Highlights
WFP is the largest provider of school meals in Malawi. Overall, school meals by all providers reach 31 percent of all primary school children in Malawi. WFP reaches 18 percent of all primary school students, focusing on the poorest, most vulnerable and hard-to-reach areas in Malawi. These tend to be rural areas.

Currently, 732,561 children are being reached by WFP school meals, meeting 100 percent of those targeted. Ultimately aiming for universal coverage, the Government is preparing to increase the overall reach of school meals by targeting a further 285,000 children in 285 schools. It has requested WFP’s support in capacity building to do so, as well as in achieving its goal.

Situation Analysis
The October 2012 Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) food security update, released in November 2012, projects that the vulnerable population in Malawi has increased from 1,646,663 to 1,989,649 people, representing a 21% increase (342,886 people) from November 2012 to March 2013. The increase was noted in 5 southern districts of the original 15 districts the MVAC identified as food insecure and one additional district (Chiradzulu) was added in the south. WFP aims to assist 1,951,137 people while other NGOs will target 38,513 people. The number of people in need of assistance will peak between January to March (the typical lean season in Malawi). According to the MVAC, the main factors contributing to the increase include the following: poor rainfall performance; increase in food prices and essential non-food items; low poor cash crop production and sales; devaluation of the local currency; and instability in the supply of fuel products which is contributing to logistical problems of moving food commodities from food surplus to food deficit areas. The national average retail price of maize is currently 77% higher compared to the same time last year (prices went from 33.20 MK per kg to 58.67 MK per kg). Maize prices are even higher in southern Malawi. For example, in the Phalombe district, the retail price of maize is MK 80.00 per kg. Roughly one million people could require emergency assistance to meet basic food needs. These problems, in combination with structural causes of food insecurity in Malawi have increased vulnerabilities among the poor.

WFP school meals are implemented in the most chronically food-insecure districts, particularly in the southern rural areas, where poverty is most pronounced and natural disasters are most frequent. WFP also supports vulnerable districts in central Malawi. WFP school meals are implemented in 11 districts that require emergency food assistance between August 2012 and March 2013. During emergencies in these parts of the country, school meals are an important safety net to protect children from hunger, and ensure that the education process is not disrupted. School meals have also demonstrated a positive impact on education indicators, which is particularly important in a country with very poor education outcomes. Despite the fact that primary education is free, the enrolment rate is only 83 percent, primary school completion rate is only 39 percent, and repetition rates are high at 19 percent. School meals are provided through strong partnerships with the Government and other stakeholders. Beneficiary targeting for the school meals programme is undertaken by joint assessments with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

Achievements
• The programme was linked to improved pass rates, particularly for girls who saw a 10 percent increase in pass rates in supported schools compared to 5 percent in non-supported schools.
• 732,561 children were fed under the school meals programme, meeting 100 percent of the planned target for the school feeding programme.
• 681 schools in the most vulnerable, hard-to-reach areas (all rural) were reached, representing 13 percent of all schools in Malawi.
• 7 percent increase in enrolment in WFP-supported schools since 2010 (from 683,223 to 732,561 students).
• Gender equality in education, with a gender ratio at 1.04, in favour of girls. Female enrollment increased by 37 percent in targeted schools compared to a 9.7 percent decline in non-targeted schools.
• Low drop-outs for boys and girls at 3.6 percent, compared to a 10.8 percent national average.
• Improved attendance rates. WFP-supported schools have higher attendance rates at 95 percent compared to the national average of 92 percent.
• Strong coordination and capacity building of Government partners and other stakeholders. In view of the hand-over strategy for full Government ownership of the programme, in 2011, 1,560 Government staff were trained by WFP in school meals programme management.
• High priority of the school meals programme in the national agenda. It is one of five priority areas of investment under the National Social Support Programme and is one of the programmes included in the Ministry of Education National School Health and Nutrition Strategy. It is also a priority in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (2011-2016).
• A holistic approach to education. WFP works with partners to support the Child Friendly Schools initiative, to provide construction materials for classrooms, as well as water and sanitation interventions. WFP is also working with a local teacher training college to develop a course on school meals for the national teacher training curriculum. Thus far, WFP has trained 12 teachers, who will train others on this programme.
Current Activities

