



## Feed the Future Malawi Improved Seed Systems and Technologies (MISST) Project: Orange-fleshed Sweetpotato Component

At the end of its third year, the project enabled over 48,000 households to produce and consume pro-vitamin A rich orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) varieties. We have built the capacity of private sector, government and NGO's to scale out OFSP technologies for the betterment of smallholder farmers in Malawi.

### What is the problem?

In rural Malawi, limited crop and food diversification results in consumption of diets that are lacking in essential micronutrients. Vitamin A deficiency is still a large problem affecting especially women and children under the age of five. Households are often not aware that consuming OFSP is a proven and easy way to enhance their vitamin A status. Moreover, farmers who have heard about the nutritional benefits of the crop often struggle to access the planting material of these improved varieties. This is because multiplication of OFSP planting material is not commonly occurring in close proximity to the farmers. Farmers with access to OFSP are often unaware of the various options for utilization at household level, or how best to store or market their freshly harvested roots.

### What do we want to achieve?

We aim to provide 62,500 farmers with OFSP planting material. These farmers will have hands-on experience with the cultivation of available varieties and will gain knowledge on agronomic practices. They will be aware of the importance of maintaining planting material over the different seasons and should also understand the nutritional benefits of the crop. Through participatory evaluation, we want to identify methods to store fresh roots over a longer period of time, and scale out the most preferred and successful options. At least 20 commercial multipliers will be able to supply OFSP vines to large-scale buyers and at least 200 community-based vine multipliers will supply their surrounding communities with clean planting material. Through media involvement, field days and demonstrations (Fig. 1), we will create more demand for both OFSP roots and vines.

### Where are we working?

The project activities are implemented in the Feed the



Fig. 1 Harvest Field day in Mbwadzulu EPA in Mangochi district. (credit P. Mamboya)

Future Zone of Influence in most Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) in seven districts in Malawi: Mchinji, Lilongwe, Dedza, Ntcheu, Balaka, Machinga and Mangochi.

### How are we going to make it happen?

We are building the capacity of private sector, government and NGOs through trainings of trainers on all aspects of the sweetpotato value chain, including commercial and community-based multiplication of planting material, on-farm variety demonstrations and evaluations by farmers, participatory evaluation of post-harvest root storage technologies, nutritional messaging and recipe demonstrations as well as vine and root marketing. Partners will subsequently train others in their organization and roll out activities to the rural households they are supporting by integrating OFSP work into on-going projects. Much of the farmers' trainings take place around the 'mother-baby' demonstration plots. On a 'mother plot' a host farmer demonstrates the six available OFSP varieties: Zonden, Ana Akwanire, Kaphulira, Mathuthu, Kadyaubwerere and Chipika. Fifty farmers around the mother plot receive a bundle of planting material of one of the varieties to plant in their own garden as a 'baby plot'. We also involve media and drama to create more awareness on the benefits of OFSP.



Fig. 2 Popular comedians Chindime and Samalani performing at Katuli trading center in Mangochi district. (credit P. Mamboya)

### Who are we working with?

We work with the government Departments of Agricultural Research and Extension Services and Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS. International NGO partners include We Effect, Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe, whereas national partners include the Catholic Development Commission in Dedza. We integrate part of our activities with other USAID funded projects including Tetratich's Protecting Ecosystems and Restoring Forests in Malawi (PERFORM), and NJIRA, implemented by Project Concern International and Emmanuel International. We have also been involved in root storage and fertilizer trials with Ex-Agris Africa Limited, a private commercial farm in Lilongwe district.

### What have we achieved so far?

Over 48,000 direct beneficiaries received planting material and training on agronomic practices, vine conservation and nutrition messages by participating in the mother-baby variety demonstrations. More than 40 commercial vine multipliers have received training on vine multiplication and over 20 have actively started selling OFSP planting material. Ninety Decentralized Vine Multiplication (DVM) sites have been established to provide clean planting material in the communities. More than 853 technical staff from ten project partners received training on mother-baby demonstrations, vine multiplication, post-harvest and root storage, marketing, nutrition and M&E.

We engaged popular comedians by the name of Chindime and Samalani (Fig. 2) to conduct live comedies in 21 markets across the MISST Zone of Influence districts. We developed two jingles to help create awareness among



Fig. 3 Popular musician Skeffa Chimoto, the composer of the OFSP Promotional Audio and Visual song. (credit B. Kachisa)

indirect beneficiaries. The jingles have been played on national radio and television stations. Recently, we engaged a popular musician by the name of Skeffa Chimoto (Fig. 3), who composed an audio and video song promoting the benefits of OFSP. The song has been approved by USAID, and the project will now work with the musician, other media outlets (including social media) to publicize it and make the message reach as many people as possible.

### What's next?

We will engage and train more commercial vine multipliers and more DVMs. This will ensure more sustainability of planting material supply and reduced needs to transport perishable planting material over long distances. We will continue scaling out the most promising OFSP varieties targeted to specific agro-ecological conditions and enhance awareness of the nutritious benefits and market potential of OFSP roots and vines through media. We will seek to engage partners that can help us strengthen our agriculture to nutrition linkages to ensure farmers receiving nutrition messages have access to planting material and understand agronomic practices, achieve good yields and receive maximum benefits from investing in crop diversification with OFSP.

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