

Nourishing the Roots:

Innovative Pathways to Food and Nutrition Resilience

Scalable multi sectoral nutrition promising practices tested by the Food and Nutrition Security Program Malawi

From 10 years of implementing the GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Program in Malawi



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giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
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Nourishing the Roots: Innovative Pathways to Food and Nutrition Resilience

Scalable multi sectoral nutrition promising practices tested by the Food and Nutrition Security Program Malawi

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IMPRINT

ii

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DEDICATION

This compilation of promising practices is dedicated to the individuals served by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme, honouring the dignity of the numerous women, children, and men in Dedza and Salima districts who navigate the daily struggles of rural poverty and food scarcity. Their remarkable fortitude, their inherent potential, and their unwavering drive to create a better future in the face of adversity are truly inspiring.

Our ongoing commitment to tackling the complex challenges of rural poverty, hunger, and malnutrition in Malawi, and to supporting the aspirations of these beneficiaries, stands as both a significant undertaking and a moral obligation. The project concluded its work in 2025, and it effectively illustrated how viable strategies for enhancing nutrition and extension improve livelihoods, furthermore how they can be developed and implemented. This success is a testament to the collaborative efforts between the Department of Nutrition within the Ministry of Health, the Dedza, and Salima District Councils, all implementing partners, and the communities themselves. Through this document, we aim to share these successful models, encouraging widespread adoption and the creation of numerous similar pathways to sustainable progress throughout Malawi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- The development of this booklet, *Innovative Pathways to Food and Nutrition Resilience: Scalable Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Promising Practices Tested by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme Malawi*, would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of numerous individuals and partners.
- We extend our sincere gratitude to the **District Councils of Dedza and Salima**, whose cooperation and collaboration have been instrumental in implementing, developing, and documenting the key learnings and recommendations that form the promising practices documented in this booklet.
- Our appreciation also goes to our **implementing partners**—CARE Malawi, Self-Help Africa (SHA), OXFAM, and Village Reach—for their unwavering commitment to advancing nutrition and resilience through innovative, community-driven solutions.
- We acknowledge the crucial support of the **Department of Nutrition (DN)** in Malawi, whose technical expertise and leadership have helped shape multi-sectoral nutrition interventions.
- A special thanks to the **Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP)** team in Malawi, whose collective efforts in research, field implementation, and documentation ensured that this booklet captures key learnings and best practices. The team also contributed to the development and editing of this publication and they comprised the following technical and development advisors and coordinators: **Chisomo Dambula, Ezekiel Luhanga, Amos Tizora, Kate Mwaungulu, Witness Dupu, Barbara Matengu, Anja Schmidt, Susanne Schwan, Kai Naegle, Chawesi Phiri, Sabrina Draheim, Trevor Madeya, Rachel Kachali**.
- We also would like to acknowledge **Bernice Mueller**, a former colleague, for her past contributions to the programme and the development of the booklet.
- Finally, a heartfelt appreciation to our **team leaders**, **Dr Martina Kress and Vitowe Batch**, for their guidance and leadership throughout this process, as well as reviewing the promising practices.
- This booklet is a testament to the collaborative spirit and shared commitment of all those involved. As FNSP transitions beyond its implementation phase, we hope that the knowledge captured here will continue to inform and inspire future efforts to improve food and nutrition security in Malawi.
- Thank you to everyone who played a role in bringing this work to life.**

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS



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FOREWORD

For over a decade, the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) in Malawi has been dedicated to improving the nutritional status and resilience of vulnerable communities. Through collaboration with local governments, implementing partners, and communities themselves, the programme has developed, tested, and refined scalable multi-sectoral nutrition interventions that are both effective and sustainable. *This booklet, Innovative Pathways to Food and Nutrition Resilience: Scalable Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Promising Practices Tested by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme Malawi*, presents sixteen of the most scalable and impactful promising practices that have emerged from these efforts.

The practices outlined here are structured into five thematic sections, each focusing on a crucial area of nutrition and resilience-building. These approaches address homestead food production, cash transfers for food security, resilient building support, leveraging digital platforms for nutrition governance, and continuous learning within the programme. Each section includes practical, field-tested strategies that have contributed to significant improvements in dietary diversity, nutrition governance, household food security, and overall nutrition outcomes.

By documenting these innovative solutions, this booklet aims to serve as a resource for policymakers, practitioners, and development partners seeking to scale up effective nutrition interventions. The lessons and insights shared here are not just reflections of what has worked within FNSP but also a call to action for continued investment in community-driven nutrition solutions.

As FNSP transitions beyond its implementation phase, we hope that the knowledge captured in this booklet will inspire further adoption and adaptation of these promising practices, ensuring that the progress made continues to benefit different communities for years to come.

Dr George Chithope Mwale

Dr Martina Kress

Vitowe Batch

From 2015 - 2025





KAMWENDO
PRIMARY SCHOOL

CHIPATALA
CLINIC

CHIPATALA
CHAPAFONI

SANITAR
PADS

DOL
INVE
TAKONDWA
COMMODIT

EXCLUSIVE
BREASTFEEDING
FOOD
SAFETY
WASH
INNOVATIVE
GARDEN
SIX FOOD
GROUPS
GENDER:
FATHER TO
FATHER GROUP

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACLAN	Area Community Leaders Action for Nutrition
ADC	Area Development Committees
AEDO	Agriculture Extension Development Officer
AgFin	GIZ Programme Promotion of Agricultural Finance of Agri-based Enterprises in Rural Areas
ASF	Animal Source Foods
ATVET	Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training
AVO	Assistant Veterinary Officer
CBCC	Community-Based Childcare Centres
CCPF	Chipatala Cha Pa Foni Health Hotline
CLAN	Community Leaders Action for Nutrition
COMSIP	Community Savings and Investment Promotion
CUMO	Concern Universal Microfinance Operations
DCPC	District Civil Protection Committee
DCDO	District Community Development Officer
DEC	District Executive Committee
DHO	District Health Office
DN	Department of Nutrition
DNHA	Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS
DNCC	District Nutrition Coordination Committee
DoDMA	Department of Disaster and Risk Management
DoNUTS	Donor Group for Nutrition Security
DSCC	District Social Support Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFC	Farmer Financial Trainings
FLW	Frontline Worker
FNSP	Food and Nutrition Security Programme
FNS -ISPA	Food Security and Nutrition – Inter Agency Protection Assessment
FUS	Follow Up Survey
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GIAE	GIZ's Programme Green Innovations for the Agriculture and Food Sector
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit

GVH	Group Village Headman
HFIES	Household Food Insecurity Experience Scale
HH	Household
HPBG	Highly Productive Backyard Garden
HSA	Health Surveillance Assistant
IHF	Integrated Homestead Farming
IP	Implementing Partner
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau <i>Development Bank</i>
LNOB	Leave No One Behind Principle
MAD	Minimum Acceptable Diet
MBA	Malawi Bureau of Standards
MDD	Minimum Dietary Diversity
MDHS	Demographic and Health Survey
MNSSP	Malawi National Social Support Programme
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MRA	Malawi Revenue Authority
MUAC	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
NSSP-TF	Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Task Force
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
PNHAO	Principal Nutrition, HIV/AIDS Officer
PRSP	Poverty Reduction and Social Protection Division under the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
SCTP	Social Cash Transfer Programme
SHA	Self Help Africa
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
SPP	GIZ's Social Protection Programme
TA	Traditional Authority
UBR	Unified Beneficiary Registry
VA	Village Agent
VDC	Village Development Committee
VLAP	Village Level Action Plan
VNCC	Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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1. Introduction to the Food and Nutrition Security Programme in Malawi



Photo: The President of Malawi as guest of honour at the Scaling Up Nutrition 3.0 launch © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

The GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) in Malawi is part of the global programme **Food and Nutrition Security, Enhanced Resilience** under the Special Initiative; *Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems*, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The programme focused on addressing malnutrition, particularly among women of reproductive age and small children, through multi-sectoral approaches that integrate nutrition into social protection, agriculture, and health systems.

In Malawi, FNSP was in Dedza and Salima districts since 2015 and concluded in 2025. The programme operated through **implementing partners**—CARE International and Self-Help Africa—in close coordination with the **Department for Nutrition (DN)** in the Ministry of Health as the lead political partner. Over the past 10 years, FNSP has played a pivotal role in improving nutritional outcomes, fostering innovation, strengthening governance, and building resilience across national, district, and community levels. Through collaboration with local governments, partners, and communities, the programme has refined and scaled up effective and sustainable interventions. Key innovations such as the Nutrition Coordination Tool, the Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) health hotline, and local subsidy agreements have laid the foundation for sustainable nutrition interventions and improved service delivery.

2. Rationale for the Approaches in the Promising Practice booklet

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Malawi's reliance on maize as a staple food demands creative solutions to enhance dietary diversity and resilience. The FNSP introduced practical and locally adaptable interventions to empower households in adopting nutrition-rich diets. These include homestead food production, innovative gardening techniques such as sack gardening, and small livestock production. By promoting these approaches, including sustainable agricultural and nutrition-sensitive social protection initiatives, the programme has contributed to improved food security, reduced malnutrition, and strengthened livelihoods in rural communities.



Photo: A chicken and its chicks having locally made feed and having clean water © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

3. Learning in the Food and Nutrition Security Programme

FNSP has continuously evolved through evidence-based learning, adapting its strategies to maximize impact. The programme has tested and refined interventions such as the Nutrition Coordination Tool, the Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) health hotline, and targeted cash transfers to support households during lean seasons. These initiatives have demonstrated the importance of integrating nutrition into broader development frameworks and have paved the way for more sustainable approaches. This booklet serves as a knowledge-sharing tool, offering valuable lessons for policymakers, practitioners, and development partners. As you explore, you will discover inspiring stories, practical solutions, and valuable lessons that illustrate FNSP's commitment to transforming Malawi's food and nutrition landscape. This documentation serves as a resource for stakeholders seeking to learn from these experiences and apply similar approaches to improve nutritional outcomes in their communities.



Photo: A lady pruning in her backyard garden to access fresh vegetables for food © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

4. Topics, Approaches, and Resources: Navigation of the Booklet

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This booklet, *Innovative Pathways to Food and Nutrition Resilience: Scalable Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Promising Practices Tested by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme Malawi*, presents sixteen promising practices structured into five thematic sections:

- **Integrated Homestead Farming to improve Diets** – Strategies for improving household food availability and dietary diversity.
- **Cash Transfers for Food Security** – Leveraging social protection mechanisms to enhance nutrition outcomes, resilience building and governance.
- **Nutrition sensitive household resilient support and Social Protection Building** – Ensuring food security during climate shocks and economic hardships.
- **Digital Platforms for Nutrition Governance** – Utilizing technology to improve access to nutrition services and information.
- **Continuous Learning and Adaptation** – Strengthening multi-sectoral coordination and evidence-based policymaking in success story narratives.

Each section includes field-tested strategies, case studies, and key takeaways to guide the scaling up of effective nutrition interventions. By documenting these innovative solutions, this booklet provides a roadmap for future initiatives, fostering continued investment in community-driven nutrition solutions in Malawi and beyond. As you explore this booklet, after each topic there are links to related knowledge management products that expand more on the topic.

Example of a resource window

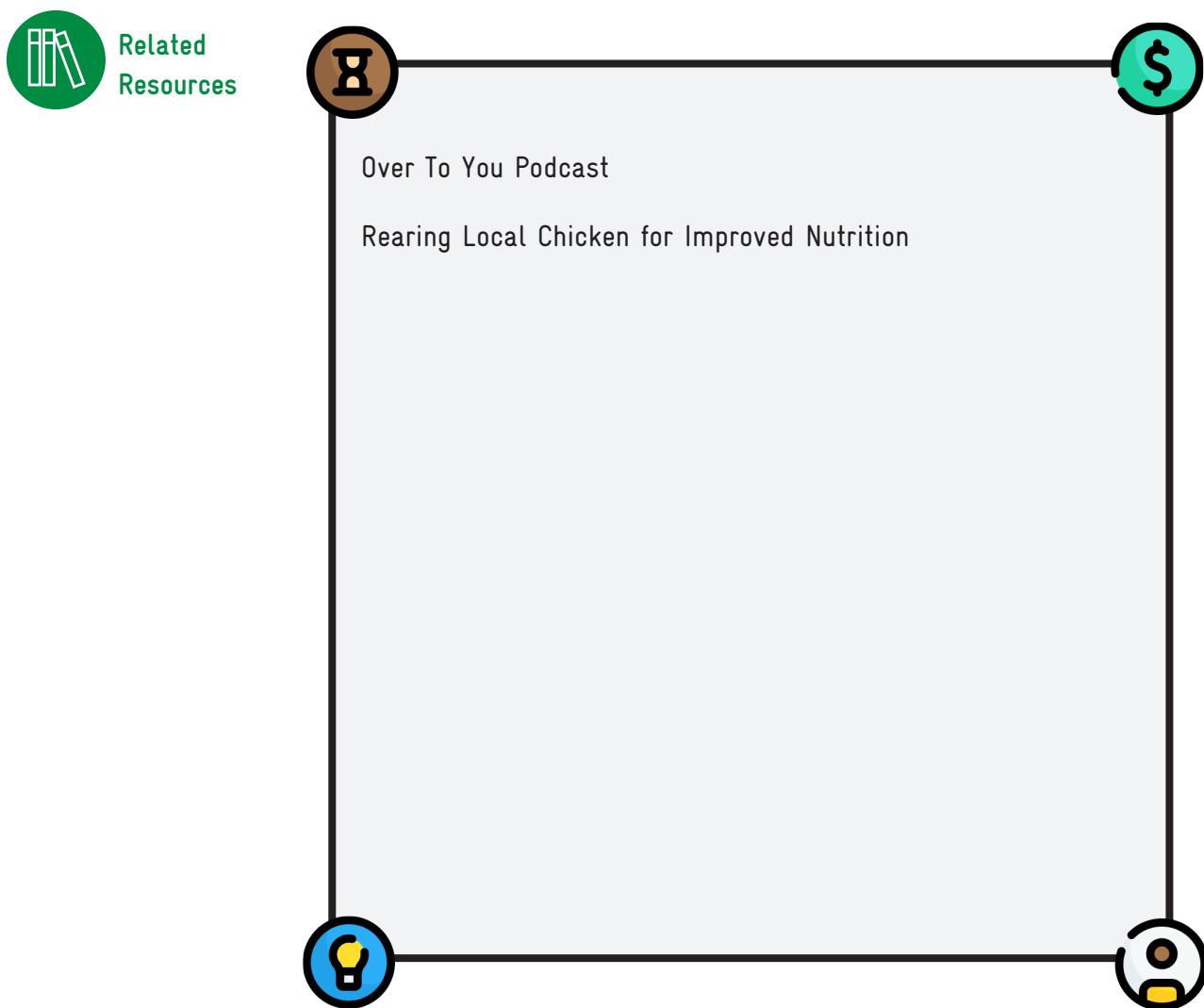
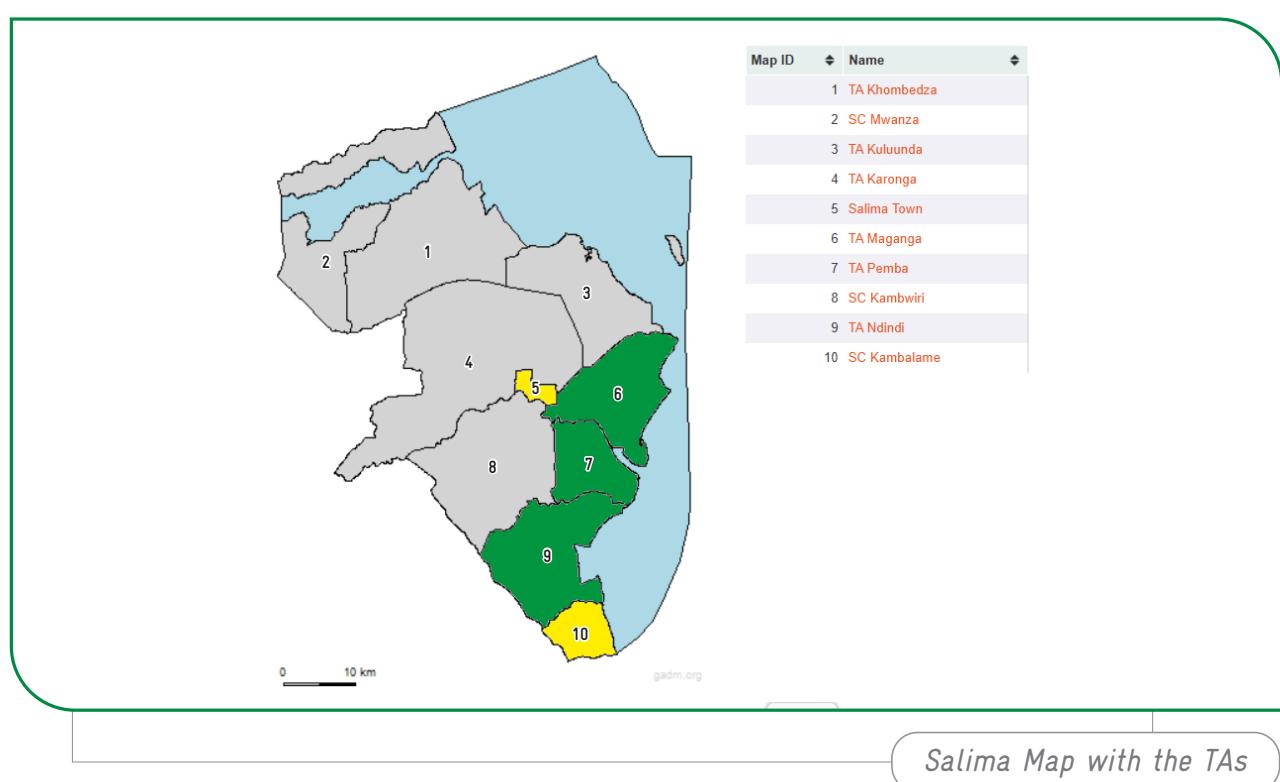
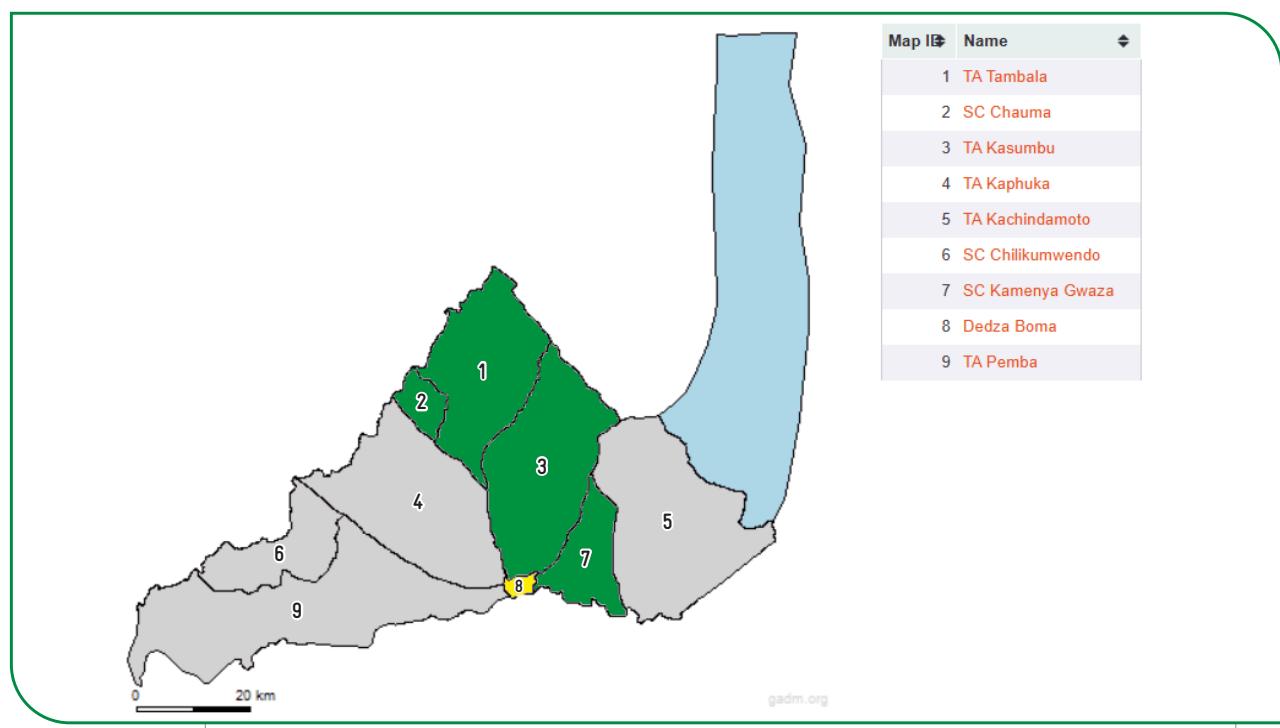


Figure 1. Example of a resource window in this promising practice document

5. The map of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme implementation area in Dedza and Salima



LEGEND: Green - FNSP Grey - Non FNSP Areas Yellow - Boma

Section 01

Approaches in Integrated Homestead Farming – Improving Diets



Section 01: Approaches in Integrated Homestead Farming – Improving Diets

Improving nutrition outcomes requires a shift away from staple-food dependence and toward the consumption of diverse, nutrient-rich, locally available foods. In Malawi, where maize is the staple food, increasing dietary diversity is crucial for enhancing health and building resilience against food insecurity. The Food and Nutrition Security Programme implemented interventions while simultaneously generating evidence to inform tailored approaches appropriate to the local context. This section explores the transformative practices and approaches employed by the Programme to promote nutrition-rich diets in rural areas, empowering households to produce, consume, and sustainably maintain diverse food sources. The project aimed to improve the nutritional status of vulnerable populations, particularly women of reproductive age and children under two years old, in the Salima and Dedza districts. Working closely with district councils, the Programme reviewed and steered numerous nutrition interventions, adapting them based on adoption rates among participants. The following promising practice topics were tested, and interventions were subsequently adapted based on the results.

1

Integrated Homestead Farming –
Household Permaculture

2

Innovative Sack and Hanging
Gardens for Vegetables Production

3

Communal Highly Productive
Gardens for Nutrition

4

Rearing Local Chicken
for Consumption

The promising practices described in this section represent the core interventions implemented by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) to achieve Objective 1 of the Global Project. Successful implementation required buy-in from the project team, comprised of Self-Help Africa, the Dedza District Council, Care Malawi, and the Salima District Council. Interventions were disseminated through a cascading approach utilizing the Care Group Model, reaching households through established networks. A key element in promoting adoption was a focus on influencing social behaviour and generating demand for these innovative approaches. The FNSP linked key enabling factors to both qualitative and quantitative data to assess intervention uptake.



Display of healthy diets and food sources in Dedza and Salima communities (c) GIZ/FNSPMalawi

Topic 1: Integrated Homestead Farming – Household Permaculture

4

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Promise Practice
documented: March 2023

This promising practice explores how the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) promoted both dietary diversity and enhanced financial resilience among households through the implementation of Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF), an approach endorsed by the Malawian Ministry of Agriculture. IHF focuses on diversifying food production at the household level, thereby improving access to nutritious foods and reducing reliance on external food purchases.

Key interventions within the IHF approach included the establishment of backyard gardens specifically designed for the cultivation of green leafy vegetables, promoting locally available varieties. These gardens provided a readily available source of essential micronutrients, contributing significantly to improved individual dietary diversification scores. The program also promoted fruit production through the planting of fruit trees. This component aimed to increase household access to vitamins, minerals, and other beneficial compounds found in fruits to support the programs target group.

Furthermore, the IHF approach incorporated small stock rearing, particularly chickens, providing households with a ready source of animal protein in meat and eggs. This element addressed the critical need for protein in diets, especially for vulnerable groups like children and pregnant women.

A crucial aspect of the IHF approach was its focus on targeting low-income households. By enabling these households to produce a sizeable portion of their own food, the program aimed to reduce their dependence on market purchases promoting food safety and redirecting limited financial resources towards other essential needs, such as healthcare, education, or other household expenses.

Beyond the individual components, the project fostered an ecological model within the IHF approach. This involved emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of the various farming components. Participants were encouraged to adopt a systems-thinking mindset, understanding how each element, from vegetable gardens to small livestock, contributed to the overall health and productivity of the homestead. This holistic approach promoted sustainability and maximized the benefits of the IHF system.

The backyard gardens proved to be a lifeline for rural households. They provided consistent access to diverse and nutrient-rich foods throughout the year, mitigating the effects of seasonal variations in food availability and improving household food security. This consistent access played a significant role in improving the nutritional status of individuals within the communities. This case study will further explore the specific ways in which households utilized the IHF interventions to improve their nutrition and examine the documented nutritional gains observed within the communities because of the program's implementation. It will delve into the actors and approach used to discuss the overall contribution of IHF to improved community health and resilience.



Photo: © GIZ/FNSP Malawi – A man watering local variety vegetables in his household's backyard garden in Salima



Context

The project, in its quest to promote dietary diversity, has been supporting household vegetable and fruit production as well as small stock production through the Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF) approach, as advocated by the Malawian Ministry of Agriculture. Backyard gardens are designed to provide a convenient source of green leafy vegetables for target households by ensuring they are near the home—hence the term “backyard garden.” The objective is to encourage the consumption of nutrient-rich green vegetables at the household level, which are essential sources of various micronutrients.

This initiative targets financially constrained households, enabling them to allocate their limited income to other pressing needs. Fruit production has similarly provided households with easy access to fruits without the need to purchase them. Small stock production, such as chickens, further enhances access to animal-sourced foods including eggs, allowing households to consume these products and save money for other scarce and costly animal products or household necessities.

The interventions also promote an ecological model through IHF, where the three main components of the approach are interlinked and interdependent. This holistic design aims to foster a mindset among the target population that recognizes and appreciates the interconnectedness of systems in their lives, encouraging them to embrace this integrated approach.



Geographical coverage

Malawi Dedza District (TAs Kasumbu, Chauma, Tambala and Kamenyagwaza) and Salima District (Ndindi, Maganga, Pemba)



Key Actors & Ownership

Key actors involved in the process:

- 1 District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC): This is the coordination team at district level which brings together all implementing partners and government departments to ensure that efforts are done in a complimentary way and there is a clear system in the district. The DNCC has nutrition technical members who train the frontline workers and volunteers on IHF and provides supportive supervisions and mentorship to community structures. The committee is also responsible for pooling funds from different partners through the joint workplan and budget.

- 2 Implementing Partners (CARE and Self-Help Africa): These support the district through the DNCC with resources to implement the joint workplan and are also responsible the implementation and monitoring of interventions.
- 3 Ministry of Agriculture (MoA): Works on Policy level- Development of approaches and monitoring tools which are adopted by IPs and government departments. At the Implementation level- Through frontline workers, the MoA, provides training to volunteers, provision of on-site monitoring services as well providing supportive supervision to households.
- 4 Project participants: They attend training sessions on management IHF, are willing to adopt the concept after training, report on gaps or challenges, and share the concept with other community members.



Target group

The interventions target women of reproductive age (15–49 years), pregnant and lactating women (PLW), and caregivers of children 2 years in Dedza and Salima districts. However, all households at the community level are reached with messages through the cascading model, while only the target population receives support in the form of vegetable seeds, fruit tree seedlings, and local chickens.



Objective

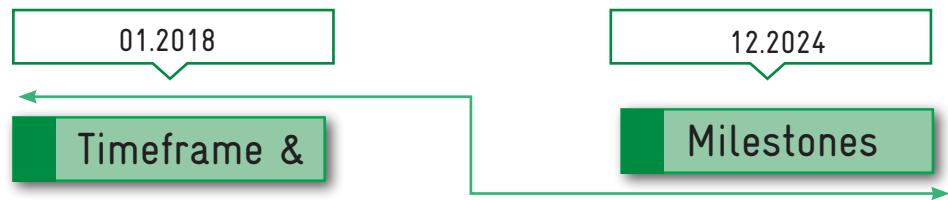
What was the specific objective of the process?

The objective of the intervention is to promote dietary diversity at household level through the convenient availability of green leafy vegetables, fruits, and animal source food in the target communities.

We aim at increasing the capacity of the target population to efficiently establish and manage the vegetable gardens regardless of the season of the year.

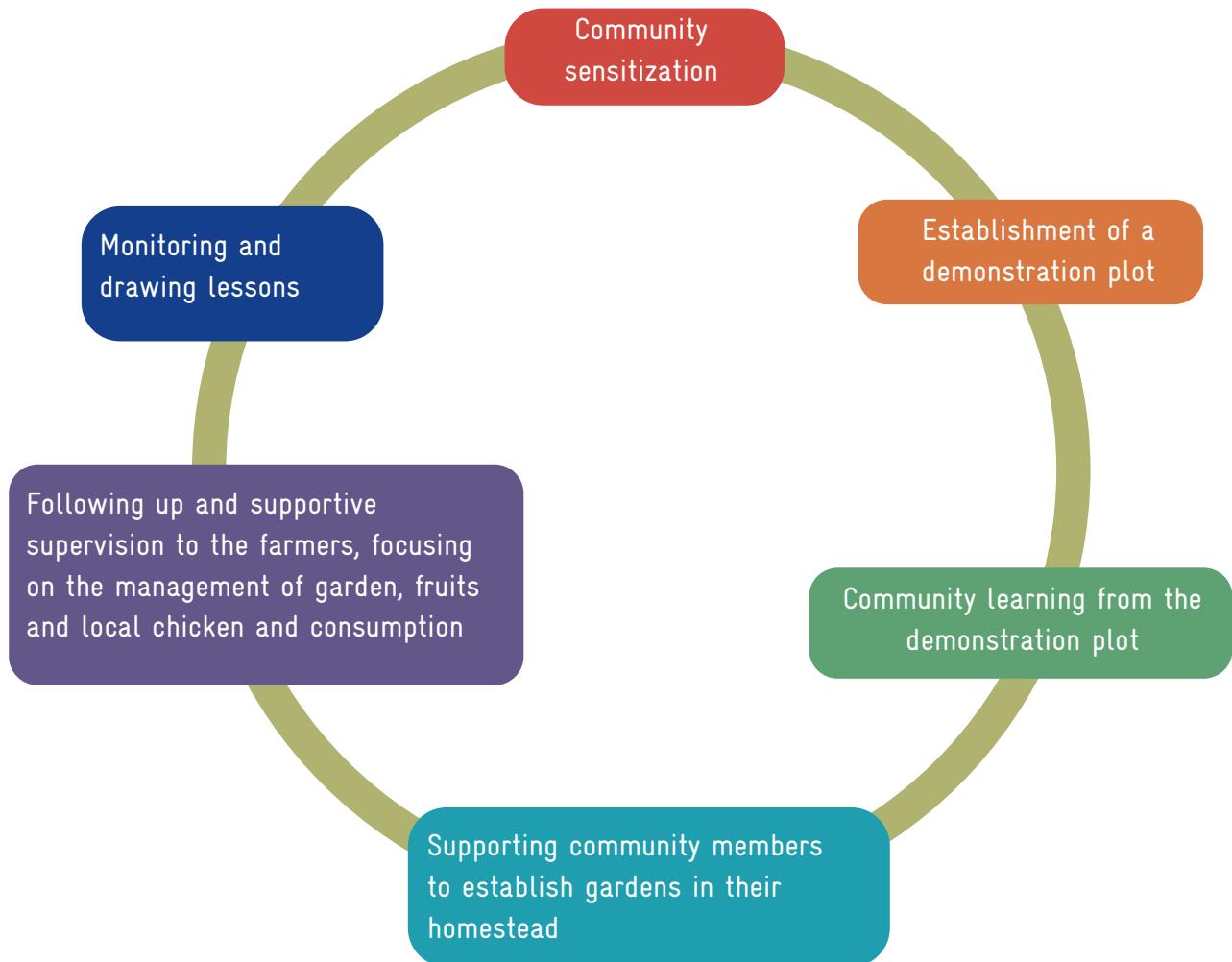
The interventions are expected to promote the establishment of the backyard gardens where over 70% of the target households have the backyard gardens and are consuming the vegetables. Further, the project is expecting to see a decline in micronutrient deficiencies, especially in Vitamin A and Iron. The project is also expected to see an increase in the Minimum Dietary Diversity (MDD) and Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) scores at targeted households.

The project will measure the progress and impact through the Follow Up Survey (FUS), the Annual Survey and the national Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS)



Methodological approach

A generic approach to all components in the IHF included:





Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability)

- **Environmental Sustainability:** The intervention uses existing land and requires a small plot of land to implement. The resources required are community based and do not affect the forestry or water resource as it uses very minimal water and wood resources. The intervention is also environmentally friendly as it uses recycled materials like sacks, broken or old bucket, etc. Further, it does not require heavy use of chemicals and machinery, as production of vegetables is strictly subsistence. Participants are also encouraged to practice integrated pest management which promotes the use of indigenous means to manage pests in the vegetables.
- **Institutional Sustainability:** There is a working policy supporting the implementation of the intervention and all key players at both national and district levels are well capacitated on the implementation. There is also knowledge at community level among the care group volunteers and community members.
- **Social sustainability:** There is community leadership acceptance at community level which includes setting of bylaws and other control measures to ensure that there is an enabling environment for the implementation of the backyard gardens.



*Growing fresh household vegetables(c) GIZ/
FNSPMalawi*



Project routine monitoring visits(c)
GIZ/FNSPMalawi

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:



(Initial)
Results

There has been a steady shift in the mindset of community members regarding the practice of integrated homestead farming. According to the 2023 Annual Survey, 68% (278) of respondents now keep livestock in their homesteads, compared to 49% (199) the previous year, with almost 80% of them keeping local chickens. The results also show that 31% of respondents have backyard gardens, an increase from 23% the previous year. Additionally, 75% of respondents have access to fruits, with 61% specifically having access to vitamin A-rich fruits.



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

According to the Follow Up Survey (FUS) 2024 preliminary report, Food security through (HFIES) has increased by 21 percentage points compared to the baseline, and 10 percentage points more beneficiaries are food secure than the control group. MAD increased by 15 percentage points since inception of FUS (baseline), while 13 percentage point less children meet the minimum threshold for acceptable diet in the control group as compared to the treatment. MDD increased by 12 percentage points for children and 13 percentage points for women, and the difference to the control group amount to 11 and 18 percentage points, respectively.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- 1 Social cohesion among community members: The community members share common characteristics which places them on a similar platform, however other community members adopt while others do not. Because of the social cohesion at community level, there are high chances of those community members who are not adopting to borrow a leaf from those who are, which will increase the interventions' success through spillover.
- 2 Availability of various partners promoting interventions: There is a DNCC which coordinates the interventions at district level, bringing in various partners to share lessons, successes, and failure for learning. There is also an opportunity for combining resources which will allow for upscaling of interventions and leveraging on pooled resources.

Existing models and approaches: The Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF) approach is a long-standing approach in Malawi popularised under the brand *"Pakhomo pa mwana alirenji,"* which translates to a house where a child does not cry (because of hunger). This is so because the IHF promotes that a household should have all sources of food at the homestead to feed their home. This is knowledge that has been there for decades and communities understand it and its requirements. This makes it easy for the project to promote the backyard gardens.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

- 1 Water shortage: Most areas in our target areas have prolonged dry spells which affect the management of the gardens.
- 2 Pests and diseases: These also affect the survivability of the vegetables.
- 3 Limited extension services: Due to the small number of Frontline Workers (FLWs), community members are not well reached with supportive supervision from the extension workers.
- 4 Livestock encroachment: Due to the loose management of livestock in Malawi where goats and cattle are let to roam around, the management of gardens becomes harder and discourages the reestablishment of the gardens.

However, it should be noted that the major constraint has been behaviour change among the community members. It has been noted that even before the interventions were fully rolled out, there were other community members who were implementing these interventions without the project knowledge. These are the very same project participants who are leading in adopting the interventions and their headline confirmation is that they know the importance of the vegetables and would not stay without a garden.



Testimony

“
I have had the garden for 3 years now and I have not bought any vegetables since
”

Efrida Mackson, a 34-year-old care group monitor and mother of five from Gonkho Village, Malawi, initially struggled to embrace Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF). After her first attempt at a backyard garden failed due to chickens eating the seedlings, she falsely claimed success during a follow-up training, only to be embarrassed when facilitators discovered her empty garden. Instead of scolding her, the facilitator patiently explained the importance of backyard gardens, motivating Efrida to try again. This time, she invested in her own seeds, built a strong fence, and protected the garden from children and livestock. For the past three years, Efrida has maintained her garden, stating, “I have had the garden for 3 years now and I have not bought any vegetables since.” She also participates in a communal garden group, further benefiting from vegetable sales and livestock purchases. Despite challenges like plant diseases, Efrida is determined to continue gardening, recognizing its positive impact on her life and even planning to expand her garden for increased vegetable consumption.



Related Resources



Over To You Podcast



Rearing Local Chicken for Improved Nutrition – <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2025-en-local-chicken-management-handbook.pdf>



Topic 2: Innovative Sack and Hanging Gardens for Vegetables production

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Promising practice
documentation date:
October 2024

The innovative gardening initiative emerged as a response to challenges faced by households in producing vegetables and diversifying diets, particularly in areas with limited land and water resources. Following a learning series in 2021, the Food Nutrition and Security Programme (FNSP) introduced the use of innovative gardens to enhance vegetable production through space-saving techniques, such as hanging gardens and sack gardens. These innovative gardens address the constraints of traditional flatbed gardens, which are often hindered by issues like land scarcity, labour intensity, and animal interference. A survey conducted by GIZ in 2021/2022 highlighted these barriers, emphasizing the need for solutions that improve the accessibility and consumption of fresh vegetables to combat malnutrition among women and children during critical developmental periods.

In response to the identified challenges, FNSP organized a series of learning sessions aimed at equipping participants with sustainable gardening practices tailored to their specific needs. The introduction of innovative garden designs, including sack and hanging gardens, significantly increased participant engagement, and interest. This led to a notable rise in the adoption of these gardening methods among households, as they provided practical solutions to previously insurmountable obstacles. The project's focus on utilizing locally available materials allowed even small spaces to be transformed into productive vegetable gardens.

As a result of these efforts, the consumption of locally grown vegetables has increased, contributing to more diverse diets within households. These fresh vegetables not only enhance dietary variety but also ensure safer pest management practices compared to conventionally sourced produce. The successful implementation of innovative gardens has led to greater food security and improved health outcomes for families involved in the project.



Photo: © GIZ/FNSP Malawi –A hanging vegetable garden on a rack in TA Chauma – with pumpkin leaves growing in them



Context

The FNSP Follow Up Survey 2022 revealed that limited land, water scarcity, labour intensity, and lack of fencing materials were significant factors hindering the adoption of backyard gardens in the districts.

To overcome these challenges, the Food Nutrition and Security Programme (FNSP) conducted a learning series on innovative gardens. This approach sought to provide a sustainable and efficient solution for vegetable growing, encompassing the specific needs and constraints of the project participants.

The project was trying to address land limitation, water scarcity, unavailability of fencing materials, animal destruction, and labour intensity associated with backyard gardening which were commonly cited by most project participants as their main challenges to low adoption rate of the conventional garden approach.

The low adoption rate of conventional backyard gardens prompted GIZ FNSP to reevaluate its strategies for promoting accessibility, availability, and consumption of vegetables by households. In response, innovative garden designs were introduced to engage project participants more effectively. These new gardens incorporated creative features, such as hanging and sack gardens. As a result, project participants showed greater interest and participation which spurred increased adoption among households.

The promising practice improved the nutrition status of project participants through consumption of diverse diets including vegetables locally grown within the homestead. These vegetables benefited to their healthy because locally grown vegetables are harvested fresh and use safe pest and disease management.



Geographical coverage

The Food nutrition and security programme (FNSP) is implemented in 58 village development committees under four traditional authorities of Traditional authorities Chauma, Kamenyagwaza, Kasumbu and Tambala in Dedza and 37 village development committees under three traditional authorities of Ndindi, Pembe and Maganga in Salima district, central Malawi.



Key Actors & Ownership

Key actors involved in the process:

The following groups were key actors in ensuring the success of the innovative vegetable production initiatives.

- GIZ-FNSP,
- Self-Help Africa,
- CARE Malawi,
- District Nutrition Coordinating Committee,
- Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee,
- Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee,
- Faith-Based Leaders,
- Traditional Leaders,
- Project participants,
- Care Group Volunteers,
- Lead Farmers



Target group

Target groups of the innovative vegetable production include pregnant women, lactating mothers with children under the age of 2 who are part of the care group, adolescents, and community spillovers.



Objective

What was the specific objective of the process?

To support project participants in improving their accessibility, availability, and consumption of fresh vegetables with the aim of addressing malnutrition among women and children in the 1000-day window.



1,091 households have established innovative gardens in all the four FNSP Traditional Authorities namely, Chauma, Tambala, Kasumbu, and Kamenyagwaza in Dedza only. This figure translates to 1,091 households who had access to fresh vegetables during this period. The data of 1,097 innovative gardens provided here, presented empirical evidence that the approach was working. Throughout the first adoption phases, traditional gardens encountered multiple challenges. Many households attributed the slow adoption of backyard gardens to land limitation, water scarcity, labour intensity, or lack of fencing materials, and many more. The challenges hindered households to effectively participate in backyard gardening initiative. Following the learning series which GIZ FNSP organized in Lilongwe for FNSP implementing partners on innovative gardens, adoption rate improved.



Methodological approach

How was regular involvement of key actors and beneficiaries ensured?

GIZ organized Learning series: GIZ organized a learning series for CARE Malawi, Self Help Africa, and District Nutrition Coordinating Committee (DNCC) focusing on innovative garden approaches. Through engagement in agricultural research, they were trained to implement these innovative gardening techniques. This initiative aimed at enhancing agricultural practices, improve food security, and promote sustainable farming methods in the respective communities.

Use of Lead Farmer concept: Implementing the lead farmer concept proved instrumental as it involved training or orienting designated individuals who then disseminated innovative garden technologies, significantly enhancing the adoption rate within the project participants. This cascade approach effectively leveraged the influence and knowledge base of lead farmers, resulting in widespread acceptance and implementation of novel gardening practices.

Awareness/community mobilization: Awareness meetings were conducted on innovative gardens, involving front line workers who conveyed technical extension messages to project participants. This engagement empowered the front-line workforce to provide valuable guidance and support in implementing innovative gardening techniques effectively.

Use of pipe Invented from banana sheaf: The participants' creation of a pipe from a banana sheaf which was seen as user-friendly, inspired others to experiment with unconventional materials, leading to the establishment of more innovative gardens. This creative use of resources sparked a chain reaction of ingenuity and exploration within the community, fostering a culture of inventive gardening practices, leading to ownership of the technology.

Model Village Approach and Demonstration Plots: Innovative model village was established with demo plots displaying creative garden designs, including growing vegetables in unconventional containers like sacks, bottles, and buckets. Project participants visited these demonstration sites to gain firsthand experience and learn practical skills in cultivating vegetables using alternative and resourceful methods.

Vegetable garden racks designs: Project participants addressed the challenge of animal destruction of vegetable gardens and shortage of fencing materials by designing racks where sack or bottle gardens are put, preventing chickens or other animals from destroying them.

Exchange visits and gallery walks: Gallery walks, and exchange visits have proven to be effective strategies in stimulating learning among participants by facilitating active engagement and knowledge sharing within a structured environment. These approaches enhance collaborative learning experiences and promote a dynamic exchange of ideas and perspectives among participants, leading to spread of innovative vegetable production in Dedza and Salima district.

