



**Country Specific Information: Malawi**  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
Office of Food for Peace

**Fiscal Year 2014: Title II Request for Applications**  
**Title II Development Food Assistance Programs**

**Summary**

The U.S. Agency for International Development’s Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) anticipates that funds and commodities will be available for development food assistance programming in Malawi in fiscal year (FY) 2014. The total anticipated FFP funding is \$30 million in Title II and \$60 million in Community Development Funds (CDF) over a five-year period to support two awards, with \$4 million in Title II resources and \$12 million in CDF available in FY 2014, subject to the availability of funds and commodities. Applications can include variable annual funding levels over the life of activity but the total amount awarded will not exceed \$30 million of Title II and \$60 million of CDF. Monetization of Title II commodities is not permitted due to the availability of CDF. To be eligible for assistance under this Request for Applications (RFA), the program must use Title II food aid resources, specifically commodities, for direct distribution only in Malawi. Given this eligibility requirement, FFP will not consider applications without direct distribution activities. The direct distribution activities should be accompanied by complementary activities that increase availability, access, and utilization/consumption of food and reduce vulnerability to food insecurity. This Country Specific Information (CSI) supplements FFP’s FY 2014 RFA. Both documents must be used for developing an application for submission.

The FFP development programs will encompass two distinct geographic areas, resulting in two awards (see *Geographic Priorities* section below for more information):

- The first award totaling \$10 million of Title II resources and \$20 million of CDF over the life of the award will target Balaka and Machinga, two current Feed the Future (FTF) priority districts.
- The second award totaling \$20 million of Title II resources and \$40 million of CDF over the life of the award will expand the FTF zone of influence, and focus on the districts in southern Malawi with high levels of food insecurity and historic need for humanitarian assistance, specifically the districts of Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre (rural area), Phalombe, Mulanje, and Chirazulu. Applicants should select no more than three of the six districts listed above and the districts selected should be contiguous.
- The USAID/Malawi Mission may also obligate up to a total of \$500,000 in FTF resources over the life of the activity to enhance knowledge research and information sharing, and improve linkages between Title II and FTF funded activities. FTF resources are subject

to the availability of funds and may be either issued as part of the second award or as a separate, but parallel third award.

The following chart summarizes anticipated funding availability for the life of the awards -

Location	Title II Funding	CDF	FTF
First Award - Balaka and Machinga	\$10,000,000	\$20,000,000	0
Second Award - Three Contiguous Districts (Selected from: Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre (rural area), Phalombe, Mulanje, and Chirazulu)	\$20,000,000	\$40,000,000	\$500,000

Applicants may apply for only one or both awards, but a separate application is required for each. Applicants applying for FTF resources should include a specific FTF narrative and clearly specify FTF resources in the budget portion of the application.

### **Current Food Security Situation**

Two million people, or 13 percent of the population in Malawi, currently face extreme food insecurity. According to the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee, production shortfalls caused by climate change, population growth, and environmental degradation make many households vulnerable to food shortages. A recent study by the United Nations World Food Program (U.N. WFP) notes that half of all Malawians are food energy deficient and have inadequate food consumption due to a heavy reliance upon maize as a primary food source. Agricultural production serves as a source of income, but increasingly erratic weather conditions and skyrocketing food prices have made smallholder farming households vulnerable to food insecurity. Lack of crop diversification, poor yields, and dependence on rain-fed farming are key factors in worsening food security in recent years. According to the National Statistical Office, population growth of 3.3 percent per year further contributes to increasing pressure for poor households to cultivate marginal and less fertile lands, particularly in densely populated districts in the south where food insecurity is the worst. The toll of food insecurity in Malawi manifests itself most significantly in the poor nutritional status of its children. Nearly half of Malawian children under five years of age are stunted, indicating a high level of chronic malnutrition.

### **Programming Priorities for Title II Resources in Malawi**

#### *Overview*

The overall goal of the FFP development program is to ***reduce chronic malnutrition and food insecurity and build resilience among vulnerable populations in Malawi***. The recently approved Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for USAID/Malawi provides the overarching strategic framework and guide for integrating FTF investments managed by USAID through the Bureau of Food Security (BFS) and FFP programming. The CDCS incorporates the FTF Multi-Year Strategy, which includes the current Title II program, and aligns the entire Mission portfolio in health, education, environment/climate change adaptation and economic growth with the Government of Malawi's (GoM) priorities. Examples of joint priorities include agricultural growth as seen in the Agriculture Sector Wide Approach Program (ASWAp), and nutrition as seen in the National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan.