In March 2012, WFP and the Government launched a five-year country programme that covers three components: Support to Education, Nutritional Support and Disaster Risk Reduction for Food Security. The Malawi country programme builds on the country strategy (2012-2016) and is fully harmonized in terms of objectives and timing with national development plans (Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II), the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the WFP corporate strategy.

WFP’s support to education under its school feeding programme dates back to 1999. By contributing to increased enrolment rates, WFP’s school feeding programme supports the Government’s education goal of universal primary education. The specific objectives of the programme are the following: 1) contribute to increasing the proportion of boys and girls accessing and completing pre-primary and primary education in WFP assisted schools; 2) enhance the capacity of the Government of Malawi to design and implement a sustainable school meals programme. The WFP school meals programme includes the following activities:

- **Daily meals** for primary school children. This helps to increase enrolment, attendance, attention in class and completion. Most children in Malawi do not have food before going to school.

- **Take home rations** for girls and orphan boys in upper grades. Rations are given during the lean season in order to enhance education for these two vulnerable groups when economic hardships or cultural practices discourage families from sending their children, especially their daughters, to school. By making sure each child attends school at least 80 percent of the school days, WFP is also making sure that attendance is consistent so that the learning process is continuous.

- **School meals to Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres.** This activity, currently being designed, will eventually reach 100 ECD centres. Higher access of vulnerable children to ECD may better prepare them to access primary education at the right age, and perform well.

- **A Home Grown School Meals model** will empower communities to manage their own school feeding programme, give local farmers an opportunity to access and benefit from the school feeding market, and provide students with fresh, nutritious, locally-grown food. This project will begin in 4 schools in one district, and will aim to scale-up step-by-step to a nationwide school meals programme. Currently, most schools are being supported through a centralized model.

- **WFP is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and other partners in project management, food procurement, monitoring and evaluation and reporting.** This forms part of the exit strategy which focuses on a progressive hand-over of responsibility for the management of the schools meals project to the government.

Beneficiary Perspective

*Mwani Ngori, teacher, Lengwe Primary School*

“The girls are encouraged here. As a female teacher, I try to be a role model for them. The school meals are also important. Since the school meals started, there have been fewer girls leaving school. This year, there were only 2 girls who got married. In the past, there might have been 8 or so.”

Future Activities

- **WFP will continue to build the capacity of Government to take-over management and scale-up of the school meals programme.** WFP will hand-over schools step-by-step to the Government, aiming at a 15 percent transfer of schools by 2016; all of these will have been converted to a more decentralized, participatory model of Home Grown School Feeding.

- **WFP will continue to seek partnerships that improve education outcomes.** WFPS and USAID are exploring a partnership to increase literacy rates in WFP-assisted schools through the USAID-funded Read Malawi programme. According to the National Statistics Office, in 2009 the overall literacy rate in Malawi was at 69 percent (79 percent males / 60 percent females). Under this partnership, USAID would take advantage of increased numbers of children as a result of incentives provided by school feeding. Getting kids to school and keeping them there as long as possible is the most important step in improving national literacy rates, and WFP helps to achieve this. Improved literacy would help WFP achieve its overall objectives of children completing primary education.

Donors

McGovern-Dole is the most important donor for the WFP school meals programme in Malawi. Since 2010, these funds covered 75 percent of the needs for the entire programme. As a result, many of the programme outcomes and outputs can be attributed to this funding resource.

WFP is developing a new funding strategy, consistent with its new vision of school feeding in Malawi. For example, it is seeking a WFP/World Bank partnership on Home Grown School Feeding. WFP is also supporting the Government on its own fundraising strategy to build its capacity in the area of school meals.

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