Monitoring and supportive supervision in model village demo plots: The monitoring and supportive supervision of demo plots in model villages and households not only encouraged establishment of innovative gardens but also catalysed a spillover effect, leading to the adoption of similar practices by non-targeted families in the community. This approach effectively fostered widespread enthusiasm for garden initiatives and promoted sustainable agricultural practices across a broader spectrum of households.


Total costs of the process:

To conduct a training to promoters at VDC (Village Development Committee) level, the estimated cost was MK 450,000

The estimated costs for a beneficiary to pilot innovative gardens at household level was MK 40,000. This is for an average household of 5 people.

Other resources which were needed included households, project volunteers, FLWs, project staff, fuel, workforce, sacks, bottles, broken basins, soil, manure, stones, seed, banana sheaths, water availability, stationary, finances, poles.



Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability)

Environmental Sustainability:

- The districts have communities, volunteers, households, and lead farmers who are equipped with technical know-how to apply innovative garden technologies because the project trained them.
- Agriculture Extension Development officers (AEDO) are more willing and highly interested in being trained and support innovative garden approaches which FNSP is currently using.
- SHA & CARE organized refresher trainings for nutrition coordinating committees on the innovation that FNSP is promoting to scale up the adoption of backyard gardens.
- 100% of materials for creating innovative gardens are locally sourced, making it potentially scalable.
- There are high willingness and empirical evidence that households are already growing indigenous vegetables.
- All the Traditional Authorities under FNSP have availability of indigenous seeds and knowledge in e.g. seed storage, use of banana sheaf for pipe, ability to make and use of compost manure.
- Gender problems are solved. Women and men can establish innovative gardens because they are cost-effective and labour-saving with less water requirement.
- Help to improve adaptive measures to impacts of climate change since innovative gardens use less water, and the project is promoting the use of manure for innovative gardens.

Institutional Sustainability:

- District councils: Continuous collaboration with district councils through the District Nutrition Coordinating Committees paves the way for sustainability of the approach.

Social sustainability:

- Community engagement, knowledge sharing, and collective action foster a sense of unity and resilience among participants as they practice the technologies. Communities are doing exchange visits / gallery walks within VDC to learn from each other and improve on sustaining the intervention.
- Promotion of community-led gardening initiatives such as use of rack, banana pipe invented by the communities themselves.
- Furthermore, the approach creates opportunities for social interaction, skill sharing, and community bonding as members also share materials such as seeds, manure, etc.

Economic sustainability (consider access to finance/business model):

- Innovative gardening techniques promote the growth of a lot of vegetables on a small piece of land. When managed properly, some vegetables are sold to neighbours acting as a source of funds for the households. These funds can be used to buy other food items like meat, eggs, small fish, oil, sugar, and salt for the household.

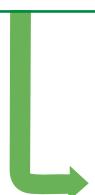
Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial)
Results

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:

After the learning series, there has been an increase in the adoption of innovative gardens in the districts, which also translated to an increase in the consumption of vegetables among households.



Success
factors

What conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- The learning series provided a platform for knowledge exchange.
- Initiative-taking and resolute field officers, FLWs
- Community willingness and commitment
- Strong community structures enforceable by laws.
- Presence of materials such as rocks, banana pith, manure, sacks etc.



Constraints and risks

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?



- Harsh weather
- Few sacks/buckets of vegetables. There were not enough to support the whole household consumption.
- Non-diversified vegetables at household level mostly due to a lack of diverse types of seeds

With the following risks associated with backyard gardens and prevention.

- Risk: Disease-carrying bugs, Prevention: Encourage hygiene and sanitation practices.
- Risk: Long and hot weather, Prevention: Promote mulching and manure application.
- Risk: The use of herbicides can lead to pollution, Prevention: Promotion of indigenous vegetables that resist attacks from pests and diseases, promotion of the use of manure, and botanical pest control/ integrated pest management (IPM).



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the programme

- The practice was observed within untargeted households in the project traditional authorities, the practice was also reported to be done in other non FNSP traditional areas by Front Line Workers.
- Replicated in other non FNSP districts such as Zomba and Mulanje, after interventions were taken there by Self Help Africa and Care Malawi in communities.
- Communities from other districts attended learning visits e.g. FNSP global conference team, visitors from Nsanje, Blantyre & Phalombe.
- This practice has also been replicated in the same districts but using local available resources e.g. banana paths.

What are the required conditions to replicate and adapt the practice in another context/geographical area?

- Learning series, the availability of model villages, exchange visits, gallery walks and field days where community members, partners, delegates are invited to field visits.

- Awareness campaigns can target widely beyond the programme area.
- Media involvement e.g. in the form of success stories and newsprint.
- Made a mural which was used in calendars, and handed over to the Department of Nutrition
- By training Nutrition Coordinating Committees which in turns train frontline workers and care group volunteers.

What are the required conditions to replicate the practice at a larger scale (national, regional)?

Training on innovative garden methods to FLWs. Most FLWs say they are not up to date with this technique and to support volunteers better they need to be trained. Otherwise, the technique can easily be scaled up as people get even more innovative once they grasp the concept.



Testimony

“

Since I planted my own vegetables in sacks at home, I don't buy them from the market anymore. I just eat what I grow.

”

Mr. Kamwaza of Mngwele VDC-TA Kasumbu-Dedza used to have a conventional backyard garden. He could not sustain it due to harsh weather conditions and lack of water for watering the garden. But after receiving training from the care group promoter on innovative gardens, he saw that it was easy to create and did not require more water. He also admired the fact that the garden can be made by using locally available resources. After the training he planted three vegetables sacks (Mustard, Rape, Bean leaves) at his house. Since he made the decision to plant the sacks at his household, he no longer buys vegetables from the market but consumes the ones that are readily available from his hanging sack garden.



Related
Resources



Over To You Podcast – Spotify



Instructional Video – Innovative Gardens (EcoAgtube)



Topic 3: Communal and Highly Productive Gardens for Nutrition

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Care Malawi

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Promising practice
documentation date:
January 2023

This promising practice builds on the situation in Malawi, where subsistence agriculture sustains nearly 80% of the population and maize dominates diets. The access to nutritious foods remains a critical challenge, exacerbated by climate change, reliance on rainfed agriculture, and limited income. With child malnutrition rates alarmingly high, the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP), in collaboration with Agriculture Extension Workers, has been implementing Integrated Household Farming (IHF) to diversify diets and improve access to nutrient-rich foods. This initiative promotes backyard, communal, and highly productive gardens, strategically located near homes to minimize women's labour and ensure the availability of fresh produce.

FNSP introduced the highly productive backyard garden (HPBG) in 2020 to enhance animal protein consumption, integrating small livestock like rabbits and chickens with diverse vegetables and fruit trees. These gardens serve as demonstration plots for climate-smart agriculture techniques, including composting, mulching, and drip irrigation, enabling households to learn and replicate sustainable practices. Communal gardens further extend these benefits to those with limited land, while backyard gardens provide readily accessible fresh produce, saving households both time and money. The program's success is evident in the thousands of households adopting these practices, significantly improving dietary diversity and resilience to climate-related challenges.



*Photo: © GIZ/FNSP Malawi –
A women VSLA group in TA
Ndindi presenting their highly
productive garden which is
supporting the group as a
business initiative.*



Context

Poor households have limited access to nutritious foods due to several factors including climate change impacts, overreliance on rainfed agriculture, limited access to income and inadequate information on food production. The Minimum Acceptable Diet among children under 5 in Malawi is still low at 8% according to MDHS 15/16. To improve access and availability of nutritious foods and to promote the diversification of household diets, the project has been implementing Integrated Household Farming (IHF) by promoting backyard gardens, fruit production, and the rearing of small livestock since its inception in collaboration with Agriculture Extension Workers.

The project promoted three types of gardens, namely highly productive backyard which are large scale vegetable gardens used for income generation, communal gardens which are backyard gardens shared by several households for the sole purpose of consumption and normal household backyard gardens. All these three gardens are established close to the houses to ensure minimum possible labour and time investment of women, as well as easy access and availability of vegetables while they are fresh with vitamins and minerals for the nutritional wellbeing of children, mothers, and the entire households.

In 2020, FNSP introduced the highly productive backyard garden (HPBG) to promote animal consumption. HPG is an intensive IHF communal garden approach, which integrates small livestock like rabbits and chickens alongside vegetables and fruit trees to maximize benefits. The garden is established to improve the availability of nutrient-dense food throughout the year and to increase resilience to climate change, particularly to droughts and pests. HPG integrates best practices in agriculture and animal production and serves as demonstration plots for HH to establish individual backyard gardens.

From 2020 households' members learnt different climate-smart agriculture technologies for their backyard gardens such as the use of compost manure, Zai pit, mulching (which helps retain moisture), drip irrigation, cultivation in sacks, banana trunks, old tins, and local ways to manage pests and diseases. Backyard gardens are mostly established during dry season when there is limited access to fresh vegetables among households. The number of backyard gardens varies yearly and according to seasons.

Further, the project promotes communal gardens where several households (5 to 12) jointly cultivate in one garden within the village. The approach helps those who do not have enough space in homes to cultivate and acts as a demonstration plot for the neighbouring village to learn from and adopt climate-smart agriculture technologies. With the HPG, it is easier for households to consume a variety of foods from diverse groups such as meat from rabbits, chickens, eggs, and several types of vegetables.

Backyard gardens are established within the household compound. Apart from providing fresh vegetables and saving time, they help save money for the household, which can be used to buy other food items. According to the project annual assessment in January 2022, 8,815 households established backyard gardens in 2021.



Geographical coverage

Home gardens are established in all the TAs of Maganga, Pemba and Ndindi.

Communal gardens started in the TA Maganga and spilled over to other GVHs (Group Village Headmen) in all the TAs.

The HPBGs (Highly Productive Backyard Gardens) approach started being practiced in September 2020.



Key Actors & Ownership

Key actors involved were:

FNSP and Care Malawi: Coordinated the process, being responsible for mobilising initial inputs and resources for training as well as facilitating the supervision of the process.

Government: Using the nutrition VNCC (Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee) structure which facilitates on ground training and technical support to the community. VNCCs provide advice to cluster members including how to deal with pest and diseases; Cluster members demand services from the VNCCs when required in addition to the routine work by these service providers.

Lead Farmers conduct trainings, monitor and supervise cluster leaders and household cluster members as implementers of the gardens.

Household Cluster members: Participate in home garden trainings organised by lead farmers and VNCCs (AEDOs). They are responsible for sourcing materials for construction of the home gardens as well sourcing seeds. When the project has distributed seeds, cluster members establish a nursery, manage it and the seedlings are distributed amongst them.

Community and HPBGs management are critical, nevertheless, cluster members devise a roster of responsibilities for each member to ensure proper and consistent management of the gardens. In one of the HPBGs, members mobilised themselves to form a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) to support with any financial needs for the garden including costs of drugs and vaccines for the animals. Additionally, where rabbits have multiplied, members have passed on to each other for to replicate the idea in their gardens at home.



Target group

The target group included households with children under the age of two, pregnant and lactating women. Nonetheless, the outcome of the home gardens extended to all household members and the entire community.

16,250 households were trained on home gardens and supported with vegetable seeds (The project directly distributed the seeds to 3,605 households and they were advised to share seedlings amongst fellow cluster members). 125 cluster members were trained on highly productive home gardens HPHG together with their spouses. To ensure gender aspects, both men and women were involved in the home garden pilot. 80% of the home garden training participants were women.

Men were involved in the construction and maintenance of home gardens. In HPBGs, cluster members participated with their spouses so that men were engaged in the construction of gardens. When vegetable seeds were distributed, clusters were encouraged to establish a nursery and distribute seedlings amongst themselves to ensure that no one was left behind. When rabbits in the HPBG multiplied, clusters members passed them on to each other first before passing them on to another cluster.



Objective

What was the specific objective of the process?

The main aim of the home gardens was to increase dietary diversification of pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and their children under the age of two. Easy access to nutritious vegetables, fruits, and small livestock (in case of IHF and HPBGs) increased chances of consumption. Healthwise, consuming dark green leafy vegetables increases intake of micronutrients.

Results of Follow Up Studies commissioned by GIZ FNSP have shown that having a backyard garden increases chances of having high dietary diversity, hence healthy and well-nourished babies, and mothers.

To measure the number of households with home gardens, the project used the number of households which accessed vegetable seeds for their gardens, the number of households which consumed the vegetables, and checked on households showing improved dietary diversity of women and children. The project used volunteers' reports, household checklist data, and annual assessments. For HPBGs, the results were measured through monitoring reports.



10.2020

12.2022

Timeframe &

Milestones



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

Regular involvement of key actors and beneficiaries is needed and must be ensured.

For home gardens the steps are as follows:

- Community sensitization
- Establishment of a demonstration plot
- Community learning from the demonstration plot
- Supporting community members to establish gardens in their homestead
- Following up on farmers on the management of garden

For communal and HPBGs the steps are as follows:

- Community sensitization on the approach
- Procurement of the items needed.
- Communities choose a village or site.
- Formation of cluster members
- Selection of leaders
- Constitution / formation of the bylaws
- Communities choose actual site where the garden can be established.
- Land preparation, planting.
- Follow up and support by Extension workers and volunteers (lead farmers, cluster leaders, and promoters)

Key actors such as AEDOs, cluster leaders, promoters and volunteers were involved throughout the process. After sensitization, the extension staff, volunteers, and community members implemented subsequent activities.



Costs & Resources

The total costs of the process were:

Drip kits = MK 11,824,458

HPBGs = MK 3,114,000

Vegetable seeds= MK 16,507,950

Costs per beneficiary of the practice (actual costs):

MK 1,015 per individual for home gardens

MK 24,912 for HPBGs

It is important for households to source their own seeds, utilize livestock that is already available and use kraals that are easy to construct.



Sustainability & Do No Harm

Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability):

- **Environmental Sustainability:**

The project was promoting backyard gardens which are more resilient to climate change by using climate-smart agriculture technologies to manage water and soil, and in the course reduce environmental damage. Indigenous vegetables such as amaranthus, blackjack, pumpkin leaves, okra, and many more were promoted in the gardens. These vegetables need less water, yet they provide essential vitamins and minerals for the body. The manure and mulching improved soil health by adding organic matter and valuable nutrients to the soil, which reduces soil erosion. With scarcity of water, especially during dry season, the zai pits, drip irrigation and mulching helped to retain moisture balance in the soil. Highly productive backyard gardens are environmentally sustainable. Integrating small livestock in the backyard garden maximized the nutritional benefits for both the plants, the livestock, and households as they depend on each other for survival.

The project is implementing climate-smart agriculture technologies, which the government is already promoting as it addresses climate change issues. With the current political will by the government to address climate change issues, it is envisaged that the activities will continue beyond the project's lifespan to sustain the environment, as the backyard gardens contribute to food and nutrition security. The technologies promoted are simple and easy to implement. Coupled with the presence of the trained lead farmers and government extension workers, the communities can continue demand the using their services from them and scale up the approaches to other members and neighbouring villages beyond the project's lifespan.

- **Institutional Sustainability:**

The project works with community structures such ACLAN (Area Community Leaders Action in Nutrition), CLAN (Community Leaders Action in Nutrition), VNCCs, Care groups and key volunteers (care group promoters, village agents, and lead farmers) and others to promote backyard gardens. As they continue working together and benefits are being realized, the backyard gardens will be institutionalized and spread in many villages. The involvement of local leaders to enforce the establishment of backyard gardens plays a big part in their adoption.

- **Social sustainability:**

Care group and household members came together to learn different climate-smart agriculture technologies to apply them in their own backyard gardens. The get-togethers improved social relationships and information sharing among the communities' members which helped to promote the backyard gardens and work together in the communal gardens and HPBG.

During the implementation, the project learnt that communal gardens are more difficult to sustain than individual backyard gardens because there is likelihood of less ownership among the members, especially if the efforts of maintaining outweigh the benefits. However, the communal gardens have proved to be useful for learning purposes for a brief period of time to replicate practices in the homestead and for income generation when planting high cash value crops such as tomatoes.

- **Economic sustainability (consider access to finance/business model):**

The backyard gardens provide a way to reduce household expenses as vegetables and fruits are readily accessible and available. The savings from consuming home-grown produce and selling the excess were used to invest or meet other households needs and increase the income. Secondly, the availability of fresh vegetables and fruits ensures a healthy lifestyle for household members which can contribute to reduced sickness and diseases, thereby saving money.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial) Results

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:

Since 2016, the project has registered an increase in households that establish home gardens from 31 to 77% in 2022 even though the percentage varies from year to year and season to season.

Dietary diversification has also improved from 3.9 to 4.1. Evidence from Follow Up Surveys commissioned by GIZ proved that having a backyard garden increases chances of having a high dietary diversity.

For HPBG, 37 households benefited from rabbits that were passed on and integrated into their homesteads.



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

Improvements in dietary diversity have been reported and associated with the availability of a backyard garden.

Home gardens and HPBGs were promoted alongside climate-smart agriculture practices such as zai pits, manure, and mulching. Additionally, beneficiaries were encouraged to control pest and diseases using natural remedies such as neem, which are environmentally friendly.

During monitoring, observations and other assessments, households reported that sometimes they shared vegetables especially with relatives, however, in cases where they felt exploited, a few households stopped establishing backyard gardens due to overdependency by other relatives in the village.

Communal and HPBGs increased teamwork, networking, sharing experiences and learning, however, in some cases e.g. at Chiunda GVH (Group Village Headman) workload was left to only one individual which led to inadequate management of the rabbits and transfer of the pilot to another site within the village.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- Working with AEDOs, lead farmers and CLAN to promote the gardens helped scaling them up. Where CLAN were more active to enforce the establishment of the backyard gardens, more gardens were established.
- Upon distributing vegetable seeds, beneficiaries were asked to establish a nursery within a cluster and share seedlings. Where this was done, more households established home gardens.
- The care group structure contributed to the scale up of the gardens as information was easily passed on among household cluster members



Constraints and risks

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice and how they were addressed?

- 1 Water scarcity in some areas especially during the dry season made it hard for some households to manage home gardens.
- 2 Pests and diseases attacked vegetables; however, households were encouraged to use neem, onions, and aloe vera to control them.
- 3 Limited number of Assistant Veterinary Officer (AVOs), AEDOs and lead farmers with a big catchment area which limited the level of support to the households.
- 4 Deficient performance of some lead farmers, hence in coordination with VNCCs the project facilitated replacement.
- 5 Overdependency on the project to provide inputs even though the project encouraged households to preserve seeds and store them for subsequent seasons.
- 6 Most households do not practice mulching even though it was promoted under this practice. They preferred zai pits. Households complained about termites eating their vegetables when they did the mulching, however, the project continues to advocate for intercropping with plants that deter termites such as onions and garlic.
- 7 Pests and diseases attacked vegetables and in some cases some individuals stopped establishing home gardens because of that.

- 8 Reluctance of community members to use organic methods for pest and disease control in the gardens because they do not work as fast as the chemical ones.
- 9 Delay in reporting of pests and diseases to lead farmers and AEDOs for support.
- 10 Rabbits passed on to committed members who were taking care of HPBG without considering the presence/availability of a garden in their homestead as a condition for eligibility. The AVOs and lead farmers leading in the pass-on process.
- 11 High mortality rate of rabbits due to several factors which included poor housing, feeding and hygiene practices. Additionally, some rabbits were affected by diseases i.e. developed sores.
- 12 Sandy soils e.g., in TA Maganga affected home gardens, however, community members were advised to use sacks, manure and other means of growing vegetables.

In retrospective, what would we do differently if we were to scale up the process?

- Consider promoting larger gardens than the current 5mx4m to enable households to consume and sell the surplus for income generation.
- Encourage beneficiaries to source their own vegetable seeds, small livestock, fruit trees and only provide capacity building to establish and manage the gardens.
- Use local expertise to build skills of volunteers and community members in establishing and managing home gardens; Build on already existing technologies in the community i.e. housing. Promote a type of livestock which is preferred and accepted for consumption by the community.
- Promote communal gardens for income generation and use the surplus for home consumption to stimulate motivation, hence building household resilience. Additionally, identify potential communities and support them with capacity building and provision of seeds.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the program.

Communal and HPBGs should be replicated only when the lessons from this document are contextually analysed and when there is evidence of sustained success for a longer period (not less than one year)



Testimony

“
My rabbits managed to multiply and were 27 in total
”

“I am Agness Masantche from Kandulu Village, GVH Ngwena in TA Ndindi, I am one of the members of the Chilungamo club who benefited from the piloting Highly Productive Back Yard Gardens. I have been learning about integrating fruits, herbs, and rabbits in a vegetable garden. Four rabbits that the program gave us multiplied and each member received two rabbits. My rabbits managed to multiply and were 27 in total, my husband and kids ate one, I sold nine of them and made a total income of MK 23,000.00 then (2021) which was used to buy food items, especially sugar and milk for my children, other household necessities and school materials”.



Related Resources



Integrated Homestead Farming manual



Topic 4: Rearing Local chicken for consumption

Authors:



Kate Mwaungulu
Program Coordinator

Promising practice
documentation date:
January 2022

This promising practice displays a pioneering approach to livestock programming, designed to significantly improve dietary diversity by maximizing the production and consumption of animal source foods (ASFs) at the household level. Recognizing the limitations of previous livestock initiatives, a 2021 study highlighted the need of a more effective strategy. In response, the Food and Nutrition Security Program, working in close collaboration with livestock experts, developed an innovative model that shifted the focus from traditional livestock like goats to local chickens. This strategic shift was driven by the understanding that local chickens offer a more accessible and culturally acceptable means of enhancing protein intake within targeted communities.

The implementation of this novel model has proven to be transformative, addressing key barriers to ASF consumption. By prioritizing local chickens, the program effectively tackles cultural norms and misconceptions that previously hindered the intake of animal-based proteins. Through targeted awareness campaigns and educational initiatives, households are now more informed about the nutritional value of poultry meat and eggs, leading to a significant increase in their consumption. This approach has not only diversified protein intake but has also contributed to improved food and nutrition security within the communities. The success of this model underscores the importance of context-specific livestock programming that aligns with local preferences and nutritional needs.



Photo: Local chicken freely roaming in their homestead © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

To improve the nutritional status of rural communities, especially of women and children under 24 months in Dedza and Salima, the GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Programme promoted the consumption of diversified food through its implementing partners, Self-Help Africa in Dedza and Care International in Salima. For the program to achieve this objective it needed to enable and motivate women of reproductive age and children under 24 months to consume diversified diets which include animal source foods (ASF), e.g. local chicken and eggs.

Based on a livestock study conducted in 2021 and a learning series event that was held with inputs from a livestock expert, FNSP refocused its livestock farming approach from goat to local chicken production, aiming to increase the consumption of egg and chicken meat. The livestock study revealed that pork consumption was rare among program and non-program participants with 59.6% and 53.7% respectively never consuming it. Similarly, most people never consumed goat milk (71.8% program participants and 81.5% non-program participants). In contrast, 20.6% of program participants and 20.4% of non-program participants consumed beef 1-3 times a week while 46.9% of program participants consumed poultry meat 1-3 times a week and 42.6% of non-program participants consumed poultry with similar frequency.

Recommendations from the livestock studies (2021) showed that the FNSP-supported Livestock Pass-on Scheme had no immediate impact on improving the consumption of animal source foods (ASF). This was due to delays in offspring production and a quest by the program participants to pass on first before consuming, and their tendency to keep livestock as a buffer against economic shocks.

Cultural beliefs also restricted egg consumption, particularly among pregnant women, who were discouraged from eating eggs due to concerns about cravings. Additionally, many community members preferred to let eggs hatch to increase their chicken stock, though not all chicks reached the desired size.

According to the FNSP local chicken model developed by livestock experts, the initial eggs laid by the parent stock were meant to be brooded and hatched. The number of eggs left with each hen for brooding depended on its body size: large hens were allowed to brood up to 8 eggs, while smaller hens were given 5 to 6 eggs. Any additional eggs laid were consumed by the household.

Furthermore, the model provided one rooster and three hens to households instead of the recommended ratio of one rooster to ten hens, as farmers had struggled to meet the feeding requirements. The recommended ratio of one rooster to ten hens tended to lead to a rapid increase in the chicken population, which could overwhelm farmers' resources.

Additionally, the model did not make the Newcastle disease vaccination mandatory. It was assumed that access to quality compounded fodder from household waste, combined with good housing management and regular deworming, would keep the chickens in good health, and boost their immunity. However, it was important to understand that ND vaccination should still be considered alongside good nutrition to further enhance the chickens' resilience.

What were the specific challenges this process was trying to address?

The program addressed several key challenges related to improving nutrition in rural communities, particularly for women of reproductive age and children under 24 months. These challenges included:

- Low Animal Source Food (ASF) Consumption: Many rural households, particularly program participants, did not regularly consume ASF like chicken, eggs, pork or goat milk due to economic barriers, cultural practices, and lack of awareness about the nutritional benefits.
- Livestock Pass-on Scheme Ineffectiveness: The scheme had limited success in boosting ASF consumption, as participants prioritized passing on livestock over consumption and used livestock as a financial safety net.
- Cultural Beliefs: Cultural norms, such as pregnant women avoiding eggs and households allowing eggs to hatch for more chickens, reduced ASF intake.
- Slow Livestock Reproduction: Delays in livestock reproduction slowed the potential for regular food consumption.
- Lack of Dietary Diversity: Despite efforts, many households still lacked consistent access to diverse ASF, which were crucial for combating malnutrition, especially among women and young children.

The practice therefore aimed to increase ASF consumption, improve the livestock pass-on scheme's effectiveness, and overcome cultural barriers for better nutrition outcomes.

How did the process address participant priorities?

The program addressed participant priorities by ensuring that all materials and inputs used were locally available within their households, focusing on practicality and ease of integration into their daily lives. Key aspects included:

- Use of Household Waste for Fodder: Chickens were fed with food scraps and other waste materials found within the home, reducing costs and reliance on external resources. This aligned with participants' priorities of minimizing expenses and making use of what was already available.
- Simple and Manageable Chicken Care: The local chicken management model was designed to be easily understood by participants. It was adaptable to their busy schedules, allowing for chicken care to fit seamlessly alongside other household chores. This ensured that participants could manage the livestock without disrupting their daily routines.

By focusing on the use of local resources and practical solutions, the program supported participants' economic priorities and workload management, making the process cost-effective and sustainable for them.



Geographical coverage

Malawi in the Salima district in the TAs Maganga, Pemba, and Ndindi. In the Dedza district in the TAs Tambala, Chauma, Kasumbu and Kamenyagwaza.



Key Actors & Ownership

Key actors that were involved:

- **Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP):** The main entity behind the pilot, responsible for designing and overseeing the process to improve nutrition outcomes through diversified food consumption.
- **Implementing Partners:** Care International (Salima) and Self-Help Africa (Dedza): Responsible for implementing the pilot in Salima and Dedza respectively, ensuring the integration of local practices and resources.
- **Livestock Officers:** These government officers played a crucial role in providing technical guidance, monitoring livestock practices, and supporting participants in the management of local chickens.
- **Community Leaders:** These actors were key for mobilizing and engaging the local population, providing cultural insights, and helping address community-specific challenges.
- **Participants (Households):** The rural households, especially women of reproductive age and caregivers of children under 24 months, were central to the process. They were involved in the management of local chickens and implementation of the practices.
- **Livestock Experts:** These experts provided technical guidance, helping to adapt livestock practices such as feeding and management to local conditions.

These actors worked together to ensure that the pilot was effectively implemented and meets the needs of the target communities.

How were key actors involved, and which responsibilities did they have in the development of milestones?

FNSP:

- Steering the livestock program in Dedza and Salima.
- Conducted the livestock study.
- Hired a livestock expert for effective implementation.
- Organized a livestock learning series.
- Managed procurement, including organizing a chicken fair.
- Oversaw monitoring and evaluation of the livestock program.

Livestock Expert:

- Initiated the “local chicken production for consumption” model.
- Briefed IPs on the local chicken model and mindset shift.
- Piloted the local chicken production model.
- Trained participants (IPs field officers, AVOs, lead farmers, monitors, and participants) in chicken management.
- Validated chickens before distributing them to participants.
- Introduced monitoring tools for consumption to IPs.
- Conducted initial model monitoring with IPs.
- Reported to FNSP on pilot initiation and implementation.
- Produced a local chicken management guide for communities.

Participants:

- Attended training sessions on local chicken management.
- Embraced a mindset shift towards the use of local chicken.
- Managed chickens after receiving them.
- Reported on the use of chicken products (eggs and meat).

Implementing Partners (Care and SHA):

- Selected participants according to project specifications.
- Participated in implementing the local chicken model.
- Monitored and evaluated the pilot/process.
- Reported progress to FNSP.

Government Staff (District Agricultural Development Officer (DADO), Assistant Veterinary Officer (AVOs) & District Animal Health and Livestock Development Officer (DAHLD0)):

- Participated in chicken management training sessions.
- Provided support to participants, especially in health-related cases.
- Backstopping the program for sustainability.

How did they demonstrate ownership?

FNSP:

- **Strategic Leadership and Oversight:** By steering the livestock program and organizing critical activities such as the livestock study and learning series, FNSP demonstrated ownership by providing strategic direction.
- **Resource Allocation:** Through procurement efforts (e.g., organizing chicken fairs) and ensuring effective implementation via hired experts, FNSP contributed key resources for coordination.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** FNSP took responsibility for ensuring the success of the program through ongoing monitoring and evaluation, helping to track impact and progress.

Livestock Experts:

- **Technical Expertise and Model Development:** The livestock experts showed ownership by initiating the local chicken production model and leading its implementation. Their role in training, validating chickens, and creating monitoring tools ensured the technical quality of the program.
- **Capacity Building:** By training participants, including field officers and local farmers, and developing the local chicken management guide, the expert helped build long-term capacity within the community and the implementing teams.

Participants:

- **Active Participation and Application:** Participants demonstrated ownership by attending training sessions, embracing mindset changes, and applying what they have learnt in managing the local chickens.
- **Utilization and Reporting:** Their responsibility to manage chickens and report on the use of products (eggs and meat) ensured that they were engaged in the process and actively contributed to its success.

Implementing Partners (Care and SHA):

- **Community Engagement and Selection:** By carefully selecting participants and engaging them in the pilot, the IPs ensured the program was tailored to community needs.
- **On-the-Ground Implementation:** They contributed by actively participating in the execution of the local chicken model and ensuring its alignment with the community's capacities and interests.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** Their role in monitoring and reporting progress to FNSP ensured accountability and helped track the program's overall impact.

Government Staff:

- **Ongoing Assistance:** By participating in training sessions and offering help when needed, they contributed to sustain the impact beyond the program's initial phase.

These actions showed ownership through active engagement, resource contribution, technical support, and a commitment to long-term success at all levels of the livestock enhancement process.



Target participant

Who were the beneficiaries?

The primary beneficiaries of the program were:

- **Women of reproductive age and children under 24 months:** The focus was on these groups, who benefited from improved access to diversified diets, particularly through increased consumption of animal source foods (ASF) like local chicken and eggs for better nutrition.
- **Households (Participants):** The households involved in the pilot benefited from the local chicken production model. They gained access to training on chicken management, which improved their food security and provided them with potential income through the sale of eggs and chicken meat.

- **Community Members:** Indirectly, community members benefited from the broader availability of local chickens and eggs, as the program encouraged mindset changes toward ASF consumption, helping to spread improved nutritional practices.
- **Implementing Partners (CARE International and Self-Help Africa):** IPs benefited by enhancing their capacity and experience in implementing sustainable livestock programs. The pilot strengthened their role in addressing food and nutrition security within the communities they serve.
- **Government Staff:** Agricultural and livestock officers gained through training and firsthand experience the necessary skills to support households in future livestock initiatives.

Through improved nutrition, skills development, and economic benefits, multiple groups within the community directly and indirectly gained from the pilot.

How many (total and proportion of programme participants) benefited?

CARE has provided 220 participants with a total of 880 local chickens, with each household receiving 4 chickens.

SHA has provided 185 participants with a total of 739 local chickens, with each household receiving 4 chickens.

Describe how the pilot ensured gender aspects and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle:

Gender Aspects:

- **Focus on Women:** The pilot prioritized women, particularly those of reproductive age, as a key target group. Women carry responsibility for household nutrition, childcare, and food preparation, making them pivotal in achieving the program's goals. By focusing on women's participation, the pilot addressed their nutritional needs and decision-making power within the household.
- **Empowering Women Through Livestock Management:** Training women in local chicken management empowered them with new skills, enabling them to take on leadership roles in managing household resources. This improves their economic standing and decision-making power, particularly regarding household nutrition and income generation.
- **Addressing Cultural Beliefs:** The program acknowledged and challenged cultural beliefs that may limit women's access to certain foods (e.g. pregnant women being discouraged from eating eggs). By promoting

mindset changes, the program worked to shift harmful gender norms, ensuring that women can fully benefit from the improved availability of animal source foods (ASF).

- **Support for Childcare and Nutrition:** The pilot directly supported women in their roles as caregivers by improving the nutrition of children under 24 months. This ensured that women can better care for their children with access to diversified diets, including essential proteins from eggs and chicken.

Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle:

- **Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups:** The pilot targeted vulnerable households, particularly those with limited access to nutrition and resources. Women and children, often the most vulnerable, were prioritized to ensure they are not left out of the benefits of the process. By focusing on marginalized rural communities, the program aligned with the LNOB principle.
- **Affordable, Locally Sourced Inputs:** By using household waste and locally available materials for chicken fodder and other inputs, the pilot ensured that even the poorest households can participate. This eliminated economic barriers to entry, making the process accessible to everyone, regardless of income or social status.
- **Tailored Training:** The training and management practices were designed to be simple and adaptable to participants' existing schedules and responsibilities, such as household chores. This ensured that women, who often had multiple caregiving and household roles, could participate fully without being overburdened.
- **Capacity Building at the Community Level:** By training local extension workers and participants, the pilot built local capacity, ensuring sustainability and long-term benefits for the most marginalized groups, even after the program phases out.



Objective

What were the specific objectives of this process?

The primary objective of the program was to improve the nutrition status of rural communities, particularly women of reproductive age and children under 24 months, by promoting the consumption of animal source foods (ASF), such as local chickens and eggs. This was achieved through locally sustainable chicken production and management practices that were accessible to participants.

Concrete Outputs:

- **Local Chicken Management:** Participants, including women, were trained in the care, feeding, and management of local chickens using affordable, locally available resources.
- **Distribution of Local Chickens:** Participants received chickens, validated by livestock experts, for household production of eggs and meat.
- **Local Chicken Management Guide:** A handbook produced for communities to ensure an ongoing and effective chicken management.
- **Monitoring Tools for ASF Consumption:** Tools introduced to track egg and chicken meat consumption at household level.

Concrete Outcomes for Participants:

- **Increased Egg and Chicken Meat Consumption:** Participants were expected to incorporate more ASF into their diets, leading to improved household nutrition, particularly for women and children.
- **Empowerment of Women:** Women gained skills in managing poultry, improving their decision-making power and economic opportunities within the household.
- **Shift in Cultural Practices:** Participants, especially women, shift their mindset and cultural beliefs about local chicken and egg consumption, ensuring a more sustainable intake of ASF.
- **Improved Livelihoods:** By utilizing local resources and increasing the availability of ASF, participants potentially reduce food insecurity and create opportunities for small-scale income generation through the sale of surplus eggs and chickens.
- The program aimed to create a sustainable model for improving nutrition and livelihoods within rural communities.

How did the pilot contribute to the programme objective?

FNSP Module objective indicator 3: The percentage of the 40,000 households in the target community that were receiving assistance and classed as seriously at risk of food and nutrition insecurity, using the Household Food Insecurity Experience Scale (HFIES), has dropped by 10%.

This directly supported the program's goal of improving food security and diversification in rural communities.

How was it measured (i.e. how was achievement assessed)?

The pilot's success was measured through a combination of regular program Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and specific studies to track key indicators. The following methods were used:

Regular M&E Activities:

Routine Monitoring: Implementing partners (Care International and Self-Help Africa) conducted regular monitoring visits to assess the management of chickens, the production of eggs and meat, and their consumption by participants.

Consumption Tracking: Monitoring tools were introduced to track the frequency of egg and chicken meat consumption among households, particularly of women and children under 24 months.

Reporting by Participants: Program participants reported on the use of chicken products (eggs and meat) and any challenges faced in managing poultry.

Program Endline Study:

The endline study incorporated evaluation of the long-term impact of the pilot on nutritional outcomes, particularly looking at changes in dietary diversity and ASF consumption rate as well as assessed shifts in cultural beliefs and practices around ASF consumption, especially the mindset changes towards local chickens and eggs.

Through these mechanisms, the program assessed whether the pilot had successfully increased ASF consumption, improved nutrition, and promoted sustainable livestock practices among participants.



What were concrete milestones to measure the progress of the process?

Participant Selection and Training:

Completion of participant selection by the implementing partners according to project specifications (e.g., women of reproductive age, households with children under 24 months).

Successful training of all selected participants, including field officers, assistant veterinary officers, and lead farmers, in local chicken management and nutrition practices.

Distribution and Validation of Local Chickens:

Distribution of validated local chickens through chicken fair to participants, ensuring they meet the standards outlined by the livestock expert.

All participants received their chickens, and initial monitoring confirmed proper management practices were in place.

ASF Consumption and Management:

Within three to six months, participants reported an increase in household consumption of eggs and chicken meat, tracked through regular monitoring tools.

Implementation of simple, household-based management practices (e.g. feeding with household waste) and integration of chicken care into daily household activities.

Behavioural and Mindset Change:

Evidence of mindset change regarding the importance of local chicken and egg consumption, including cultural shifts (e.g. more pregnant women consuming eggs). Routine monitoring results showed improved attitudes toward ASF consumption, particularly overcoming cultural barriers.

Monitoring and Reporting:

Implementing partners and livestock experts introduced and maintained ASF consumption tracking tools, with monthly reports showing progress on egg and chicken consumption. Households kept eggshells and chicken shacks as evidence for egg and chicken meat consumption.

Regular monitoring reports from the implementing partners and government staff demonstrated progress in chicken management and consumption.

Endline Evaluation:

Final evaluation or specific study conducted at the end of the program to assess its overall impact on nutrition, ASF consumption, and cultural changes.

These milestones provided clear points for measuring progress in terms of training, distribution, behaviour change, and overall impact on nutrition within the targeted households.

Describe the process how key actors and participants have been involved in the development of the timeframe and milestones?

Initial Trainings and Coordination: Government officers and implementing partners participated in initial trainings to coordinate the implementation of the program. This ensured that all stakeholders understood their roles and responsibilities.

Consultations with Livestock Experts: Livestock experts played a critical role in developing the local chicken production model. They advised on technical aspects like chicken care, feeding practices, and health management. Their input helped shape realistic milestones related to chicken distribution, health management, and nutrition improvement.

Participant Engagement and Training: Selected participants, particularly women and caregivers of children under 24 months, were involved in training sessions focused on local chicken management. This included practical aspects such as feeding chickens using household waste, simple housing designs, and monitoring tools for consumption.

Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms: The implementing partners and FNSP regularly monitored the program and tracked progress. This feedback loop allowed for adjustments to the timeline and ensured that milestones, such as increased egg and chicken meat consumption, were being met.



Costs & Resources

The total costs of the process were:

The estimated cost of the pilot, including all implementation and FNSP activities (by CARE, SHA, and Umodzi), was approximately 105,000 Euros. This budget covered all aspects of the project, including consultant remuneration, voucher design and procurement, acquisition of chickens for Umodzi, as well as training and monitoring activities.

Other resources (personnel, labour, inputs, assets)

Regular M&E and capacity building by FNSP, CARE, SHA, and government staff to project participants to improve attitude and mindset change towards the consumption of eggs and chicken meat.



Sustainability & Do No Harm

Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability):

● **Environmental Sustainability:**

All management aspects of the local chickens are environmentally friendly thus no use of heating for chicks as brooding is done naturally. No artificial brooding hence charcoal is not used! Thus, all chicks hatched are tended by the mother chickens. Additionally,

food waste is being reduced as it is recycled as fodder. Furthermore, waste from the chickens (manure) is used for the nutrient improvement of soil when applied to backyard gardens that the participants have. Lastly, the use of kitchen waste to feed the chickens reduces food waste.

- **Institutional Sustainability:**

The local chicken program has involved extension workers from the initial phase, however, from experience, most extension workers did not commit themselves to the approach due to their demand for allowance. This can be resolved by targeting only those willing to support the program participants.

- **Social sustainability:**

The consumption of local chicken eggs and meat has contributed to healthy communities that are socially active to follow other social responsibilities.

- **Economic sustainability (consider access to finance/business model):**

Producing local chickens beyond consumption will contribute to improved household incomes hence a change in the economic status of the participants' communities. Additionally, producing beyond consumption will create business opportunities in terms of sale of local chicken eggs and local chickens. However, the spread of pests and diseases can pose a limitation to this in case all chickens die. The approach can continue without financing from FNSP as people sometimes share their chickens within the communities and adopt local chicken management practices.

How was the "Do no harm" principle always assured?

Environmental Impact: The local chicken model is designed with an emphasis on sustainability, utilizing organic materials like kitchen waste and locally sourced food for fodder. This reduces reliance on commercial fodder, minimizing waste and environmental impact. Additionally, chicken droppings are used as organic manure, which supports soil health without synthetic fertilizers.

Building Trust with Participants: Establishing a relationship of trust with participants involved transparency and clear communication about the benefits and responsibilities of rearing local chickens. A community centred approach was followed where households benefited from both the economic and nutritional value of chicken products and that was focusing on consumption. By engaging participants in training sessions and regular household visits, the project encouraged long-term trust and commitment.

Continuous Approachability of the Implementation Team: The program emphasized the presence and support of extension officers, who assisted households with practical knowledge and addressing challenges. This ongoing support ensured participants could easily reach out for assistance, which fostered a supportive relationship and quick resolution of challenges.

Community Dynamics: The model's production guidelines had a set up structured, cycle-based approach for consuming eggs and meat. The program avoided overuse, which could have otherwise caused depletion of chicken populations. Regular monitoring by officers further ensured adherence to these guidelines, maintaining harmony within communities.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial)
Results

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:

Dietary diversity has improved from 3.9 to 4.1. Evidence from Follow Up Surveys commissioned by GIZ, demonstrated that this approach to livestock implementation was one of several factors contributing to improved dietary diversity, along with backyard gardening.



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

Access to animal protein in form of local chicken eggs, hence diversified nutrition is a positive impact.

Impact monitoring and evaluation

Through evidence for consumption:

- **Using eggshells:** The participating households were advised to keep dried eggshells as evidence of consumption until the monitoring officer came and recorded them. The shells were then destroyed so that a next set could be preserved upon new consumption was done.
- **For chicken meat through use of dried chicken shanks:** The participating households were advised to cut off the chicken shanks and dry them by hanging them to the kitchen roof. They presented them to the monitoring officer as evidence of chicken meat consumption. These dried shanks can last for a long time. They were then destroyed after the monitoring to ensure that a new set of shanks was preserved in case of another chicken meat consumption.

How have participants' livelihoods been improved economically, socially, and/or environmentally?

Evidence gathered from participants through field monitoring showed that livelihoods improved socially in terms of well-being, through increased food security and improved dietary diversity. Economically, through reduced expenditure on animal protein as well as sale of excess chickens and or eggs if production levels increased beyond consumption. Environmentally, as the model does not involve any destructive use of natural resources like trees but is rather likely to improve the soil using chicken waste in the backyard and/ or field crops garden/ or field crops garden.

What were unexpected positive/negative effects (in the community, the environment, behaviour)?

In the initial phase participants stuck to their tradition of keeping local chicken for commercial purposes that made households to aim for reproducing more than for egg and chicken meat consumption. With the continuous trainings households realised keeping more eggs for hedging ended up losing more to spoilage as local hens can only hedge 5 to 8 eggs. In addition, keeping more chickens led to pest and disease management challenges, limited floor space, and fodder.