The CDCS proposes integration as the overarching development hypothesis of the five-year strategic plan, i.e., “if assistance is integrated, then development results will be enhanced, more sustainable, and lead to achievement of our CDCS goal, Malawians’ quality of life improved.” Integration will use a 3-C approach: Co-location where sensible; Coordination; and Collaboration. The CDCS outlines strategic and synergistic roles for the BFS and FFP investments that jointly contribute to the reduction of poverty and hunger in Malawi and are supported by other Mission programs in health, education, environment, economic growth and governance.

The CDCS recognizes the catalytic power of the integrated rural community development approach that has been evolving in the Title II programs in Malawi during the past 10 years. This integrated rural community development approach is a top priority for the new FFP Malawi development programs. Priority components are maternal and child health and nutrition (MCHN) including the care group model and developing links to existing family planning activities, agriculture and natural resource management including both Climate Smart agriculture and value chain activities, village savings and loan groups, and disaster risk reduction. Integration with the FTF program will be achieved through the 3-C approach. Applicants are expected to explain how they will coordinate with other USAID, donor and GoM activities and priorities and should include a strong focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout all phases of the program (more information on gender can be found in the RFA).

#### *Development Approach and Sustainability*

FFP seeks to implement effective models, build capacity, and create an enabling environment adapted to the Malawi context. Therefore, applicants must provide an overall development strategy that seeks to create, when possible, self-financing and self-transferring models that will continue to spread under their own momentum both during and after the project. FFP expects that these models will be adopted and adapted by a significant proportion of the population. Many examples of this type of intervention exist, but one particularly successful example of this type of model is the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) system that is spreading in Niger. A paper describing this system can be found here: <http://www.ifpri.org/publication/agroenvironmental-transformation-sahel>.

For the program to be successful, sustainability must be built into the program from its conception. Applicants should place strategic importance on sustainability during all levels of program design. Applicants must identify linkages with local structures, institutions, and organizations at the district, Traditional Authority (TA), and village level. *When working through and with existing structures, institutions and organizations, applicants must develop a capacity building plan for these entities.* Applicants should propose an integrated suite of interventions using appropriate sequencing and combination of activities that will lift households from food insecurity. This should include an analysis of potential impact, where applicants are expected to explain how and what methods will be used to justify the proposed livelihood and agricultural interventions. Interventions must be evidence-based and discuss implementation in the Malawi context taking into consideration livelihood zones, cultural and religious practices of the target populations. Program design should consider that within operational districts, TAs may have differing needs and different levels of food insecurity, requiring multiple combinations of interventions tailored to the local community.

Applicants should propose evidence-based improvements to the integrated rural community development approach as it is currently implemented in Malawi through the FFP-funded Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement (WALA) program. These should include more explicit integration with FTF and other Mission programs, with USAID’s Water and Development Strategy implementation, with BFS centrally funded programs (especially Africa Rising, AGRA Scaling Seeds and Technologies Partnership, the Feed the Future Innovation Labs implemented by Title XII Universities, formerly known as Collaborative Research Support Projects (CRSPs), with other development programs, and with government and host country systems) – by means of the recommended 3-Cs. This integration effort is not one-way, but all programs should be proactively promoting such integration. For example, the FTF flagship value chain program, Integrating Nutrition into Value Chains (INVC), is incorporating the Title II care group model, now adopted by the GoM, into its activities in five of the districts in the FTF Zone of Influence where Title II programs are not currently operating.

Applicants are encouraged to coordinate and collaborate with the FTF INVC to ensure that approaches for care groups, agriculture, market and value chain activities are consistent across the entire FTF agriculture and health portfolio. This type of integration requires concerted and explicit coordination and collaboration. In areas where the Title II development programs may be co-located in the same district with the FTF INVC program, coordination is critical to ensure coverage is comprehensive, seamless, and not duplicative.

#### *Geographic Priorities*

As stated in the **Summary** section, the FFP development programs will encompass two distinct geographic areas. One award totaling \$10 million of Title II resources and \$20 million of CDF over the life of the award will target Balaka and Machinga, two current FTF priority districts. Applicants are expected to work in close coordination and collaboration with other activities under the CDCS and FTF INVC activities in particular.

