

Malawi: Food and Nutrition Security

In Malawi, many mothers and children continue to suffer from chronic malnutrition. Food and nutrition security, dietary diversity as well as adequate hygiene and sanitation practices are central to maternal and child health. There is need for good nutrition governance and nutrition-sensitive social protection for people to recover from recurrent shocks and crises without major implications for their nutrition status.

The challenge

In sub-Saharan Africa, improvements in adult and child malnutrition are slow, and multiple forms of malnutrition are prevalent in the region. Malawi is particularly burdened by chronic malnutrition, resulting in high stunting rates: More than a third of the children under 5 years – 37% – are stunted (2015-16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey).

The first 1,000 days, from conception to a child’s second birthday, are crucial for physical and cognitive development. Malnutrition during this time window can have long-term and sometimes even irreversible effects in later life. Household food and nutrition security are important to ensure adequate food quality and quantity which are key to early child development.

Our approach

In Malawi, the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) supports community groups and governmental service providers in Dedza and Salima districts to address malnutrition, especially among women and children in this 1000-day window. FNSP interventions focus on:

- **Social Behaviour Change:** improving knowledge, attitudes and practices on nutrition and hygiene;
- **Resilience:** strengthening the resilience of households and communities to nutrition insecurity in increasingly more unpredictable environments due to climate change other crises.
- **Decentralised nutrition governance:** strengthening the planning and coordination of nutrition-sensitive measures; and
- **Strengthening national partners:** supporting the identification, implementation and evaluation of best-practices for an improved planning, coordination and implementation of nutrition interventions.

Project name	Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Southern Africa
Lead executing agency	Department of Nutrition (DN) in the Ministry of Health (MoH)
Duration	01.02.2015 – 31.03.2025

GIZ Malawi FNSP Geographic Coverage



Left: Vegetables, fruits and animal products: Knowledge multipliers from the communities are trained in a care group to enrich their daily diet to promote balanced meals in their families.

Photo: © GIZ/Robin Rothweiler

Right: The Food and Nutrition Security Programme empowers women and caretakers to better nourish their families through community approaches. Here: at a cooking demonstration.

Photo: © GIZ/Lameck Mtali (WHH)

Dr. Martina Kress
Team Leader



Left: To ensure supplement of essential nutrients from vegetables for her family, FNSP beneficiary Mhelakena, waters her innovate garden, just outside her house.

Right: FNSP and partners discuss food and nutrition interventions during District Implementing Partners' meeting in Dedza

Photos: © GIZ/Rachel Kachali

Results in Figures

Since it was launched in 2015, the Food and Nutrition Security Programme has reached 52,374 of the planned 40,000 households directly in Dedza and Salima. 638 of the planned 450 basic service providers were trained to deliver knowledge on nutrition practices, hygiene and sanitation as well as sustainable agricultural practices through the care group model established by the Malawi Government in 2012.

As animal source foods are one of the highly underrepresented food groups in Malawi, FNSP has designed an approach for nutrition-sensitive management of local chicken to promote the consumption of eggs and chicken. About 3,228 local chickens were distributed to 807 households in Salima and Dedza. Nationwide, a health service hotline ('Chipatala Cha Pa Foni' – English 'Hospital by Phone') which was supported by FNSP was fully integrated in the Ministry of Health (under the Clinical Services Directorate), playing a crucial role in disseminating nutrition messages.

Following a multi-level approach, FNSP supports the Malawian government in creating an enabling environment for food and nutrition security both at national as well as at district level. FNSP has supported advocacy for increased financial and human resources for nutrition. The support resulted in the devolution of nutrition in 2023, with protected budget lines for nutrition being established in all 28 districts of Malawi as well as increased personnel at the council to guide the implementation of nutrition interventions. Acknowledging the impact of recurrent shocks and crises on food and nutrition security as well as the high poverty levels in the country, FNSP works extensively on the linkages between social protection and nutrition as well as on resilience. The project has worked with 581 Village Savings and Loans (VSL) groups which empower 9,195 women and enable nutrition-sensitive decision making. Responding to severe economic impacts of the 2016/17 El Niño drought and a severe lean season in 2019, cash transfers benefitted 18,435 households, roughly 81,000 Malawians.

The project also ensured the central anchoring of nutrition in the social protection policy, rendering it nutrition-sensitive. This includes a particular focus on social protection services that can improve household food security and dietary diversity among other food and nutrition related issues.

Published by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
 Author: Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP)
 Layout: GIZ
 As at: January 2024
 Photo credits: © GIZ/Robin Rothweiler, © GIZ/Lameck Mtali (WHH): page 1
 © GIZ/Rachel Kachali: page 2

... and in stories

Stella and Bauti Innocent from Khwakhwa village in the district of Dedza are proud parents of a one-year-old boy, Dan. Their village does not have electricity, and in the absence of TV and smart phones, care groups are an essential way for them to get information on issues around health and nutrition. Stella attends care group meetings every two weeks. In her household, they have a durable latrine behind the house and a hand washing facility with soap constructed next to it.

Stella is a cluster leader in her village. She regularly meets with other 10 to 15 cluster leaders and extension workers to get information on topics that concern good nutrition and health in everyday life. The cluster leaders' task is to assist on improving families' well-being in the direct neighbourhood. They give **advice on nutrition and hygiene practices** such as **diversified healthy diets for mothers and children**, how to grow vegetables in home gardens and how to avoid common diseases like diarrhoea.

Care groups are a great platform at community level to share knowledge and good practices for many aspects related to nutrition. The structure was established by the Malawi Government in 2012 and involves many unpaid volunteers like Stella.

Stella and Bauti grow different kinds of **legumes, vegetables and vitamin A-rich orange fleshed sweet potatoes in their home garden**. They also have **fruit trees** like mango or papaya that grow well in Malawi's warm climate. They were trained in keeping **local chicken** and in making the animals more resilient and productive by feeding them well throughout the year. Now they eat eggs three times a week and even chicken twice a month.

Men like Bauti play a central role in food and nutrition security and are therefore involved in many FNSP activities. Together with other men, he sometimes prepares food at cooking demonstrations. He has even been assigned the role of a **nutrition champion** and now encourages fellow men in his village to also support their wives more. Working together as a couple has allowed Stella and Bauti to better care for their son, Dan. Now they are happy to see him grow up healthy and many other families follow their good example.

Text: GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.
 On behalf of: Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in cooperation with the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS.
 Address of the BMZ Bonn BMZ Berlin
 BMZ Offices: Dahlmannstraße 4 10963 Berlin, Germany
 53113 Bonn, Germany
 T: +49 0 228 99 535-0 T: +49 030 18 535-0
poststelle@bmz.bund.de
www.bmz.de