What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

1 Institutional:

- Implementing Partners' officers that immediately accepted the model in their programming.
- Government extension officers that were knowledgeable of the management aspects of local chickens for ease of attitude and mindset change.

2 Economically, the availability of markets for the chickens and eggs produced beyond consumption will ensure the economic success of the pilot/process.

- Markets are in great demand of local chicken meat and eggs whilst the supply remains low which facilitates an increase in household income for the program participants to achieve dietary diversity.

3 Socially, well-nourished participants will ensure a socially vibrant community.

- **Gender:** Male involvement in the trainings facilitated a mindset change on local chicken management which was solely designed for women and children. However, men were decision-makers on consumption or sales, which has changed. Women and children can make decisions, especially on egg consumption, without seeking consent. Therefore, the improved local chicken approach will increase egg consumption.
- **Knowledge management:** Spillover effects have been observed through field monitoring and reports from IPs due to knowledge sharing among program participants and outsiders.

4 Environmentally: The minimal use of resources from the environment and the release of waste (manure) will ensure environmental sustenance because of the pilot.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

- Lack of interest from some partners like government livestock extension staff
- Divided attention of participants during training (as trainings were done within communities, hence distraction with some household issues)
- Tendency of staging of activities, especially during monitoring of the practice. In some cases, it is likely that the moment the continuous monitoring from the IPs has phased out, the intervention might end. Following of all training aspects should be a routine among participants whether there is a visit or not; only then the model and intervention will be sustained.
- Lack of commitment from some IP field staff members

How were they addressed?

- The lack of interest from some of the government livestock extension staff was difficult to address as it was an issue of commitment and mindset change.

- FNSP focussed on government officers that showed interest and were willing to support program participants in the final phase.
- In addition, the program strategized and engaged government partners at national level by strengthening the relationship with the Department of Animal Health and Livestock Development
- The divided attention of participants was addressed by ensuring that the training was as interactive as possible through giving relevant examples within the community.
- Staging of activities. This was addressed through the District and Implementing Partner meeting.
- Lack of commitment from some IP field staff. This remained a challenge as showing commitment to the intervention depends on the individual. However, after meetings with the IP field staff, there was a change in the attitude.

In retrospective, what would we do differently if we were to scale up?

- More emphasis on the training of participants and minimizing dependency on the IP and government staff.
- Using local monitoring structures that enforce mindset change towards local chicken consumption and no visit by the IPs.



Replicability and upscaling

Replicability/upscaling within and outside of the programme:

The local chicken model has the potential to be replicated and or upscaled outside of the program wherever local chickens can be raised if the training component is well articulated as it aims to change mindsets.

Has this practice been replicated (in the same/different contexts) independent of the programme?

The programme had not recorded any replication of this approach by the time the country package closed. Despite this, the practice was heavily recommended by government to other partners who would want to provide this sort of intervention in communities.

What are the required conditions to replicate and adapt the practice in another context/geographical area:

- Replication depends on the training management of local chickens including mindset and attitude change concepts.
- Acceptance of the participants to adopt the concepts shared during training.

- Adherence to management practices of local chickens
- Use of examples based on what participants already know will make them accept the practices and not see them as an extra burden to daily household chores.

What are the required conditions to replicate the practice at a larger scale (national, regional):

- Training on mindset change towards local chickens and training on local chicken management.



Testimony

“
The introduction of local chickens to his household has eased the challenge of sourcing foods of animal origin
”



Collection of potato vines to be treated and processed as feed for the local chickens – the skill of household waste

Alick Shaibu, a male champion that comes from Dzoole village, GVH Kabumbu of the TA Pemba. Despite his wife being the direct beneficiary of this project, he learnt local chicken management from her and immediately took up the challenge to support her with the preparation of supplementary fodder for their chickens. Apart from other fodder that he makes, he is also a champion in hydroponic sorghum sprout production to supply fodder to the chickens. Alick is always at the forefront when it comes to local chicken management practices which were shared with him by his wife through training guidelines from the livestock expert. He says that the introduction of local chickens at his household has eased the challenge of sourcing protein rich foods of animal origin for the betterment of his family. He is grateful to FNSP and the livestock expert for the knowledge and skills he gained in managing local chickens that they never perceived initially as something that will anchor their nutrition at household level.



Related Resources



Related Resources

Rearing Local Chicken for Improved Nutrition

Over To You Podcast



Instructional Video – How to locally make chicken feed





Section 02

Approaches on cash transfers to buffer household food security



Photo: FNSP staff and implementing partners verifying participants for nutrition sensitive emergency response packages © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

Section 02: Approaches on cash transfers to buffer household food security

When crises strike, whether due to natural disasters or the escalating impacts of climate change, household food security is immediately jeopardized. A common consequence is a shift towards monotonous diets, often characterized by an overreliance on staple foods like maize in Malawi. This dependence leads to a carbohydrate-heavy diet, severely lacking in essential nutrients, and consequently heightens the risk of widespread malnutrition. To counteract these threats, active Nutrition Clusters, operating at both national and district levels, implement crucial Nutrition in Emergencies responses. These interventions are designed to provide targeted support and preventative measures, aiming to safeguard vulnerable populations from the devastating effects of malnutrition during times of adversity.

This section offers valuable learnings on nutrition-sensitive cash transfers and integrated “plus” interventions, drawing from diverse responses implemented in Salima and Dedza districts. These initiatives demonstrate how strategic support can mitigate the impact of crises on vulnerable populations. Specifically, Topic 5 provides a comparative study of these various responses, offering a dedicated learning section that aligns with the overarching goal of disseminating best practices, as highlighted by the Success Story Narratives. By examining the effectiveness of different approaches, this section aims to inform and improve future nutrition responses, ensuring that communities are better equipped to withstand and recover from crises.

The following topics have been outlined.

1. Overall Learnings from the Lean Season/Nutrition Emergency Responses Over the Years
2. Unconditional Cash Transfers for Food and Nutrition Security
3. Nutrition-Sensitive Lean Season Response: Dedza District Council
4. Integrated Nutrition Response in Dedza
5. El Niño Nutrition Response in Salima

Topic 5: Overall learnings and recommendations from the lean season/nutrition emergency responses over the years

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documented: December
2024

The GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) supported Social Cash Transfers as part of the Malawi National Social Protection Policy aiming to enhance resilience and reduce negative coping strategies over several lean seasons. These cash transfers were partially combined with accompanying nutrition and climate-smart agriculture initiatives ("Plus" components). The modalities and accompanying measure varied for each response, resulting in key learnings for nutrition-sensitive responses to crises situations. The following chapter summarizes five different response programmes that were implemented by GIZ FNSP between 2016 and 2025 together with their success factors and constraints before drawing overall learnings and recommendations.

- 2016/2017: The INGO Consortium Emergency Cash Transfer Programme
- 2018/2019: Support to the Government's Lean Season Response in Salima
- 2022/2023: Cash+ Support with Universal Targeting in the TA Tambala (Dedza)
- 2023/2024: District-led Support to the Lean Season Response in Dedza
- 2024/2025: Integrated Nutrition Response in Dedza
- 2024/2025: El Niño Nutrition Response in Salima

NB: The promising practices of the last four responses can be looked up in the Topics 6,7,8 and 9.

First Response

2016/2017: The INGO Consortium Emergency Cash Transfer Programme

The 2016/17 INGO Consortium Emergency Cash Transfer Response Programme in Malawi, supported by GIZ, aimed to address food insecurity caused by the El Niño-induced drought. The programme provided monthly cash transfers to 11,000 vulnerable households in Dedza (TAs Chilikumwendo, Tambala and Chauma), among other districts. Additionally, the programme included a resilience-building component for 20% of the beneficiaries (2,000 HHs), involving productive asset creation and climate-smart agricultural practices.



Key Stakeholders

- GIZ FNSP
- INGO Consortium including Save the Children, GOAL Malawi, Oxfam, Concern Worldwide and United Purpose (implementing organization in Dedza)



Cash Modality

- Monthly cash transfers over 6 months
- The cash amount was adjusted monthly based on the cost of a food basket.
- The cash was distributed physically using a service provider and central distribution locations



Plus Components

- Climate-smart agriculture trainings (incl. Inter-cropping, mulching, manure-making, and irrigation rehabilitation) for beneficiaries
- Seed fairs were organized to provide beneficiaries with quality seeds for both summer and winter crops. Beneficiaries received a standard package containing hybrid maize, legumes, and vegetable seeds



Beneficiary Targeting

- Community members themselves identified the most vulnerable households using the JEFAP (Joint Emergency Food Assessment Programme) Criteria
- A sample of 10% of the beneficiaries was verified by the project



Results

- 75% of the cash was used to buy food, with the remainder used for other essential needs like education and health.
- Beneficiaries who received seeds reported higher maize yields compared to those who did not.

- Significant improvements in food security indicators, with an increase in households eating two or more meals per day.
- Reduction in households reporting referrals of under-five children to nutritional rehabilitation units.



Constraints

- The programme faced challenges in coordinating with key government stakeholders, particularly in the health and agriculture sectors. In some districts, such as Dedza, Lilongwe and Mulanje, government personnel were either unaware or had extraordinarily little information about the project. This lack of coordination hindered the effectiveness of the programme and its ability to have a greater impact.
- The targeting and selection process faced significant interference from traditional leaders across all districts.
- In some districts, such as Mangochi and Dedza, the seeds distributed at the seed fairs were of inferior quality and did not sprout after planting.
- The infestation of fall armyworms significantly affected crop yields in several districts

Second Response

2018/2019: Support to the Government's Lean Season Response in Salima

The Improving Food and Nutrition Security (IFNS) Project in Salima, funded by GIZ, aimed to complement the Government of Malawi's lean season response. The project provided unconditional cash transfers to 5,193 households intended to cover the cost of pulses and cooking oil, while the government provided maize.



Key Stakeholders

- GIZ FNSP
- CARE Malawi



Cash Modality

- Monthly cash transfers over 3 months
- Amount: MWK 11,500
- The cash was physically distributed using a service provider and central distribution locations (average distance: 1,88 km)



Plus Components

- Nutrition Messaging through Participatory Education Theatre (PET) and cooking demonstrations
- The project was able to reach a lot of beneficiaries by providing these at the cash distribution locations



Beneficiary Targeting

- Community members themselves identified the most vulnerable households using the JEFAP (Joint Emergency Food Assessment Programme) Criteria
- Extensive efforts were put into the verification, reducing the instances of interference by local leaders.
- A complaint response mechanism was set up for beneficiaries



Results

- 81.3% of the cash was used for food. Despite receiving maize from the government, the highest proportion of cash (25%) was still used for maize.
- 94.3% of CARE beneficiaries received nutrition messages, with cooking demonstrations being the most preferred and effective channel



Constraints

- Lack of coordination with government stakeholders and other NGOs implementing cash responses using different values and durations
- Some beneficiaries felt the cash amount was inadequate to meet their needs, suggesting an increase to MWK 20,000 per month.

Third Response – Further documented on Topic 6

2022/2023 Cash+ Support with universal targeting in the TA Tambala (Dedza)

The intervention aimed to address chronic and acute food insecurity in Malawi, particularly in the TA Tambala (Dedza district), through a combination of unconditional cash transfers and climate-smart agricultural interventions (Cash+) for 2,242 recipients in selected villages. The intervention was accompanied by intensive monitoring and research and provided many insights into the utilization as well as short, medium, and long-term impact of Cash interventions.

	Key Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GIZ FNSP• Give Directly (Cash Transfers)• Self Help Africa (Climate-smart Agriculture Trainings)
	Cash Modality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A once-off cash transfer of MWK 371,000 was provided. This amount was based on the minimum food expenditure basket for the rural central region of Malawi and was calculated to cover minimum expenditures for up to five months.• The cash was transferred using mobile money.• Beneficiaries that did not have a phone and SIM card received them from the project (the cost was deducted from the cash transfer)
	Plus Components <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuous climate-smart agriculture interventions aimed at improving agricultural practices and food availability at the household level
	Beneficiary Targeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project selected villages based on high malnutrition rates. Universal targeting was used to avoid jealousy and tension within the selected communities, ensuring that all households within the villages were part of the response.
	Results <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 97% of households allocated the highest share of funds to purchasing fertilizer, followed by the purchase of maize (94%) and other foods (64%). Significant contributions also went to education (60%) and the purchase of livestock (55%) for long-term resilience.• Short-term increase in business activities, with existing businesses expanding and new small-scale businesses starting.• Improved household food security and dietary diversity in the short term.• Increased agricultural productivity and investment in livestock in the medium to long term.



Constraints

- Some beneficiaries mentioned an increase in food prices on the market only for those villages that were known to have received the response, which could indicate jealousy and a feeling of unfairness from other, not selected villages.
- The targeting could have been more nutrition-sensitive, not only relying on village malnutrition rates but spreading out the response to those most vulnerable from a nutrition perspective.
- The universal targeting approach also made it harder to track down all beneficiaries and verify the payment.
- The climate-smart agriculture (CSA) activities did not start early enough before the planting season and follow-up was limited, due to a lack of integration in the government extension structure



Related Resources



Related Resources



Over To You Podcast



Learning Video – GIZ Humanitarian Work in Malawi



2022/2023: Cash+ Support with Universal Targeting in the TA Tambala (Dedza)

2023/2024: District-led Support to the Lean Season Response in Dedza

2024/2025: Integrated Nutrition Response in Dedza

2024/2025: El Niño Nutrition Response in Salima



Topic 6: Unconditional cash transfers for food and nutrition security

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documented: November
2024

Malawi faced a severe food security crisis, particularly during the 2022/23 agricultural lean season, driven by a complex interplay of economic, climatic, and global factors. The nation grappled with alarmingly prominent levels of chronic food insecurity, with 5.4 million individuals experiencing moderate to severe conditions. This pre-existing vulnerability was dramatically exacerbated during the lean season, resulting in over 3.8 million households facing food insecurity—a staggering 155 % increase from the previous year, the largest in the Southern African region. This crisis was precipitated by widespread poverty, erratic rainfall, the devastating impacts of cyclones Ana and Gombe, the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, and soaring food and agricultural input prices, compounded by global events like the war in Ukraine and Malawi's own economic challenges. In Dedza district, the situation was particularly dire, with over 90,000 people, representing 10 % of the population, experiencing crisis-level food insecurity (IPC Phase 3), further aggravated by high rates of stunting due to chronic malnutrition.

This promising practice addresses the specific challenges arising from this crisis: financial barriers to food and nutrition security during the lean season, limited financial capacity for agricultural investments, aggravated access to essential agricultural inputs like fertilizer due to steep price increases, and a lack of knowledge regarding alternatives to synthetic fertilizers. To effectively address these challenges, the intervention prioritized beneficiary needs by providing unconditional cash transfers. This approach offered beneficiaries the autonomy to allocate resources according to their specific priorities, upholding their dignity and enabling them to make informed decisions to improve their livelihoods. Furthermore, universal targeting within selected villages ensured that support reached all vulnerable households, fostering community-wide resilience.



Photo: Community members receiving a post-harvest handling training and nutrition messages, In TA Tambala Dedza© GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

Building on the already dire food insecurity situation in Malawi, the process specifically addressed key challenges that exacerbated household vulnerability during the 2022/23 agricultural lean season. Financial barriers remained a major obstacle—not only to securing sufficient food and nutrition during the lean period but also to making critical agricultural investments that could enhance future food security. The sharp rise in the cost of agricultural inputs, particularly fertilizer, due to both global disruptions and Malawi's economic instability, significantly constrained access, especially for smallholder farmers. Compounding this was a widespread lack of knowledge about viable alternatives to synthetic fertilizers, limiting farmers' ability to adapt. In response to these complex and interlinked challenges, the process prioritized beneficiary agency and dignity by providing unconditional cash transfers. This approach allowed recipients to allocate resources based on their immediate needs and priorities, whether for food, agricultural inputs, healthcare, or debt repayment. Furthermore, universal targeting in the selected villages ensured equitable access to support, reducing exclusion and fostering community cohesion during a time of widespread hardship.



Geographical coverage

Malawi, 2,242 recipients were targeted in GVHs Mpombe, Kapanda, Mgawi, and Lipululu of TA Tambala in Dedza District



Key Actors & Ownership

The key actors involved in this process were:

- Political partner: Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA) and Dedza District
- Implementing Partners: Give Directly and United Purpose
- Research: Makoka Associates

How were key actors involved, and which responsibilities did they have?

- Give Directly (Cash component)
- United Purpose (Plus component)
- Makoka Associates (Research)
- Dedza District (Beneficiary Selection, Monitoring)

How did they demonstrate ownership?

Staunch support and interest from district officials (active participation in preparation and beneficiary selection and monitoring)

- Potentially: add information on plus component (training of agricultural extension workers)



Target group

Who were the beneficiaries?

- Universal targeting in selected villages (villages were selected based on high malnutrition rates and an alarming rise in malnutrition, despite being rich in agricultural products like legumes and maize)

How many benefited?

- 2,242 recipients (roughly 5.6% of FNSP's 40,000 target households; however, recipients also include beneficiaries beyond FNSP's target group (women and children under 2) due to the universal targeting approach.)

How did the process ensure gender aspects and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle?

- Everybody in selected villages benefits
- Ongoing research will shed light on effects on gender dynamics and decision-making power at household level.
- Households are encouraged to jointly decide on what to do with the money.
- Nobody is left behind due to universal targeting.
- Particularly vulnerable people (i.e. elderly, disabled) not able to conduct registration and cash out of mobile money are supported by a helper they trust



Objective

What was the specific objective of the process?

- Improve food and nutrition security of beneficiary households during the lean season (prevent vulnerable households to fall into acute food insecurity)
- Overcome financial barriers for productive, nutrition-sensitive agricultural investments (strengthen resilience)
- Reduce dependency on agricultural inputs, especially chemical fertilizers, and support agricultural diversification and food availability at household level (plus component)

How did the process contribute to the programme objective?

The intervention contributes to FNSP's objective (the nutrition situation and resilience towards hunger crisis of women of reproductive age (15-49) and children under two (6-23 months) is improved) through

(a) improved access to food during the lean season due to the cash transfer and (b) through improved food availability at household level through climate-smart agriculture (envisaged medium-term impact)

- The intervention directly contributes to the following output indicator: In the districts of Dedza and Salima, 25,000 households that are at risk of food and nutrition insecurity benefit from nutrition-sensitive social protection measures to improve access to food, which should translate into effects on the following module Objective Indicator: The percentage of the 40,000 households in the target communities categorised as seriously at risk from food and nutrition insecurity, using the Household Food Insecurity Experience Scale (HFIAS), has dropped by 10%.

- HFIES is one of the key indicators measured by the research conducted to evaluate and learn from the intervention.

How was it measured?

The intervention is accompanied by thorough monitoring and evaluation.

- A study specifically designed for this intervention analysed the impact of the intervention with respect to its key objectives to (a) improve food and nutrition security of beneficiary households during the lean season and (b) overcome financial barriers for productive, nutrition-sensitive agricultural investments based on:
 - quantitative panel data*, which allowed for the analysis of causal relationships (data are collected and analysed from a randomly selected, representative sample of beneficiaries and a control group over time, i.e. baseline, mid-line, end-line) and for identifying potential differences in the benefits for households with different socio-economic characteristics and food security status.
 - and based on a *case study using qualitative data* collected in two selected villages (qualitative data is collected and analysed from two selected villages over time) that provides in-depth learning on the dynamics at village level due to the intervention (considering e.g. power structures, gender aspects, employment and business development).



- Cash component: one lumpsum, unconditional cash transfer in October 2022
- The Plus component run continuous from July 2022 to October with awareness raising formats.

Research: baseline in September 2022 and final data collection in September 2023 (final report due in November 2023)

Time for upscaling

- Intervention may be repeated under FNSP provided additional funds will be available for the programme.

- Generally, intervention is not designed to be scaled up under FNSP but as a learning exercise to inform other GIZ projects and cash transfer projects conducted in Malawi (including the national Social Cash Transfer Programme, SCTP).
- FNSP still runs until March 2025; after finalizing the research on the intervention the programme will still have 1.5 years to disseminate its findings.

What were concrete milestones to measure the progress of the process?

- Pay-out of cash transfers in October 2022 before beginning of lean season.
- Initial report on quantitative and qualitative research in January 2023 to inform potential future cash interventions of FNSP and other programmes (incl. GIZ and other organizations).

Describe how key actors and participants have been involved in the development of the timeframe and milestones?

- Main critical milestone is beginning of lean season households (HH) should receive cash transfer before beginning of lean season)

Coordination with District and Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) on cash transfer to ensure HH are not benefiting from government support to cushion against the effects of the lean season.



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

- Direct, unconditional cash transfer combined with climate-smart agricultural interventions (cash+)
- Large lumpsum cash transfer (USD 350.00) to give households the opportunity to overcome agricultural investment and other financial barriers at the beginning of the lean season.
- Continuous Climate Smart Agriculture Interventions, incl. Community Sensitizations, training on winter cropping, training of lead farmers and care group volunteers, promotion of soil and water conservation through extension workers, promotion of backyard and communal gardens, promotion of village forests, training and demonstration of PICS bags, upscaling of grain bank initiatives, distribution of drip kits, training of lead farmers on compost and manure making



Costs & Resources

The total cost of the process:

- EUR 850.000 for cash component (of which EUR 775.250 directly goes to targets households as a direct, unconditional cash transfer)
- Roughly EUR 115.000 EUR for plus component (September – December 2022)

Costs per beneficiary of the process

- 2,242 households translate to 8,860 beneficiaries.
- Costs account to roughly EUR 436 per household and EUR 109 per beneficiary.

Can relevant cost reductions be assumed when the approach is being scaled up?

Cash transfers are extremely cost efficient (see above)

- “Plus” component could be scrutinized for potential cost savings



Sustainability & Do No Harm Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability)

- Environmental Sustainability:
 - CSA interventions contributed positively due to increased knowledge.
 - Inputs only had a short-term effect.
- Institutional Sustainability:
 - Learnings were influencing LSR measures and activities 2023/2024.
 - Inclusion of government structures in the planning process
- Social sustainability:
 - Social Cash Transfer (SCT) payout to whole community to increase or not interrupt social cohesion.
- Economical sustainability (consider access to finance/business model):
 - Cash transfers are one of the most thoroughly researched forms of development intervention, with studies showing significant improvements in recipient's levels of poverty; education; health and nutrition; savings, investment, and production; employment; early childhood development; empowerment; and even psychological well-being.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial) Results

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:

- Initial results from a quantitative follow-up survey conducted by Give Directly with almost all target households (2,177 out of 2,242) indicate that:
 - No recipient encountered any challenges with their cash-out experience.
 - Recipients' full cash transfer value in local currency was MWK 371,100. The cost of a phone amounting to MWK 16,900 was deducted, and the agent withdrawal fee for the full amount was at MWK 5,500. Hence, each recipient's net transfer was MWK 354,200, which was equivalent to approx. \$350.
 - 92 % of recipients reported spending money on agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer etc.).
 - 86 % spent money on buying food such as maize but also milk products and cooking oil.
 - 55 % indicated that they bought livestock (mainly sheep, goats, and chicken).
 - 37 % bought clothes for their family.
 - 36 % saved (parts of) the money.
 - 30 % invested in improving their houses.
 - 22 % spent money on education.



Impact

What were unexpected positive/negative effects (in the community, the environment, behaviour)?

HH Food Security:

- Significant positive impact on household food security in the short to medium term, enabling recipients to purchase food, invest in agricultural assets and livestock, and improve their living conditions.
- CSA activities were considered contributing factors for crop productivity. However, long-term food security remains fragile due to ongoing dependency on expensive inputs like fertilizer and the vulnerability of farming to climatic uncertainties.

- Continued support and structural improvements are necessary to address the deeper, systemic issues of poverty and food insecurity in these communities. Thus, the inclusion of local stakeholders in the planning and implementation of UCTs may prove an approach of identifying the solutions required by the individuals and households in question. CSA interventions addressing crop diversification might be upscaled.

Dietary diversity:

- Short-term improvements in dietary diversity among children in benefitting communities, gains not sustained in the long term.
- Households prioritized food availability and agricultural investments over dietary diversity, focusing on maize production as a means of ensuring food security. Although protein-rich foods such as meat and soy were consumed more frequently after the unconditional cash transfer (UCT), the overall variety of food groups in children's diets decreased over time.
- Several factors, including a lack of knowledge about the importance of dietary diversity, weather-related challenges, and children's food preferences, further impeded progress.

HH business activity and income:

- Overall, while the initial benefits of cash transfers in boosting household income and business activity were evident, these gains were not sustained in the long run because most households were not able to keep on doubling the money on their own, highlighting the complexities of economic resilience in these communities and need of financial trainings.
- Trainings on sustainable business development and a periodical CT to provide reliable cash flow might sustain businesses as second income source despite farming.

Education access for children/SBC:

- Short term increased access to education due to ability to pay school fees.
- Observed change in caretaking behaviours related to food consumption of children was rare.
- Enrichment of the child's porridge with protein-rich plant foods or the occasional provision of fruits and other snacks, when available.
- An enhanced focus on nutrition education of caretakers and local role models or care groups improved prioritization on nutrition.



Success factors



What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- Accepting political partners on national and district levels and other development actors, such as UNICEF and local NGOs, as scene setters and process holders for coordination.
- Quick and flexible response through flexibly allocated resources.
- Implementation through established third parties (e.g. SHA, Give Directly)
- Technical support to implementing and political partners which were SHA, Give Directly and the Dedza Nutrition Unit.
- Simultaneous strengthening of district and community multi-sectoral coordination (Coordination Task Force).
- Strong integration of nutrition into emergency response: By (1) selection of vulnerable target groups based on nutrition screenings/malnutrition levels and (2) accompanying suitable nutrition and resilience-building messages.
- "Plus" components play a role where they improved household food expenditure, agricultural productivity, and household dietary diversity, as households have an extended use of the money outside these needs.



Constraints



What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

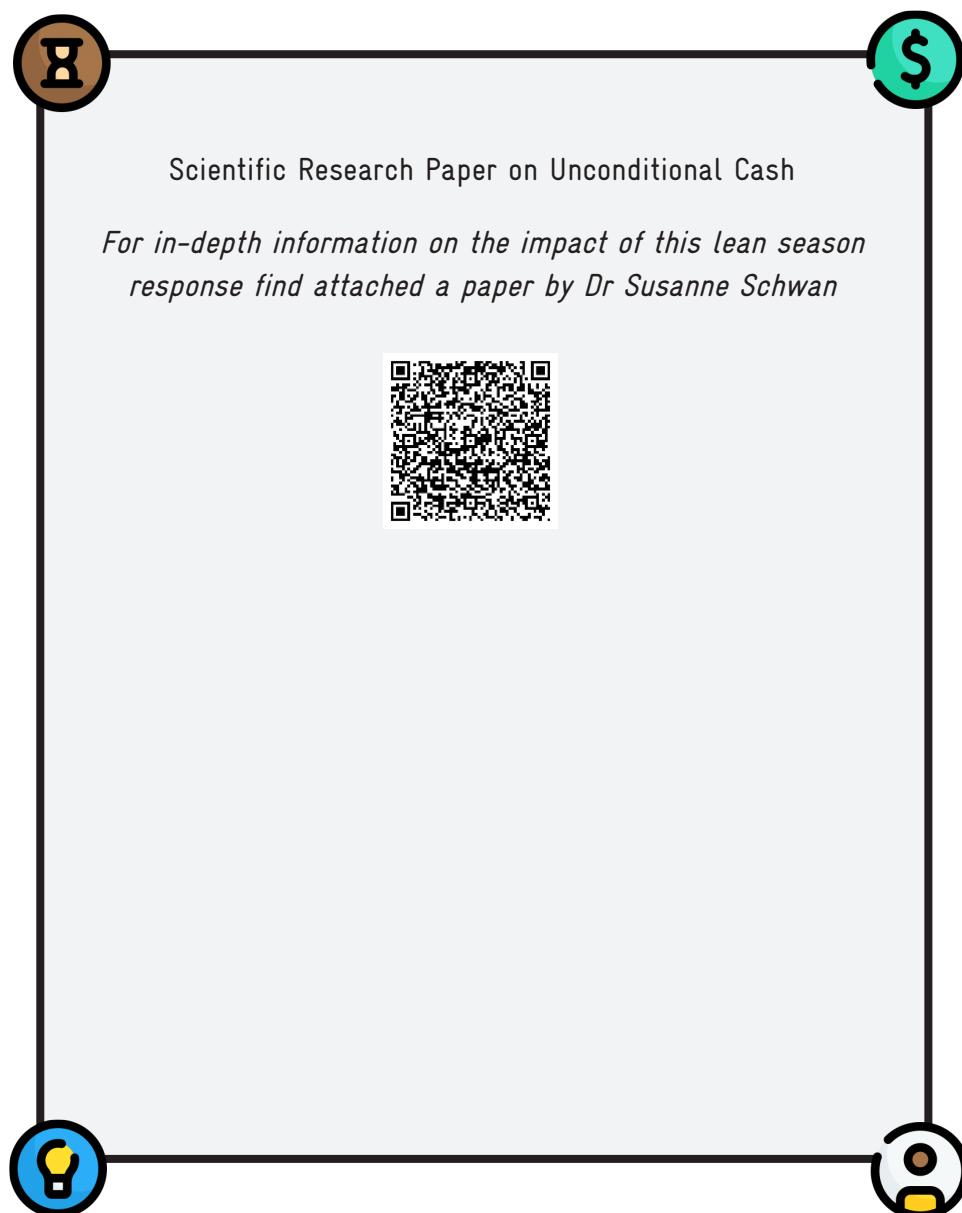
Starting way earlier with CSA activities; providing closer follow-up on CSA activities, incl. establishing demonstration plots for an extended period due to time it takes for organic fertilizer to show beneficial effects and for behaviour change.

- Nutrition-sensitive targeting (e.g. through nutrition screenings) was vital to reach vulnerable target groups, build on care group linkages and decrease risk of misuse of support.
- In-depth mobilisation of local leaders and community committees were needed for community policing from the onset are necessary to avoid safeguarding issues.
- Frontline workers needed to be well sensitized and supervised to receive good data and avoid interference of beneficiary registration.

- Larger and well-timed transfers achieved better result in household food security and longer-term resilience.
- Payment and tracking of payments were often hindered by missing means of identification (ID cards/phones). Supporting registration and setting up tracking process allowed for transparency and allows for accountability.
- Frontline workers and district offer should be capacitated (e.g. nutrition in emergencies) and oriented on standard procedures and forms (e.g. screenings) ahead of emergencies.



Related Resources



Topic 7: Nutrition-Sensitive Lean Season Response: Dedza District Council

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Promise Practice
documented: September
2024

This promising practice illustrates a comprehensive and impactful strategy for combating acute food and nutrition insecurity during the demanding lean season, as successfully implemented in Dedza District, Malawi, in 2023/2024. This initiative, a testament to effective collaboration among the Dedza District Council, Self Help Africa, and GIZ, highlights the transformative potential of integrating direct cash transfers with meticulously designed, nutrition-sensitive interventions.

The program's core strength lies in its targeted approach, focusing on 1,661 highly vulnerable households, with a particular emphasis on malnourished children under five years of age and pregnant or lactating women, who are disproportionately affected by food shortages. By employing evidence-based beneficiary targeting (nutrition screenings), the initiative ensured that support reached those in greatest need.

Furthermore, the initiative's success was underpinned by robust multi-sectoral coordination, bringing together expertise and resources from various government sector and partners to address the multifaceted nature of food and nutrition insecurity. The program's design incorporated resilience-focused messaging, empowering households to adopt sustainable practices that would enhance their long-term food security.

The outcomes of this initiative were significant, resulting in measurable improvements in food consumption and enhanced dietary diversity among beneficiary households. Beyond immediate relief, the program yielded invaluable lessons regarding the effectiveness of integrated interventions, the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration, and the potential for scaling such responses in other regions facing similar challenges. This promising practice serves as a blueprint for future interventions, demonstrating how strategic partnerships and evidence-based approaches can effectively address food and nutrition insecurity during critical periods.



Photo: Linda, recipient of cassava cuttings and soybean from the emergency response showing off her field © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

Alarming projections from the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) for the 2023/2024 lean period prompted the Nutrition Unit of the Dedza District Council to approach the GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) with a request to support the response led by the Department of Disaster and Risk Management (DoDMA). By that time, DoDMA had announced their support to 41,333 vulnerable households in Dedza District with two bags of 50 kg maize per household for the entire period of the lean season. The Nutrition Unit in Dedza recommended the integration of more nutrition-sensitive interventions targeted to vulnerable groups such as children under five years of age, pregnant and lactating women. GIZ FNSP availed additional funding to their Implementing Partner Self Help Africa (SHA) in Dedza District to support and complement the government's lean season response. After consultations in the district, the modality of support was determined to be a once-off cash transfer (MWK 50,000). However, beneficiary households were supposed to be selected based on the active malnutrition status of either a child under five or a pregnant or lactating woman. Nutrition-sensitive and resilience-promoting messages were supposed to accompany the cash transfer, so that the short-term financial support may result in better nutrition and resilience outcomes.

Specifically, the challenges which this process was trying to address were:

- Food and nutrition insecurity caused by recurring climate shocks such as the El Niño weather pattern.
- Absence of nutrition-sensitive response and coordination mechanisms on district level
- Lack of comprehensive data on moderate and severe malnutrition
- Lack of evidence and best practices to conduct and advocate for the integration of nutrition in emergency responses.

Note to Reader: The modality of a cash transfer was chosen to enable beneficiaries to have autonomy and prioritize their most urgent needs during the emergency.



Geographical coverage

Within the Dedza District, four Traditional Authorities were selected based on their vulnerability: TA Chauma, TA Tambala, TA Kaphuka and TA Kasumbu.

It is important to note that the TA Kaphuka is not within FNSP's core target area but was added based on vulnerability and need.

The selection of the geographical area was in a first step suggested by a Task Force that was grouped on district level, consisting of GIZ FNSP and Self-Help Africa colleagues based in Dedza and various sector representatives from the Dedza District Council (i.e. Agricultural Planning Officer, Nutrition Focal Point in Health, Principal Nutrition HIV/AIDS Officer and his team and the Disaster and Risk Management Officer). During the meeting, different sector data such as the Food Insecurity Assessment Report, Crop Yield Projection Report from the Agriculture Office, latest district reports on moderate and severe malnutrition cases as well as death rates from the Nutrition Rehabilitation Units (NRU) from the Health Office were compared. It was noted while the Agriculture Office in Dedza had comprehensive recent data, the health office had data challenges due to a lack of funding which affects frequency of conducting nutrition screenings in the community.

The selection of the TAs was later backed up by the District Executive Committee (DEC). In another step, the health office selected specific hotspots within the four TAs, where the team would conduct nutrition screenings to get an overview of the nutrition situation and select beneficiaries for the response.

These hotspots were Tsoyo, Kasina, Kaphuka, Kanyama, Kalulu, Dzindevu, Mzengereza, Chongoni, Chitowo and Chikuse.



Key Actors & Ownership

The key actors involved were:

- **GIZ FNSP:** Advisory and particularly emphasis on strong collaboration and coordination between the implementing organization (SHA) and the District Council
- **Self Help Africa:** Implementing organization and overall coordination.
- **Office of the Principal Nutrition HIV/AIDS Officer:** Main convener of different sector offices within the Council and in the lead for nutrition field activities (screening and counselling)
- **Dedza District Hospital** (especially the Nutrition Officer and Environmental Health Officer) key in coordination of Health Surveillance Assistants
- **Community Development Office** (especially Social Cash Transfer Office): Alignment of this cash transfer with the social cash transfer programme; selection of some beneficiaries using the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR)
- **Disaster and Risk Management Office:** Alignment of the response with the government-led maize distribution
- **Social Welfare Office:** Support in supervision of field activities as part of the Nutrition Unit



Target group

Who were the beneficiaries?

1,661 Households

90% were households with a malnourished child under five years of age or a malnourished pregnant or lactating woman.

10% were ultra poor households selected by the UBR



Objective

What was the specific objective of the process?

- Increased food consumption of targeted households over the assistance period
- Improved coordination and multisectoral collaboration of the district response team
- Improved integration of nutrition into the response and future response/contingency plans

How did the process contribute to the programme objective?

FNSP's overall objective is to improve the nutritional status and resilience to famine of people vulnerable to food insecurity, especially women of reproductive age and young children, in the districts of Dedza and Salima. This is measured by improved dietary diversity of women, an increased percentage of infants with the Minimum Acceptable Diet indicator, a reduction in the percentage of households categorised as seriously at risk from food and nutrition insecurity, and improved nutrition governance.

The multi-stakeholder process contributes to improved nutrition governance on the national level. Relevant FNSP indicators are:

- Nutrition governance has improved at national and decentralized levels thanks to support from the programme in Malawi. This can be measured as follows: ... *In each of the district, District Nutrition Coordinating Committee (DNCC), District Stakeholder Coordinating Committee (DSCC), and District Civil Protection Committee (DCPC) develop one common multisectoral response to crisis situations*



03.2024

06.2024

Timeframe &

Milestones

The process started in March 2024 and was supposed to run for two months until April 2024, however, several delays in the implementation led the process to run until June 2024.

Time for upscaling

There is only limited time for scaling-up, as FNSP is phasing out. However, the results and recommendations will be presented to the relevant committees on district level (i.e. DNCC, DCPC, DSCC and the nutrition cluster) to inform future decision-making.

FNSP also has the opportunity of a scale up as part of the 2024/2025 lean season response which has more than double the budget as this pilot had.

What were concrete milestones to measure the progress of the process?

- Regular multisectoral task force meetings on district level
- Nutrition screenings and pay-out of the cash transfer before end of March 2024
- Joint development of Lessons Learnt and Recommendations
- Integration of recommendations in the district's emergency response plans

Describe how key actors and beneficiaries were involved in the development of the timeframe and milestones:

The task force on district level has jointly developed a broad timeframe and workplan for the interventions with the most important milestone of the pay-out of the cash transfers before March 2024.



Methodological approach The methodological approach step-by-step:

During the After-Action Review Workshop that was held between GIZ, SHA and the Dedza District Council, six key processes were identified:

①

Coordination Structure

Key to the process was the close involvement of the district and community structures in the response as opposed to simply getting all permissions and implementing in isolation. A task force was therefore formed, so that all sectors take part in the response and gather experiences from it. The main conveyer and coordinator of the taskforce was the Office of the Principal Nutrition, HIV/AIDS Officer (PNHAO) in close partnership with the Project Manager from SHA. The taskforce met regularly depending on the need and upcoming activities (once or twice a week at the height of the response implementation). One of the

main first steps was to discuss the approach and geographical coverage jointly. This had an influence as the structures felt included instead of the result just being presented to them. Secondly, entry meetings were held with the District Executive Committee, the District Commissioner, and the Area Development Committees (ADCs) in the four respective TAs. Every stakeholder was encouraged to contribute to the planning of specific interventions. At a later point, the Social Welfare Office and the Social Cash Transfer Office (under the Community Development Office) were also asked to join the task force and field supervisions.

2 Cash Transfer Modality

Using Cash Transfers into mobile money accounts of beneficiaries was first suggested by SHA. They believed it is the fastest response option and gives recipients the freedom to choose what is urgently needed in their household. It also allows them to buy various food groups and reduces logistical challenges. The Nutrition Unit – especially the health sector – argued a case to distribute food items (e.g. cooking oil, pulses, fortified flour). However, after weighing costs and benefits, it was agreed that cash transfers are the best option regarding time, availability, and safety. The Nutrition Unit emphasized the need for accompanying interventions (nutrition counselling and sensitization on dietary diversity and winter cropping amongst other resilience-building measures) to a cash transfer programme to enhance a nutrition-sensitive utilization of the money.

3 Beneficiary Targeting

One of the main recommendations and requests by the Nutrition Unit from the earliest planning stage of the response, was to conduct mass nutrition screenings to get a clear overview of the malnutrition situation in the communities and to also be used for the focused targeting of beneficiaries. After SHA presented the response as a “lean season response” on national level to the Department of Disaster and Risk Management (DoDMA), a request was made to use the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR) and not nutrition screenings for the selection of beneficiaries. However, concerns were brought forward from all district sectors as well as the ADCs concerning the coverage of the UBR (not all vulnerable households are registered), lack of updated data, missing villages from the database as well as the missing information about children under 5 years of age in these households. A decision was made to prioritize beneficiaries with active malnutrition from the screenings, but include several vulnerable households, which were just recently added to the UBR and hence did not yet receive any support from the Social Cash Transfer Programme or the government-led maize distribution.

After the selection of hotspots by the District Health Office (DHO), a screening form collecting Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) measurements (a method that measures the nutritional status using a

tape, which is put around the upper arm), Oedema, demographic data and contact details was developed. Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) in the communities were then briefed on the project. They then conducted both door-to-door (household) and mass nutrition screenings of children under five and pregnant and lactating women. In the end, around 90% of the beneficiaries were selected from the screenings and around 10% using the UBR.

4 Data Entry and Verification

The screening forms were filled by the HSAs by hand, collected by the Senior HSAs of their respective health facilities and then collected by the project. As the screenings were coordinated under the leadership of the District Health Office, they also wanted to be the ones entering the data. HSAs and data clerks from DHO therefore entered the data in a one-week exercise. However, significant gaps were found under the supervision of the team which resulted in wrong data entered and a considerable number of forms skipped. After attempting to rectify and clean up the data, it was found that it was more appropriate to completely re-enter the forms. This was done by an external data entry team brought in by SHA. After reviewing the data, the task force team met to conclude on the final eligibility criteria for screened households. Based on a recommendation from the health sector, all children under five with either severe acute malnutrition (SAM; MUAC 11.5 cm and below), moderate acute malnutrition (MUAC 11.6-12.5 cm) or at risk (MUAC below 14 cm) were selected to be included in the response. Pregnant or lactating women were selected if they were either severely malnourished (MUAC 19 cm and below) or mild to moderately malnourished (MUAC 19.1-22.9 cm).

All eligible beneficiaries were contacted by their HSAs and needed to participate in a verification exercise whereby SHA and the DNCC verified their data to avoid duplications (every household was only eligible for one transfer) as well as to document their mobile money account and ID number. Those that did not have their own SIM card received a new SIM card from SHA, if they had a national ID. Those with neither a SIM card or ID were encouraged to use a proxy within their household or close family.

5 Follow-up with beneficiaries (by the project)

The project conducted a post distribution verification exercise to beneficiaries in all the targeted TAs. It was confirmed that 1,661 out of 1,719 beneficiaries (representing 97% of the beneficiaries) received cash of MWK 50.000 through mobile transfers. A sample size of 218 respondents was interviewed thoroughly as part of a Post-Distribution Monitoring with questions on household demographics, utilization of the money, resilience strategies, and overall feedback on the intervention.

6 Messages and Follow-up/Referrals (by HSAs)

SHA and the DNCC jointly developed messages that were shared to the beneficiaries through the HSAs. They mobilized the households to prioritize food items and especially dietary diversity after receiving the cash. While these messages were delivered and nutrition counselling was provided during the screening exercise, a majority of respondents from the Post-Distribution Monitoring reported that they did not receive any more follow-up care from HSAs after the screening. In contrast, 30% stated that they did receive follow-up care, while 5% (who were under UBR) were not followed up, as they had not undergone nutrition screening and are therefore not part of the usual target group of HSAs. These findings indicate that, while some respondents received additional support, the majority did not, highlighting potential gaps in the continuity of care provided by HSAs after the initial screenings.