The other award, totaling \$20 million of Title II resources and \$40 million of CDF over the life of the award, will expand the FTF zone of influence, and focus on three contiguous districts in southern Malawi with high levels of food insecurity and historic need for humanitarian assistance and should be chosen from Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre (rural area), Phalombe, Mulanje, and Chirazulu. FFP expects applicants to reach the majority of the district with a focus on highly food insecure TAs with intensive and integrated activities. Targeting should be based on prevalence of stunting, historical needs for food assistance, population demographics, and livelihood zones, and TAs should be contiguous where possible.

In selecting TAs, applicants must either prevent overlap with or explain how they will sequence, layer, and integrate with other food security activities (see section on Strategic Partnerships and Coordination). Applicants may propose interventions in districts and TAs where FFP activities are currently operational. However, the application must substantiate proposed target areas based on comparative need, activity sequencing, and potential improvement in food security for the beneficiary households. Applicants should provide maps to the TA level for areas of geographic targeting.

### *Beneficiaries*

Applicants should develop an integrated rural development program that targets entire communities and within this program the focus population for various component activities may be different. Applicants are encouraged to use a household economy analysis (HEA) approach as described in the Malawi Livelihood Baseline profiles (2005 and to be updated in 2014), which breaks down the population into wealth groups – very poor, poor, middle, and better off – relative rankings for the specific livelihood zone – to develop a strategic plan for working with individual communities.

The smallholder farmers targeted in the FTF INVC flagship program are the “poor with assets” – in HEA this is most often the “middle” group in a livelihood zone. This constitutes the wealth group, a layer or two above the smallholders that should be targeted in FFP development programs. It is important to understand that not all “poor” farming households are equal. Some are “poorer” than others and some have more opportunities or more resources than others, and often dependency ratio is a distinguishing factor. While the primary target of the FFP program should be the very poor and poor, some Disaster Risk Reduction and resilience activities should also engage the middle and better off wealth groups within the entire community. Some Title II value chain activities focused on the poor members of farmer organizations should also engage with association members who are in middle or even better off wealth groups as they can provide valuable role models or mentors for the newer members of an association.

To maximize nutrition impacts, households with children under 2 and pregnant and lactating women should be prioritized for activities beyond MCHN to facilitate sustainable reductions in food insecurity, one of the major underlying causes of chronic malnutrition. Beneficiary targeting should also focus on young adults (approximately aged 14–24), as they make up a large percentage of the population and will likely become parents during the life of the Title II program, but are often marginalized.

### *Programmatic Priorities /Types of Activities*

To sustainably reduce food insecurity in Malawi, a highly selective package of activities must be designed to address the underlying factors of food insecurity and under-nutrition as well as an integrated set of activities that aim to boost household health, productivity and income. Interventions should be context specific, tailored to individual households and communities, and not a one-size-fits-all approach. With greater diversity in agricultural productivity and income sources, rural households will benefit from increased income and greater resilience to shocks, and decreased reliance on rain-fed agriculture. This approach is intended to yield compounding returns in food security status by simultaneously addressing availability, access, and utilization of foods. All of the interventions need to include gender considerations.

For maximum development impact, cross cutting issues such as market development, environment, youth engagement, behavior change, gender equality and local governance should be incorporated throughout. Interventions should be fully integrated, i.e., layering of activities at a household and village level, to maximize their impact, and sustainability and exit strategies should be clearly articulated.

Examples of program activities could include, but are not limited to:

1) Agriculture and natural resource management:

- Increasing farmer skills in farm management including small livestock and business planning with whole farm budget for decision-making. This would include working with farmers to develop the optimum combination of food from their own production, income from the sale of high value crops, value-added processing, off-farm income, and other income sources.
- Incorporating basic literacy/numeracy as part of the package to enabling farming households to become better farm managers and businesspersons. Special emphasis could be placed on tracking the cost of production in order to engender a better understanding of return on investment and profit.
- Demonstrating and promoting climate smart agricultural technologies such as soil and water conserving practices appropriate to the ecosystem and promoting diversified cropping systems.
- Promoting methods for eliminating aflatoxin contamination in foods through farm management and improved post-harvest management. This may include behavior change communication and market incentives for low aflatoxin-burden foods.
- Promoting natural resource management focused on sound management of soil, water and biological resources.
- Coordinating and collaborating with public and private sector extension and advisory service providers.
- Strengthening and working with existing community structures.
- Promoting farmers' voices (especially women farmers' voices) to ensure feedback to research, input suppliers, markets, public and private extension providers, and demand for services.

