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# Malawi: Afikepo Nutrition Programme – Nutrition and Access to Primary Education (NAPE)

Under the Afikepo/NAPE component schools, communities, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders work together towards providing high quality school meals contributing to improved health and performance of learners.

## The challenge

In Malawi, there is free primary education and the country records relatively high enrolment figures. However, repetition and drop-out rates remain extremely high with hunger and malnutrition having a detrimental effect on school attendance and performance.

## Our approach

Under the Afikepo/NAPE component, 180 Primary Schools and nearby Early Childhood Development Centers implement a Home Grown School Meals approach: Schools and communities plan and manage all activities from planting crops especially legumes to preparing diversified meals. In each school, the established Home Grown School Meals Committees are equipped with management skills and cooks are trained in preparing healthy school meals. Thus, community members gain knowledge and skills and local ownership is created.

### Nutrition education and hygiene practices

To sustainably improve the nutritional status among learners and their performance, the project focusses on nutrition and hygiene practices: School-based clubs use a highly participatory approach to raise awareness for the importance of diversified nutrition and hygiene practices among learners. The club members then carry the messages to their classmates, their families and their communities where, in turn, the health and nutrition status is improved as well.

### Management of school health and nutrition

The District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC) is the main body responsible for coordinating nutrition issues at district level. Being part of this committee, School Health and



<b>Project name</b>	Nutrition and Access to Primary Education
<b>Commissioned by</b>	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
<b>Funded by</b>	The European Union (EU) and the BMZ
<b>Implementing organisation</b>	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
<b>Project region</b>	10 districts of Malawi, South-East Africa: Chiradzulu, Chitipa, Karonga, Kasungu, Mulanje, Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Nkhhotakota, Salima and Thyolo
<b>Lead executing agency</b>	Department of School Health and Nutrition (DSHN) of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)
<b>Duration</b>	01.03.2016 – 31.10.2021
<b>Financial volume</b>	28.290 million (EUR 19 million by the EU through the Afikepo Nutrition Programme Malawi and EUR 9.29 million by the BMZ)

Nutrition Coordinators support school feeding activities and work closely together implementing the Home Grown School Meals approach.

### Input for Policy Dialogue

The project is implemented in close cooperation with the Malawian Government at national and district level. As the Government stresses the importance of school meals, the lessons learnt provide valuable input to the dialogue among decision makers at national level to help review and improve concerned policies and strategies.



Left: School meals are given out at 180 primary schools and 180 Early Development Centres. The construction of kitchens with energy saving stoves and store rooms is part of the activity.

Right: Good hygiene practices are a key part of the project: Ms. Mwangwala, teacher at Tilora School in Karonga District, teaches and observes handwashing practices of her standard 1 class before eating their school meals.



*Left: At Mtende School in Mzimba District Mr. Nyirenda and learners of the Drama Group raise awareness for nutrition and hygiene among the community.*

*Right: Members of the Garden Club at Msani School in Nkhata Bay District grow vegetables in sacks.*

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## Results in figures ...

In 2018, more than 105,000 primary school children and pre-school children of 150 schools and 150 pre-schools ate nutritious school meals.

To make sure that every child gets a nutritious meal, the 150 benefitting schools have received a mix of various grain, i.e. 2590 metric tons (mt) of maize; 137 mt of soya; 277 mt of groundnuts; 20 mt of cowpeas; 62 mt of pigeon peas; 42 mt of beans and 6 mt of Bambara nuts in 2017 and 2018.

All grains were procured locally in Malawi to support the national grain markets. At the same time, seeds and seedlings have reached the communities for the cultivation of the "home grown" part of the school meals. In this way, every school has the chance to grow healthy food mix that can then be used to enrich school meals with local ingredients.

In 2018, 48 mt of seeds were planted on about 860 hectares of land: mainly soya, groundnuts, cowpeas, pigeon peas, and beans. Working together with the district administrations, the village authorities allocated more land to their schools for the community based production of legumes than in 2017.

Committees are trained in food processing and food preparation techniques to improve both the variety and nutritive value of the dishes prepared.

At the same time, they are encouraged to establish a productive school environment including orchards, vegetable gardens and woodlots for fire wood.

Trainings of members of the Home Grown School Meal Committees and their cooks provide knowledge and skills for proper handling and preparation of food. So far, 8,000 volunteer cooks learned how to prepare simple but tasty and nutritious meals with nothing but local ingredients. The Afikepo/NAPE training package also covers topics of hygiene to prevent common diseases like diarrhoea.

## ... and in stories

Mr. Bonster Lungu is the headteacher of Msani Primary School in Nkhata Bay. When he came to Msani, the school had already started implementing the home grown school meals activities but he noticed a lack of commitment and ownership among learners and community members. School feeding did not take place regularly and the school clubs did not function very well.

However, Mr. Lungu saw a lot of potential in providing school meals: Children who receive school meals come to school regularly and reduced absenteeism and drop-out rates result in better performance. That is why he became an advocate for school feeding and convinced learners, teachers and community members to get involved. With support from the School Health and Nutrition Coordinator, he talked to traditional leaders and parents so that they could understand the importance of nutritious school meals and how they could contribute to it. "We now all work together to ensure that every child gets a healthy meal every day. Children and communities also bring foods like fruits, eggs and salt to have as many different food groups as possible", Mr. Lungu says. And first successes can already be observed: Teachers report that children are more attentive and active during classes.

Thanks to Mr. Lungu's leadership, the school is now a home grown champion in the district. Other schools even come to learn from Msani Primary School: "We were among the first schools to use the solar drier to preserve fruits like mango, so that we can also eat it when it is not in season. We also started planting indigenous vegetables in old grain bags and some children are also doing this at their homes now", Mr. Lungu reports proudly.

Msani Primary School impressively demonstrated the importance of community ownership and collaboration to successfully implement a home grown school meals approach.

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