Costs & Resources

Total costs of the process:

The main costs for this response targeting 1,661 households were around 9,750 Euros:

- Project entry and exit meetings = 1,200 EUR
- Coordination meetings and beneficiary verification and registration = 1,650 EUR
- Nutrition screening = 1,000 EUR
- Beneficiary Sensitization and counselling meetings = 800 EUR
- Transfers costs and bank changes = 3,600 EUR
- Vehicle maintenance and fuel costs = 1,000 EUR
- After Action Review, Post Distribution Monitoring, Verification, and end of project reporting = 500 EUR

Other resources: Personnel from different sectors and community structures (e.g. HSAs, district supervisors), computers/tablets for data collection and analysis, stationery, and vehicles.

Can relevant cost reductions be assumed when the approach is being scaled up?

Upscaling the response to more beneficiaries can decrease the other costs per beneficiary significantly, however only if scaled up in the same communities. For example, fuel costs, community engagement costs and dissemination costs of nutrition messages will be reduced if more people are reached in one location.



Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability):

Long-term sustainability is particularly challenging in the context of an emergency response, however, positive developments towards more ownership and sustainability can be seen. The new Disaster and Risk Management Bill of the Government of Malawi recognize the recurring crises and the need to have immediate funds available. They therefore want to establish a "trust fund" that can disburse funds to district councils within 72 hours of a declared disaster. Another positive effect of this pilot is the enhanced collaboration and coordination of the different sectors as well as the district taking charge of the emergency coordination.

The selection of project participants and cash recipients was agreed on with the district working group and national stakeholders, e.g. by considering Crop Projections (Agriculture Department), Food Insecurity Indicators (Maize projections), and the identification of Active Malnutrition Cases (Health Department). Together with the District Nutrition Unit, clear selection criteria were developed and shared with all relevant stakeholders to ensure an open and non-discriminatory process for selecting beneficiaries. The District Nutrition Unit and Frontline Workers (FLWs) conducted nutrition screenings to identify Lean Season Response (LSR) recipients, focusing on malnutrition hotspots within different health facilities. Participants were chosen based on their nutritional status and level of food insecurity. To ensure transparency and prevent discrimination, the Nutrition Unit was involved in all project planning, decision-making, and implementation of activities. During community engagement meetings, safeguarding key messages were shared. In the post distribution period, the project promoted reporting of safeguarding, fraud and protection issues and there was follow up on these issues to close them in the survivors' interest whenever possible.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



The results/outputs of the process:

Evidence on the malnutrition situation in the district was generated: 2,611 people in the TAs Kaphuka, Kasumbu, Tambala and Chauma were screened, of which 2,282 were children under five years of age and 329 were pregnant and lactating women à The state of malnutrition was high (29% for children under 5 and 35% for pregnant and lactating women); the data helped the DNCC to advocate for more support:

- 1,661 households received a once off cash transfer of MWK 50,000 MWK as well as nutrition counselling and other messages.
- According to a post-distribution monitoring survey with 218 respondents, the money was predominantly used for food items (69%) and to enhance agricultural productivity with inputs (11%).



Success factors

- Among the food items purchased, dietary diversity was visible: maize (44%), soya (18%), chickens (10%), groundnuts (9%), cooking oil (7%) à Maize, groundnut and soy make a nutritious porridge, which is promoted by the care groups in Dedza.
- The coordinating group from the different sector offices of Dedza District Council, GIZ and SHA collected important lessons learnt and best practices. These were reviewed in a one-day "After Action Review Workshop," documented in this template and presented to the DNCC, decision-makers and other partners in a special nutrition cluster meeting.

What key conditions/ factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

1 Coordination

- Multisectoral task force on district level (nutrition, health, agriculture, disaster and risk management, community development, social welfare, implementing organization) and frequent meetings for joint planning.
- Orientation of Frontline Workers (i.e. HSAs) and community structures (i.e. ADCs, VNCCs, ACLAN).

2 Cash Transfer Modality

- Cash transfer using mobile money is a safe and quick way of reaching beneficiaries.
- Providing SIM cards to beneficiaries can enhance their independence within a household (especially for women).
- Paired with accompanying nutrition messages, beneficiaries were able prioritize their needs which were mostly in buying food items and seeds.

3 Beneficiary Targeting

- Nutrition screenings have been crucial to gather data from the communities and help decision making for interventions but also further action and advocacy by the district council.
- Targeting vulnerable beneficiaries with confirmed malnutrition enhances the impact of the intervention from a nutrition perspective and reduces the risk of the support being misused. Communities and their leaders were also in favour of using the selection criteria as they are transparent.

4 Data Entry and Verification

- User-friendly data entry template (Excel).

5 Follow-up with beneficiaries (by the project)

- Established community feedback mechanisms by SHA.

6 Messages and Follow-up/Referrals (by HSAs)

- Standard nutrition and resilience messages were readily available from the PNHAOs office.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

7 Coordination

- Lack of time for a thorough sensitization of communities and HSAs and lack of involvement of other community structures such as ADRMC and VDRMC (Area/Village Disaster and Risk Management Committee) for oversight and safeguarding of community activities
- Inconsistency of task force membership: delegations and tiredness of members when response took longer than expected (no Daily Subsistence Allowances (DSAs) were paid)
- The leadership of the task force and activities taken up by sectors were sometimes not clearly distributed and communicated.

8 Cash Transfer Modality

- Delays in donor approval, unexpected logistical efforts (implementation in four TAs) and lack of understanding of procurement procedure with the mobile money provider led to a distribution of the cash much later – after the lean period.
- The use of proxies to receive the transfer on behalf of beneficiaries without a SIM card or national ID resulted in safeguarding challenges (not receiving the money at all or just partly). In some few cases, even the husbands of beneficiaries would keep funds.
- The amount of (MWK 50,000 MWK) once off was not enough for beneficiaries to buy substantial amounts of food – especially since food items and agricultural inputs have become more expensive with the MWK devaluation(s)

9 Beneficiary Targeting

- Using the UBR for the selection of 10% of the beneficiaries resulted in coordination challenges (different FLWs and committees on community level), outdated data, beneficiaries not being part of vulnerable target

groups and lack of prioritization of nutrition because they did not receive any nutrition education before or during the response and are typically not part of care groups either

- The pre-selection of hotspots for the mass screenings was not done evidence-based by the District Health Office (DHO)
- Lack of supervision of HSAs during the screening resulted in unreliable data e.g. forms not filled out correctly, non-eligible beneficiaries added to the list, etc.
- Lack of standard form for nutrition screenings at the district that HSAs are oriented on and lack of form that clearly distinguished between children and adults.

◆ Data Entry and Verification

- Lack of equipment (laptops) for data entry clerks and lack of supervision led to slow and poor entry.

◆ Follow-up with beneficiaries (by the project)

- Lack of involvement with other community structures: there is need for close collaboration and engagement with other community structures like the community protection committees and community policing so that all protection, safeguarding and fraud cases could be handled jointly.
- Poor communication to beneficiaries: some beneficiaries failed to receive cash as the verification exercise was not communicated to them. There is need for proper and timely communication to ensure all intended beneficiaries are reached.

◆ Messages and Follow-up/Referrals (by HSAs)

- Lack of proper sensitization on nutrition message delivery for FLWs: some beneficiaries did not receive messages.
- Lack of follow-up on households that have children that relapsed and fell back into malnourished status.



Recommendations

- The response should be titled "Nutrition Response" rather than "Emergency" or "Lean Season Response" to emphasize the need to target beneficiaries based on their nutritional status.

- Selection of a multisectoral task force for a close collaboration of district and community structures with the implementing organization from the early planning stages on to enhance ownership, efficiency, and sustainability à however, it needs one main coordination body to avoid confusion on leadership and supervisory mandate.
- Strong integration of nutrition into the emergency response: selection of vulnerable target groups (children under five and pregnant and lactating women) based on malnutrition and accompanying nutrition and resilience-building messages.
- In its current form, the UBR is not suitable to target beneficiaries for a nutrition response: it is not updated regularly, vulnerable target groups might not be registered, and social cash transfer beneficiaries are typically not covered by care groups and HSAs. Nutrition screening can therefore be fully recommended.
- In-depth mobilisation of local leaders and community committees are needed for community policing from the beginning to avoid safeguarding issues, such as sharing of funds with leaders, frontline workers, or proxies.
- Cash Transfer modality can work fast and safe, but should be planned well ahead, e.g. good preparation of procurement and procedures with mobile money service provider and the integration of mobile money agents in other field activities for quick registration of new SIM cards.
- Frontline workers (HSAs) for the screening and data entry clerks need to be well sensitized and supervised to receive good data and avoid interference of beneficiary registration.
- The size of the transfer should be increased, e.g. to a minimum food basket. The frequency and timing should be better aligned with the needs of households (e.g. one transfer before the rainy season to focus on increased production and a second transfer in January/February for supporting food items)
- Cash Transfers should be accompanied with other nutrition-sensitive interventions, such as nutrition counselling and messages, but also agroecology trainings and inputs (e.g. 2 bags of fertilizer and 10 kg of maize)
- Standard forms and guidance for nutrition screenings, counselling, referrals, and follow-up should be made available to Frontline Workers. It is also advisable to train them on nutrition in emergency ahead to be able to deliver comprehensive services during the recurring crises.

- The follow-up with beneficiaries by the task force and by the HSAs should be enhanced.
- Alternatives to using proxies for those beneficiaries that do not have a SIM card or national ID cards need to be found, e.g. registration of SIM cards in the beneficiary's name but with an ID from another household member, and encouraging potential beneficiaries in the targeted geographical area to get this SIM card on their own rather than waiting for the project



Testimony

“ Today, I am a proud mother of a healthy baby girl. Her health and mine have improved significantly compared to those days of food insecurity ”

Sarah Zamadula, 32, from Mtechera village, struggled with chronic food shortages. Her husband's small farm yielded insufficient harvests, forcing them to rely on meagre piecework and endure single-meal days. Climate change exacerbated their plight, with low rainfall further diminishing their crops. Pregnant and underweight, Sarah feared for her and her unborn child's health.

In March 2024, she learned about the Lean Season Program, a nutrition-sensitive cash assistance initiative by the Dedza District Council, Self Help Africa and GIZ, implemented after nutrition screenings. Receiving MWK 50,000 she bought maize, soybeans, and groundnuts, creating a nutritious porridge that drastically improved her diet.

“Today, I am the proud mother of a healthy baby girl. My health has improved significantly compared to those days of food insecurity,” Sarah stated, expressing deep gratitude for the timely support that transformed her, and her family's lives. She hopes the program continues to reach more struggling families.



Related Resources



Related Resources

Over To You Podcast



Topic 8: Integrated Nutrition Response in Dedza

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Promise Practice
documented: February 2025

Even amidst crises, the interwoven strategies of strong governance, climate-smart agriculture, and targeted nutrition interventions remain crucial for safeguarding vulnerable populations. A recent example, the Dedza Nutrition Response programme implemented in Malawi during the challenging lean season 2024/2025 vividly illustrates this point.

This programme was designed to combat acute malnutrition by providing essential support to households with malnourished children and pregnant or lactating women. Recognizing that crises demand multifaceted solutions; the response went beyond simple relief. It strategically combined cash transfers with the distribution of agricultural inputs, training in climate-smart agricultural techniques, nutrition counselling, and concerted efforts to enhance multi-sectoral coordination. This integrated approach not only provided immediate relief but also fostered long-term resilience and strengthened local governance structures.

The Dedza Nutrition Response programme demonstrates a vital principle: by incorporating strategic "Plus" components into crisis interventions, projects can achieve positive outcomes across multiple impact areas. This highlights the enduring relevance of governance, sustainable agriculture, and nutrition-focused actions, even – and especially – during times of crisis.



Photo: GIZ and SHA delegates (present was GIZ Country Director (3rd left), German Embassy Representative (4th left), SHA Country Director (2nd right), SHA Dedza Manager (3rd right), and GIZ GIAE Representative (1st right) at the post monitoring distribution in Dedza© GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

Malnutrition remains a pressing challenge in Malawi, particularly during the lean season when food availability and access become severely constrained. The 2024 Nutrition-Sensitive Lean Season Response in Malawi aimed to mitigate these challenges by providing targeted support to households with acutely malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women. The intervention focused on both immediate relief and long-term resilience-building, ensuring that affected households had access to essential food supplies while also strengthening their agricultural capacity.

Under this program, each targeted household received:

- MWK 95,200 in cash transfers through mobile money to enhance purchasing power and dietary diversity.
- Agricultural inputs including cassava, soya, groundnuts, and inoculants, aimed at improving household food production and nutrition.
- Training on Good Agricultural Practices / Climate Smart Agriculture.
- Nutrition Counselling with a focus on feeding practices for infants and young children and dietary diversity.

The funding for this intervention was only possible, because the GIZ Country Director and project teams negotiated the utilization of residual funds from the concluded GIZ's programme *Green Innovations for the Agriculture and Food Sector* (GIAE) in Malawi. Through its existing grant agreement with the INGO Self Help Africa, the GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) was able to implement this response swiftly.



Geographical coverage

TA Kaphuka and Kachindamoto within Dedza District

It is important to note that both TA are not within FNSP's core target area but were selected by the District Nutrition Coordination Committee (DNCC) and the District Executive Committee (DEC) based on health, nutrition, and agriculture indicators.



Key Actors & Ownership

Key actors involved in this process:

- **GIZ Green Innovation Centres for the Agriculture and Food Sector:** Provided residual funds, coordination, and technical knowledge.
- **GIZ FNSP:** Advisory and particularly emphasized on strong collaboration and coordination between the implementing organization SHA and the district council.
- **Self Help Africa:** Implementing organization and overall coordination.
- **Office of the Principal Nutrition HIV/AIDS Officer:** Main convener of different sector offices within the Council and lead for nutrition field activities (screening and counselling).
- **Dedza District Hospital** (especially the Nutrition Officer) were key in coordination of Health Surveillance Assistants.
- **Disaster and Risk Management Office:** Alignment of the response with the government-led maize distribution.
- **District Agriculture Office:** Alignment of training materials to their curriculum and coordination of Agriculture Extension Officers (AEDOs).



Target group

Who were the beneficiaries?

1.324 households

The households were either selected because one child under five years was severely or moderately acute malnourished (SAM / MAM) or one pregnant or lactating woman was malnourished. The targeting was done by using data from a routine nutrition screening (using MUAC tape) conducted by UNICEF and the Dedza Health Office (DHO).



Objective

What were the specific objectives of this process?

- Immediate increase of the food consumption of targeted households (Cash Transfer).
- Increased agricultural production and resilience in the medium and long-term (seed inputs and climate-smart agriculture trainings).
- Improved coordination and multisectoral collaboration of the district response team.
- Improved integration of nutrition into the response and future response/contingency plans.



What were concrete milestones to measure the progress of the pilot/process?

- DNCC and DEC selection of impact area and targeting method.
- Routine Nutrition Screening
- Climate-Smart Agriculture and Good Agricultural Practices training for AEDOs
- AEDOs cascading the trainings to lead farmers and beneficiary households.
- Distribution of seeds, inoculants, and simultaneous pay-out of cash via mobile money
- Post-Distribution Monitoring to receive beneficiaries' feedback.
- After Action Review Workshop: Development of joint learning and recommendations

Implementing a Nutrition Emergency Response Program

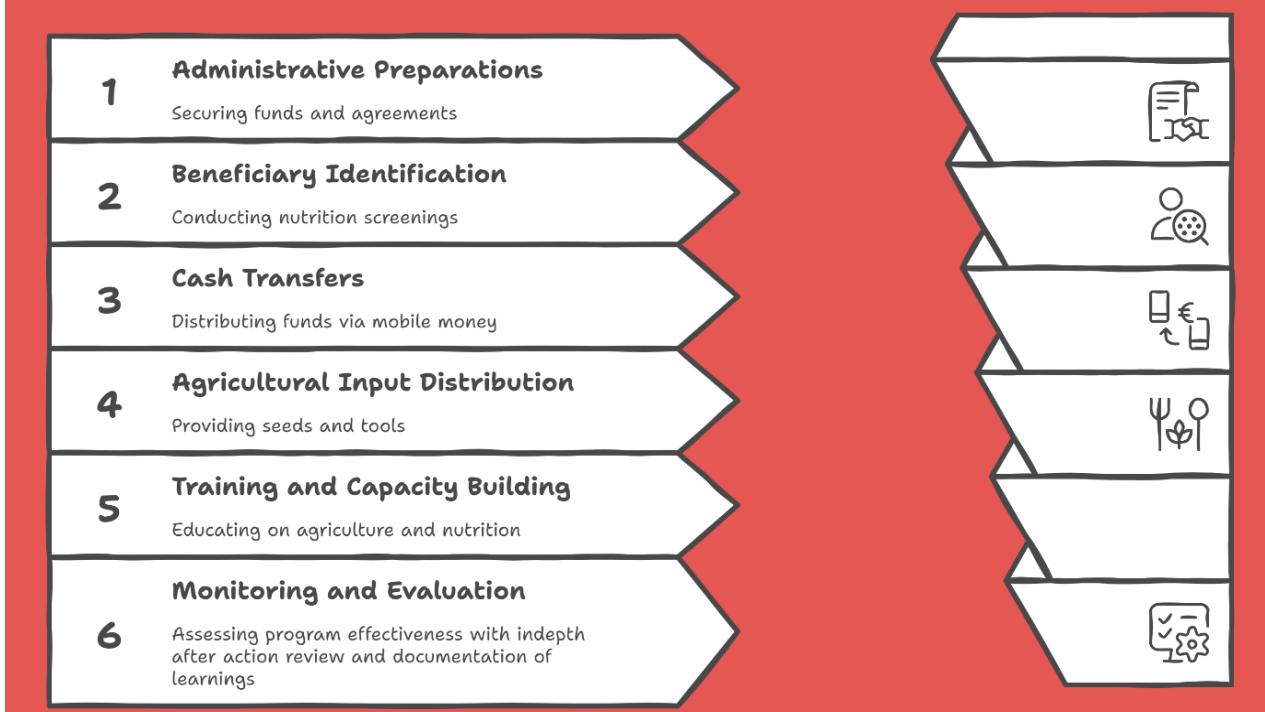


Figure 2. Methodology of implementing a nutrition sensitive emergency response (AI generated)



Methodological approach

1 Administrative Preparations

- **Residual Funds:** Agreement reached to utilize funds from the concluded GIZ GIAE project for this response.
- **Grant Agreement:** The existing grant agreement between GIZ FNSP and SHA was extended for the nutrition response.

2 Targeting and Identification of Beneficiaries

- **Nutrition Screenings:** Conducted using MUAC (Mid-Upper Arm Circumference) tape to identify households with acutely malnourished children under 5 or pregnant and lactating women.
- **Data Utilization:** Leveraged data from routine nutrition screenings to ensure accurate identification and reduce the risk of data tampering.

3 Cash Transfers

- **Mobile Money Transfers:** Distributed MWK 95,200 to each targeted household via mobile money to immediately enhance purchasing power, food consumption, and dietary diversity.

- 4 Distribution of Agricultural Inputs
 - Types of Inputs: Provided cassava, soya, groundnuts, and inoculants to improve household food production and nutrition in the medium to long-term.
- 5 Training and Capacity Building
 - Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA): Conducted practical 3-day training of trainer's sessions covering crop planting, soil conservation, pest management, and afforestation. The trained Agricultural Extension Workers (AEWs) then cascaded the knowledge to lead farmers and beneficiary households.
 - Nutrition Counselling: Focused on feeding practices for infants and young children, which were delivered during nutrition screening and monthly U5 clinics by Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs).
- 6 Monitoring and Evaluation
 - Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM): Conducted to assess the effectiveness of the intervention and gather feedback from beneficiaries.
 - After-Action Review Workshops: Held with key stakeholders to document best practices, learnings, and recommendations for future programming.



Sustainability Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it & Do No Harm contributes to long-term sustainability)

The program's sustainability is rooted in its comprehensive approach, which combines immediate relief with long-term capacity building and resilience. By integrating cash transfers, agricultural inputs, training, and continuous support, the program not only addresses immediate nutritional needs but also empowers households to sustain their well-being and improve their agricultural production and livelihoods over time. The active involvement of beneficiaries and stakeholders in feedback and review processes further enhances the program's adaptability and effectiveness.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial)
Results

The results/ outputs of the process:

The results are largely drawn from the Post Distribution Monitoring with a sample size of 149 respondents (n=11.3%), two Focus Group Discussions and the After-Action Review Workshop with key stakeholders.

1

Cash Transfers

- **Receipt Confirmation:** 100% of respondents confirmed receipt of the cash transfers.
- **Spending Priorities:** All respondents (100%) prioritized spending the cash they received on food, with additional expenditures on clothing (41%), agricultural inputs/fertilizer (40%), and miscellaneous needs (38%). Some households also invested in small businesses (13%) and education-related expenses (8%).
- **Dietary Diversity:** Among the food items bought from the cash transfer, the majority mentioned maize (30%), followed by animal-source foods (17%), rice (14%), groundnuts (14%), and beans (11%). Among the other mentioned foods (14%), soya, nsinjrio (groundnut flour) and cooking oil were frequently mentioned. Most of the food items are among the items promoted to make a nutritious porridge for children.

2

Agricultural Inputs

- **Distribution and Utilization:** Cassava was the most received input (67%), followed by soya and groundnuts (48% each), and inoculants (23%).
- **Planting and Satisfaction:** 92% of beneficiaries planted the seeds as intended, with high satisfaction rates (71.77% rated the inputs as "Great").
- **Crop Performance:** 72% of respondents rated the performance of the inputs positively.

3

Training and Capacity Building

- **Training Attendance:** 72.5% of respondents attended GAP and CSA training sessions.
- **Knowledge Retention:** Respondents recalled key messages on Best Agricultural Practices, Breastfeeding/Child Feeding Practices, and WASH, indicating effective communication and training.
- **Adoption:** AEDOs reported that households which received the inputs that were part of the emergency response were more likely to adopt the promoted climate-smart agriculture practices than those which had to source their own inputs.

4

Nutrition Counselling

- **Counselling Sessions:** 84% of households received nutrition counselling during monthly U5 clinics, focusing on feeding practices for infants and young children.

- 5 Follow-Up Support
 - HSAs Follow-Up: 39% of households received follow-up support from Health Surveillance Assistants.
 - AEDOs Follow-Up: 47% of households received follow-up support from Agricultural Extension Development Officers.
- 6 Coordination and Learning
 - Coordination: The close collaboration between GIZ, SHA and the Dedza District Council enabled improved coordination of sector offices involved in emergency response. It also emphasized the need for the integration of nutrition into such interventions.
 - Learning: The M&E interventions and After-Action Review Workshop established a culture of learning and produced valuable recommendations for future programming that can not only be utilized by GIZ or SHA, but also by the district officers in the governments or other partner's future responses to the recurring crises.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- 1 Effective Coordination
 - Stakeholder Engagement: Strong coordination among the GIZ projects, the implementing organization (Self Help Africa), and various sector offices of the Dedza District Council (Nutrition, M&E, Agriculture, Emergency, and Health) ensured effective planning, implementation, monitoring, and review of the response.
 - Dedicated Personnel: Extra personnel from GIZ and Self-Help Africa were designated for overall coordination, improving the timely implementation of interventions without impacting other project activities.
- 2 Comprehensive Targeting and Identification
 - Nutrition Screenings: The use of MUAC tape for nutrition screenings effectively identified households with acutely malnourished children or pregnant and lactating women, ensuring support for the most vulnerable.
 - Data Utilization: Leveraging data from routine nutrition screenings reduced the risk of data tempering and saved financial resources.

3 Cash Transfers

- **Mobile Money Transfers:** The use of the existing "E-Wallet" from Airtel facilitated quicker and more efficient cash transfers.
- **Spending Priorities:** Cash transfers significantly improved food security and dietary diversity among households, with spendings being prioritized on food, clothing, agricultural inputs, and other essential needs.

4 Integration of "Plus" Components

- **Combination of Interventions:** The integration of cash transfers, agricultural inputs, training, and nutrition messaging enabled beneficiaries to meet immediate nutritional needs and improve food security and resilience in the medium- to long-term. It was particularly important that the support reached the beneficiaries at the same time to prevent sale or consumption of inputs.
- **Accompanying Messages:** Central to the cash transfer program, the nutrition messages increased the utilization of cash for the intended purpose and reduced the risk of causing unintended harm, which would be misuse of cash – purchasing non-food items and community riots.

5 Training and Capacity Building

- **Practical Training Sessions:** Comprehensive training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) equipped farmers with the knowledge and skills needed to improve agricultural productivity and adopt sustainable farming techniques. It was important that the trainings were paired with inputs as this motivated the households to adopt new techniques, which they are less likely to stop once they have experienced the benefits – even with their own inputs.

6 High Adoption Rates and Satisfaction

- **Agricultural Inputs:** High adoption rates and positive feedback on the quality of agricultural inputs indicated that providing seeds and other inputs was effective. Most beneficiaries rated the inputs positively.
- **Crop Performance:** Successful germination and growth of distributed seeds contributed to enhanced food security and resilience.

7 Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM):** Regular monitoring to assess the effectiveness of the intervention and gather insights for future programming.
- **After-Action Review Workshops:** Engaged key stakeholders in documenting best practices and lessons learned, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

8 Beneficiary Empowerment

- **Financial Decision-Making:** Empowering women in financial decision-making led to more sustainable household management and improved nutritional outcomes for children.
- **Income-Generating Activities:** Some households invested cash assistance in small businesses, indicating a focus on long-term economic resilience.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

1 Accessibility of Mobile Money Payments

- **Lack of Phones and IDs:** Many households, particularly women, do not own or have access to phones, SIM cards, or national IDs, which made accessing mobile money payments challenging.

2 Proxy Issues: Although allowing beneficiaries to name proxies helped, there were still a few issues with forwarding funds or demanding shares, despite intense sensitization efforts. Logistical Challenges

- **Fuel Shortages:** The nationwide fuel shortage posed significant logistical challenges for conducting nutrition screenings and other activities.

Follow-Up Support

- **Gaps in Follow-Up:** A considerable proportion of households did not receive follow-up support from Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) and Agricultural Extension Development Officers (AEDOs), which could impact the sustained adoption of recommended practices.

Timing and Distribution of Inputs

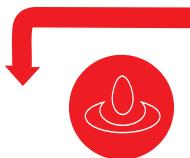
- **Unpredictable Weather Conditions:** Aligning the distribution of seeds and inputs with the start of the planting season was challenging due to unpredictable weather conditions.
- **Availability of Inputs:** The unavailability of groundnuts on the market was a major challenge, affecting the distribution to beneficiaries.

3 Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms

- **Awareness of Feedback Mechanisms:** Some beneficiaries were unaware of the feedback and safeguarding mechanisms, indicating a need for better sensitization.
- **Market Price Monitoring:** Monitoring market prices closely to adjust cash amounts according to rising costs and considering household size and the number of children under five in cash calculations were identified as areas for improvement.

4 Coordination and Involvement of Government Offices

- **Multi-Sectoral Coordination:** Unlike the previous response, a multi-sectoral coordination committee was not established at the same scale, which was seen as a step back. Closer involvement of the emergency and risk management office and the agriculture office could have prevented issues like the drying up of cassava cuttings due to a lack of horticulture expertise.



Recommendations

By sustaining best practices and addressing the identified challenges, future programming can be more effective and sustainable. These recommendations aim to enhance the overall impact of nutrition (emergency) response programs, ensuring that they meet immediate needs while building long-term resilience and food security among the targeted households.

- **Maintain Strong Stakeholder Engagement:** Continue the effective coordination among GIZ projects, the implementing organization, and various sector offices. Ensure that all stakeholders are actively engaged in planning, implementation, monitoring, and review processes. Re-establish a multi-sectoral coordination committee to ensure closer involvement of government offices, particularly the emergency and risk management office and the agriculture office.
- **Dedicated Personnel:** Keep designating extra personnel for overall coordination to ensure timely implementation without impacting other project activities.
- **Nutrition Screenings:** Continue using MUAC tape for nutrition screenings to effectively identify the most vulnerable households and maximize the utilization of support for nutrition outcomes.
- **Data Utilization:** Leverage data from routine nutrition screenings to ensure accurate identification and reduce the risk of data falsification.
- **Mobile Money Transfers:** Sustain the use of mobile money transfers for efficient and secure distribution of cash assistance. Monitor market prices closely and adjust cash amounts according to rising costs.

Consider household size and the number of children under five in cash calculations. Address the lack of phones, SIM cards, and national IDs by providing support to obtain these items. Improve sensitization efforts to reduce issues with forwarding funds or demanding shares. Ensure clear communication about the role and responsibilities of proxies.

- **Spending Priorities:** Actively encourage households to prioritize spending on food, clothing, agricultural inputs, and other essential needs.
- **Combination of Interventions:** Maintain the integration of cash transfers, agricultural inputs, training, and nutrition messaging to meet immediate nutritional needs and improve food security and resilience. Pairing of training and inputs also enhanced the adoption rates of new techniques.
- **Timing and Distribution of Inputs:** Improve the timing of seed and input distribution to align them with the start of the planting season. Collaborate closely with experts from the District Agriculture Office to consider different agroecological zones. Address the unavailability of certain inputs, such as groundnuts, by initiating the procurement process earlier or sourcing alternatives.
- **Accompanying Messages:** Continue to emphasize the importance of accompanying nutrition messages to increase the utilization of cash for the intended purpose and to reduce the risk of causing unintended harm.
- **Practical Training Sessions:** Sustain comprehensive training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) to equip farmers with the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable farming. Enhance technical follow-up support from the AEDOs to improve adoption of promoted techniques.
- **Nutrition Counselling:** Continue focusing on feeding practices for infants and young children to ensure long-term health and nutrition outcomes.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Enhance sensitization efforts to ensure beneficiaries are aware of feedback and safeguarding mechanisms. Consider sending accompanying text messages with cash transfer notification



Testimony

“
My child went from malnourished and underweight to healthy and strong in just a month, adding 2kg to his initial weight.

Linda, a 36-year-old mother of four, shared a powerful success story: "My child went from malnourished and underweight to healthy and strong in just a month, adding 2kg to his initial weight." This transformation was made possible by cash support she received, allowing her to provide nutritious meals. She further explained, "The extra income helped us buy schoolbooks for my other children and invest in our farm."

Linda's experience reflects the broader success of a program that provided cash transfers to 1,324 mothers, enabling them to meet immediate dietary needs. Beyond the cash support, families received seeds for sustainable food production and training in Climate Smart Agriculture. The German Embassy Lilongwe noted the program's lasting impact, with households demonstrating their ability to continue thriving. Focus group discussions confirmed that the cash transfers were highly valued, leading to noticeable health improvements in children and enabling families to meet other essential needs.



Related Resources



Related Resources

PDM Report



Topic 9: El Niño Nutrition Response in Salima

102

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documented: December
2024

In response to the severe drought conditions exacerbated by El Niño, CARE Malawi, with funding from GIZ through CARE Germany, launched a critical El Niño Nutrition Response within the Food and Nutrition Security Project (FNSP) in the Salima District. This initiative, mirroring the efforts undertaken in Dedza, focuses on bolstering the nutritional well-being and resilience of vulnerable populations, particularly women of reproductive age and young children, who are disproportionately affected by climate-related food shortages.

Operating within the Traditional Authorities Maganga, Pemba, and Ndindi, this phase of the FNSP is specifically designed to address the urgent food and nutritional needs arising from the El Niño-induced drought. Through a collaborative approach with GIZ and in close partnership with the Government of Malawi, CARE Malawi is implementing strategically planned activities to ensure a coordinated and effective humanitarian response. This concerted effort aims to mitigate the immediate impacts of the drought while building long-term resilience within these targeted communities, mirroring the vital nutrition response work already highlighted in Dedza.



Photo: Women in Salima ready to receive their Lean season response social support bundle © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

CARE Malawi, with funding from GIZ through CARE Germany, is implementing Phase IV of the Food and Nutrition Security Project (FNSP) in the Salima District. This phase focuses on the Traditional Authorities Maganga, Pemba, and Ndindi, aiming to improve the nutritional well-being and resilience of food insecure populations, particularly women of reproductive age and young children.

As part of this initiative, the El Niño Nutrition Response addresses the urgent food and nutritional needs of households affected by the drought linked to El Niño within these communities. Through collaborative efforts with GIZ and in partnership with the Government, CARE Malawi is dedicated to supporting this humanitarian response. Activities under the FNSP have been strategically planned to ensure a coordinated approach that benefits the targeted areas of Maganga, Pemba, and Ndindi in the Salima District.



Geographical coverage

The El Niño Nutrition Response initiative, implemented from August to December 2024, aimed to address the immediate food and nutritional needs of nutritionally vulnerable households within the project's target areas. These included the Traditional Authorities (TA) Maganga, Pemba, and Ndindi in Salima District, covering 15 Group Village Headmen (GVHs) in the TAs Maganga and Pemba and 7 GVHs in TA Ndindi.



Key Actors & Ownership

Key actors that were involved:

CARE: Facilitates coordination at district level, ensuring effective planning and implementation, timely availability of resources, and that all activities are executed successfully while adhering to standards and compliance requirements.

Government: Holds primary responsibility for leading the nutrition response ensuring alignment with national policies and priorities which include DoDMA, the Ministry of Health, Agriculture, Gender, and Community Development

Community structures: Ownership and sustainability of the intervention

Donor: Provision of financial support

Media: Responsible for public awareness, advocacy and behaviour change communication



Target group

The El Niño Nutrition Response prioritized nutrition-centred interventions, focusing on pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under five based on data from the Nutrition Mass Screening and Community Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM). Secondary priorities were guided by JEFAP criteria, including households with limited or no landholding, minimal or no harvest, and those affected by chronic illness or disability.



Objective

Promote nutritional awareness and prioritize nutritional needs by guiding beneficiaries to use cash transfers for diverse, nutritious foods while ensuring transparent selection and accountability.

Strengthen food security and community resilience by supporting vulnerable groups with targeted cash transfers, enhancing access to nutritious foods, and boosting local markets.



A time frame of five months (August – December 2024) was planned.

Time for upscaling

- There was insufficient time for scaling up due to the urgency of the emergency response.

What were concrete milestones to measure the progress of the process?

- Preparatory Phase (stakeholders' engagement and sensitization and awareness campaign)
- Beneficiary selection, verification, and registration
- Distribution and monitoring

Describe how key actors and beneficiaries have been involved in the development of the timeframe and milestones:

- Stakeholders mapping and engagements.
- Community consultations
- Beneficiary data collection and analysis

Salima El-Nino NR Methodology

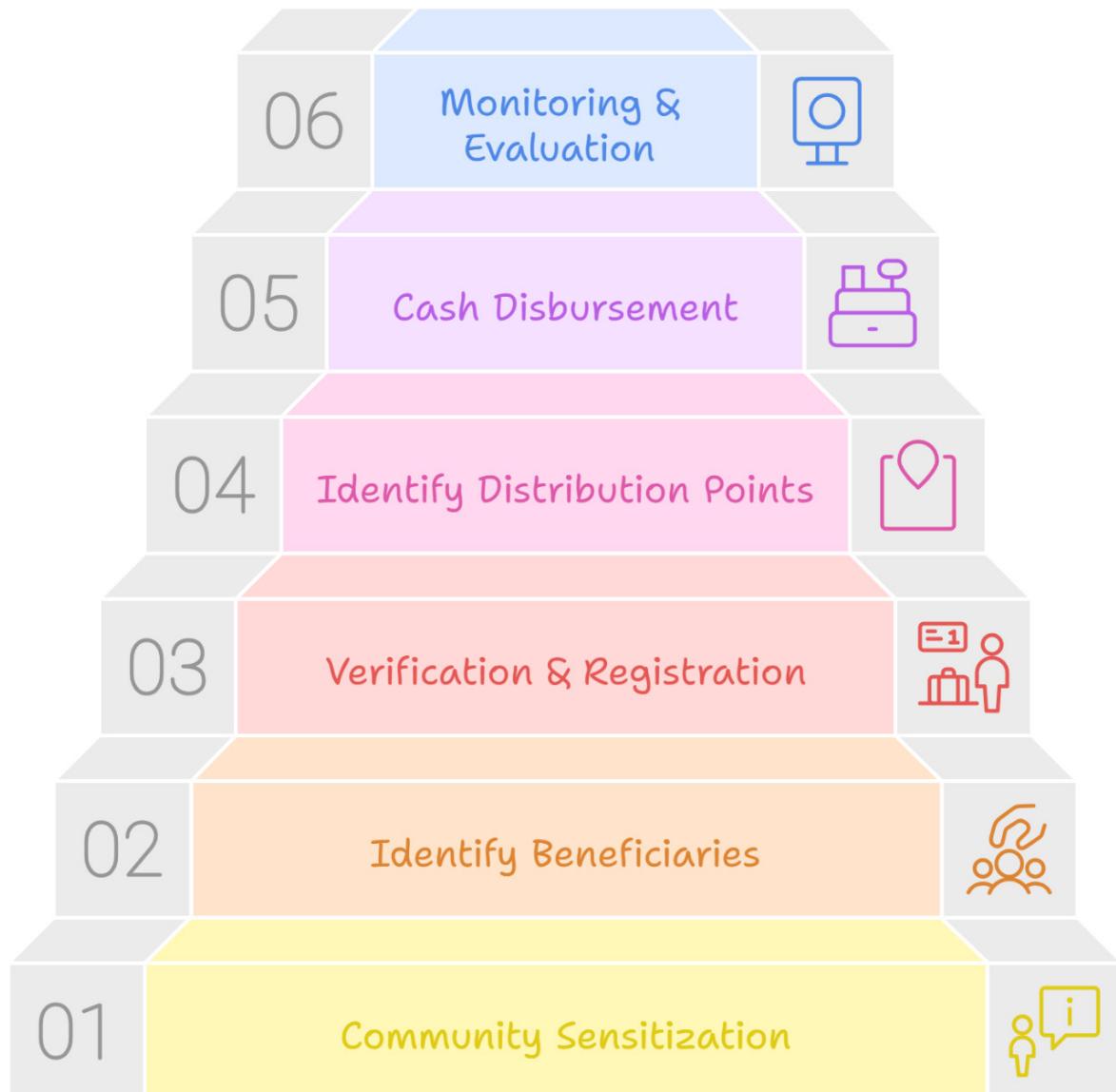


Figure 3. Methodology of the Salima El-Nino nutrition response (AI – Generated)



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

- Community sensitization on the approach
- Community identification and selection of beneficiaries
- Verification and registration exercise done by district-level team.
- District and community level structures identification of distribution pay points.
- Distribution Lay-out and Cash disbursement
- Monitoring tools (On-site and PDM)

How was regular involvement of key actors and beneficiaries ensured?

The consistent participation of key actors and beneficiaries in the El Niño response was ensured by fostering inclusive planning, coordination, and community engagement. This was supported by transparent information sharing, feedback mechanisms, and regular communication.



Costs & Resources

Total costs of the process:

The CARE FNSP project planned to distribute cash amounting to MWK 216,240,000 (Two Hundred Sixteen Million Two Hundred Forty Thousand Kwacha only) to 1,544 (One Thousand Five Hundred and Forty-Four) recipients in a one-off disbursement; MWK 140,000 (One Hundred Forty Thousand Kwacha only) per recipient household. The disbursement was made in December 2024 in Salima in the TAs Maganga, Pemba, and Ndindi.

An actual total of 1,535 households (One Thousand five Hundred Thirty-five) benefited from the initiative which amounted to MWK 214,900,000 (Two Hundred Fourteen Million Nine Hundred Thousand)

Can relevant cost reductions be assumed when the approach is being scaled up?

Yes, cost reductions are expected when the El Niño response is scaled up because larger operations allow to buy in bulk, work more efficiently, and use existing systems and processes that are already in place.

Which other resources (personnel, labour, inputs, assets) were needed from the programme, key actors, and beneficiaries?

An effective El Niño Nutrition Response required a range of resources from the program, key stakeholders, and beneficiaries to ensure smooth implementation. This included human resources such as project staff, district stakeholders, local leaders, committee members, and volunteers. Labour support was also needed to set up distribution layouts and manage other logistics. Key assets like transportation and tablets for data collection were essential, along with active community participation and support from beneficiaries to ensure successful implementation.



Sustainability & Do No Harm

Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability)

Environmental, Institutional, Social and Economic sustainability (consider access to finance/business model):

The pilot/process supported the sustainability of the El Niño Nutrition Response in multiple ways:

- Environmentally by promoting environmentally responsible practices.
- Institutionally by strengthening local capacity for continued operations.
- Socially by fostering community ownership and engagement.
- Economically by ensuring cost-effective and income-generating solutions. These factors collectively ensured that the benefits of the program can endure in the long-term, even without ongoing intervention.

How is the “Do no harm” principle assured at all stages of the process (e.g. environmental damage, trust relationship with beneficiaries, continuous approachability of implementation team by beneficiaries, dynamics in the community)?

The “Do no harm” principle was integrated into the El Niño Nutrition Response by proactively addressing risks at every stage. Environmental and social impacts were considered in the planning phase, while transparent targeting, continuous community engagement, and accessible feedback mechanisms built trust during implementation. Regular monitoring allowed for adjustments to prevent harm. This approach aimed to protect both the environment and the community, fostering resilience and trust.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial)
Results

The results/outputs of the process (considering the defined objectives and milestones):

The results and outputs of the pilot process for the El Niño response, considering the defined objectives and milestones, would generally be assessed based on how well the initial phase met the intended goals and benchmarks. These outputs typically focus on the achievement of key objectives such as improving food security, nutrition, and resilience among the affected populations.

To ensure that the results of the pilot process are presented with a clear level of evidence, each output should be supported by data, including sources, dates, and relevant indicators in the process.



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

The El Niño Nutrition Response pilot improved nutrition, access to resources, and community empowerment but might have also led to selection errors, dependency, or unequal aid distribution. Monitoring and evaluation, including tracking, assessments, feedback, and impact evaluations, ensured the program's effectiveness and address any issues.

How have beneficiaries' livelihoods been improved economically, socially, and/or environmentally?

The El Niño Nutrition Response helped beneficiaries by offering financial support, improving food security, and creating income opportunities. It also strengthened communities through nutritional education, better health, and promoting gender equality. Additionally, it made beneficiaries more resilient to economic, social, and environmental challenges.

What were unexpected positive/negative effects (in the community, the environment, behaviour)?

The cash transfers of the El Niño response had both positive and negative impacts. On the positive side, it improved food access, supported local businesses, and promote better saving or coping strategies. On the downside, the response led to price increases in commodities, created short term community dependency on aid which reduced people's motivation for self-sufficiency. Additionally, after distribution there were social tensions. To make the assistance effective, it is important to target the right people using need-based approaches and provide additional support in form of strong messaging and plus components.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

The successful El Niño nutrition depended on strong institutional coordination, economic resilience, and social engagement. Effective collaboration among stakeholders both at district and community levels ensured timely interventions, while economic stability supported resource availability and market functionality. Community involvement was key to addressing social inequalities and ensured that nutrition programs were well-utilized and inclusive, enhancing overall impact.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

- Difficulty in tracing households within the CMAM database due to missing household particulars, making it difficult to assist them. Efforts were made to follow up and ensure households could be properly identified and supported.
- There were cases where local leadership (chiefs) were taking or getting funds from beneficiaries. The district team Disk Risk Management Officer (DRMO), Social Cash Transfer Officer (SCTO), Gender, and Police Office) promptly investigated these incidents, leading to the successful recovery and return of the funds to the rightful beneficiaries.
- The verification process was conducted several times due to emerging issues, resulting in delays in completing the exercise. To ensure effectiveness, adequate time and resources must be allocated to exercises.
- Incomplete or missing information on the registration forms led to delays in the data entry process. Project staff were assigned to the respective communities to correct the information, which hence caused further delays.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the program.

