the Functional Landscape Approach

Rachael Carrie, **Alan Dixon** and **Albert Mvula**
Socio-ecological Systems and Sustainability Research Group, Institute of Science and the Environment, University of Worcester.

Taking a mixed methods and interdisciplinary approach we are exploring if and how the FLA contributes to sustainable development in the Kankhulukulu catchment, Northern Malawi.

Exploring Local Indicators

Indicators of resilience and environmental change are being explored using participant photography to develop shared understandings of project concepts and to explore their potential as monitoring tools.

(Photos: Davie Nyasulu)

Skills development "*puts people in a better position to withstand uncertainties than the one who only depends on farming*". A house is a very important asset *"as everything that is done comes from and ends up in the house"*.

Bananas are important resilience crops, providing food in times of hunger and a source of income. Banana prices remain stable relative to other crops and their flowers and leaves have medicinal, domestic and composting value.

Income from businesses enhance resilience. Group members wish to establish a saving and loans scheme and a farmers market. The committee is planning exchange visits with successful farmers in neighbouring areas.

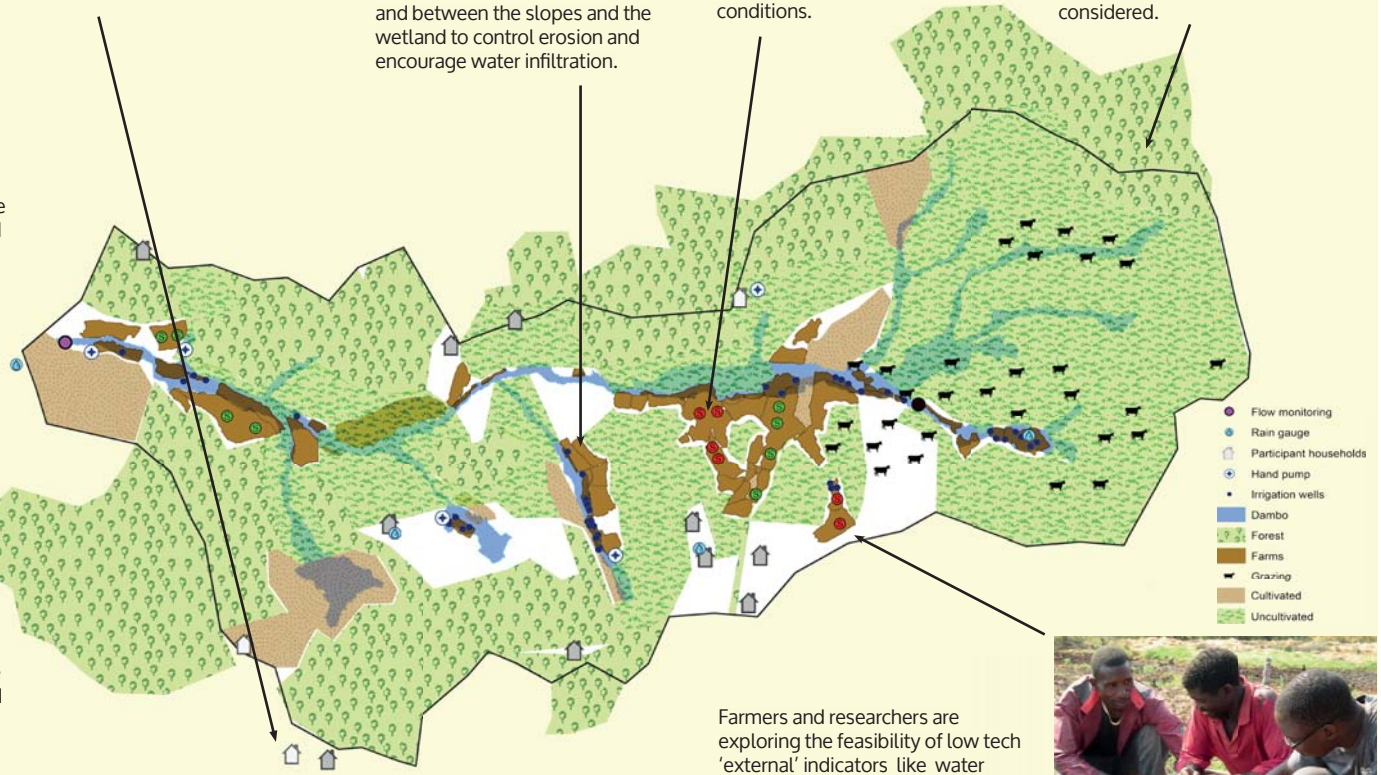
Soil colour is used to indicate fertility – red/brown/black soils are fertile, white/grey soils are no good for growing crops.

26 Chilembe villagers have joined the project and formed the 'Kankhulukulu dimba group'. The group committee will establish byelaws to manage FLA interventions and resource use.

Catchment users are exploring systems to share technologies and practices learned experientially, including the use of ants to control moles and the establishment of natural buffer zones around fields and between the slopes and the wetland to control erosion and encourage water infiltration.

'Maize and other vegetables and fruits are grown in dimba's' (wetland farms) in the dry season. Farmers want to develop knowledge so they can sustainably farm under increasingly unpredictable climate conditions.

Forests and natural grasslands provide wild goods like 'Chinaka', protect soil from erosion and encourage rainfall. Rules to encourage sustainable use of these ecosystem services are being considered.



Kankhulukulu Catchment

Farmers and researchers are exploring the feasibility of low tech 'external' indicators like water infiltration rate, and formalised monitoring systems for measuring and managing environmental change.