2) Increasing market access, information, and orientation:

- Supporting village-based, informal savings groups to assist with market access and small scale initiatives. Included as part of this, an effort should be made to assist members of the group to make strategic investments and diversify livelihood opportunities as well as develop basic literacy and numeracy.
- Improving access to credit for small and medium enterprises.
- Establishing and strengthening economic opportunities for women and youth, including both on and off-farm income-generating activities and access to markets, including training or support to entrepreneurship ventures/private sector for job creation.
- Linking to existing market and market information programs operated by USAID or other donors including, but not limited to, FTF INVC, the Agriculture Commodity Exchange, WFP's Purchase for Progress program, Esoko and Farm Radio.

3) Improving MCHN outcomes (note – these interventions must be closely coordinated with the appropriate office within Ministry of Health and Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS, and be consistent with GoM policies and practices):

- For MCHN interventions, please refer to the RFA on the “First 1,000 Days Approach: Preventing Chronic Malnutrition” as a guide, while considering the GoM policies and practices.

- Supporting and creating linkages with the Nutritional Policy and Strategic Plan, (specifically, the community infant and young child feeding), USAID, and other donor supported health, nutrition and HIV/AIDs activities where appropriate.
- Supporting existing or developing new care groups to promote Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) and Scaling up Nutrition. Note: Any interventions should use existing behavior change communication and information, education and communication materials that have been developed or endorsed by the GoM and build on those to address other barriers to implementation of ENA that have been or are identified in new formative research.
- Linking to and promoting access to appropriate family planning services and information.
- Working with existing structures, such as Village Health Committees and Health Surveillance Assistants, to support and promote growth monitoring and promotion, vitamin A, iron, folic acid, and de-worming at the village level.
- Increasing household dietary diversity, diet quality and income through homestead food production (such as home gardens, poultry and other small livestock programs) taking into consideration issues around women’s workload. This should clearly be linked to increasing farmer skills in farm management.
- Promoting improved household and community water, sanitation, and hygiene practices and facilities.
- Mobilizing communities to support existing or new, community-based child care centers at the village level.
- Distributing rations<sup>1</sup> to children ages six months to two years old and pregnant and lactating women during the lean season. Rations can include a mixture of Title II and CDF *locally* procured foods (Please see FINTRAC’s Bellmon Estimation Study for Malawi).
- Engaging strategies for special outreach to male partners and household members.

4) Enhancing risk management:

- Supporting livelihood-centered disaster risk reduction activities and planning while taking into account the various gender needs and constraints of the community;
- Promoting community-led seed security schemes;
- Assisting and supporting communities and districts in establishing and managing early warning systems; and
- Using food for assets or cash for assets interventions to support community asset creation. This could include the use of mobile money systems for cash transfers. If cash for assets is proposed, applicants have to demonstrate that participants have suitable access to food markets.

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<sup>1</sup> Explained in Codex GUIDELINES ON FORMULATED COMPLEMENTARY FOODS FOR OLDER INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN CAC/GL 8-1991 <http://www.codexalimentarius.org/standards/list-of-standards/>

*Program Linkages, Strategic Partnerships and Coordination*

Beyond the linkages with the USAID/Malawi FTF INVC program, successful implementation of the program will require coordination with other stakeholders and the creation of strategic partnerships with the GoM through its line ministries at the national level as well as through district and local government authorities. Coordination should take place within appropriate district mechanisms and include, but are not limited to, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, public and private extension service providers, District Executive Committees, District Development Committees, Area Development Committees, Village Development Committees, Department of Disaster Management Affairs Village Health Committees, Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS and the Ministry of Health. In addition to the 3-C approach referenced above for working with FTF and other USAID supported activities, applicants need to demonstrate how their proposed activities will be coordinated with and compliment other programs such as, but not limited to DFID's Enhancing Community Resilience Program and Developing Innovative Solutions with Communities to Overcome Vulnerability through Enhanced Resilience project, the World Bank's Shire River Valley project and on-going U.N.'s programs.

*Gender*

Please refer to the RFA for information on gender.