The El Niño Nutrition Response can be easily replicated and scaled up with its clear selection, flexible methods, and focus on community involvement and proven approaches. It is adaptable to other emergencies, addressing nutrition challenges effectively.

Has this practice been replicated (in the same/different contexts) independent of the program?

Beneficiary selection and targeting, based on local data (e.g. Nutrition Mass Screening, CMAM), have been applied in various contexts. This approach is used in emergency programs during disasters to support vulnerable households. These practices follow the Joint Emergency Food Aid Programme (JEFAP) Guidelines, adapting to local needs for effective assistance.

What are the required conditions to replicate the practice at a larger scale (national, regional)?

Replicating a practice at larger scale requires adequate resources, strong institutions at the district and community level, and political support. Capacity building, local adaptation, and effective monitoring are key for sustainability. Collaboration and clear communication are vital for successful upscaling.



Testimony During the Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) for the El Niño Nutrition Response, beneficiaries reported that nearly all the cash received (almost 100%) was spent on food items. Specifically, 99% of households used the funds to purchase carbohydrates, primarily maize. Additionally, 70% of households spent it on animal-source foods like milk and meat, 75% on fats and oils, 76% on vegetables, 70% on fruits, and 79% on legumes such as beans.



Related Resources



JEFA Guidelines



Section 03

Approaches in Nutrition-Sensitive Household-Resilient Support and Social



Photo: Frontline worker registering household names prior to a fruit tree distribution exercise © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

Section 03: Approaches in Nutrition-Sensitive Household-Resilient Support and Social Protection

The Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) in Malawi champions a holistic approach to tackling food insecurity and malnutrition, focusing on nutrition-sensitive household resilience and robust social protection systems. Recognizing that mere survival is insufficient, FNSP strives to empower communities to thrive through sustainable access to nutritious food and financial stability. This is achieved by strategically integrating nutritional considerations into existing social protection frameworks and fostering community-driven initiatives that build long-term resilience.

FNSP's interventions are diverse and impactful. At the policy level, the program advocates for the integration of nutrition into social protection policies, ensuring that safety nets not only provide sustenance but also actively promote healthy diets, particularly for vulnerable groups like women and children under two. At the community level, FNSP supports initiatives like Integrated Homestead Farming, which enables households to cultivate their own nutritious food through backyard gardens and fruit tree production. Improved irrigation technologies and support for Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) further enhance household resilience by improving agricultural productivity and fiscal management.

Central to FNSP's success is its emphasis on community engagement. Village Level Action Plans (VLAPs) empower local groups to identify and address their specific needs, as demonstrated by the Tagwirizana Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) Group's effective use of mango and moringa processing to enhance food security and nutrition. By combining policy advocacy, practical interventions, and community empowerment, FNSP is building a sustainable foundation for improved nutrition and resilience across the Dedza and Salima districts, ensuring that vulnerable populations not only survive but truly flourish.

The topics covered here are:

1. Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection: From an Operational Framework to a National Policy
2. Combating micronutrient deficiency with fruit tree production
3. Mango Drying for food preservation and safety.
4. Village Savings and Loans Association in Farmer Financial Cycle
5. Resilient food and nutrition security with improved irrigation practices

Topic 10: Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection: From an Operational Framework to a National Policy

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documented: December
2022

Imagine social safety nets that not only prevent people from falling into poverty but also actively nourish them. That is the core idea behind nutrition-sensitive social protection. Globally, it is understood that social protection programs are powerful tools for fighting poverty and improving food security. However, aid is not enough to guarantee better nutrition.

In Malawi, where many struggle with food insecurity, child stunting becomes a major issue, the need for programs that directly address nutrition is urgent. While Malawi's national policies recognize the importance of both social protection and nutrition, they often fail to connect the two. Current social protection efforts largely focus on providing food, assuming that this alone will improve nutrition. However, they lack specific targeting criteria, goals, or interventions designed to directly improve nutritional outcomes.

Even though Malawi's social support programs aim to improve nutrition, they often fall short in practice. There is a lack of coordination between nutrition and social protection efforts at all levels, from national policy to local implementation. This gap means that opportunities to truly improve the health and well-being of vulnerable populations are being missed. The push to integrate nutrition into Malawi's social protection policy is about bridging this gap, ensuring that these vital programs work together to create healthier, more resilient communities.



Photo: Government and project staff distributing chickens to VSLA and COMSIP groups to boost their local businesses © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

Social protection has been recognised globally as an important entry point and platform for simultaneously contributing to poverty reduction and improving food security and nutrition (FSN) outcomes. However, reductions in under- and malnutrition are not achieved automatically. A lack of progress is often linked to the design and implementation of social protection programmes.

With more than 5.4 million moderately or severely food insecure people and about 37% of children suffering from stunting, Malawi urgently needs nutrition-sensitive programmes reaching the most vulnerable population groups. Overarching policies in Malawi (Malawi Vision 2063, Growth and Development Strategy, National Resilience Strategy) recognize the importance of both nutrition and social protection but fail to establish linkages between the two. The current Social Protection Policy and Programme mainly limit food security and nutrition to consumption support and assume improvements through the benefits of different social protection programmes but do not define any nutrition-sensitive targeting criteria, goals, objectives, indicators, or nutrition-sensitive interventions.

Even though the Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP) II 2018-2023 envisages "improved nutritional intakes" of vulnerable households under Pillar 1 – Consumption Support and "better links with other programmes ... [to] help address nutritional problems" under Pillar 2 – Resilient Livelihoods,

the implementation of the programme fails to address and achieve these outcomes. As the National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy (NMNP) 2018-2022, the programme acknowledges the need for multi-sectoral collaboration under Pillar 4 – Linkages for a Coherent and Effective Social Support System and aims at facilitating “access to nutritional interventions for [its] beneficiaries”. However, there is hardly any coordination or collaboration between nutrition and social protection at national, district or implementation level.

These are the specific challenges this process was addressing:

- Lack of harmonized policies in nutrition and social protection (policy framework)
- Little, no systematic or regular cooperation between nutrition and social protection at national and district level, even little coordination within organizations
- Lack of explicit mandate for joint planning and implementation
- Lack of consideration of food and nutrition security situation in the design and implementation of social protection programmes (e.g. objectives and indicators, targeting and inclusiveness, adequacy, predictability, and responsiveness)
- Lack of implementation guidelines that support government officials and implementing agencies to systematically consider linkages on the ground (operational framework)

The process addressed these priority beneficiaries:

The process was mainly focusing on the policy and operational framework but aimed at addressing important needs of vulnerable groups benefiting from social protection and nutrition interventions (i.e. always ensuring economic access to safe and nutritious food)



Geographical coverage

The process focused on *integrating nutrition* into the *national Social Protection Policy* and the *Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP)*, which provides a guiding framework for designing, implementing, coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating social support programmes in Malawi. The process also aimed at *improving collaboration* between the nutrition and social protection sectors *at all levels* (national, district and implementation level) and at providing guidance for implementation.

In addition to the national multi-stakeholder process, the GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) also implemented *concrete nutrition-sensitive social protection measures* in the districts Dedza and

Salima, which provided FNSP with key insights and learnings (also with relevance for the work at national level):

- Nutrition-sensitive cash transfers (implemented in times of severe food insecurity and at a small-scale, usually at Traditional Authority (TA) or village level).
- Nutrition-sensitive Village Savings and Loan Associations (VLSA) (integration of nutrition into the national Savings and Loan Groups Guidelines; implementation of nutrition-sensitive VSLA as part of regular project implementation reaching more than 6,000 households through nutrition messaging and cooking demonstrations at VSL group meetings; encouraging Care Group Members to join VSL groups).

Nutrition-sensitive Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) groups (support of a limited number of COMSIP groups on food processing and irrigation).



Key Actors & Ownership

The key actors involved in this process were:

At its core, this was a *multisectoral* and *multi-stakeholder process*. Key actors next to FNSP and the GIZ Social Protection Programme (SPP), were the Poverty Reduction and Social Protection (PRSP) Division under the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (the political partner of SPP) and the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA) under the Ministry of Health (the political partner of FNSP). Other key actors from international development organizations were UNICEF and FAO.

The *Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Task Force* (NSSP-TF), established particularly for this process, comprises several other ministries and departments (see figure below), as well as international development organizations. It is co-chaired by PRSP and DNHA.

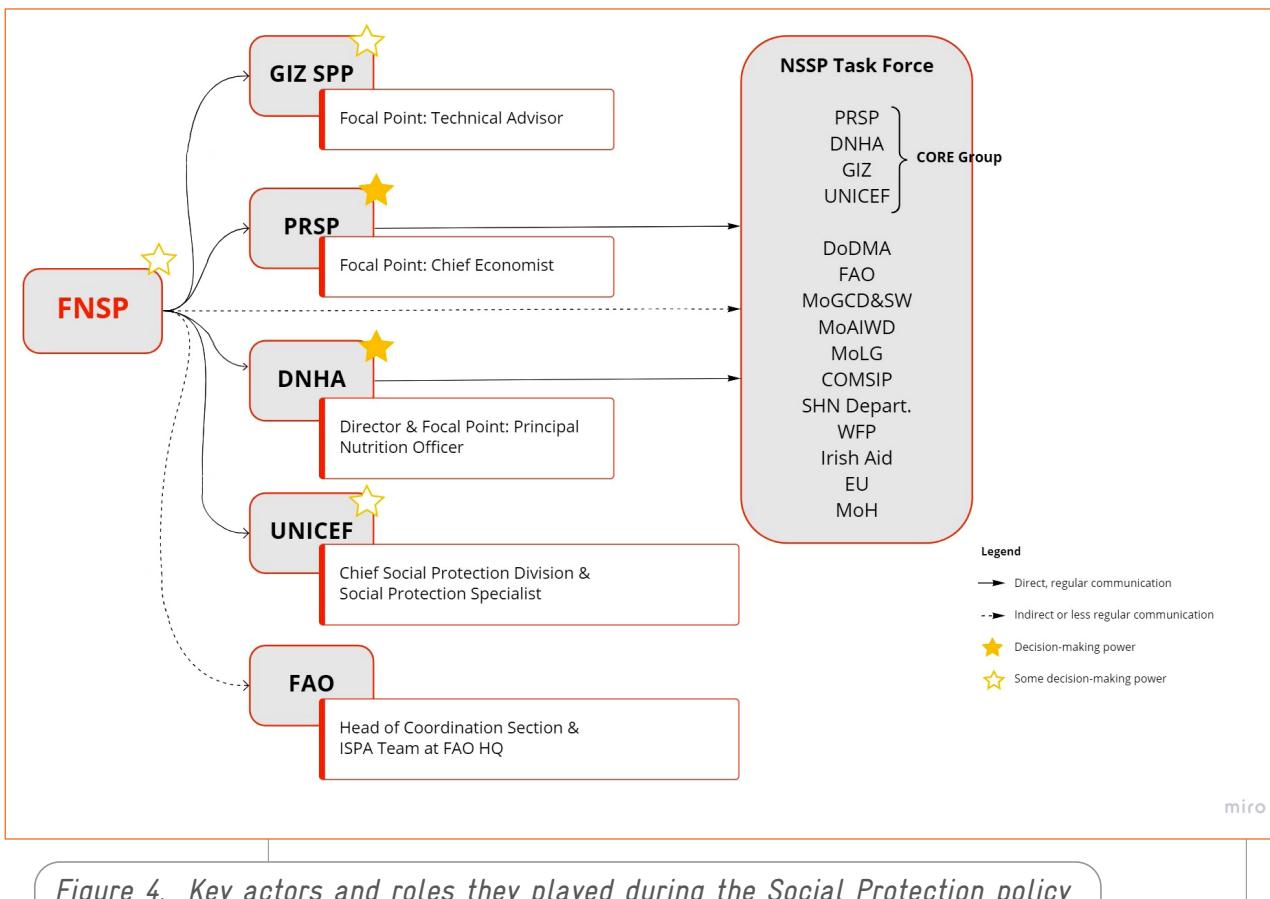


Figure 4. Key actors and roles they played during the Social Protection policy

Who were the key actors involved, and what responsibilities did they have?

PRSP, DNHA, GIZ and UNICEF comprised the *Core Group* of the Task Force steering the process for the integration of nutrition into social protection. They all had decision-making power, though at varying degrees: PRSP, as the *owner* of the social protection policy and the chair of the NSSP-TF, had *veto power* on decisions taken. Similarly, DNHA as the *owner* of the nutrition policy and co-chair of the NSSP-TF, had a *strong say in decision-making* (though a little less than PRSP). GIZ FNSP and SPP *initiated* the discussions on national level and, together with UNICEF, were the key funding organizations of the process at national level (whereas additional organizations implement nutrition-sensitive social protection measures/pilots in several districts). Both, PRSP and DNHA were the *owners* of the *process*, defined the *way forward* and *officially called for meetings* of the NSSP-TF. GIZ (and to a lesser extent UNICEF) drove the process *behind the scenes* (i.e. prepares meetings and workshops, coordinates and commissions consultancies, follows up on deadlines, decisions to take, etc).

The NSSP-TF was regularly consulted (through meetings and workshops) and served as a *sounding board* for results (e.g. from studies and assignments) and decisions on the way forward. Departments and organizations represented

in the NSSP-TF showed *varying degrees of interest and involvement* and most of them were present at national workshops but rather inactive when asked for comments or feedback. FAO was a continually active NSSP-TF member (providing feedback, comments) and was temporarily a member of the Core Group. However, the FAO NSSP-TF member stopped working for FAO and FAO never sent a replacement.

How was ownership demonstrated?

PRSP and DNHA demonstrated ownership through:

- Inviting for meetings and workshops.
- (Co-)Facilitating meetings and workshops.
- Following up on decisions taken.
- Steering the process of policy revision and ensuring the integration of nutrition and social protection into the respective policies (i.e. revision of the Social Protection Policy, review of the MNSSP, revision of the Nutrition Policy)
- Especially DNHA: making active contributions to the Social Protection Policy way beyond what is expected from them; presenting achievements in various fora (e.g. to BMZ)



Target group

Who were the beneficiaries?

The work focused on the national level and thus the process as such aimed at improving collaboration between government partners (mainly PRSP and DNHA). As the focus lied on integrating *nutrition* into social protection policies and programmes, one could claim that the nutrition sector was benefiting most as social protection is used to reach scale and to improve nutritional outcomes.

However, the *overall objective* of the process was that social protection beneficiaries eventually benefit from a more effective *implementation* of social protection programmes. As the process may include the revision of *targeting strategies*, it is expected that food and nutrition insecure households have higher chances to receive social protection benefits and, through the better integration of nutrition-sensitive interventions, social protection programmes may lead to *improved nutrition outcomes* for their beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries vary from programme to programme implemented under the MNSSP¹:

- *The Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP)* targets ultra-poor households with labour constraints and reached 289,705 households (an estimated 1.3 million individuals) in all 28 districts in Malawi in 2021.
- *The Public Works Programme (PWP)* targets ultra-poor households with available labour and reached an estimated 10,000 households in 10 districts in 2021. The programme will be scaled up to 14 districts aiming at reaching 35,000 households in the coming years.
- *The School Meals Programme (SMP)* offers school meals to primary school learners and reached 2.8 million learners in all districts in 2021. (However, coverage is still far from being nationwide. The SMP reaches about half of all primary school learners in Malawi).
- *Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA)* are self-selective, and it is estimated that there are over 1 million VSLA members in Malawi, of whom the large majority (82%) are women.

How many (total and proportion of programme beneficiaries) were benefiting?

We could not claim *any concrete improvements* for food and nutrition insecure households through the multi-stakeholder process at national level as policies and frameworks are still under revision. Also, implementation will depend on various donors implementing social protection programmes in Malawi.

Under FNSP, in total ~24,450 (end of 2022) households have benefitted from nutrition-sensitive social protection measures. In total, ~18,400 households have been reached with nutrition-sensitive cash transfers during the lean seasons in 2016/17, 2018/19 and 2022/23. Through VSLA and COMSIP, ~6,050 households have been sensitized on issues around nutrition to promote nutrition-sensitive investments and businesses.

How did the process ensure gender aspects and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle?

The different social protection programmes implemented in Malawi under the current MNSSP II (see above) aim at supporting the poorest and most vulnerable households in Malawi (often also women-headed households). Integrating nutrition into social protection policies and programmes is expected to *utilize the potential* of social protection interventions to simultaneously contribute to poverty reduction and improved food and nutrition security. A revision of targeting strategies could help food and nutrition insecure households get better access to social protection programmes. At the same time, the better integration of nutrition-sensitive measures and linkages to nutrition services could help achieve better nutrition outcomes among vulnerable households.

¹ Data from Government of Malawi 2022: Mid-Term Review of the Malawi National Social Support Programme II.



Objective

What were the specific objectives of the process?

The overall objective was to *better utilize the potential* of social protection programmes to *improve* food security and nutrition outcomes in Malawi. This was achieved through:

- The identification of *gaps and opportunities* for integrating nutrition into Malawi's policy framework and social protection programmes.
- *Harmonized policies* in nutrition and social protection (nutrition-sensitive social protection policy framework)
- *Improved coordination and collaboration* between nutrition and social protection stakeholders, at national but in the medium-/longer-term also at district level
- An *explicit mandate* for joint planning and implementation (formulated within the respective policies, strategies, and programmes)
- Explicit *consideration* of food and nutrition security situation in the *design and implementation* of social protection programmes
- *Implementation guidelines* that present concrete and costed options to integrate nutrition-sensitive interventions and linkages to nutrition services into Malawi's social protection programmes (nutrition-sensitive social protection operational framework)

How did the process contribute to the overall programme objective?

FNSP's overall objective is to improve the nutritional status and resilience to famine of people vulnerable to food insecurity, especially women of reproductive age and young children, in the districts of Dedza and Salima. This is measured by improved dietary diversity of women, an increased percentage of infants with a Minimum Acceptable Diet, a reduction in the percentage of households categorised as seriously at risk from food and nutrition insecurity, and improved nutrition governance.

The multi-stakeholder process contributed to *improved nutrition governance* on the national level. Relevant FNSP indicators were:

- Nutrition governance has improved at national and decentralized levels thanks to support from the programme in Malawi. This can be measured as follows: *Nutrition is an integral part of the revised National Social Protection Policy.*
- DNHA and PRSP have adopted national guidelines on the integration of nutrition into social security measures ('nutrition packages') as a document to guide the actions of implementing actors.

At household level, the work on nutrition-sensitive social protection contributed to a reduction of food insecure households. Relevant FNSP indicators were:

- The percentage of the 40,000 households in the target communities categorised as *seriously at risk from food and nutrition insecurity*, using the Household Food Insecurity Experience Scale (HFIES), has dropped by 10%.
- In the districts of Dedza and Salima, 25,000 households that are at risk of food and nutrition insecurity *benefit from nutrition-sensitive social protection measures* to improve access to food.

How was it measured?

At national level, the revised Social Protection Policy (in particular, sections on nutrition-sensitive social protection) and the adoption of guidelines or a nutrition-sensitive operational framework served as proof for the achievement of the indicators.

At household level, regular surveys (baseline in 2015, follow-up surveys I and II in 2018 and 2021, and endline survey in 2024) collected data from a representative sample and control group on the HFIES. The regular project monitoring kept track of cash transfer beneficiaries and supported COMSIP and VSLA groups.



The process at national level started *mid-2018*. Nutrition-sensitive cash transfers were implemented during severe lean seasons to prevent households falling into acute food insecurity. Support to COMSIP and VSLA groups was provided throughout the implementation of FNSP, whereas a critical deadline for all activities was at the end of 2024 (with the programme closing in March 2025).

Time for upscaling

With an expected finalization of the social protection policy and programme (MNSSP III) and the nutrition policy in mid-2023 and an adoption of an operational framework end of 2023, FNSP could still contribute to the *roll-out and dissemination* of the operational framework and *advertise for its implementation* amongst other donors (due to a very limited national budget,

Malawi heavily depends on donors for the implementation of its social protection programmes). FNSP could continue to *strengthen* collaboration and coordination between PRSP and DNHA at national level. In the two districts of Dedza and Salima, FNSP could *directly contribute to improved coordination* and the implementation of the guidelines/the operational framework.

What were concrete milestones to measure the progress of the process?

- Awareness on *relevance of topic* created at national level.
- National *Task Force* on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection established.
- *Regular meetings* of Task Force
- Study on *gaps and opportunities* for integrating nutrition into Malawi's policy framework and social protection programmes conducted.
- Policy revision processes *involve* respective stakeholders.
- Policies *revised*
- Development of operational framework *commissioned*.
- Operational framework *adopted* or *reflected* in key programmes (such as MNSSP III) by key stakeholders.

Describe how key actors and beneficiaries have been involved in the development of the timeframe and milestones:

Jointly, GIZ SPP and FNSP created awareness on the relevance of *nutrition-sensitive social protection*. The *Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Task Force* was founded exceedingly early in the process (beginning of 2019) and steered the process since then. When starting the process, the main objectives (from a GIZ perspective) were to:

- Improve coordination between the sectors (especially at district level as both programmes actively work with District Social Support Committees (DSSC) and District Nutrition Coordination Committees (DNCC) respectively)
- Link MNSSP II beneficiaries to nutrition interventions and vice versa.
- Ensure participatory planning through the Village Level Action Plan (VLAP) process and identify linkages between nutrition and social protection.
- Strengthen food security and nutrition in the implementation of the Public Works Programme (PWP) (e.g. through nutrition-sensitive watershed management)

- Identify further potential linkages for nutrition-sensitive cash transfers.
- Document and share lessons learned.

Thus, initially, the focus was very much on the *implementation level*. The Task Force, co-chaired by PRSP and DNHA, ensured that *nutrition-sensitive social protection* is also anchored in relevant policies and strategies. PRSP and DNHA as the key stakeholders of this process thus *lifted the topic to the policy level*, which gave the topic much more relevance, also from a sustainability perspective. All steps were planned jointly with the *Core Task Force*, and additional milestones and objectives (in addition to focusing on implementation only) were continuously added and the timeline continuously adjusted. A key learning is that policy processes take *much more time* than "just" developing guidelines for implementation, but the topic obviously gains much more *relevance and buy-in* from key stakeholders.



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

The process started with a joint *conceptualization phase* within GIZ SPP and FNSP (see initial objectives under Timeframe & Milestones) before discussing the topic with key political stakeholders, i.e. the directors of PRSP and DNHA. Initial discussions were followed by several meetings, concept notes, and lobbying to create awareness of the relevance of the topic for Malawi amongst key government partners and key donors in nutrition and social protection. It took almost a year until a government-led Task Force on Nutrition Sensitive Social Protection was founded and a national stakeholder workshop was organized. The workshop aimed at *creating awareness* on the topic and at *getting an overview* of what is already being implemented (as a pilot or at larger scale) by different stakeholders. Along the process, it was always ensured that PRSP and DNHA are the *public face* of the process. They invited for and chaired each Task Force meeting and workshop and took the final decisions on next steps. Presentations and publications were designed in the government layout and GIZ as well as UNICEF were *not* very prominent. Thus, the key government partners could always *take credit* for any achievement of the Task Force or process.

An overview of the process and key steps are presented below:

Objectives and broader process of nutrition-sensitive social protection

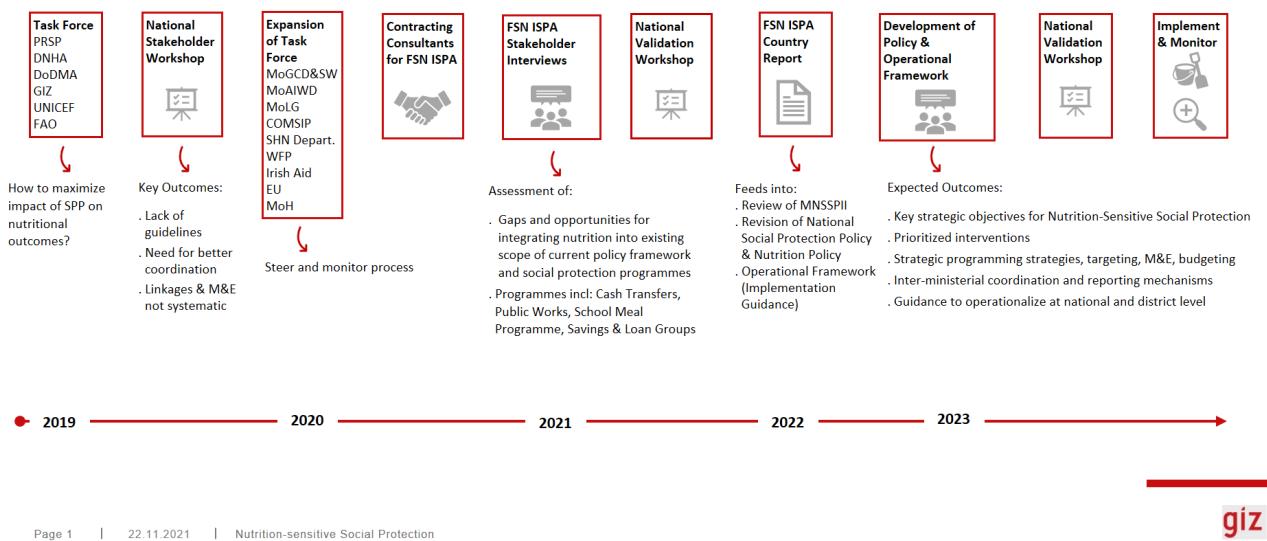


Figure 5. An overview of the process and key steps

- The *core* Task Force was expanded after the national stakeholder workshop to get a better representation of stakeholders, including different ministries, donors, and NGOs. However, the *core Task Force* remained the *key body* for steering and decision-making and met more regularly than the whole Task Force.
- A key tool applied during the process was the *Food Security and Nutrition Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment* (FSN ISPA). The purpose of the tool was to understand how social protection can achieve a greater positive impact on FSN at country level. For more information on the tool refer to the *What Matters Guidance Note* available on the ISPA website (see related resources below). The FSN ISPA assessment, conducted by a team of Malawian consultants with backgrounds in nutrition and social protection, strengthened collaboration and exchange between key stakeholders and, by identifying *gaps and opportunities*, built the first step in making policies and programmes *more nutrition sensitive*.
- As a next step, the development of an operational framework was commissioned to a team of international and Malawian consultants at the end of 2022. This process took up to eight months and provided concrete guidance on and expected costs of different options to make social protection programmes implemented in Malawi more nutrition sensitive.
- The revision processes of the Social Protection and Nutrition Policies – more coincidentally – started in 2021 and 2022 respectively and provided an opportunity for a more *nutrition-sensitive social protection*

policy framework. Due to the established work relationship between PRSP and DNHA (through the Task Force) and the strong awareness of the relevance of the topic, both ministries involved each other in the respective revision processes.

How was regular involvement of key actors and beneficiaries ensured?

The Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection Task Forces ensured regular stakeholder involvement, including different ministries and departments, donor organisations, and NGOs. The core Task Force, including the key policy holders for nutrition and social protection, functioned as the main steering and decision-making body. Substantial *stakeholder interviews*, including national, district and local (social protection beneficiary) level, were an integral part of the FSN ISPA assessment and were critical in the development of the operational framework. Representatives from PRSP and DNHA were involved in stakeholder interviews at district and local level during the FSN ISPA assessment to get a better insight into gaps and opportunities to make social protection programmes more nutrition sensitive.



Costs & Resources

The total costs of the process:

- Stakeholder Process (National Workshops, Task Force Meetings): EUR 5,000 – 15,000 depending on the country, duration and number of meetings and workshops.
- FSN-ISPA Food Security and Nutrition – Inter Agency Social Protection Assessment (including substantial stakeholder interviews at different levels): ~ EUR 50,000 with a Malawian consultancy.
- Operational Framework (including several work packages, such as costing prioritized interventions, recommendations for coordinating mechanisms at different levels, implementation guidance for different social protection programmes, and a pilot with one programme in one district): ~ EUR 80,000 – 100,000 with a team of international and national consultants (in this case the operational framework was funded by UNICEF)
- Costs for policy revisions are not considered here as these were independent of this process.

What were the costs per beneficiary of the process?

N/A – it may be possible to roughly calculate costs per beneficiary when it is clear which nutrition-sensitive interventions will be implemented under which social protection programme.

Can relevant cost reductions be assumed when the approach is being scaled up?

N/A – may become relevant when nutrition-sensitive social protection measures are implemented at larger scale.

Which other resources (personnel, labour, inputs, assets) were needed from the programme, key actors, and beneficiaries?

Deployment of personnel from the programme heavily depended on *government ownership and capacities* to steer the process and other organizations supporting the work around nutrition-sensitive social protection. In Malawi, at the beginning of the process nutrition-sensitive social protection (in contrast to *shock-sensitive* social protection, which gained stronger focus of both government and development partners after the El Niño event in 2016/17), was hardly relevant. DNHA had hardly any knowledge of the concept and potential positive outcomes. At FNSP, between 40% and 80% of a full-time position were dedicated to nutrition-sensitive social protection throughout the entire process. Support provided by the programme to government partners and the Task Force included the following:

- *Lobbying efforts* to get the topic on the political agenda (incl. conceptual inputs, presentations, meetings with government partners, building a good working relationship with government partners)
- Supporting the government with *conceptualizing and steering* the multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder process (incl. task force membership, terms of reference for task force and consultants, outline of process, preparing information for decisions to take, pushing for regular exchange between PRSP and DNHA)
- Support for the *organization* of task force meetings and stakeholder workshops (incl. *logistics* but also preparation of *content* and *concepts* and ensuring regular meetings)
- Accompanying the work of the task force with conceptual input
- *Steering consultants* for FSN-ISPA and other relevant processes/reports/assignments (incl. commenting, inviting government partners and other donors for commenting, follow-up on deadlines)
- Keeping track of relevant *political processes* (review of policies, strategies, guidelines) and ensure, together with government partners and the task force, that relevant findings and recommendations from FSN-ISPA, evidence from pilots, etc. were fed into relevant policies, strategic frameworks (e.g. social protection policy and relevant programmes, nutrition policy and relevant programmes)



Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability)

- Environmental Sustainability: No negative environmental effects can be expected from the multi-stakeholder process; implementation of social protection programmes may need more detailed analysis, but no negative effects are envisaged.
- Institutional Sustainability: As key stakeholders (mainly PRSP and DNHA) were involved from the beginning and as they (especially DNHA) demonstrated ownership for the process/topic of nutrition-sensitive social protection and as the topic is reflected in the (draft) social protection policy (and very likely also in the nutrition policy, for which the review process just started) it can be expected that the topic will be taken up and continued at the institutional level (i.e. PRSP and DNHA are likely to request other development partners to consider nutrition-sensitive social protection in their implementation).
- Social sustainability: Social protection in Malawi targets the poorest of the poor and reaches large segments of the population. From a social perspective, better integration of nutrition and social protection addresses key challenges of the poor in Malawi (food and nutrition insecurity and poverty).
- Economical sustainability (consider access to finance/business model): While it can be expected that a better integration of nutrition and social protection is (more) cost-efficient in terms of poverty reduction and improving food and nutrition security, economic or financial sustainability is a *major concern*. Social protection programmes in Malawi are largely donor dependent as the Malawian government has limited funds. As nutrition-sensitive social protection also gains relevance amongst different donors and development partners and as nutrition-sensitive social protection will be anchored in key policies, it can be expected that – at least to some extent – recommendations will be implemented.

The *Do no harm* principle will be more relevant during the development of the implementation guidance and actual implementation (e.g. social protection beneficiaries should not be worse off than before; potential revised targeting criteria should not exclude vulnerable groups).

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial) Results

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:

- Awareness on *relevance of topic* has certainly been created at national level (reflection of nutrition in the drafted social protection policy; stated intention by DNHA to reflect social protection in revised nutrition policy; consideration of recommendations from FSN ISPA assessment in MNSSP II review)
- National *Task Force* on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection was established and already led to better coordination between DNHA and PRSP (explicitly mentioned during stakeholder interviews for the FSN ISPA assessment)
- *Regular meetings* of Task Force are taking place (especially when the Task Force was newly established when concrete decisions had to be taken, and when assignments had to be steered and commented)
- FSN ISPA Assessment was conducted to identify *gaps and opportunities* for integrating nutrition into Malawi's policy framework and social protection programmes.
- Policy revision processes *involve* respective stakeholders (DNHA, as an example, provided substantial feedback and input on the social protection policy)
- Policies are both in *revision* (but not yet finalized)
- Development of operational framework was *commissioned* by UNICEF end of 2022 (the assignment will be steered by the Task Force)



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

- Nutrition-sensitive social protection is on the *political agenda* with demonstrated ownership by key stakeholders (e.g. substantial input by DNHA for social protection policy; DNHA founded a nutrition-sensitive social protection Technical Working Group)
- Stronger collaboration between nutrition and social protection at national level (According to the FSN ISPA assessment, the Task Force already led to an improvement in inter-sectoral engagement)

- Likely: a nutrition-sensitive social protection policy and operational framework

How have beneficiaries' livelihoods been improved economically, socially, and/or environmentally?

N/A – will be relevant when social protection programmes are implemented in a nutrition-sensitive manner.

See impact assessment for VSLA/COMSIP and Cash+ interventions in the respective promising practice template.

What were unexpected positive/negative effects (in the community, the environment, behaviour)?

N/A – will be relevant when social protection programmes are implemented in a nutrition-sensitive manner



Success factors

- Endurance to steer and accompany a long-term process (over several years)
- Establishment of a government-led Task Force and demonstrated government ownership.
- No changes in key government positions (incl. the Director for DNHA and the chief economist in PRSP tasked with the topic) during the process.
- Making government responsible for and visible in the process and mainly operating *behind the scenes* (including low visibility of GIZ and other partners at workshops, publications, etc.)
- Good working relationship between key development partners (in this case, GIZ and UNICEF sharing costs for assignments)



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

A key constraint for the sustainability of the achievements of the process were budget constraints of the Government of Malawi and its social protection sector. The approach taken to address this issue was to establish a *multi-stakeholder process* involving key development partners along the way. Time will tell whether development partners are keen to also finance changes in the implementation of the social protection programmes.

In retrospective, what would we do differently if we were to plan the process again?

- Consider the policy level from the beginning (initially, the focus was almost only on the implementation level)
- More strongly involve KfW and other key donors of social protection programmes (in addition to UNICEF) in the whole process (KfW is a key donor for the Social Cash Transfer Programme); several attempts to involve KfW more, also in the Task Force, were undertaken but not successfully, most likely due to limited human resources at KfW to get involved in such technical discussions.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the programme:

The process can certainly be replicated in other countries. The FSN ISPA assessment is a great tool to start the process (after there is agreement on its importance for the country) and to get a large group of stakeholders involved.

What are the required conditions to replicate and adapt the practice in another context/geographical area?

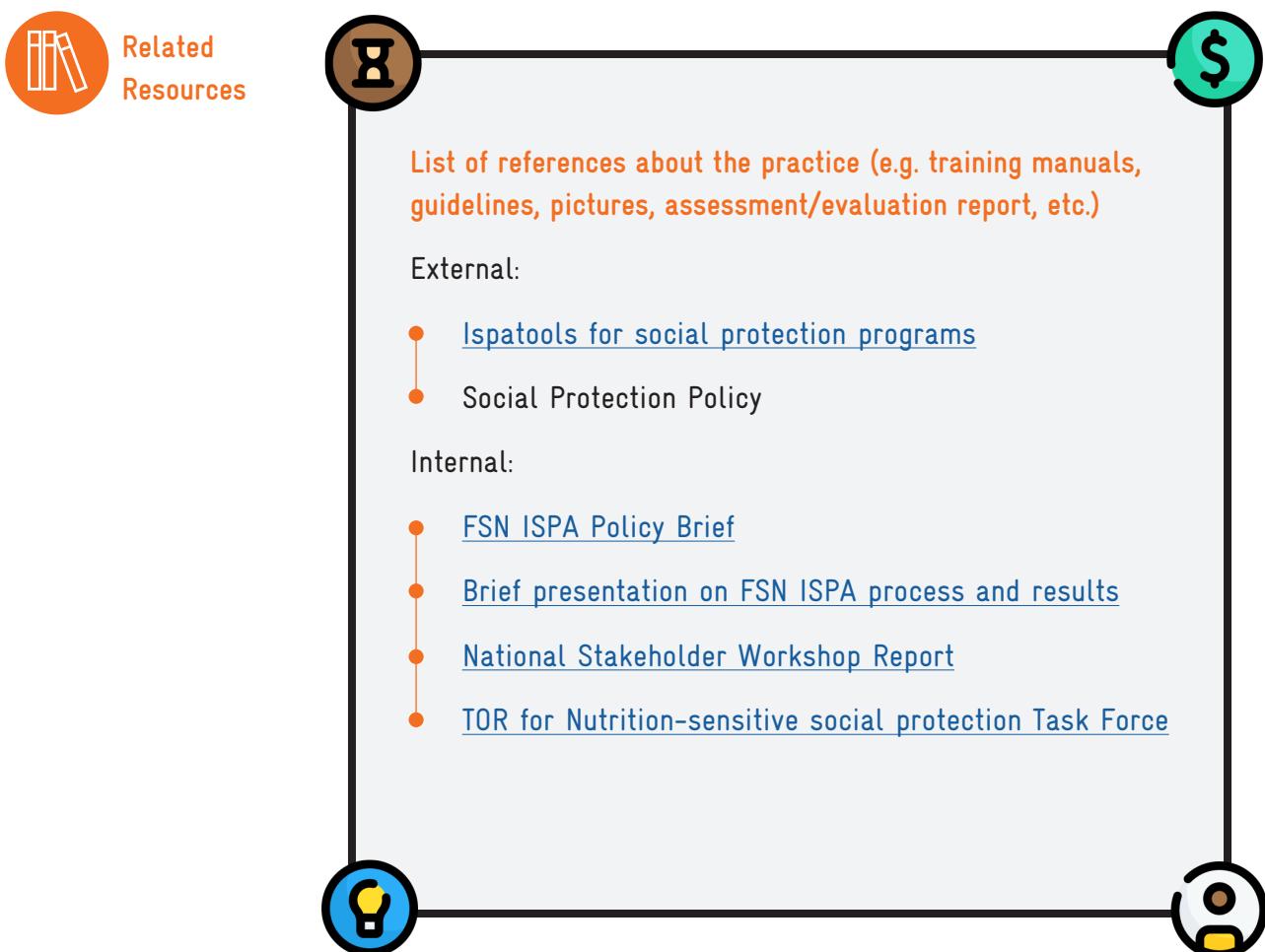
A key learning was that policy processes take *much more time* than "just" developing guidelines for implementation, but the topic obviously gains much more *relevance and buy-in* from key stakeholders. However, such an approach may be difficult to pursue during a normal 3-year project duration. FNSP had the advantage of a very long project duration (4.5 years when the work on nutrition-sensitive social protection started in 2018 and eventually 6 years due to another project extension) and could thus start working on nutrition-sensitive social protection *from scratch* (i.e. start with creating awareness on the importance of the topic, co-design the process with key stakeholders with substantial changes to the initial objective and delays in the process due to slow policy processes, etc.). SPP, for example, underwent major changes throughout the process and stopped supporting it beginning of 2022, when the FSN ISPA Assessment was finalized. Thus, key criteria for another project to pursue such a process include:

- A long project duration (> 3 years) or awareness and an *explicit request* from national stakeholders to anchor nutrition-sensitive social protection in national policies and/or programmes.
- Strong interest in creating better linkages between nutrition and social protection amongst other donors, especially when social protection programmes are largely financed through donors.

- GIZ programmes in both sectors, nutrition and social protection, are an advantage as it ensures established relationships with political partners from both sectors; otherwise, additional time is needed to build a good working relationship with the respective Ministry or division from the other sector.
- A technical advisor, who can devote *at least 50%* of his/her time to the process.

What are the required conditions to replicate the practice at a larger scale (national, regional)?

N/A; for this process it is more relevant to ensure implementation on the local level. It is designed as a *national multi-stakeholder* process.



Topic 11: Combating micronutrient deficiency with fruit tree production

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Promise Practice
documented: October 2023

The Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) worked to combat food insecurity and improve nutrition, particularly for women and young children, in the Dedza and Salima districts of Malawi. A key strategy was promoting Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF), which included planting fruit trees right in people's backyards. This approach aimed to make healthy fruits readily available throughout the year, saving families time and money.

Before FNSP's intervention, many households struggled to access fruits, relying on expensive market purchases or inconsistent gifts from friends. The programme addressed this by training families on proper fruit tree care, like watering and protecting the trees from animals, which was often neglected. By growing their own fruits, households not only improved their diets but also gained the potential to sell surplus produce for extra income, boosting their overall resilience. FNSP's focus on fruit tree production, alongside backyard gardens and small livestock, was a practical way to ensure families had consistent access to nutritious food.



*Photo: Local fruit variety in scientific name *Ziziphus mauritiana* (Masau) which is consumed in many communities around Salim and Dedza © GIZ/FNSP Malawi*



Context

The programme implemented Integrated Homestead Farming (IHF) interventions, including fruit tree production as a key component. This approach integrated backyard gardens and small livestock to promote dietary diversity. The aim of the fruit tree production was to encourage households to consume fresh and healthy fruits year-round while saving time and money.

Fruit trees were planted within the homestead, depending on land availability. Households were trained in proper tree management practices, such as protecting trees from animals, regular watering, and applying manure to enhance growth and productivity. Before receiving training on proper fruit tree management, households often neglected essential practices, such as frequent watering and protecting trees from livestock. This neglect resulted in poor fruit production. Improper care of fruit trees significantly limits their productivity, highlighting the importance of proper management.

The specific challenges this process was addressing:

The Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP), through its implementing partners (IPs), promoted fruit production to ensure households have easy access to fruits. Previously, many households relied on purchasing fruits from markets or receiving them from friends. However, due to low incomes, purchasing fruits daily is often unaffordable, and relying on friends is not a sustainable option. As a result, fruit consumption rates among households remain low.

The priority beneficiaries that were being addressed:

Households can reduce their financial burden by producing their own fruits instead of purchasing them. Additionally, they can sell surplus fruits to generate income, which can be used to meet other household needs. Implementing partners (IPs) promoted fruit production alongside backyard gardens, emphasizing its dietary benefits and contribution to household resilience.



Geographical coverage

Malawi in the Salima district in the TAs Maganga, Pemba, and Ndindi, and in the Dedza district in the TAs Tambala, Chauma, Kasumbu and Kamenyagwaza.



Key Actors & Ownership

The key actors involved were:

- Community (program participants: Care group members, lead farmers)
- Implementing partners (CARE Salima and Self-Help Africa – Dedza)
- Government staff (Agriculture extension workers)

How were key actors involved, and which responsibilities did they have?

Participants:

- Attended training sessions on management of fruit production.
- Willingness to adopt the concept after training.
- Managed fruit trees.
- Reported on identified gaps or challenges.
- Shared the concept with other community members.

Implementing partners (Care and SHA)

- Mobilized technical support on fruit production at the district level.
- Supported government field officers to facilitate trainings on fruit production.
- Communication function between government staff, FNSP, and beneficiaries
- Monitoring and evaluation of the fruit production
- Reported to FNSP on progress of the fruit production.

Government staff- Agriculture/ Forest extension workers:

- Facilitated the training sessions.
- Made sure that the approach is in line with government priorities and approaches.
- Backstopped and provided trainings to program participants in collaboration with IPs field officers.
- Backstopped the implementation processes for sustainability.

Local Leaders

- Mobilized the communities.
- Moderated between the service providers and the community.

How was ownership demonstrated?

- The participants implemented the training aspects during the fruit production management.
 - For example, constructed fences or baskets around the fruit tree to prevent livestock accessing.
 - Participants used locally available resources to manage the fruit trees to minimize cost and reliance on the IPs i.e., manure, natural pesticides.



Target group

- The IPs rendered support as required by the participants and the government staff.

The government staff was supposed to provide support to both the IPs and the participants, however, there was little to no support in terms of supervision, mentoring and coaching from the Government Extension Workers.

Who were the beneficiaries?

- Rural communities especially pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under 24 months.

Total and proportion of programme beneficiaries:

- At the time of this documentation in 2023, over 16,250 households had been trained on home gardens and fruit trees representing 79% of the programme beneficiaries and 8,000 households were supported with seeds. FNSPs annual survey results from 2023 indicate 31% of households in Dedza and Salima had backyard gardens and fruit trees. The survey also indicated that 75% of households have access to fruits within their homestead.

How did the process ensure gender aspects and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle?

- The program participants received both theoretical and practical trainings using demonstration sites where households could learn different techniques on the management of fruit trees and then apply the aspects.
- Participants shared knowledge as well as fruit tree seedlings with family members and neighbours.
- Men were involved in the trainings and assisted their spouse in management.



Objective

The specific objectives of this process:

Promoting dietary diversity. Households were given access to fresh, vitamin and mineral-rich fruits supporting their overall nutritional well-being.

How did the process contribute to the overall programme objectives?

The intervention contributed to the following FNSP indicators:

- FNSP Module objective indicator 1; The dietary diversity of 40,000 women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) in the selected Traditional Authorities (TAs) in Dedza and Salima has improved according to the Individual Dietary Diversity Score (IDDS).

- **FNSP Module objective indicator 2;** The percentage of the 21,000 young children (aged between 6 and 23 months) receiving meals that are sufficiently frequent and varied according to the Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) has increased by 15%.



The approach was implemented from the beginning until the end of the project. With its peak in 2022 to the period of 2024. The objective indicators were measured through annual assessments, field activity reports and field monitoring visits done.

Time for upscaling

The fruit tree production has been upscaled towards the end of the programme by the nutrition units. Mostly by Dedza which through their GIZ local contribution (LSA) constructed orchards in Community Based Child Care Centres to promote consumption of fruits in all children attending the CBCCs.

Concrete milestones to measure the progress of the process:

- Increased knowledge of beneficiaries of the importance of having a fruit tree within the homestead.
- Proportion of households with fruit trees within their homestead.

Describe how key actors and beneficiaries have been involved in the development of the timeframe and milestones?

- Agriculture extension workers were involved in training participants as they are experts in fruit tree production.
- Involving local leaders played a crucial role in influencing the concept.

For example, in the TA Tambala in Dedza by-laws have been established that regulate the containment of livestock that damage backyard gardens.



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

- IPs conducted a community assessment followed by sensitization efforts supported by local leaders.
- IPs used demonstration plots to train participants on the management of fruit trees.
- Fruit trees production training included:
 - Seedlings selection
 - Proper watering of the trees
 - Integrated pest management with the use of natural remedies
 - Use of manure
 - Protecting fruit trees from livestock encroachment by constructing tree fences or using animal dung
 - Supporting households through the provision of fruit tree seedlings as a starter pack for homestead planting

How were key actors and beneficiaries involved?

- Key actors were involved throughout the implementation, such as AEDOs, cluster leaders, promoters, and volunteers as they played a crucial role in supporting implementation.



Sustainability & Do No Harm

Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability):

- Environmental Sustainability: Participants were encouraged to practise climate-smart agriculture techniques to protect the soil and enhance its fertility. The techniques included earth basins, mulching and compost manure making.
- Institutional Sustainability: Involvement of government partners, Agriculture Extension Workers in training and implementation to enhance capacity building for sustainable development.
- Social sustainability: Community gardens have an impact on household resilience where financial problems and food insecurity are addressed especially during the lean season.
- Economical sustainability (consider access to finance/business model): Through fruit tree production money was being saved on having to buy fruits. Households sell surplus produce. Several households managed to buy local chickens from the income earned after having sold the fruits.

Documentation of Process Outcomes

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Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

Households have improved dietary diversity with the availability of fruit trees evident through reports. 75% of households had access to fruit trees within their homestead.

How have beneficiaries' livelihoods been improved economically, socially, and/or environmentally?

- Fruit trees have contributed to improved dietary diversity and the availability of nutrient-dense food, increasing access to Vitamin A.
- Money saved from not having to buy fruits or earned from the sale of fruits was used by households to buy other food items.
- Fruit trees were promoted alongside climate-smart agriculture practices such as manuring. Additionally, beneficiaries were encouraged to control pest and diseases using natural remedies, such as Neem, which are environmentally friendly.
- Spill-over effects could be observed as the approach has been replicated by non-program participants as well.

What were unexpected positive/negative effects (in the community, the environment, behaviour)?

- The use of fertilizer and pesticides by some households
 - IPs promoted organic farming; however, some participants were reluctant to adopt it as they were used to chemical farming. They indicated that organic farming enhanced plant growth and increased their yields.
- Goats eating the fruit trees.
- Conflicts in the community since some shared seedlings and others did not
- Organic manure and CSA in general more labour-intensive and showed slower effects.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- Institutional: IPs having staff members who are knowledgeable about fruit tree management, facilitating easier attitude and mindset change.
- Economic: The availability of markets for produced fruits ensures the economic success of the intervention.
- Social: There is a mindset change towards fruit tree management and spill-over effect could be observed in the community
- Environmental: Households were planting fruit trees in their backyard gardens and used the local chickens they received by the project for chicken manure. Households indicated that pesticides and fertilizer are costly and harmful. They have adopted the use of manure and natural pesticides.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

- Fruits are only available in specific seasons and there is only limited knowledge in fruit preservation amongst community members.
- Fruits are not considered a major component of the household food basket.
- Technical knowledge on fruit production is not readily available among extension service providers



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the programme:

- Fruit tree production can be practiced anywhere. It is not selective. There are diverse ways of planting trees around the homestead using locally available resources.

What are required conditions to replicate and adapt the practice in another context/geographical area?

- Training on fruit tree management considering also the soil type, geographical area, and proximity to the next water source to ensure an effective implementation.
- The willingness of the participants to adopt the concept.

What are required conditions to replicate the practice at a larger scale (national, regional):

- Trainings involving demonstrations of fruit tree production and social behaviour change.



Topic 12: Mango Drying for food preservation and safety

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Promise Practice
documented: October 2018

This promising practice showcases the Food and Nutrition Security Programme's Village Level Action Plans. Village Level Action Plans (VLAPs) are instrumental in empowering communities, in this case in the Salima District in Malawi, to address their specific needs and build sustainable livelihoods. In the area of the Traditional Authority (TA) Maganga, specifically in the Group Village Headman (GVH) Kundayi, the Tagwirizana Mango Drying Group – which has now evolved into the Tagwirizana Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) Group, comprising 30 dedicated members – exemplifies the power of community-driven initiatives.

The group's success story revolves around the strategic utilization of locally available resources, particularly mangoes and moringa. By focusing on mango value addition and preservation, the group has effectively tackled the challenge of seasonal food availability. During periods of mango abundance, they process and preserve the fruit, ensuring a consistent supply of nutritious, value-added products throughout the year, even during times of scarcity. This practice not only enhances food security but also significantly contributes to improved nutrition within the community.

Furthermore, capitalizing on the abundance of mangoes in Salima, the Tagwirizana Group has diversified its product offerings by drying and processing mangoes for various applications. This versatile fruit, known for its rich nutritional content, enhances dietary diversity and benefits the community.

To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of their operations, the group has benefited from comprehensive training programs. The Malawi Bureau of Standards provided crucial training on processing techniques and machinery management, equipping the members with the necessary skills to maintain quality and efficiency. Additionally, the District Community Development Office conducted training on group dynamics and business management, fostering a cohesive and well-organized group structure. These combined efforts have significantly strengthened the group's functionality as a viable business, promoting dietary diversity, and improving nutrition in the community. This initiative demonstrates the transformative potential of VLAPs in fostering community-led development and enhancing resilience in rural Malawi.



Photo: Women from Salima COMSIP group celebrating at the official opening of the mango drying factory © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

The mango drying group in Salima called Tagwirizana was formed in 2018 with assistance from the community development office as part of one of its VLAP plans. The main goal was to strengthen resilience, food, and nutrition security, as well as increase the accessibility/availability of fruits all year round. GIZ's Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) conducted trainings on fruit and vegetable processing, methods of sampling and analysis for processed fruits and vegetables and equipped the group with training materials from Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS). Further the group was trained on solar dryers and group dynamics.

FNSP provided two solar dryers for a start. To create a sense of ownership the group contributed 50% to the solar driers. So far, the group has managed to buy two additional solar dryers. Later in 2022, FNSP constructed a factory unit for the group. The group is now processing mangoes, vegetables and moringa leaves. The group is in the process of obtaining a Malawi Bureau of Standards Certificate as it is already registered with the Malawi Revenue Authority and the Malawi office of business registration with support from FNSP.

What were the specific challenges the process addressed?

- Improve household income by boosting business.
- Increase food diversity by assisting with food preservation and income.

- Improve household food and nutrition security by increasing accessibility by purchasing power.
- Extend market identification of the Tagwirazana group.

How does the pilot/process address/consider beneficiaries' priorities?

Program participants used locally available resources. Mangoes were collected from their fields, and it was only necessary to buy a few bags. Local vegetables were collected during rainy season in times of plenty while moringa leaves are available all year round. The group developed a working schedule to balance time and attend to their families.



Geographical coverage

The group is based in the Salima TA Maganga GVH Kundayi



Key Actors & Ownership

- Key actors involved in the process:
- Government staff (Community development officer)
- External Expert/Consultant
- Program participants
- Implementation partners (CARE)

How were key actors involved, and which responsibilities did they have?

Expert:

- Trained participants on methods of sampling and analysis for processed fruits and vegetables, labelling and packaging, identifying markets and requirements of the Malawi Bureau of Standards
- Trained participants on solar dryer operation
- Conducted exchange visits for learning.
- Translated training modules and shared them with the program participants.

Government staff:

- Followed up on the group operation
- Mentored the process.
- Assisted the group in identifying markets.
- Provided trainings.
- Facilitated training opportunities for the group.

Program Participants:

- Attended training sessions.
- Managed and initiated the trainings on fruits and vegetables processing using a solar dryer.
- Reported on the utilization of chicken products i.e. eggs and chicken meat.

Implementation partner (CARE):

- Provided trainings on food security and dietary diversity.
- Conducted cooking demonstrations with group members.

How did they demonstrate ownership?

- Financial contribution of 50% to the acquisition of solar dryers
- Contribution of 20% to the Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS) fee requested.
- Implementation of the training aspects
- Gaining independence and financial stability as the business is progressing.



Target group

Who were the beneficiaries?

- The community especially households involved were (and still are) benefiting from the group.

How many benefited?

- 30 members are benefiting from the group including 2 men and 28 women.

How did the process ensure gender aspects and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle?

- The participants shared training aspects with community members, and some participants managed to construct a small solar dryer using locally available materials for household use. The trainings involved spouses so that in case one family member gets sick the partner can work on her/his behalf.



Objective

What was the specific objective of the process?

- To strengthen household resilience

How did the process contribute to the programme objective?

- **Module objective indicator 1**

The dietary diversity of 40,000 women of reproductive age (15 to 49 years) in the selected Traditional Authorities (TAs) in the Dedza and Salima districts has improved according to the Individual Dietary Diversity Score (IDDS).



Through regular monthly routine monitoring and evaluation, a change in attitude and mindset towards the consumption of dried fruits and drying practice could be observed. This was verified through the presence of dried vegetables, dried fruits and for consumption at household and community level.

What specific milestones could be observed/were used to measure the progress of the process?

- Construction of a factory unit
- Trainings including fruit and vegetable processing and "Gender makes Business Sense" in coordination with Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET)
- MRA registration soon to be certified with MBS.
- Successful sales of dried fruits and vegetables
- Purchase of additional equipment i.e. solar dryers
- The pilot has provided evidence of improved management of dried fruit consumption and production, as well as strengthened resilience at both the household and community levels.



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

- The group was formed in 2018 with guidance from DNCC in coordination with the FNSP District Advisor as part of one of the Village Level Action Plans

- The group was asked to select food items that were in excess in the community and could be preserved for future use and they chose mangoes and vegetables.
- FNSP supported the group with trainings and the purchase of solar dryers.
- Later in 2022, FNSP constructed a factory unit for the group and assisted the group with registering with MRA to obtain an MBS Certificate

How was regular involvement of key actors and beneficiaries ensured?

- Identifying knowledge gaps and conducting trainings by involving government staff for continual mentorship and monitoring



Costs & Resources

Which other resources (personnel, labour, inputs, assets) were needed from the programme, key actors, and beneficiaries?

- Beneficiaries were financially stable as they used their own resources to run activities.
- FNSP kept supporting the group with the trainings and mentorship.



Sustainability & Do No Harm

Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability)

- Environmental Sustainability: Leftovers from the mangoes and vegetables are used to make compost manure, which is later applied to maize fields and gardens, making the process environmentally friendly by reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.
- Institutional Sustainability:
The pilot also involved government partners from the initial phase, and FNSP has been working together with them throughout. This collaboration helped ensure that the program continues operating after the FNSP phases out.
- Social sustainability:
The construction of the factory unit will attract more developments that will benefit the community just as the dried mangoes and vegetables did by enabling access and the availability of fruits and vegetables all year round.
- Economic sustainability (consider access to finance/business models):
The business has grown through the years as the group has identified markets for their products. This has improved household income for the group members, as well as food security and household resilience. The group is now able to operate without financial support from FNSP.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial) Results

The group made MWK 360,000 in 2018 and MWK 883,333 in 2023 from selling dried mangoes and adding their village savings and loans money. Furthermore, in 2023 sales were boosted by including Moringa products.



Impact

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the programme:

The positive impact is that households now have access to mangoes and vegetables all year round. The group can earn profits from dried mangoes and vegetable sales.

- During interviews participants reported an increase in household income. Some managed to buy iron sheets, motorbikes, farm inputs and invested in small businesses. All of this has contributed to improved household food security. There is also active knowledge sharing within the community, as members are enthusiastic to learn from their neighbours.

What were unexpected positive/negative effects (in the community, the environment, behaviour)?

- When the group started producing dried mangoes the community did not want to buy them initially as they were used to eating fresh mangoes but later after the group members started producing locally at household level and sharing them with their neighbours, they became interested. Some have started producing dried mangoes for their own household consumption.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- Institutional:
Government extension officer (community development office) that supports in capacitating, following up and mentoring the group.
- Economically: The availability of markets for dried mangoes and vegetables will improve household income and ensure financial growth for the group. The group is now able to supply local lodges with them with the temporary certification from MBS.

Socially:

- The construction of the factory unit will attract other developments in the community.
- Group members share knowledge with fellow community members, and some have adopted the local solar dryer for household use to dry fruits and vegetables, ensuring accessibility to micronutrients at household level.

Environmentally:

The use of waste (leftovers) of the mangoes and vegetables as compost manure ensures environmental sustainability by restoring soil structure and improving soil health.



Constraints



What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

- Lack of capital for a business start-up, however, the group received support from FNSP which provided solar dryers. The group made financial contributions as well.
- They started and registered as a COMSIP group; however, they did not go through any trainings on COMSIP. Therefore, participants inquired information from other groups which received trainings.
- Many participants joined the group but later some dropped out as they expected immediate results. They were replaced with new members.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaleing within and outside of the programme:

- It has all the potential to be replicated and/or upscaled outside of the programme. Basically, anywhere where mangoes and vegetables are available.

What are required conditions to replicate and adapt the practice in another context/geographical area?

- Food preservation to strengthen food diversity and household resilience interventions can be replicated/adopted. Requirements for that are trainings and the willingness of participants to employ the training aspects.

What are required conditions to replicate the practice at a larger scale (national, regional)

- Creating awareness and trainings on mindset change towards food preservation, especially fruit drying.



Testimony

“I managed to buy a motor bicycle,” declared Mr. Chambe Imedi

The group's progress was remarkable. Seven members, including Irene, Judith Manda, and Kelesiya Davie, proudly erected new homes with durable iron sheet roofing, a testament to their improved financial stability. “I managed to buy a motor bicycle,” declared Mr. Chambe Imedi, highlighting a significant step forward that enhanced his mobility and business opportunities. Moreover, a substantial 80% of the group members successfully launched their own small businesses, demonstrating a widespread entrepreneurial spirit and a tangible uplift in their livelihoods.



Related Resources



Related Resources



Over To You Podcast



Topic 13: Village Savings and Loans Associations in Farmer Financial Cycle Trainings

150

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Promise Practice
documented: November
2023

This promising practice highlights the integration of nutrition-sensitive interventions within Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), a cornerstone of the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) implemented by GIZ. Recognizing the pivotal role of VSLAs in fostering financial inclusion and community empowerment, particularly among women, FNSP has strategically leveraged these groups to disseminate crucial nutrition messages and promote nutrition-sensitive investments.

The program's approach goes beyond traditional savings and loan activities, incorporating nutrition education directly into VSLA meetings and encouraging participation from women involved in Care Groups. This integration has proven highly effective, with a 2020 study by Planetarium Institute revealing that a significant majority of VSLA members find these groups beneficial for funding nutritional needs, accessing vital information, and fostering social cohesion. However, the study also identified challenges, such as low-margin businesses and the risk of multiple parallel loans, which can hinder members' ability to invest in food and nutrition security. To address these issues, FNSP is implementing initiatives to strengthen financial capacities within the VSLAs, increase nutrition awareness, and facilitate access to microfinance institutions for sustainable business development. Furthermore, the introduction of Farmer Financial Cycle (FFC) trainings, developed by AgFin and based on financial literacy messages from the Reserve Bank of Malawi, aims to empower rural populations with the skills needed to manage their personal and farm business finances effectively. This holistic approach underscores FNSP's commitment to build resilient communities by integrating nutrition and financial empowerment within the established framework of VSLAs.



Photo: GIZ AgFin staff training farmers and care group members on financial literacy © GIZ/AgFin Malawi



Context

FNSP builds on and strengthens existing structures such as Care Groups, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) as well as participatory planning processes. VSLA is incorporated as a means for financial inclusion of women as well as for nutrition-sensitive investments under FNSP. As part of the programme, VSLA meetings are utilized for disseminating nutrition messages. Women participating in the Care Group Structure2 are encouraged to join VSLAs. Cumulatively, FNSP, through its implementing partners (CARE and United Purpose in Salima and Dedza districts respectively), works with almost 600 VSLAs with a total of 10,273 members, of which 9,075 are women.

A study on the effectiveness of VSLAs in Salima and Dedza, conducted by Planetarium Institute in 2020 reported as follows:

- The majority of VSLAs members found VSLAs to be greatly beneficial because they fund nutritional needs, provide a platform for access to information and ongoing learning ([96%] of VSLA members have access to nutrition messages), advance social relations and promote unity among members. This demonstrates evidence that VSLAs are well suited as platforms where various development initiatives like nutrition can be promoted. 52% of the VSLA members are part of Care Groups in Salima.

- The majority of VSLA members believe that VSLAs are one of the best locally based financial institutions because they give them access to credit [89 percent], the cost of financing (interest) rate] is fair [92%], they have friendly repayment procedures, and provide an easy and a convenient financing source for their business and farming needs.
- The main reason VSLA members borrow is to invest in their businesses [51%], fund living expenses [28%], procurement of farm inputs [24%], buying food [35%], and for non-productive purposes [31%]. Therefore, VSLAs have demonstrated to support nutrition among VSLA members.
- Businesses pursued by VSLA members are low-margin businesses. This affects their debt servicing capacity on loans they borrow from VSLAs. With a limited debt servicing capacity, little margins, and multiple parallel loans – non-productive loans will leave many VSLA members worse-off, and their immediate coping mechanisms would not allow them to invest in food and nutrition security and/or household resilience.

Therefore, this activity is supported with the goal to:

- Increase financial capacities in the VSLAs to reduce multiple parallel loans and debt.
- Increase awareness and knowledge in VSLAs on nutrition.
- Support access to microfinance institutions for improved sustainable business development and livelihood resilience.

What is the FFC (Farmer Financial Cycle) training in general?

The FFC strengthens the capacities of the rural Malawian population to manage its personal and farm business finances and access services. The FFC has been developed by AgFin (Promotion of Agricultural Finance of Agri-based Enterprises in Rural Areas). The training materials were developed based on the financial literacy core messages from the Reserve Bank of Malawi.



Geographical coverage

- Doko VSLA: Dedza – Traditional Authority (TA) Kamenyagwaza
- Tiyeselenawo VSLA: Dedza – TA Kamenyagwaza
- Livwazi VSLA: Dedza – TA Chauma
- Kachere VSLA: Dedza – TA Tambala
- Tiyesenanwo VSLA: Dedza – TA Tambala
- Umodzi VSLA: Salima – TA Maganga
- Timvane VSLA: Salima – TA Maganga
- Kanthunkhama VSLA: Salima – TA Pemba
- Tadziwa VSLA: Salima – TA Ndindi



Key Actors Key actors involved in the process:

& Ownership

- Promotion of Agricultural Finance for Agri-based Enterprises in Rural Areas - GIZ AgFin
- Food and Nutrition Security Programme – GIZ FNSP
- CARE
- Self Help Africa (SHA)
- FINCOOP Savings and Credit Cooperative
- Concern Universal Microfinance Operations (CUMO)
- Community Development Office

How were key actors involved, and which responsibilities did they have?

AgFin: Planning and preparation for the training; orientation of trainers, Follow up.

FNSP: Incorporation of nutrition messages; follow-up on uptake

CARE/SHA: Implementing partners in Salima/Dedza; organizing the groups and follow-ups after the training.

FINCOOP/CUMO: FFC trainers

Community Development Office: Following up on the groups.

VSLA groups: Active participation in trainings



Target group

Who were the beneficiaries?

Approximately 160 participants have benefitted from the trainings in Personal Financial Management which will improve financial planning at household level. The training also incorporated nutrition messages to motivate project participants to include nutrition in their household budgeting.

Three groups have also been linked to Financial Institutions.

How did the process ensure gender aspects and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle?

Gender Aspect

VSLA members are primarily women, ensuring their active participation and leadership. For example, groups like the Timvane VSLA in Salima are entirely female.

- VSLA groups have been trained tailored to women's needs, such as financial literacy, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills, to build confidence and capability.
- Male counterparts and community leaders have been engaged to address cultural barriers or barriers to women's participation.
- Gender disaggregated data has been used during monitoring to measure women's participation and decision-making influence.

Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle

- The VSLA groups allow members with limited financial means to participate through smaller savings contributions.
- Capacity building is for all members as facilitators provide training that ensures everyone, regardless of educational background, understands the VSLA's objectives and processes.



What were the specific objectives of the process?

Working on recommendations made in the VSLA study:

- VSLAs have demonstrated to support nutrition among members.
- Development of a comprehensive capacity building program (trainings, systematic mentorship, and supervision programs)
- Training Village Agents (VA) and VSLA members in entrepreneurship and business management. VSLAs offer members an affordable and accessible source of small loans for income-generating activities, emergencies, or household needs.
- VSLAs have improved the financial stability of members by creating a safety net through savings and access to funds in times of need.

How did the process contribute to the programme objective?

Module Objective Indicator: The percentage of the 40,000 households in the target communities categorised as seriously at risk of food and nutrition insecurity, using the Household Food Insecurity Experience Scale (HFIES), has dropped by 10%.

Output 2, Indicator 2.1:

In the districts of Dedza and Salima, 25,000 households that are at risk of food and nutrition insecurity benefited from nutrition-sensitive social protection measures which improved their access to food.

How was it measured?

Pre-assessment and post-assessment organized and implemented by AgFin and supported and contributed to by FNSP.

Questionnaire: [Link](#)



What is the duration envisaged for the pilot including a critical deadline?

In preparation for the FFC trainings, a dry run session (preparation meeting) was held on 20th and 26th June in Dedza and Salima respectively, where partners and trainers consolidated key nutrition messages and examples. Actual trainings were held in Dedza from 21st to 25th July 2023 and in Salima from 27th to 28th July 2023. The final set of trainings was conducted in 2024.

How have key actors and beneficiaries been involved in the development of the timeframe and milestones?

- GIZ played a pivotal role in supporting the implementation of the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) in the program, focusing on improving nutrition and household resilience in vulnerable communities. It facilitated capacity building for Village Agents and VSLA members, provided logistical support, and used VSLA meetings to disseminate key nutrition and health messages. FNSP coordinated this with its implementing partners like CARE and United Purpose, engaged stakeholders such as community leaders and extension workers, and advocated for integrating nutrition-sensitive practices into guidelines. Additionally, it conducted a VSLA study to determine best practices and aligned its efforts with Malawi's development goals, emphasizing sustainability and resilience against food insecurity.
- FNSP also played a crucial role in creating linkages with other stakeholders within GIZ which also expanded the network including financial institutions.
- Extension workers especially Community Development Assistants play a vital role in ensuring the success of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) by providing trainings on financial literacy, group management, and business development to members. They regularly monitored the performance of VSLAs. Additionally, they disseminated critical messages on nutrition, hygiene, and sustainable farming

practices at VSLA meetings, promoting household resilience and food security.

Village Agents (VAs) were instrumental in establishing and sustaining VSLAs at the community level. They organized and mobilized members, ensuring that the VSLA model was well understood and implemented. VAs provide ongoing support to groups by facilitating leadership development, resolving conflicts, and fostering group cohesion. As community-based peer educators, they act as a bridge between external support agencies and local groups, empowering members with knowledge and encouraging self-reliance. Their involvement was crucial for the long-term sustainability and functionality of VSLAs, enabling the associations to thrive even after external interventions ended.

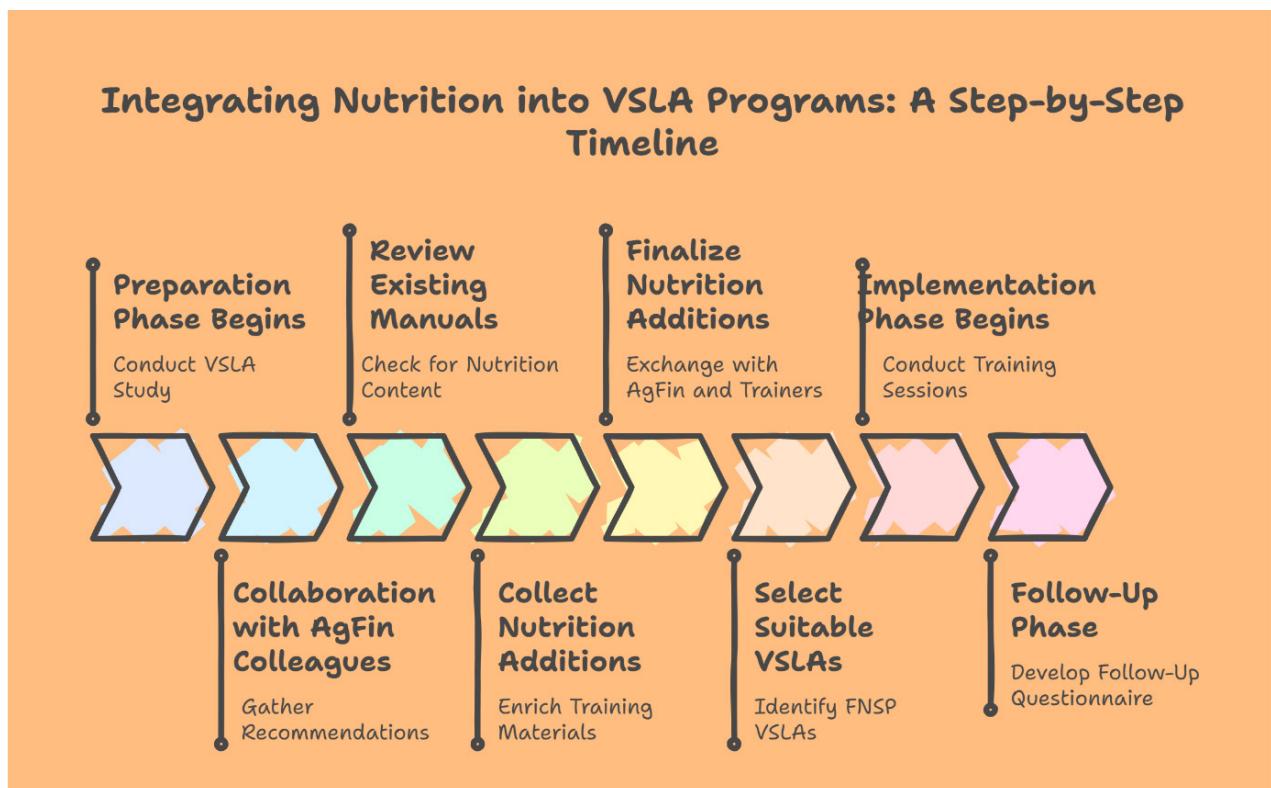


Figure 6. Integrating Nutrition into VSLA programs methodology – showing the timeline.



The methodological approach step-by-step:

- ① Preparation:
 - VSLA study
 - Approaching AgFin colleagues with recommendations and searching for a suitable programme in which nutrition messages were easily integrated.
 - Checking available manuals for suitable nutrition entry points
 - Collection of additional nutrition messages and entry points within the FNSP team and with the implementing partners
 - Exchanged on these ideas with AgFin and trainers.
 - Selection of suitable FNSP VSLAs (according to) with IPs after sharing criteria
 - In our case unfortunately only 1 VSLA in Salima and 2 in Dedza were selected.
- ② Implementation:
 - IPs and FNSP colleagues joining training preparations and training to support with nutrition questions.
- ③ Follow up:
 - Trainers should get nutrition training.
 - Follow up questionnaire

Documentation of Process Outcomes

(No Impact and Results had been collected at closure)



Success factors

What key conditions/ factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

Valuable experience:

- During the trainings, nutrition examples were perceived well and fully integrated by FFC trainers.
- VSLA members enjoyed the trainings.
- Participants turn up was impressive.

- Involvement of FNSP partners helped a lot in providing classical nutrition examples and messages during the FFC trainings in all the districts (Dedza and Salima).
- Engagement of governmental officials (Community Development Facilitators/ Officers participated in all the FFC trainings in all the districts).

Good news: Immediate results after FFC trainings:

- One (1) VSLA group in Dedza (Doko VSLA) opened a group bank account with FINCOOP.
- 25 members for Doko VSLA have opened individual bank accounts with FINCOOP.
- Majority of VSL members in all the districts changed the way on how they were doing their businesses. They have started keeping business records and they are able to develop and follow cash flow budgets (profit and loss) statements.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

In retrospective, what would we do differently if we were to plan the process/ implement the pilot again?

Unpleasant experience:

- Time management by other VSL groups was poor. Trainers were waiting for participants to come on training venue. Somehow this was negatively affecting the training sessions.
- Participants in some groups were asking for lunch allowances. As a community, they work with different developmental organizations hence the tendency of lunch allowances was emulated.
- Participants were not happy with bottled water as part of refreshments provided by FNSP during the FFC trainings. They opted for soft drinks such as Fanta/ coke, etc.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the programme.

Based on the VSLA study the VSLA model is easy to scale because it is low-cost and run by the community. In Salima and Dedza, it has helped 5,053 members, including 4,381 women, with 89% getting access to credit and 96% improving their nutrition habits. One of the groups like Doko had an 84% success rate in FFC training, showing it works well for teaching

financial skills. VSLAs can be used in many areas like business, farming, and nutrition. Expanding the program and working with banks to offer loans can help more people benefit, making VSLAs a simple and effective solution for communities.

What are the required conditions to replicate the practice at a larger scale (national, regional)?

The team (trainers, FNSP partners, AgFin partners) proposes and recommend the following:

- Partner Financial Institutions (PFIs) to open bank accounts and facilitate/ initiate credit processes for Agri-loan in collaboration with partners on the ground.
- To have a joint mission with partners in the monitoring of the VSLA's performances. This will enable the team to capture success stories that will ignite the process to scale up.
- Impart knowledge/ to train FFC trainers in Nutrition aspects so that they can ably use the knowledge during FFC trainings. Basic only in line with nutritional aspects.
- AgFin and FNSP including partners such as UP and CARE to have more VSL groups (about 3 groups) in Salima / Dedza for piloting.
- Based on the results from the pilot phase, AgFin Mw, to liaise with STU and get permission for the adaptation of the FFC training materials to include nutrition examples and messages

AgFin and FNSP to have monthly update meeting where key highlights/ updates and progress will be shared with the team including partners on the ground.



Related Resources



List of references about the practice (e.g. training manuals, guidelines, pictures, assessment/evaluation report, etc.)

Internal Links

[Training materials](#)

[VSLA study](#)



Topic 14: Resilient food and nutrition security with Improved irrigation practices

160

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Promise Practice
documented: October 2023

In the pursuit of enhanced agricultural productivity and food security, the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) undertook a pivotal pilot initiative in Dedza, focusing on the deployment of advanced irrigation technologies. Recognizing the critical role of water management in agricultural success, particularly for small-scale farmers, FNSP introduced gravity drip systems and solar-immersed pumps to five Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) groups. This strategic intervention aimed to revolutionize traditional farming practices by providing cost-effective and sustainable solutions that address the inherent challenges of water scarcity and inefficient irrigation methods.

The implementation of these improved irrigation technologies has yielded significant benefits, demonstrating a tangible pathway towards agricultural transformation. By enhancing soil moisture and optimizing water usage, these systems have directly contributed to increased crop yields, thereby improving food availability and nutritional outcomes for participating households. Moreover, the reduction in water loss associated with these technologies promotes environmental sustainability, aligning with broader efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change. Ultimately, this intervention empowers households to transition from subsistence farming to a more market-oriented approach, fostering economic resilience and contributing to the overall development of the agricultural sector in Dedza.



Photo: Smallholder farmer watering her garden using the irrigation systems that was supported by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

Malawi's economy is mainly based on agriculture. Approximately 80% of the population are small-scale farmers in rural areas. Infrastructure is generally poor and access to markets and market information is limited. Hence, rural households tend to primarily focus on subsistence farming. The median land area cultivated is 0.45 hectares per agricultural household. During the rainy season, virtually no plots use any form of irrigation (0.04%), while during the dry season, about two thirds (67.1%) do. The most usual form of irrigation is buckets (50.9%), followed by stream diversion (8.1%), and treadle pumps (3.5%), while gravity-fed systems only account for 2.8% (IFPRI, 2018).

Gravity-fed irrigation schemes combined with drip irrigation are an easy and inexpensive method for small-scale irrigation. Drip irrigation systems slowly emit water through small-diameter pipes directly to the roots of plants to lower evaporation and reduce water loss. Drip irrigation can improve soil moisture conditions, resulting in yield gains, which are expected to translate into better incomes for farmers. Usually, water for the systems is collected from rivers, ponds, through rainwater harvesting, or from small dams. As the system works entirely through gravity on sloped land or hillsides, no pumps or electricity are needed. Where land is flat, gravity can be created by placing the water tank above ground level. Systems can be used for agriculture and horticulture, but they are not feasible for all plots as they depend on specific topographical and hydrological conditions (e.g. without combining the system with a pump, surface water availability, water harvesting and collection or a borehole providing enough water is a prerequisite; the slope cannot be too steep for the drip system to evenly provide water).

Gravity-fed irrigation schemes provide a solution to the following challenges:

- Lack of access to irrigation technologies due to lack of financial resources, availability of technologies, and capacities: Low-cost technology, extremely low initial, and maintenance costs
- Inefficient and time-consuming water usage: Drip irrigation technologies use 30 to 60 percent less water than other irrigation techniques and thus reduce workload for fetching water and for irrigation.
- Sustainable and cost-efficient systems, such as (solar-powered) drip irrigation systems can help farmers adapt to shrinking water supplies, become more resilient to drought and variable rainfall patterns.
- Systems are easy to assemble; manufacturing can often be done locally (Locally manufactured systems are available in Malawi)



Geographical coverage

The GIZ Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) in Malawi piloted improved irrigation systems (including gravity drip irrigation, solar-immersed pumps and improved traditional channel systems) in Dedza district with five Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) Groups in TA Kamenyagwaza.

- Chilungamo Cluster
- Mtsala Cluster
- Ngononda Cluster
- Makungwa 1 Cluster
- Tanyamuka Cluster



Actors and Stakeholders

Key actors that were involved:

- Close cooperation with the District Agricultural Extension Services and Irrigation officers
- Establishment of a task force (Community Development Assistant, Agricultural Extension, Irrigation, GIZ) to plan and guide the pilot implementation and roll-out.
- District Community Development Officer (DCDO) as coordinator between GIZ and district personnel
- External Irrigation specialist Mr. Emmanuel Mboma for overall project coordination and for irrigation trainings during the implementation phase



Target beneficiaries

- COMSIP Groups, of which a majority constituted of female members who had an agriculture or horticulture business.
- Rural Households with women of childbearing age, pregnant and lactating women, and children under two with backyard gardens
- Community gardens

According to the FNSP Follow-up Survey (2018) 44% of beneficiaries at that time and 34% of future beneficiaries had or will have a kitchen or backyard garden. FNSP had a total target group of 40,000 households and aimed at gradually expanding from pilot stage to up to 5,000 households (backyard gardens). It further aimed to support up to 10 cooperatives/communities (agriculture/horticulture business and community land) with improved irrigation techniques, including gravity drip irrigation, solar pumps and improved traditional channel systems.

The last membership count in the five COMSIP groups was ~500 benefitting members.

What was the specific objective of the process?

The intervention contributed to FNSP's second output:

Households and communities have further developed their capacity for dealing with food insecurity, above all in relation to food crises and the impacts of climate change.

The irrigation was expected to contribute to:

- a.** Improved availability of food throughout the year at household and community level.
- b.** Diversified diets at household and community level (see output indicator below)
- c.** Increased incomes through the selling of agriculture and horticulture products.

The intervention contributed to the following output indicator of FNSP:

The percentage of the 40,000 women who receive support and grow products from two of the food groups that play a crucial role in increasing nutritional diversity has increased by 50%.

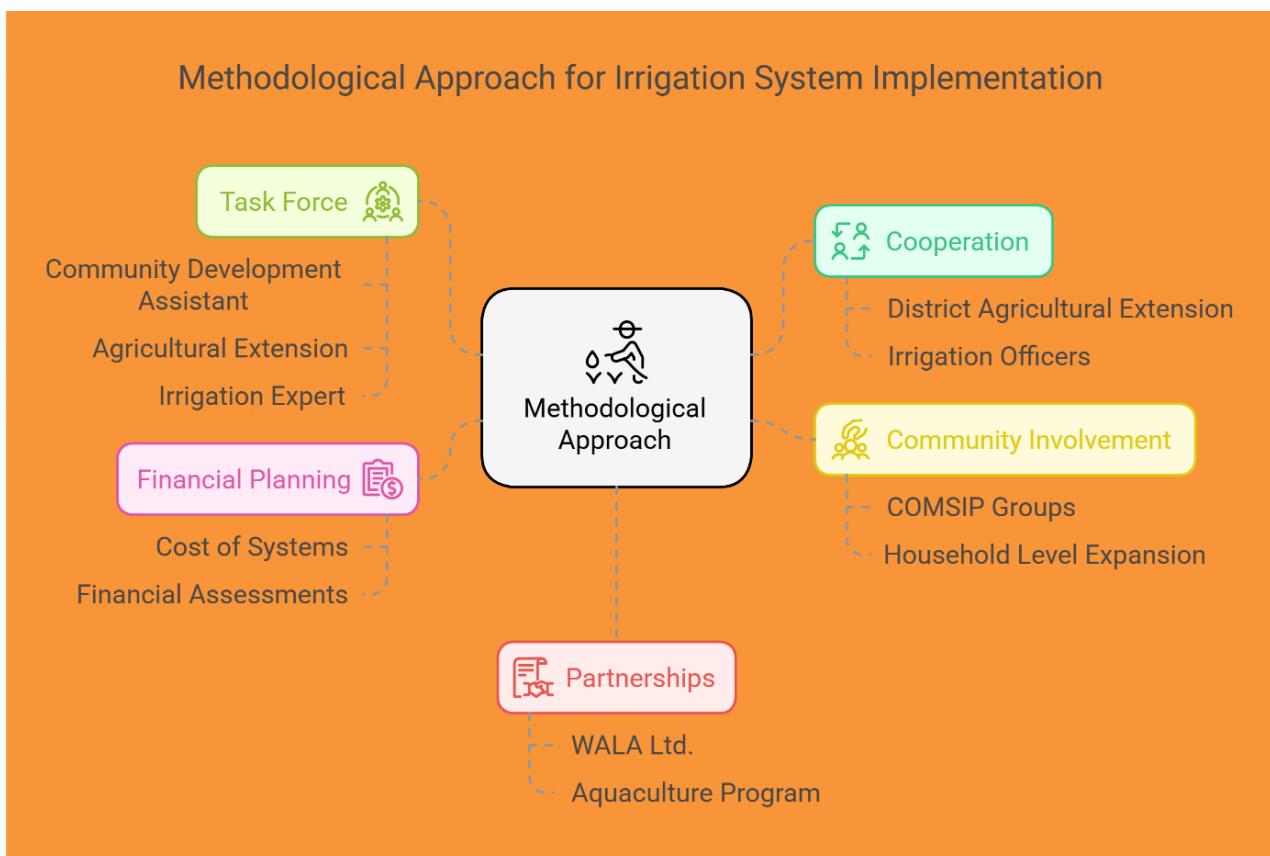


Figure 7. Methodological approach for improving irrigation systems.



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

- Close cooperation with District Agricultural Extension Services and Irrigation officers in defining appropriate contexts for the application of the systems, the beneficiary selection process, and contributions of beneficiaries to the solar pump to ensure ownership.
- Establishment of a task force (Community Development Assistant, Agricultural Extension, Irrigation, GIZ, Irrigation expert) to plan and guide the pilot implementation and roll-out.
- Analysing existing Village Level Action Plans (VLAPs) to identify communities where irrigation was defined as a priority.
- Establishing different systems at a demonstration site to
 - Check quality and ease of use of different systems.
 - Enable Agricultural Extension Workers and Irrigation Officers to familiarize with systems to make informed decision about suitable contexts, beneficiary selection, etc.
- Start implementation with Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP) groups or communities (Agriculture/horticulture cooperatives and community businesses with up to 1000 sqm)
- Financial assessments showed that all COMSIP groups together can shoulder a share of MWK 2,029,750. This share was calculated to suit the financially weakest COMSIP group, but shares were the same for all five groups.
- Later expansion to household level (Backyard gardens 20sqm to 100sqm)
- Combination of larger systems with solar-powered pumps (surface or groundwater) planned.
- Combination of systems with improved rainwater harvesting and water storage: Two wires were repaired and improved, a pipe system to allow water delivery from water source to field established.
- To guarantee an obligation between the solar pump provider (WALA Ltd.) and the COMSIP groups to pay the remaining balance and availability in case of a need for reparation they signed a Memorandum of Partnership
- The aquaculture programme provided an analysis of suitability for two groups who were interested in aquaculture. COMSIP groups have the necessary infrastructure. A training in aquaculture should be considered in the future.

Costs of gravity drip irrigation systems range between:

- 20sqm: EUR 30 (imported) – EUR 50 (locally manufactured)
- 100sqm: EUR 100 (imported) – EUR 150 (locally manufactured)
- 200sqm: EUR 150 (imported) – EUR 200 (locally manufactured)
- 500sqm: ~ EUR 350
- 1,000sqm: ~ EUR 650

The solar pumps were procured in October 2023 for MWK 2.595.000 per unit.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial) Results

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:

- Technical assessments have been conducted with six COMSIP groups (431 members in total) in Dedza.
- Results indicated that an improvement of traditional, gravity-based irrigation systems (such as channels) is best suited for most of the groups.
- Some systems could have been combined with solar pumps and drip irrigation pipes.
- Generally, in many regions in Dedza the topographical characteristics are not beneficial for gravity drip irrigation (steep slopes).
- Improvement of the systems of the groups would cost between EUR 1,000 and EUR 2,500 EUR.
- Gravity drip irrigation kits were promoted at household level, where plots are usually flat and more suitable for drip irrigation.



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

- Impacts were evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively as part of FNSP's Annual Monitoring Surveys. Dimensions to be assessed included income generation, time and water efficiency, diversification of agriculture and horticulture products.
- COMSIP groups had an assessment before trainings on GAP and irrigation techniques. This assessment was repeated in November 2023 at the end of the pilot.
- Groups that were economically better off were also better in up taking nutrition messages than groups that were economically struggling due to lack of financial capacity.
- For future implementation we recommend integrating nutrition and irrigation activities together.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

- Dedicated Agricultural Extension Services who provided support with maintenance.
- Dedicated (private sector) service providers for technical backstopping.
- Availability of spare parts in proximity to system users (if not in the market, then at the District through Agricultural Extension Officers)
- Availability of water throughout the year (or combination with solar pumps)
- Direct connection between COMSIP groups and pumps provider increased independence of groups
- Activities based on needs assessment (VLAP)
- Partial payment through COMSIP groups increased ownership in groups and motivated groups to reorganize together with DCDO support.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

- None of the Agricultural Extension Workers or even Irrigation Officers had seen a drip irrigation system before – an initial practical training on the installation, usage and maintenance of the system was organized at the District Agricultural Extension Service Office and a demo-plot with different systems was set up.
- Spare parts for systems were not available in local markets – it was planned that key spare parts would be stocked at the district to ensure availability.
- Limited number of suppliers of drip irrigation systems in Malawi
- Clogging of systems and lack of maintenance might have demotivated users.
- Limited availability of spare parts
- Took long time for irrigation, depending on the pressure created by gravity.
- Pipes were prone to insect and weather damage.
- Agricultural diversification (especially for COMSIP groups) depended on demand. If more nutritious products could not be sold in local markets, diversification was not attractive from a business perspective.
- Financing irrigation farming can increase membership fees.



Sustainability

Below are the different sustainability dimensions of the process (how it contributes to long-term sustainability):

- Environmental Sustainability:

Drip irrigation systems slowly emit water through small-diameter pipes directly to the roots of the plants, lower evaporation and reduce water loss. Improved traditional systems reduce water loss and, where possible, a combination with drip irrigation further improves water efficiency. Solar pumps use solar energy to pump the water and therefore have a much smaller carbon footprint in comparison to electrical or diesel pumps.

- Institutional Sustainability:

FNSP's hypothesis was that ownership of households and communities is higher when they contribute to a share of the costs. FNSP already tested this approach with other productive assets, such as solar driers.

- Social sustainability:

Improved (drip) irrigation can improve soil moisture conditions, resulting in yield gains for farmers, which are expected to translate into better incomes. It further reduces inefficient and time-consuming water usage: drip irrigation systems use 30 to 60% less water than other irrigation techniques and reduce workload for fetching water and irrigation. Systems can help farmers adapt to shrinking water supplies, become more resilient to drought and variable rainfall patterns.

- Economical sustainability:

Cost efficient irrigation options, which can (at least partly) be locally manufactured.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the programme.

Generally, this promising practice is useful for households (backyard gardens), cooperatives, and communities (productive land for agriculture or horticulture in settings where:

- Access to irrigation technologies is limited.
- Efficient water usage is a benefit because of (seasonally) limited availability of water and inefficient water usage.
- More time efficient irrigation technologies relief especially women from workload

Learnings:

- To guarantee ability to pay a share, all COMSIP groups should have received an initial organization training through DCDO. This allows a current membership count and accountability in the group.
- Agreements with the (pump) providers should already include delivery modalities and follow up for payments.
- An external consultant with irrigation expertise allowed a more direct interaction with the groups and technical support in the setup of the pilot



Related Resources



[Malabo Montpellier Panel \(2018\): Water-wise. Smart Irrigation Strategies for Africa.](#)



Section 04

Approaches for Leveraging digital platforms for Nutrition Governance



Photo: Various food and nutrition security actors contributing at the multisector national nutrition coordination committee meeting, which is convened by the Department of Nutrition © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

Section 4: Approaches for Leveraging digital platforms for Nutrition Governance

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This section delves into the transformative digital solution practices implemented under the Food and Nutrition Security Programme, specifically designed to bolster governance and enhance nutrition outcomes. Recognizing the critical role of technology in modernizing and streamlining processes, the programme focused on two key initiatives: the expansion and integration of nutrition messaging within the Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) platform, and the development and nationwide scale-up of the web and mobile-based Nutrition Coordination Tool. These digital interventions represent a significant stride towards more efficient, accessible, and data-driven nutrition governance, addressing challenges at both the central and decentralized levels.

The topics covered here are:

- 1 Mapping and decentralizing national nutrition actors through the Coordination Tool
- 2 Nutrition is Health: Complementary Implementation in CCPF

These digital solutions directly align with the core objectives of FNSP, namely, to support the planning and coordination of nutrition-sensitive activities at district and local levels, and to feed experiences and scalable approaches into national policies, strategies, and the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) framework. The Nutrition Coordination Tool, with its ability to map interventions and streamline data collection across all districts, directly facilitates localized planning and coordination. Meanwhile, the integration of nutrition messages within the CCPF hotline, a widely accessible platform, ensures that valuable knowledge and best practices are disseminated to remote communities, thereby contributing to the development of scalable approaches that can inform national strategies and strengthen the SUN framework. By leveraging digital technology, FNSP effectively bridges the gap between national policy and grassroots implementation, fostering a more integrated and impactful approach to nutrition security.

Topic 15: Mapping and decentralizing national nutrition actors through the Coordination Tool

Authors:



Amos Tizora

Junior M&E Specialist

Ezekiel Luhanga

Senior M&E Specialist

Promise Practice

documented: November 2024

This promising practice highlights the development of a web and mobile-based platform that was a direct response to the operational inefficiencies encountered with the traditional, excel-based coordination methods employed by the Dedza district. Recognizing the limitations of manual data management, this digital tool was designed to provide a more dynamic and integrated approach to stakeholder coordination and nutrition intervention mapping. Its core functionalities encompass a wide range of features, including streamlined data collection, which eliminates the need for manual entry and reduces the potential for errors. Automated report generation ensures that stakeholders have access to up-to-date information, facilitating timely analysis and decision-making. Moreover, the platform provides analytical insights that empower users to make evidence-based choices, thereby strengthening nutrition governance at all levels. A key innovation of this tool is its integration of a food systems element, and other features such as the monitoring of key infrastructure such as health centres and Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs). This feature plays a crucial role in ensuring that nutrition interventions are strategically targeted and that resources are allocated effectively to reach the most vulnerable populations. By providing a comprehensive overview of the existing landscape, the platform helps to prevent duplication of efforts and ensures that resources are used efficiently. Crucially, this coordination tool directly addresses nutrition governance at both central and decentralized levels, marking a significant advancement in how nutrition interventions are managed and monitored. Due to its demonstrated effectiveness, the tool has now been upscaled and implemented across all districts in Malawi, ensuring nationwide consistency and improved nutrition governance.

In essence, this platform acts as a central hub for nutrition-related data, enabling stakeholders to visualize and analyse information in real-time. This enhanced visibility fosters greater collaboration and coordination among various actors, leading to more impactful nutrition outcomes. The ability to monitor the presence of vital community resources, such as health centres and CBCCs, allows for a more granular understanding of the needs and assets within specific areas, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the local context. This targeted approach is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of nutrition programs and ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the support they need. For those seeking a deeper dive into the platform's capabilities and operational procedures, the *Over to You* podcast and the FNSP instructional videos, both accessible within the resources section, offer comprehensive insights and practical demonstrations.



Photo: Interface of the Nutrition Coordination Tool © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Context

The Food and Nutrition Security Programme was implemented in Dedza and Salima from 2015 to 2025. Within the implementation period, the programme shifted its strategic focus exclusively towards women in reproductive age (15–49 years) and infants and young children (6–23 months) while activities focusing on primary and pre-school children (2–5 years) were ended in 2017. In addition to continuing the implementation of interventions in the Dedza and Salima districts, additional villages have been targeted since 2018 in the same districts.

On national level, FNSP's political partner is the Department of Nutrition under the Ministry of Health. In recognition of the multisectoral nature of nutrition, the Government of Malawi established the Department of Nutrition in 2004 to provide oversight, strategic leadership, and policy direction. In addition to resource mobilization, capacity building, especially for its lower-level structures, monitoring and evaluation, and research, key responsibilities of the department include primarily the structured coordination of nutrition partners.

Despite this necessity, cooperation, and coordination between a large and diverse range of partners for planning, implementation, and close monitoring of activities at district level is a substantial challenge. Here, the desirable

state as defined in the national strategy, in which the district authority is in a strong position to exert superordinate steering of all these planning processes, still seems far away. The cause for this seems to be rather the absence of a clear overview of the operating stakeholders and their responsibilities than political resistance or lack of openness. Moreover, it is not only the coordination between the partners at national and district level that is not yet adequately developed. The demand-oriented selection of activities and their sustainable implementation become a challenge for both, government as well as international actors due to the lack of actual data and information on the state of the population and their needs, especially for the rural and remote areas. The aim of this initiative is to ensure that all nutrition stakeholders, DN and DNCCs but also DoNUTS members (Donor Group for Nutrition Security), have access to the necessary data and to provide an overview of the existing actors and their activities in the districts. It should furthermore enhance the district council's capacities in planning and steering of new and ongoing projects and provide a communication platform for improved coordination among all nutrition partners working in the district. The Nutrition Coordination Tool was created to address gaps in coordination and monitoring within the nutrition sector in Malawi. Previously, Nutrition Units relied on excel-based sheets, which could not provide a space for comprehensive data management and stakeholder mapping. This tool was developed with support from the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) as part of a global initiative funded by BMZ to improve food security and resilience.



Geographical coverage

The Nutrition Coordination Tool covers all districts in Malawi; however, it was initially piloted in Dedza as an impact district of the programme



Key Actors & Ownership

Malawi Government (DHNA), FNSP – GIZ/BMZ, Starbyte



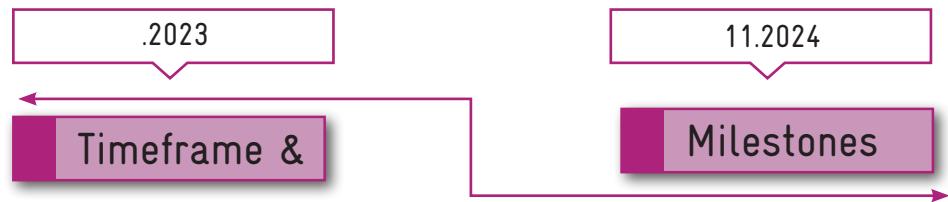
Target beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries are vulnerable populations in Malawi, particularly women of reproductive age and children aged between 6-59 months. Specifically, it benefits the nutrition coordinating office and its stakeholders in improving coordination and implementation of nutrition related projects.



Objective

The tool aims to improve nutrition sector coordination by mapping stakeholders and interventions across different administrative levels. Piloted in Dedza district, it is now implemented nationwide, enhancing stakeholder mapping, data collection, and reporting capabilities across Malawi.



The Tool demands were noticed in 2022 and the development started in 2023. Full deployment began in 2024. The Initial pilot in Dedza, with full adoption in all districts.

Methodology



Figure 8. Methodological process of how the coordination tool was developed.



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

The project employed a phased, structured approach:

1 Phase One: Mobilise and Design Phase – Solution Co-development and the journey to Scale with the Government.

Facilitating a mindset shift workshop to foster collaboration among key stakeholders for planning the nutrition partner coordination tool.

Conducting a human-centred design workshop to align on the User Personas and User Journeys that help us define software requirements. The result was that all actors understand the government and end-user perspectives and needs.

Co-creating a solution design that addresses both government and user needs by gathering software requirements from stakeholders to guide the redesign of the current tool.

2 Phase two: Execution

Applying the chosen technology approach to revise the current nutrition tool or shift to a new tool platform to best fit the long-term needs of the government and support users.

Web API Development: RESTful API with integration capabilities.

Database and UI Design: Developed a responsive, intuitive interface with advanced security.

Testing and Deployment: Thorough testing before cloud deployment.

3 Training: Upscaling and Adoption

Training was done through a cascading model starting with the central level team down to the district level. The training targeted the Principal Nutrition and HIV/AIDS Officer, M&E Officer, and Nutrition Officers from the sectors.



Costs & Resources

The total costs of the process:

Funding is provided by BMZ, emphasizing both technical development and sustainable management. Costs include personnel and training for district-wide implementation and maintenance.



Sustainability & Do No Harm

Sustainability of the tool can be achieved through the following:

- ① Co-creation of the tool with the end-users. Before the design of the solution, there was a mindset change workshop which was planned to promote the spirit of using data for decision-making. The Human-centred Design workshop was designed to incorporate the expectation of the users in the tool. All these were implemented to promote a need-based approach in developing digital solutions.
- ② Capacity building of the district officers in the management of the information systems – PHNAOs as district-based administrators
- ③ The Department of Nutrition manages the tool at the national level, integrating it into existing platforms (e.g., National Nutrition Information System (NNIS) to ensure long-term sustainability. DN staff were well-trained on the tool, reducing dependency on external support and ensuring local ownership.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial) Results

The results/outputs of the process were as follows:

Stakeholder Engagement: Visual stakeholder mapping and easy access to intervention data.

Capacity Building: District staff trained in tool operation.

Integration with Food Systems: The tool now includes food system components.

Offline Functionality: A mobile app was developed for remote areas with network issues.



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

The tool has enhanced collaboration and data transparency, with almost all 28 districts utilizing it with over 100 users. It has compelled partners to regularly provide project data to the District Nutrition Coordinating Committees (DNCC), enabling them to effectively monitor and collect information on nutrition-related projects across districts.

The system will enhance reporting at the district and national level, especially on coordination information.



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

Scalability: The tool's design allows seamless addition of new districts, Traditional Authorities, Group Village Heads and users. All metadata/dropdown

data such as sectors, target population, etc. has also been provided under settings for expansion of the system.

Comprehensive Training: Capacity-building efforts ensured local staff could independently manage the tool.

Technological Adaptability: Designed to function both online and offline, supporting a wider range of users.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

Resource Intensive: Scaling the tool requires ongoing investment in infrastructure and user training.

Data Availability: Nutrition units at first did not have data on projects, partner budgets etc.

Resistance to Change: Introducing the tool may alter existing coordination and information-sharing processes, which could cause concern among end users and lead to resistance.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the program.

The tool's robust 3-tier architecture (Front end, Business Tier, and Database) powered by innovative technology stack (C-Sharp/C#, Vue.js, jQuery, MSSQL/ PostgreSQL) ensures reliability and is optimized for upscaling. The design ensures upgrades and expansion can be carried out at each individual tier without affecting the other. Future phases aim to integrate more users and partners, supported by the DN's management capabilities.



Testimony

“

This tool represents a transformative step in Malawi's nutrition management, leveraging advanced technology to foster better coordination and data transparency among nutrition stakeholders.

Department of Nutrition

”



Related
Resources



Nutrition Coordination Tool Access:
nutritionmw.com



GIZ FNSP Information: GIZ Malawi



Over To You Podcast



Coordination Tool FAQ



Topic 16: Nutrition is Health: Complementary Implementation in CCPF

Authors:



Martina Kress
Team Leader

Vitowe Batch
Co-Team Leader

Promise Practice
documented: November
2020

The Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) initiative, implemented in partnership with the Malawian Ministry of Health and with key implementation support from Village Reach, represents a promising practice in enhancing health and nutrition knowledge dissemination within remote Malawian communities. Notably, the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) was at the forefront of integrating critical nutrition messages into the CCPF platform. This toll-free hotline, accessible via Airtel at 54747, provides crucial telehealth services by connecting individuals with trained clinical professionals, including nurses, nutritionists, medical assistants, and clinical officers. These professionals offer guidance on a spectrum of health issues, encompassing maternal, neonatal, and child health, nutrition, reproductive health, HIV, and TB, thereby mitigating the burden on traditional health facilities. Village Reach played a crucial role as a key implementing partner, leveraging its expertise in digital health solutions and strengthening health systems in Malawi.

The CCPF utilizes a hybrid service model, integrating both live professional consultations and an interactive voice response (IVR) system. By December 2019, data provided by Village Reach indicated a near-equal utilization of both modalities, with 51% of callers opting for direct professional interaction and 49% accessing pre-recorded IVR messages. When presenting specific data points, such as the IVR usage statistics, it is vital to attribute them to Village Reach, which adds credibility to the information and allows readers to seek further details. The hotline's commitment to inclusivity is evident in its multilingual service provision, offering consultations in Chichewa, English, Yao, and Tumbuka, effectively addressing language and literacy barriers. With an average call duration of 15 minutes, clients receive personalized telehealth consultations, empowering them to make informed health decisions and improve communication with healthcare providers.

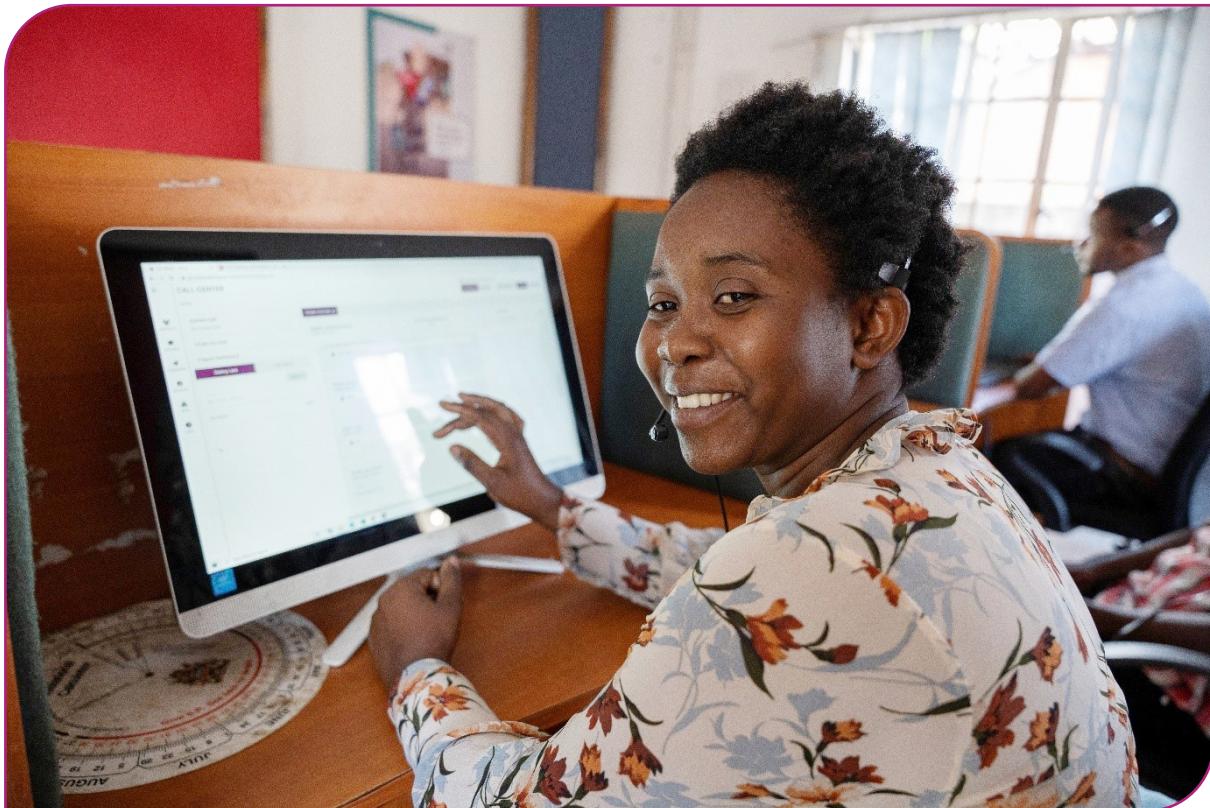


Photo: Hotline worker Annie Bita working for Health Centre by Phone in Lilongwe © Homeline Media Malawi



Context

CCPF provides advice on both health and nutrition issues. The hotline can be accessed toll-free from any Airtel number by calling 54747. It is staffed by trained clinical professionals – nurses, nutritionists, medical assistants, and clinical officers – who give advice to the clients on various health topics ranging from maternal, neonatal and child health to nutrition, reproductive health, HIV, tuberculosis, etc. The hotline also has an interactive voice message (IVR) platform. By December 2019, 51% of callers chose to talk to a hotline worker, whereas 49% accessed the IVR messages. Multilingual (Chichewa, English, Yao, Tumbuka), and voice messaging options make sure that language and literacy are not a barrier to accessing the hotline and the information.

The average call time is 15 minutes, which gives enough time to the clients to explain what issues they are having. On the other hand, the hotline workers have enough time to explain to the clients' what symptoms they have and help them make an informed decision if they need to use further services at a health centre, village clinic, or hospital. In this way the clients can explain better to the health workers at the health facilities what they need, which helps to reduce the pressure on the health workers, as well as the consultation time.

The rationale behind launching a free hotline was that most hospitals were and still are overwhelmed and doctors and other health workers have little time to speak to the patients. On the other hand, many patients could not explain what exactly they experience, so this was one of the factors that prevented them from going to the doctor. Launching a hotline led to reducing the pressure on the health facilities and increase nutrition and health knowledge amongst remote populations.



Geographical coverage

Malawi (nationwide)



Key Actors & Ownership

Key actors that were involved:

- Malawi Government
- BMZ/GIZ FNSP
- Village Reach

CCPF had a pool of advocates within the MoH – especially in the time of political instability in Malawi (May 2019–June 2020) – who used every opportunity to promote CCPF. The former President Mutharika mentioned the hotline in the State of the Nation address, and CCPF is part of the five-year development plan of the country. Endorsement by the former President ensured that there would be a way for CCPF to continue operating. CCPF has eventually become the main source of information on fighting the COVID-19 pandemic at the national level.



Target beneficiaries

Pregnant women, parents of children under one, women of child-bearing age (WCBA), adolescents

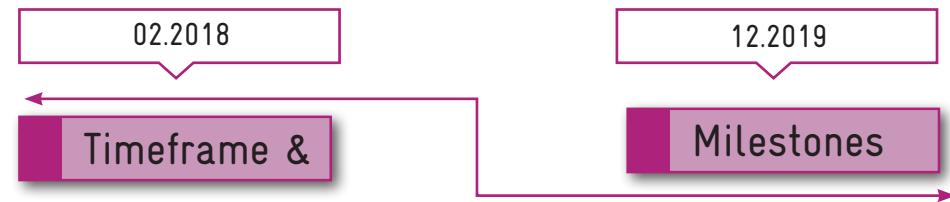
Total of 66,848 calls were received by CCPF hotline workers.



Objective

What was the specific objective of the process?

The project directly strengthened the capacity of CCPF to provide information and advice on nutrition in the two targeted districts of Dedza and Salima, as well as to the rest of the districts in Malawi. The activities contributed to scaling up the hotline, with CCPF becoming a national health and nutrition hotline operating 24 hours every day. Due to the positive impact of the hotline in providing health and nutrition advice to a large number of the population in Malawi, CCPF transitioned to the Ministry of Health in July 2019.



Chipatala cha pa Foni (CCPF): From idea to national health hotline

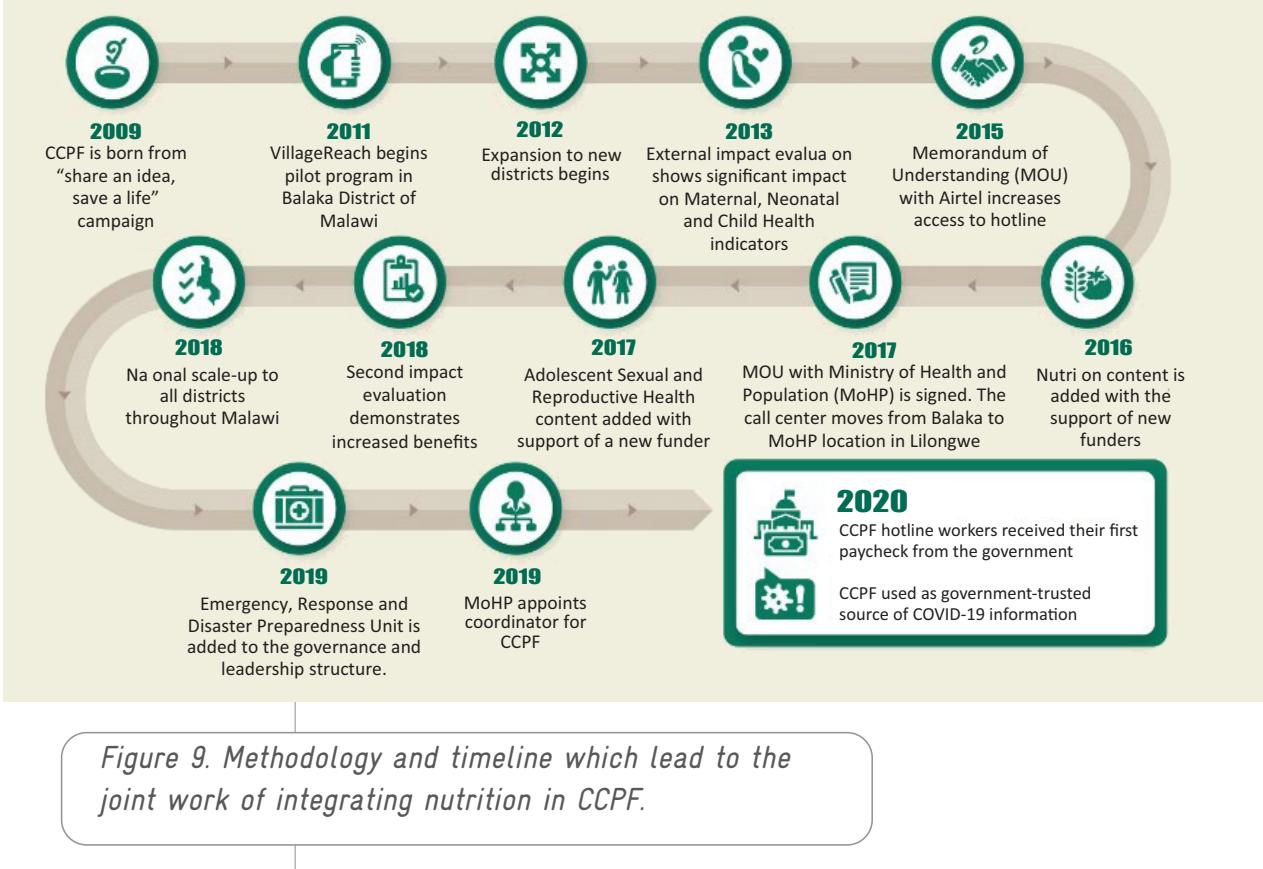


Figure 9. Methodology and timeline which lead to the joint work of integrating nutrition in CCPF.



Methodological approach

The methodological approach step-by-step:

- An externally made impact evaluation in 2013 showed that CCPF contributed to increasing knowledge of pregnant women on where and how to seek help.
- CCPF was operating in five districts (out of 28) across Malawi by 2015
- Signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Airtel including zero-rate calls for Airtel users made the hotline easily accessible to many the population.
- A module and information on nutrition were added to the CCPF services in 2016.
- A youth friendly module on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) was introduced in 2017.

- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) in 2017
- In 2018 CCPF became the first national health and nutrition hotline operating 24 hours
- The transition process to Malawi Government structures was finalized and CCPF became an integral part of the Ministry of Health (MoH) in 2019
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, CCPF served as the national toll-free hotline that provided accurate, MoH certified information on the virus disease



Costs & Resources

The total costs of the process:

The grant agreement in the duration from 01/02/2018 – 31/12/2019 amounted to a total of 207.700,28 EUR. (The supplement to the grant agreement amounting to 82.045,28 EUR was signed on the 12/09/2019.)



Sustainability & Do No Harm

During the grant implementation period, Village Reach transitioned the hotline to the Ministry of Health. This was a remarkable achievement for CCPF, since the continuity of the service was ensured as an integral part of the health sector response.

As part of the transition process, the MoH established the CCPF Steering Committee in 2016 to initiate discussions on the hotline's transition. The MoH Directorate of Clinical Services convened and chaired nine steering committee meetings where, among others, critical progress updates on the transition were provided to participating partners. Various MoH programs and departments participated in these meetings including the Reproductive Health Directorate, the National Malaria Control Program, DNHA, Health Education Services (HES), Community Health, CMED, the Nursing Department, the Quality Management Division, along with CCPF partners and donors in the country, including GIZ. A significant milestone for the transition was the approval of 25 hotline staff positions by the MoH in February 2020. The MoH hired 20 hotline workers (previously on Village Reach contracts) on the 1st of March 2020.

CCPF is in line with the technical reference framework for development partnerships in the agri-food sector. Specifically, CCPF supports food and nutrition security by promoting the consumption of healthy and nutritious food. The hotline is also a priority service contributing to the Health Sector Strategic Plan in Malawi. CCPF currently falls under the MoH Clinical Services Directorate and is guided by MoH protocols and standards. The hotline is also part of the Emergency and Rehabilitation Unit.

Documentation of Process Outcomes



(Initial) Results

The results/outputs of the process:

- **Objective 1:** Call growth has been much higher in Dedza and Salima relative to the national average (mobilization efforts championed by CARE and UP)
- **Objective 2:** The project recruited four more nurses who were trained on various health topics including nutrition models and customer care.
- Promotion of CCPF through radio jingles and phone-in programmes.



Impact

What was the impact (positive and/or negative) of this process on the beneficiaries?

An independent mid-term impact evaluation was produced by Jimat Consultants in March 2019. It covered CCPF activities in the period between June 2016 and August 2018. The evaluation was made with the aim of assessing the CCPF impact on individual health consumers since expanding to all the health topics including nutrition, as well as the impact through its contribution on the health system in Malawi. Overall, the evaluation showed that CCPF has a significant impact on maternal and child health indicators.

The results on General Nutrition showed the following:

- CCPF users were more likely to know the importance of a diversified daily diet (78% CCPF users vs. 22% CCPF non-users)
- CCPF users (46%) were more likely to know all the six food groups
- CCPF users (54%) were more likely to have consumed fats/oils foods

In addition, the evaluation showed that:

- CCPF helped introduce new topics to the population, such as nutrition
- CCPF impacted nutrition knowledge, but not necessarily food consumption



Success factors

What key conditions/factors (institutional, economic, social, and environmental) could be identified that made the practice successful?

CCPF provides a platform (a toll-free hotline) for the underserved communities to have access to accurate Ministry of Health (MoH) certified health information and referral services to nearby health facilities.

Interactive Voice Responses (IVR) including messages on the above-mentioned topics – the callers can call in for free and listen to the messages of their interest. They proved to be extremely popular, because the callers can also listen to them while waiting to talk to a hotline worker.



Constraints

What constraints/challenges were encountered when implementing the practice?

- From the experience of Village Reach management, they should have consulted as many departments at the MoH as possible, and DNHA prior to initiating the transition process. It is important for different departments to feed into the strategy, but also do the advocacy for the transition itself in the senior management meetings.
- Timely communication and preparation of the transition exercise with partners, so that they know what their role in the process will be and what impact their contribution will create in the process.
- CCPF engagement with Airtel – the MoU signed with Airtel stipulated exclusive cooperation between CCPF and Airtel. However, not everyone is an Airtel subscriber, and certain disservice has been done to the communities.
- The MoH should have been engaged in the negotiations and help unlock the toll-free service to all the users. The impact levels would have been significantly higher.
- Limited resources regarding the handover to MoH which may affect continuity. Even after the transition, the MoH will require support such as following up on the topics, integrating new messages, providing training and capacity development to the hotline workers, etc.



Replicability and upscaling

Describe the potential for replicability/upscaling within and outside of the program.

The intervention was about setting up systems or methods of interacting with the community on technical information. In the pilot phase, it was about nutrition messages. Previously, the facility had been used for COVID-19 message dissemination. The facility has been handed over to the Ministry of Health. It has been a major platform for interaction on technical information with the community on national health issues i.e. Cholera



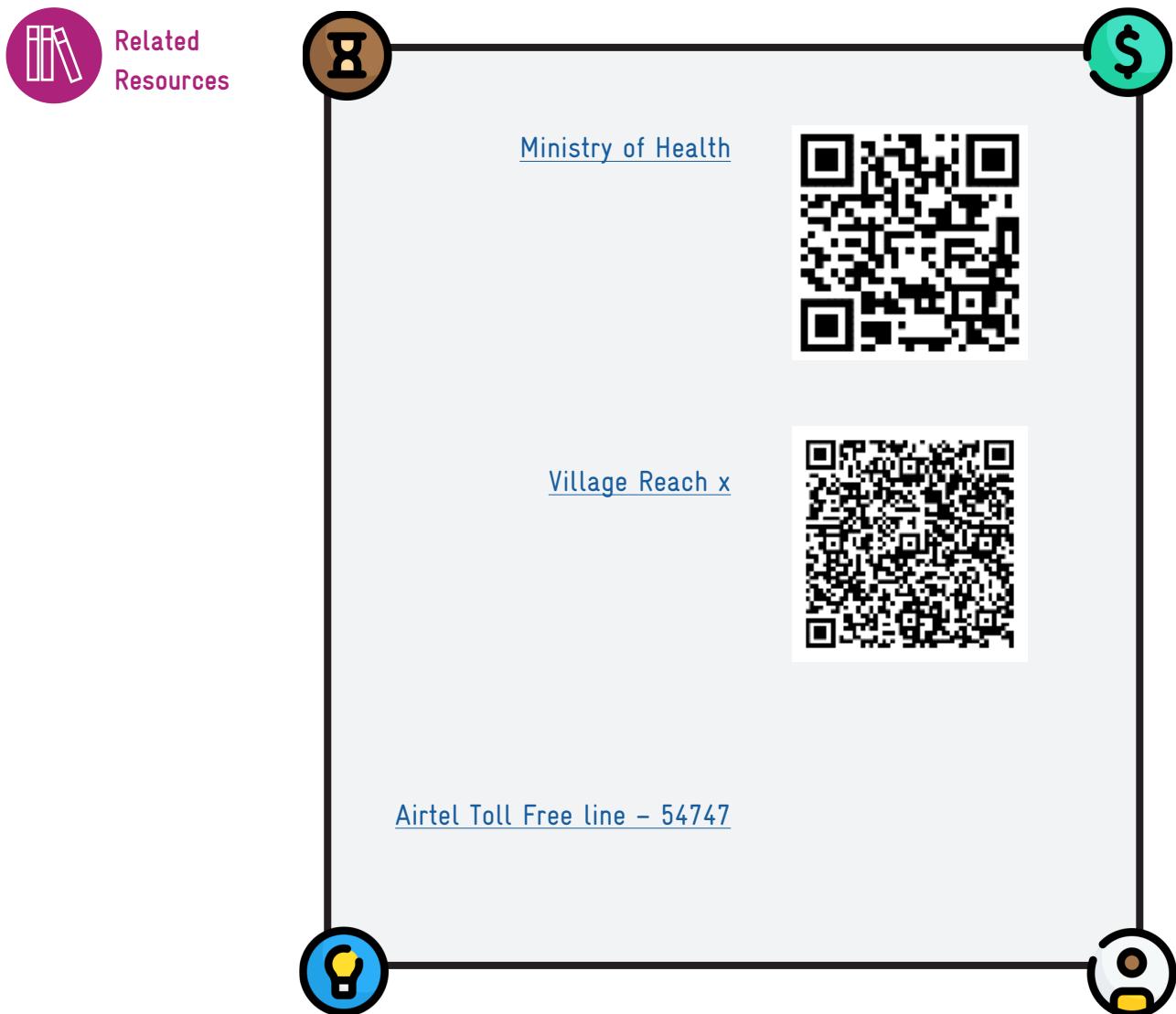
Testimony

“
We've seen significant improvements in the well-being of countless children

George Tambala, a nurse at CCPF since 2018, spends his days fielding calls from individuals seeking vital health information. “Many callers come to us with limited knowledge,” George explains, “requiring detailed explanations about their conditions and symptoms. We encourage them to call back, ensuring they feel supported and informed.” Though not a nutritionist, he has become well-versed in the field through CCPF’s training. He understands that malnutrition in Malawi stems from both food scarcity and a lack of nutritional understanding. Common inquiries revolve around nutrition during pregnancy, child feeding practices, and the six food groups. George and

his colleagues provide practical advice, such as recommending groundnut and vegetable porridge for children, and dispelling the myth that meat is essential for a balanced diet.

George is proud of CCPF's positive impact. "We've seen significant improvements in the well-being of countless children," he states, "thanks to the advice provided through our hotline." However, he recognizes the ongoing need for broader nutrition education. "Raising awareness remains a crucial task," he says. He looks forward to continued training, ensuring the hotline's services remain effective and impactful, and that they continue to offer valuable guidance to those who need it the most.



Section 05

Approach to continuous learning in the Food and Nutrition Security Programme



Photo: Various Malawi nutrition stakeholders at the animal source foods learning event hosted by FNSP at BICC © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

Section 5: Approach to continuous learning in the Food and Nutrition Security Programme

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Improving nutrition outcomes necessitates a robust learning mechanism capable of assimilating information, transforming it into a readily usable format, and effectively disseminating it to trigger action within the implementing community. This section introduces the Food and Nutrition Security Programme's (FNSP) "Success Story Narratives" as a key component of this learning process. Essentially, these narratives condense critical procedures – pivotal to achieving desired outcomes within specific interventions or high-level planning and advocacy endeavours. The following topics are covered within this section:

1

Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection

6

Strengthen mandates in districts

2

Nutrition Budget Line

7

Strengthen political institutions

3

Gender Transformative Approaches
for Improved Nutrition

8

Lean season response cash
transfers for improved resilience
and food security

4

Learning in FNSP to enhance
programme Outcomes

9

Village Savings and Loans
Associations for improved
resilience and food security

5

Local chicken program for
improved animal source food
consumption

10

Not adapted Village Level
Action Planning

The success stories presented within this section encompass a broad spectrum of objectives outlined by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme.

Topic 17: Adapted learning success story narratives

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Authors:

FNSP

FNSP Lilongwe

Success Story Narratives:

The Food and Nutrition Security Programme recognized the critical importance of learning throughout its interventions and collaborative discussions with government, partners, and communities. The primary objective was to derive actionable recommendations that would enable seamless upscaling and replication by other stakeholders. These learnings were systematically collected across ten key thematic areas, as previously delineated in the section head.

The focus of this learning process centred on identifying:

- 1 the critical roles played by involved stakeholders.
- 2 the instruments and activities utilized in implementing each thematic area.
- 3 the success factors that influenced the outcomes. These success factors are thoroughly documented to provide a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of success within each topic.

Furthermore, the analysis acknowledged the interconnectedness of these thematic areas across national policy processes, engagement with lead political partners, district-level implementation, and community-level participation. This holistic approach ensured that the documented learnings accurately reflect the multifaceted nature of the FNSP project.

The success stories presented herein are concise narratives that encapsulate major processes, designed to stimulate critical thinking and reflection. These brief accounts invite the reader to delve deeper into the implications of each statement.

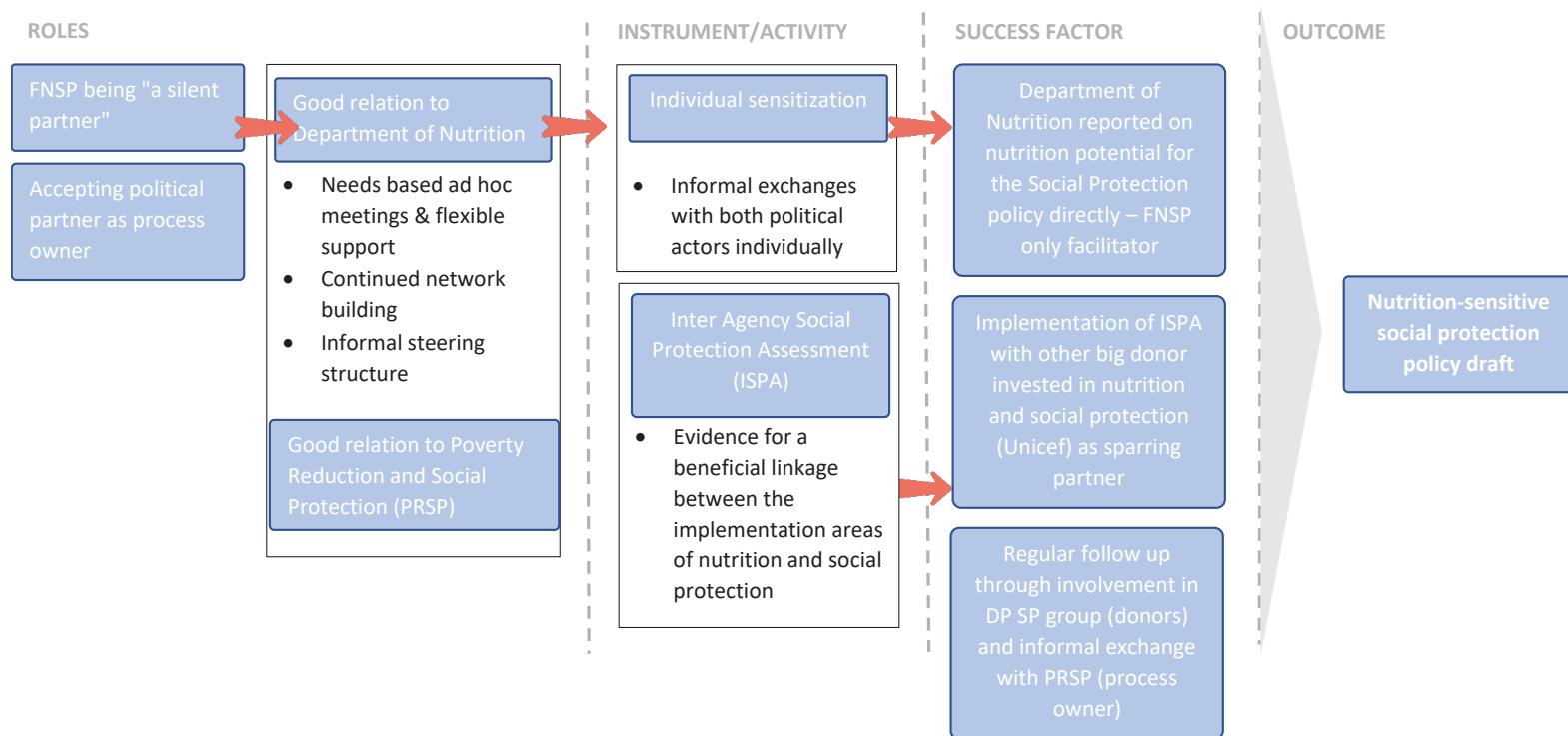
We encourage readers to carefully consider these learnings and success stories, and to utilize them as a foundation for developing and implementing similar initiatives. By sharing and applying these insights, we can collectively contribute to more effective and sustainable development outcomes in empowering nutrition coordination structures across the country.



Photo: The food and nutrition security programme hosting an after-action review session with project participant's © GIZ/FNSP Malawi



Success story narrative: Nutrition-sensitive Social Protection Policy*



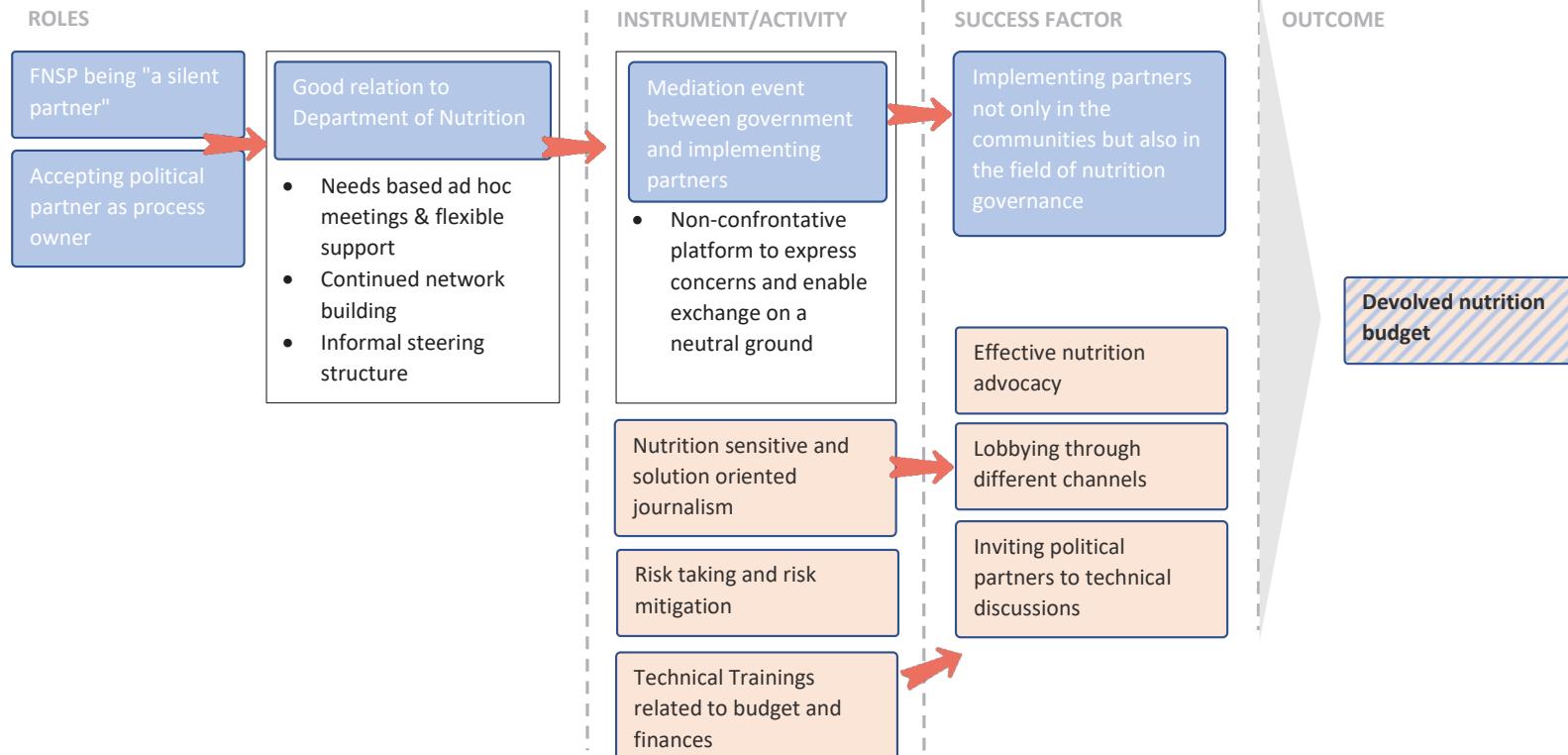
In preparing the Nutrition Sensitive Social Protection Policy, the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) collected evidence demonstrating the beneficial connection between nutrition and social protection through the Inter Agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA). The assessment results helped raise awareness among the Department of Nutrition and the Department of Poverty Reduction and Social Protection (PRSP), leading to the Department of Nutrition's involvement in commenting on the draft Social Protection Policy spearheaded by PRSP. This collaboration fostered a strong integration of nutrition within the Social Protection Policy.

Key success factors included presenting evidence to highlight mutual benefits and fostering interdepartmental cooperation initiated by GIZ but carried out by political partners, enhancing ownership and accountability. Challenges included the context-specific nature of the process, requiring patience and a deep understanding of the involved partners. Additionally, rivalries and competition among topics and actors could hinder strong linkages, making clear evidence and a well-defined theory of change essential for success.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.



Success story narrative: Nutrition budget line*



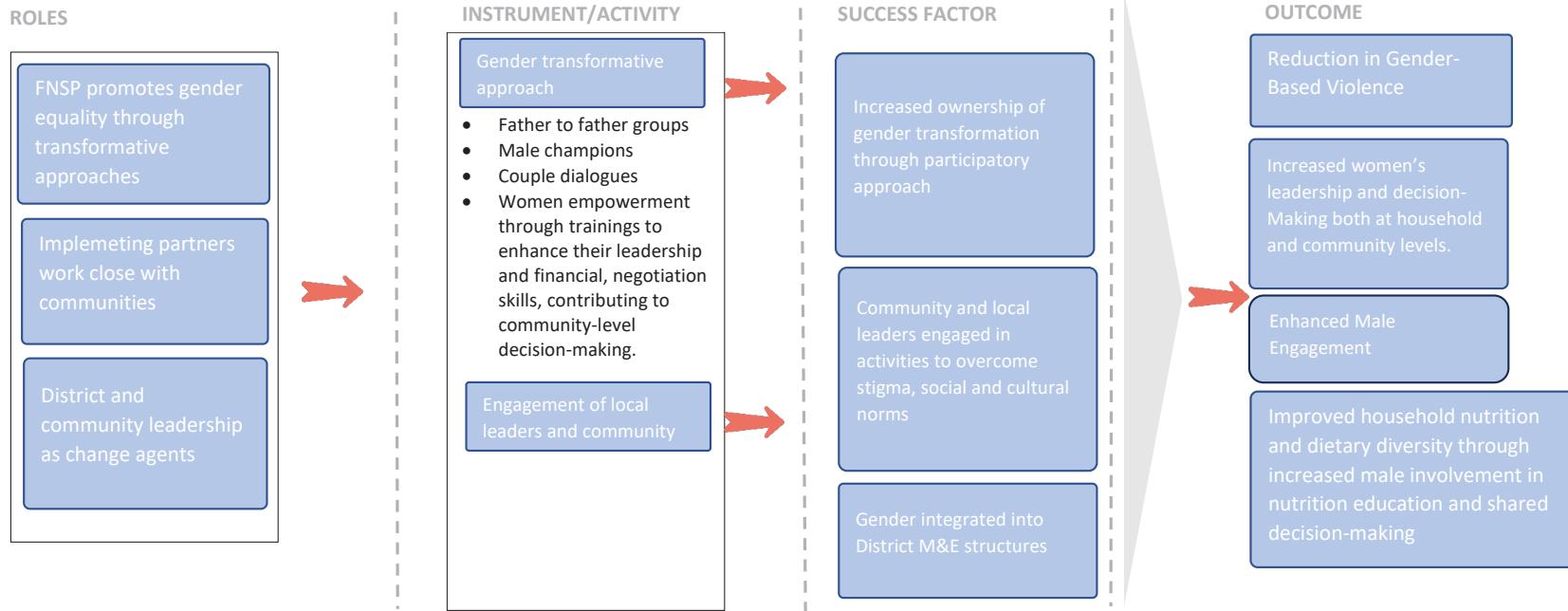
In Malawi, the Department of Nutrition is recognized as the leading political partner in co-creating and managing activities, while the Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) acts as an enabler and supportive partner. This dynamic fosters a strong working relationship characterized by ongoing network and relationship building, needs-based flexible support, and an informal steering structure.

Initially, there was resistance to this collaborative approach, but a mediation event facilitated a non-confrontational platform for expressing concerns, promoting transparent dialogue and controlled risk-taking. Key success factors include having implementation partners (IPs) engage at both the household and national levels, which enhances nutrition advocacy, lobbying efforts, and the integration of technical expertise from political partners in discussions. These steps have been crucial in establishing a national budget line for nutrition.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.



Success story narrative: Gender Transformative Approaches for Improved Nutrition*

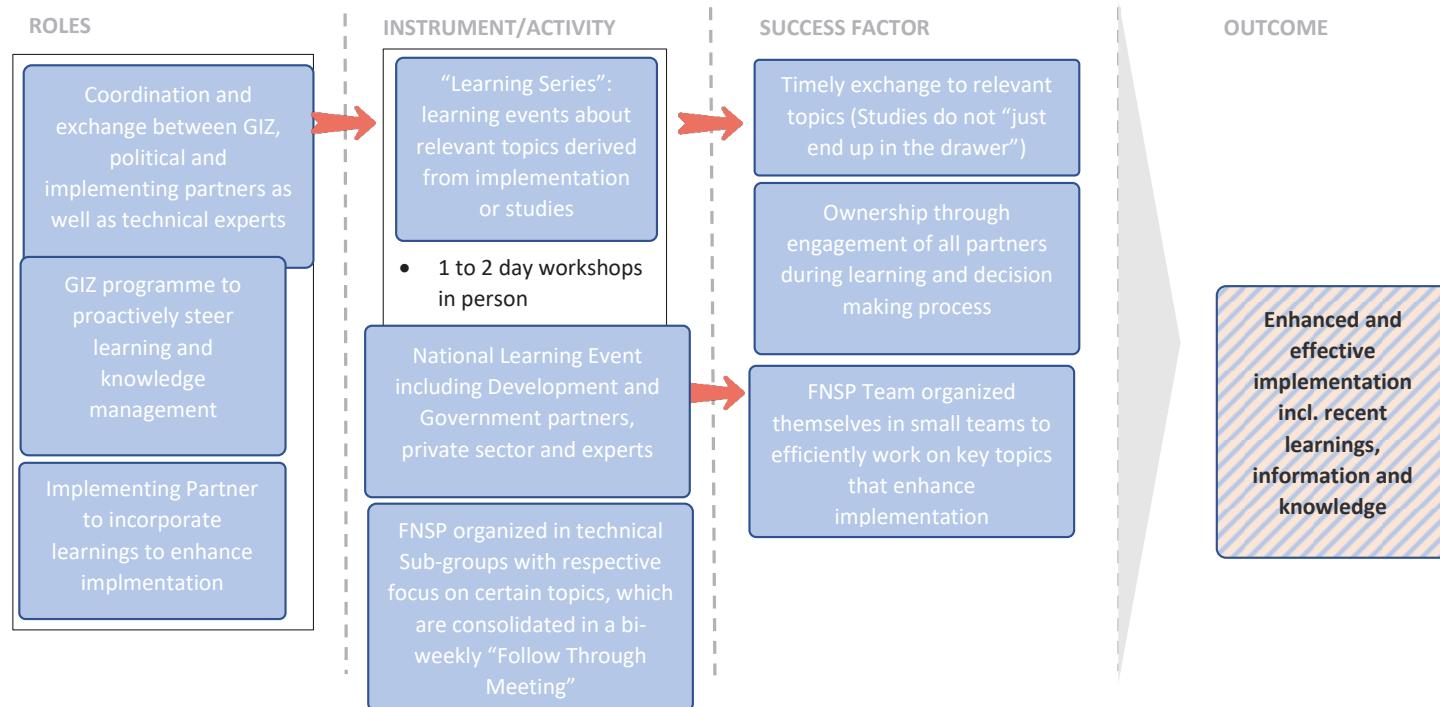


The Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) strategically promoted gender equality by adopting a gender-transformative approach that engaged men in nutrition, childcare, and household management. Key initiatives, including father-to-father groups and couple dialogues, challenged traditional gender roles and addressed gender-based violence (GBV). Women's empowerment was prioritized through training programs focused on leadership, financial negotiation, and decision-making at both household and community levels. The program also emphasized sustainability by developing exit strategies to maintain gender-responsive structures through local leadership. The expected outcomes included increased women's leadership and decision-making, enhanced male support for women's roles, and improved household nutrition and income, ultimately leading to greater community well-being.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.



Success story narrative: Learning in FNSP to enhance programme outcome*



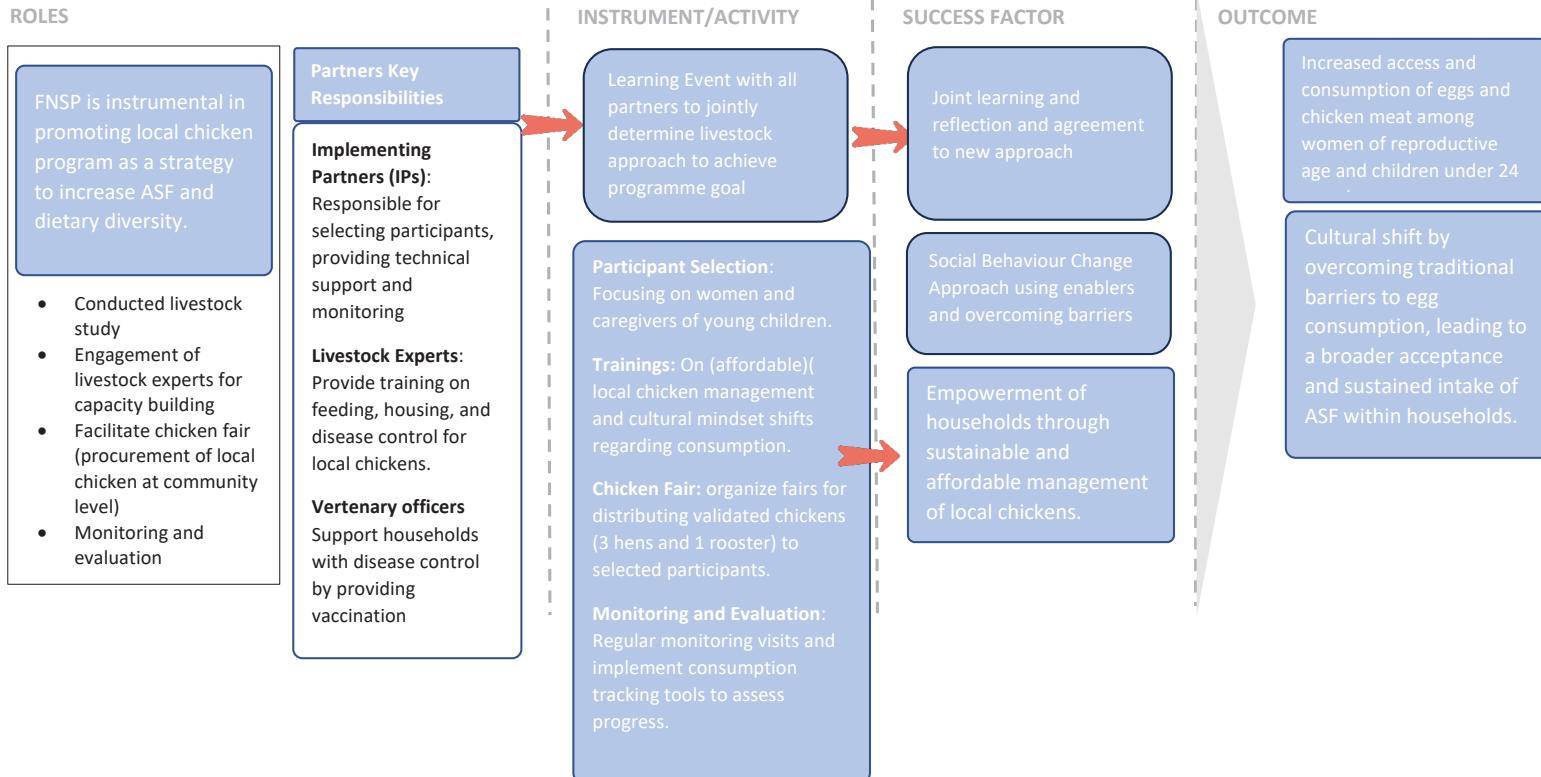
To ensure effective and current program implementation, it is essential to integrate lessons learned and new knowledge. In a complex setting, however, it can be challenging to quickly digest and apply this information. Often, reports, studies, or briefs may end up overlooked, without fully incorporating their recommendations.

To address this, the program adopted a learning series approach, fostering proactive information sharing and collaboration with partners through learning events. This led to timely adjustments that increased impact and improved outcomes, while strengthening partnerships, ownership and sustainability by involving all stakeholders. The learning events provided a platform for discussions and reflections, ensuring the program stays aligned with up-to-date information.

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Success story narrative: Local Chicken Program for Improved Animal Source Food Consumption *



The local chicken management model in Dedza and Salima has significantly improved dietary diversity by boosting the consumption of eggs and chicken, thereby enhancing nutrition for women and children and combating malnutrition. This model was introduced following a comprehensive learning event that included livestock experts and stakeholders, which allowed for reflection and adjustments to the livestock approach in the programme.

Women, in particular, gained empowerment through training on chicken care, enabling them to lead household nutrition and economic decisions, resulting in improved health outcomes. The program promotes sustainability by utilizing local resources, such as household waste for feed, which provides a stable source of protein and income. Continuous training and engagement of community leaders and government livestock officers further support the initiative's sustainability.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.



Success story narrative: Strengthening mandates in districts*

ROLES

- Accepting political partners as experts, who hold ownership
- GIZ programme is advisor not implementer
- Implementing Partner only as implementation support

INSTRUMENT/ACTIVITY

- Providing tools for advocacy to strengthen district actor's agency
- Placing a direct liaison
 - Creating opportunity and knowledge
- "Flexible" funding
 - Choosing mode of financial support that offers autonomy to the political partner
 - Trust in counterpart's capacities

SUCCESS FACTOR

- Clear counterpart placed for a direct liaison with political partners
- Capacity to directly voice and advocate for needs for flexible, quick and targeted solutions
- Encouraging political partner in strategic planning

OUTCOME

Strengthened district mandate

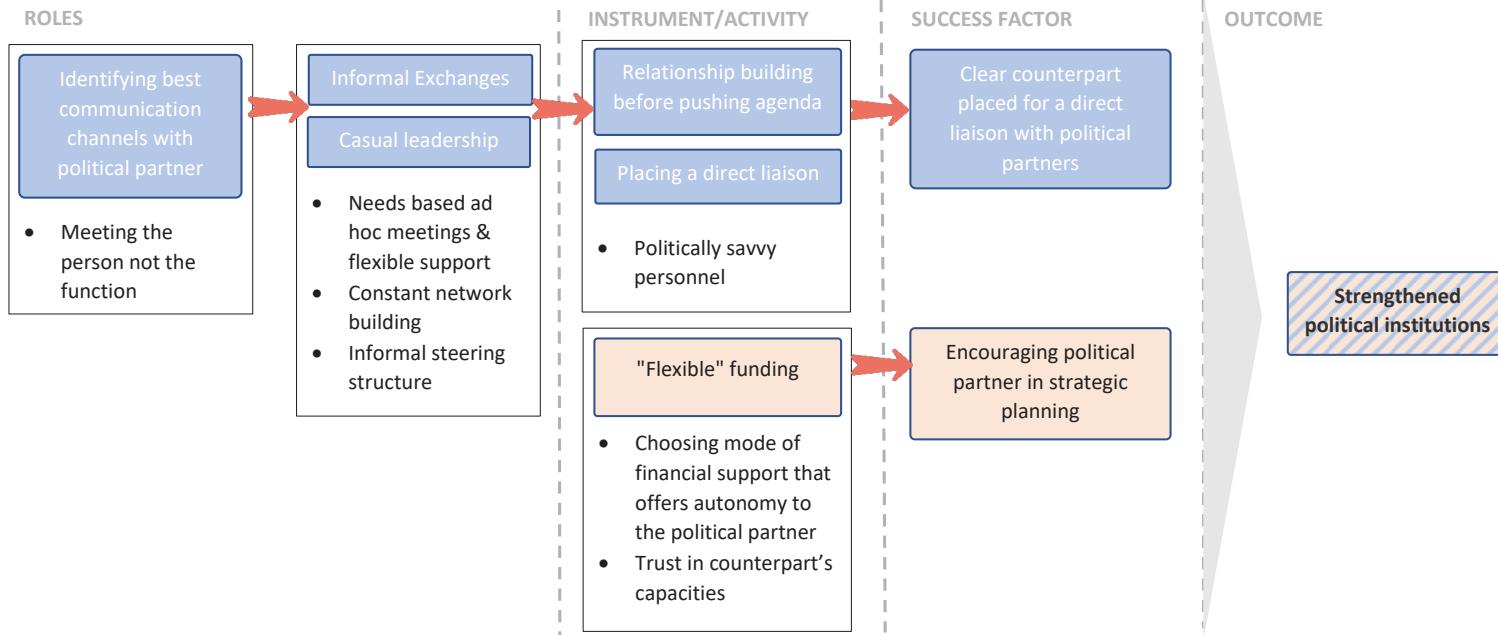
Effective communication varies by context and should be tailored to the political partner by **focusing on personal engagement rather than formal roles**. In Malawi, successful approaches include informal interactions and flexible leadership, such as needs-based meetings and casual lunch discussions. Building relationships is a necessary precondition for any content related discussion and appointing a politically astute liaison has facilitated this process.

A deep understanding of the partners' needs helps determine financial support methods that offer autonomy, allowing them to set and adjust priorities within a framework. Key success factors include having a dedicated team member to foster these relationships and a supportive environment that encourages political partners to engage in strategic planning. These steps are vital for strengthening political institutions.

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Success story narrative: Strengthening political institutions*



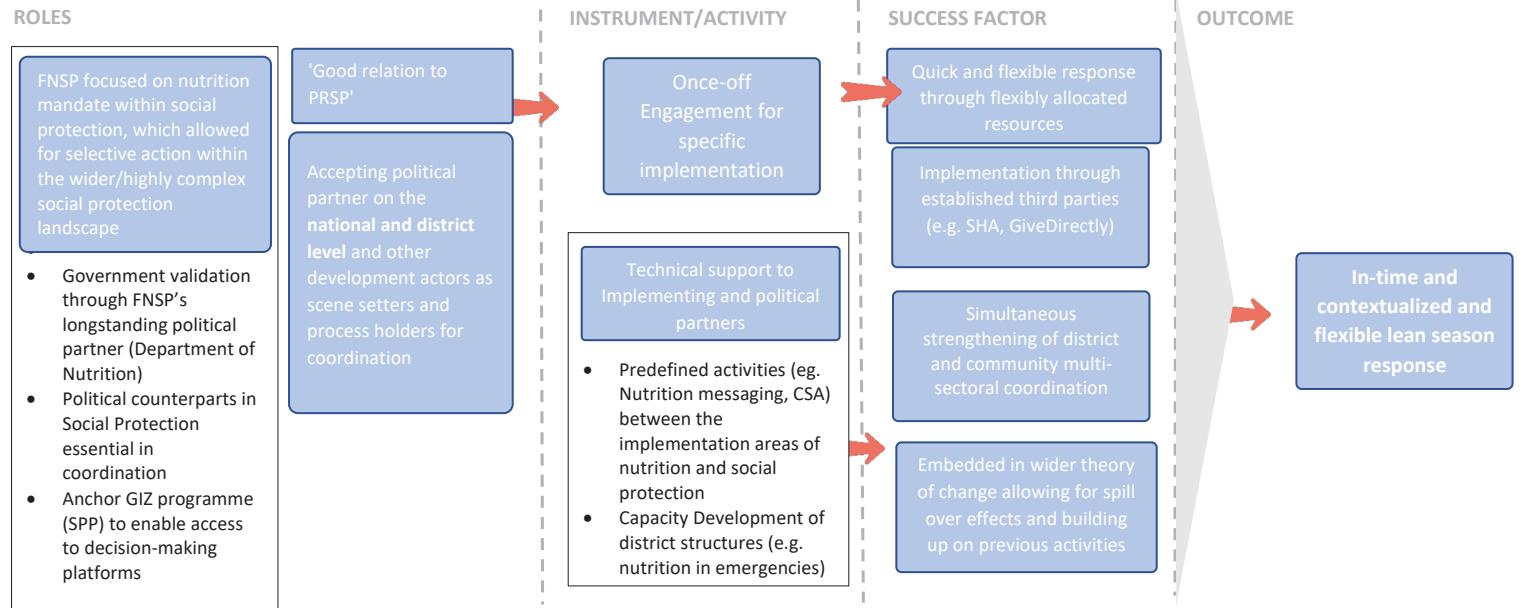
Effective communication varies by context and should be tailored to the political partner by **focusing on personal engagement rather than formal roles**. In Malawi, successful approaches include informal interactions and flexible leadership, such as needs-based meetings and casual lunch discussions. Building relationships is a necessary precondition for any content related discussion and appointing a politically astute liaison has facilitated this process.

Understanding the needs and capacities of partners is essential for selecting a supportive financial model that grants them autonomy. In this case, a financial agreement allows the Department for Nutrition to adapt priorities as necessary. Key success factors include having a dedicated team member/counterpart for relationship building and creating an environment that empowers the political partner to actively and independently engage in strategic planning. These steps are vital for strengthening political institutions.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.



Success story narrative: Lean Season Response cash transfers for increased resilience and food security*



Malawi's population, 90% of whom depend on rainfed smallholder agriculture, is increasingly vulnerable due to erratic rainfall patterns and extreme weather events associated with El Niño/La Niña. To address this, the Food and Nutrition Security Policy (FNSP) supports Social Cash Transfers as part of the Malawi National Social Protection Policy, aiming to enhance resilience and reduce negative coping strategies during five Lean Seasons.

These cash transfers (partially combined with nutrition and climate-smart agriculture initiatives), with specific objectives including short-term alleviation of severe food and nutrition insecurity in households, decreased financial barriers for agricultural inputs, and increased dietary diversity. Transfer amounts vary, ranging from minor top-ups to one-time payments of up to \$350, targeting households with malnourished children, pregnant and lactating women, or through universal targeting.

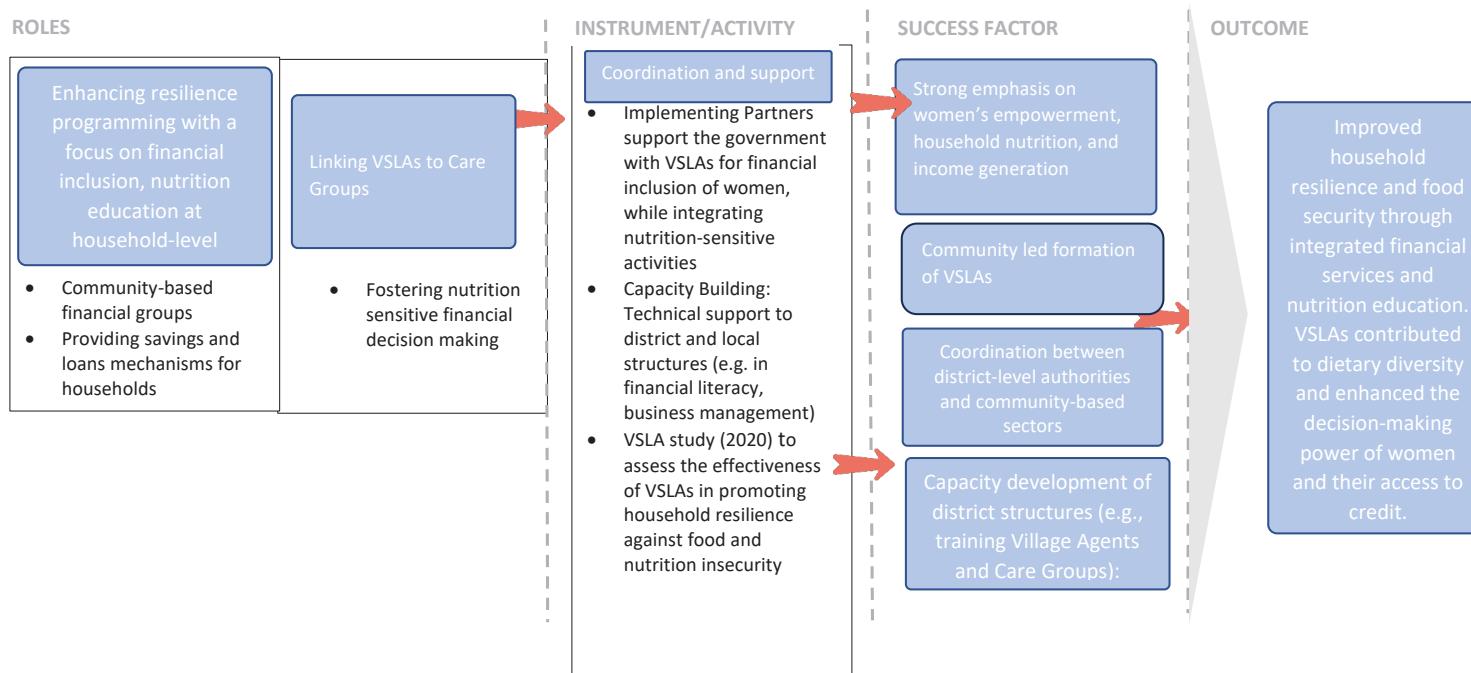
Key success factors include substantial emergency funds disbursed by BMZ in response to crises like the Ukraine conflict and COVID-19, which facilitated rapid spending. Established multi-sectoral coordination structures in Dedza and Salima, along with effective implementation of additional components, contributed to positive outcomes.

However, challenges remain, such as intransparent government and donor structures, which delay effective responses. The variability in activity designs complicates the comparability of efforts and makes it difficult to communicate successes. Evidence of success is primarily anecdotal, with limited research accompanying the 2022/2023 Lean Season Response. Additionally, unpredictable funding and personnel allocation pose ongoing challenges.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.



Success story narrative: Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) for increased resilience and food security*

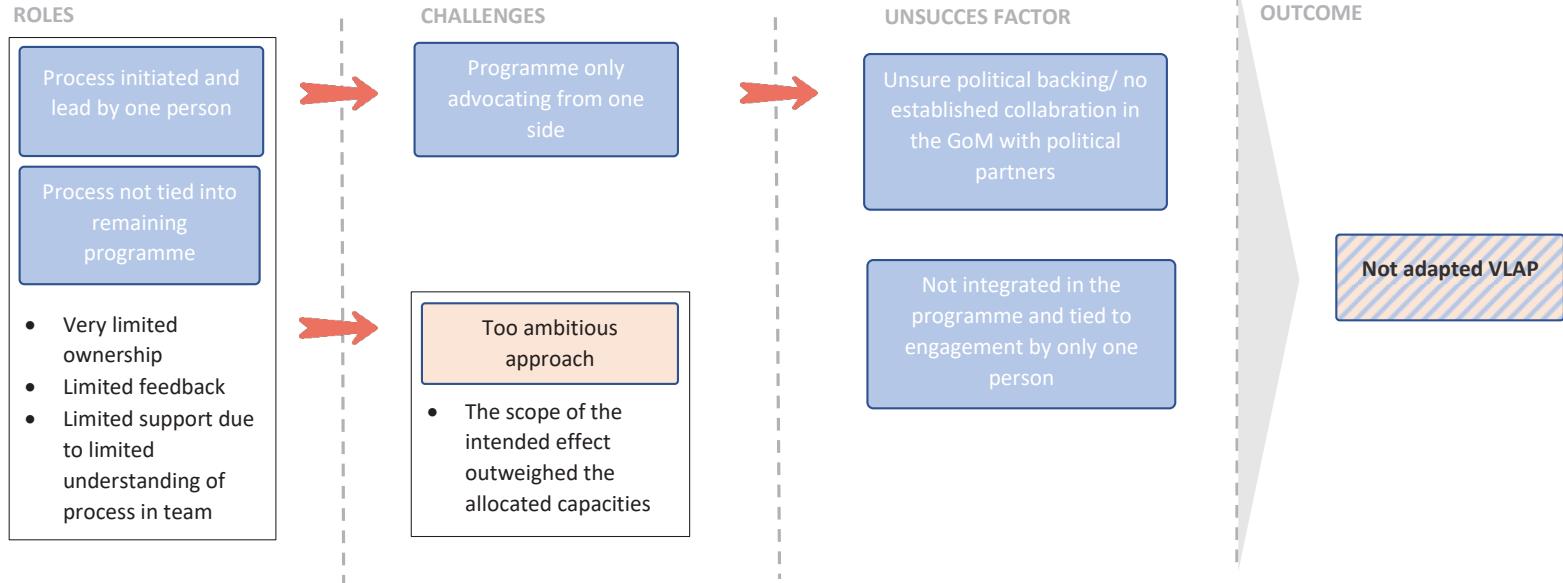


Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) have greatly improved resilience and food security in local communities. By pooling resources, members in Salima and Dedza districts are accessing loans that enhance individual livelihoods and promote economic stability. VSLAs empower participants, increasing food production and improving resource management. A 2020 study by FNSP highlights VSLAs as vital for financial inclusion, particularly for women, who gain access to credit for agricultural investments and small businesses. Members enjoy benefits such as better access to nutritional information, with 96% receiving nutritional messages through meetings. However, challenges remain, including insufficient financial literacy training and the risk of multiple borrowing. The project has worked with 581 Village savings and loan groups empowering 9195 women in financial and nutrition-sensitive decision making.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Security Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.



Learning story narrative: Not adapted Village Level Action Plan (VLAP)*



The process to include three activities from the Village Level Action Plans (VLAP) in the district development plans was not successful. Tracing the challenges faced in the process we identified causes in our role in the process, the design of the process and the resulting decision-making structures.

On FNSP side, the activities around the VLAP stand out in the results matrix and are difficult to tie into other activities. As a result, these activities were not steered by different colleagues involved in different aspects of the activities but limited to only one person. This limitation resolved in a very limited understanding in the team and therefore very limited ownership.

With this limited support, the advocacy for this activity was also very limited by the programme. The approach felt too ambitious for the chosen mode of work and too complex for the allocated capacities.

This led to unsure political backing and missed the chance to be further tied into the remaining programmatic activities.

*This is a highly simplified presentation of the process but shows the most crucial steps as identified by the Food and Nutrition Programme. For more information contact martina.kress@giz.de.

Section 06

Conclusion of all approaches



Photo: The new daily norm for households in Salima, sharing roles and chores – after Father-to-Father groups and Care Groups sensitizations © GIZ/FNSP Malawi

Conclusion: Transforming Nutrition in Malawi

Authors:



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Junior KM Advisor

Alinafe Malunga
Intern

Conclusion documented:
February 2025

The Food and Nutrition Security Programme (FNSP) has implemented a comprehensive strategy to address Malawi's persistent nutrition challenges, focusing on strengthening governance, enhancing dietary diversity, and building resilient rural communities. By fostering multi-sectoral collaboration and empowering local stakeholders, FNSP has laid a solid foundation for sustainable nutrition improvements.

Effective governance is paramount, and FNSP has significantly enhanced this through the development of a web and mobile-based Nutrition Coordination Tool, ensuring resources are strategically allocated. The integration of nutrition into social protection policies has addressed critical gaps, while the Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) hotline has bridged the gap between remote communities and essential nutrition health information. Empowering district authorities through local subsidy agreements and district funds has further decentralized nutrition governance, enabling tailored interventions. Additionally, the program enhanced multisectoral coordination and collaboration on a decentralized level. The key aspects to this positive change were functional committees for planning, steering, and monitoring of interventions, advocacy for increased allocation of resources and the shift towards a food system approach.

Recognizing the need for dietary diversification, FNSP has promoted innovative agricultural practices in rural areas. The Integrated Homestead Farming Approach, innovative sack and hanging vegetable gardens, and local chicken production have empowered households to produce and consume nutrient-rich foods year-round, moving beyond reliance on staple crops.

Building resilience within rural communities is crucial for long-term nutrition security. FNSP has supported initiatives such as mango drying for year-round consumption and income generation, unconditional cash transfers during lean seasons, and the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices. Improved irrigation systems, including gravity drip and solar-powered pumps, have empowered households to transition towards market-oriented production. Additionally, promoting Village Savings and Loan groups has fostered financial resilience and empowered communities to invest in productive activities.

Integral to FNSP's journey are learning and dissemination strategies. The project captured essential lessons learned from governance improvements to community-level resilience-building, ensuring that effective strategies are shared and utilized by other stakeholders.

These adapted approaches demonstrate FNSP's commitment to creating lasting change. By combining governance enhancements, dietary diversification, and resilience-building strategies, the programme has significantly contributed to improving nutrition outcomes and fostering sustainable livelihoods in Malawi proved by results of the Endline survey. The success of these initiatives underscores the importance of innovative, localized, and collaborative efforts in addressing complex nutrition challenges, offering valuable lessons for future interventions and scale-up.



Related Resources



Nutrition Coordination Tool Access



GIZ FNSP Information: GIZ Malawi Page



GIZ Global Food and Nutrition Security Programme Page



Over To You Podcast



FNSP EcoAgtube Page



SNRD Website (FNS WG)



FNSP – Malawi

Meet the Team – Our drive in documenting this learning journey.



Martina Kress
Team Leader

"It was a privilege working with the Food and Nutrition Security Programme alongside such dedicated, motivated, and determined partners and team members. What stood out most was our shared commitment to staying relevant by adapting our approaches whenever needed, guided by evidence and reflection rather than routine. We placed strong emphasis on learning, collectively striving to improve our systems, collaboration, and impact every single day. The team spirit, sense of shared purpose, and openness to grow were truly exceptional. In fact, there was not a single day I did not look forward to coming to the office. This energy and passion made FNSP not just a workplace, but a learning community driving meaningful change."



Vitowe Batch
Co – Team Leader

"Working on national-level governance in the FNSP was deeply rewarding because it put me at the heart of shaping how Malawi tackles food and nutrition security. I enjoyed bringing different voices together government, partners, and communities, to create solutions that are both strategic and practical. Seeing high-level commitments turn into action on the ground reminded me why collaboration and strong governance matter so much for lasting change."



Sussane Schwan
Technical Advisor – NSSP

"Bringing together different sectors corresponds to my conviction that we need more cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration to initiate important transformation processes and promote poverty reduction and food and nutrition security. Helping to facilitate this process in Malawi and seeing nutrition-sensitive social protection better reflected in policies and implementation was extremely rewarding. I highly appreciated working with different stakeholders, learning to better understand different perspectives, and trying to build bridges between different objectives."



"I really enjoyed collaborating with a big team with diverse backgrounds and expertise towards a joint goal that really felt impactful. But while doing that we had the freedom to try new paths, discover new partners along the way, or simply add us with our skills to the process. Besides often impactful results, working within FNSP also really changed how I work and approach challenges now."

Bernice Muller
Technical Advisor – NSSP and Food Systems



"What I appreciated most about my work was its practical nature: I shared reports with FNSP and partners and contributed insights based on my direct field experiences with project participants. Additionally, the platform offered valuable opportunities through trainings, conferences, mentorship, and the exchange of knowledge with experts from both FNSP and GIZ."

Kate Mwaungulu Botha
Project Coordinator



"Working on being part of the solution to enhance food security and community wellbeing has been both inspiring and fulfilling for me. I valued the opportunity to engage directly with communities and government partners, collaboratively exploring context-specific strategies to address food safety, food security, and malnutrition in the country."

Witness Dupu
Junior Advisor – District Coordinator



"I appreciated that my work was always a collaborative team effort and involved joint co-creation. I had the opportunity to address nutrition from a multisectoral perspective, which enabled the integration of diverse sectors and led to improved nutrition outcomes."

Anja Schmidt
Technical Advisor – Knowledge Management



"What I loved about FNSP was seeing how our initiatives like the innovative gardening impacted communities. I enjoyed every bit of my work in communications and knowledge management, from developing podcasts to crafting key messages with the team. Deeply, what made it even more special was the amazing teamwork and family spirit we shared."

Rachel Kachali
Technical Advisor – Communication



"What I loved most about my work was listening to the voices of project participants and understanding their perspectives on the programme, especially regarding its successes and challenges. This feedback provided valuable insights that helped improve the programme's effectiveness and ensure it met their needs."

Ezekeil Luhanga
Technical Advisor – M and E



Sabrina Draheim
Development Advisor – Dedza

“What I loved about FNSP was working in the districts. Being close to communities and government partners because that is where most learning happens. Through that closeness, works as the lean season response came out of district-led reflection: we sat with partners, reviewed what worked and what didn’t, captured lessons, and built recommendations into the next round. Instead of insisting on one way, we adjusted interventions based on context and that is exactly why the work felt honest, responsive, and impactful.”



Chawezi Phiri
Junior Advisor – District Coordinator

“What I loved most about my role was the opportunity to work with government structures to strengthen nutrition governance and also working directly with project participants to witness improvements in some of the FNSP promoted behaviours.”



Chisomo Dambula
Technical Advisor – Q & A

“I loved FNSP because it let me share real, on-the-ground Malawian experiences you do not find written anywhere. It felt meaningful to know those insights could help the next implementer see what works, what does not, and what to avoid. I also valued that it was a space to speak honestly about everyday challenges, not just successes. That gave my work purpose, each lesson, good or tough, contributed to improving how we implement nutrition and food systems programs in Malawi.”



Amos Tizora
Junior Advisor – M and E

“What I liked most about working in FNSP, was seeing how technology could directly address the coordination challenges that had long slowed progress in the nutrition sector.

For the Nutrition Coordination Tool to succeed, we had to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders from government ministries to NGOs and development partners which created a rich learning environment. Engaging with people of different expertise and perspectives not only strengthened the tool’s design but also expanded my own capacity and understanding of multisectoral collaboration.”



Kai Naegle
Development Advisor

“I am grateful for the close cooperation with communities and political partners that made real change possible – and for a warm, brilliant team that made this time so meaningful.”



Trevor Madeya
Junior Advisor – Knowledge Management and Phasing Out

“Working in FNSP exposed me to new ways of working, this involved collaborating with others in several multi-level nutrition interventions and being innovative in presenting the program. I really enjoyed the work, and it challenged me to level up and the teams’ approach of being solution oriented caused a ripple effect on my everyday work and office presence.”



Esther Gunsalu

FNSP Intern

"What I loved most about my work at FNSP was the strong collaboration across departments. I especially valued that my role extended beyond nutrition to include monitoring and evaluation, giving me the opportunity to engage in both office management and field-level implementation with partners."



Hazel Kantayeni

Care FNSP Manager

"What I loved most about FNSP was its flexibility to adapt and apply lessons learned throughout implementation. This approach created a dynamic platform for continuous learning and allowed strategies to be tailored to the needs of the communities. It empowered us to respond effectively and meaningfully, ensuring greater impact and ownership at the grassroots level."



Virginia Banda

Care Advisor

"What I really loved about this project is how we achieved real, lasting change by bringing the entire community in. The best part was seeing how empowering local women and truly engaging the community created sustainable food security. By blending smart agriculture with nutrition and using climate-smart, local solutions, the project wasn't just a temporary fix it built long-term resilience, and our data proved it was all working efficiently."



"What I loved most about FNSP is its holistic, community-centred approach. Integrating nutrition, agriculture, gender empowerment, and resilience, it provided life-saving nutrition support through cash transfers during emergencies. Its approach used care groups, savings groups, and behaviour change initiatives; it promoted ownership, dignity, and long-term impact, making FNSP truly remarkable."

Jane Simwaka
Care Advisor



"I loved how FNSP improved household knowledge on nutrition and how it promoted utilization of locally available foods to improve nutrition of women and young children."

Ivy Banda
Care Advisor



"One thing I loved about FNSP was its holistic approach to transforming lives. The program addressed every angle of a household: From backyard gardens and livestock management to economic empowerment, disaster risk management, rapid response, and strong coordination at all levels. Such a comprehensive and unique program."

Felista Chulu
Self Help Africa FNSP Manager

Core team pictures in different periods of the project

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FNSP Malawi – Its Over To You

