

Developing Integrated Value Chains to Enhance Rural Smallholders' Incomes and Food (DIVERSIFY) Project-Malawi

The project has reached 3,000 household farmers with orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) planting material, conducted value addition training and home-based food processing to 100 lead farmers who are continuing to reach beneficiaries.



Fig 1. Harvesting and yield assessment training of lead farmers (Credit W. Kumwenda)

What is the problem?

In Malawi, food insecurity is a key challenge in Thyolo, Chiradzulu and Balaka districts due to small land-holding sizes, high population density, and unpredictable climate. Most farmers are used to growing maize and low yielding sweetpotato varieties. In addition to the above challenges, there is a serious problem of vitamin A deficiency (VAD), which mostly affects pregnant women and children under 5 years. The Developing Integrated Value Chains to Enhance Rural Smallholders' Incomes and Food (DIVERSIFY) project was introduced in January 2017 and is funded by the European Union with additional support from the Australian Government. The major problems in the target districts are hunger, low incomes and malnutrition which have been accelerated by climate change, limited agriculture production/nutrition knowledge including low crop diversification. DIVERSIFY is aiming at reducing these problems through the introduction of four newly released high yielding OFSP varieties.

What do we want to achieve?

DIVERSIFY seeks to build resilience among 3,000 households by June 2020, through improved food security, incomes and nutrition levels. This will be achieved through increased production, sale, processing and consumption of OFSP by accelerating farmer access to quality planting material of the best four new OFSP varieties: Chipika, Kadyaubwerere, Kaphulira and Mathuthu. This will in turn contribute to increased food availability, dietary diversity, and improved vitamin A intake among pregnant mothers and children under the age of five years. The project is encouraging rainfed as well as winter production to ensure continuous availability of OFSP roots and vines.

The project is working with Mothers Holdings, a food processing company with the goal of purchasing fresh roots from farmer groups to produce bread, buns, and other confectionaries in their bakeries across the country.



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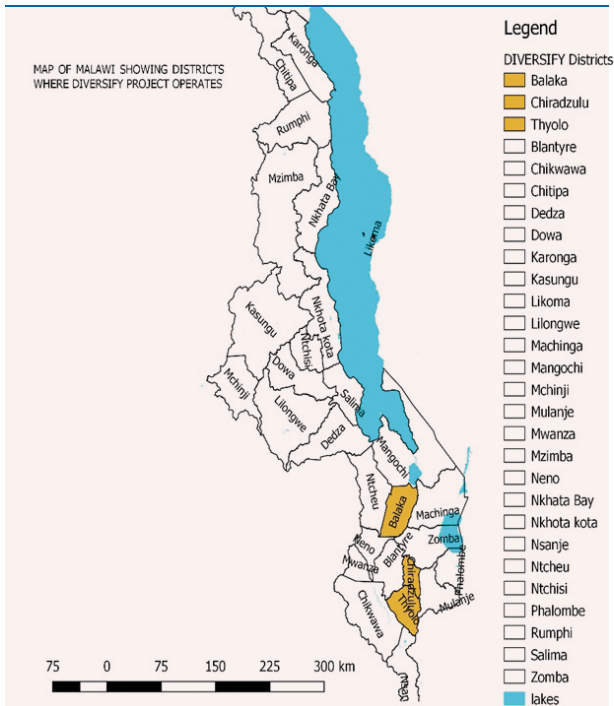


Fig 2. Map of Malawi showing target districts

Where and with whom are we working?

DIVERSIFY is working with United Purpose (Formerly Concern Universal) and the Iman Consulting Group. The project is reaching out to beneficiaries through the existing Government structures in the Ministries of Agriculture and Health to make sure that there will be sustainability at the end of the project. In this current phase, the project has targeted the three districts of Balaka, Chiradzulu and Thyolo where the nutrition and food security problems are severe (Fig. 2).

How are we making it happen?

DIVERSIFY is training lead farmers who in turn reach out to the target beneficiaries. The project is training farmers to form groups to enable them sell their produce at a good price and it is also supporting nutrition education activities with communication tools and training. The project is introducing and promoting OFSP storage, utilization and value addition at the community level through home-based food processing technologies (Fig. 3).

What have we achieved and learnt so far?

The project has reached 3,000 household farmers with OFSP planting material, conducted training on value addition and home-based food processing to 100 lead farmers who are continuing to reach beneficiaries. The project has learnt that both men and women are interested in improving the nutrition of pregnant mothers and children under five years of age, so it is important to train both.

What Next?

The project will continue to reach out to both Government extension agents and lead farmers to solidify the gains it has made.

Fig 3. Home-based food dishes prepared during the training. From left: a. Futali, b. Mixed pot with fish, c. mixed pot with meat, d. Porridge for children over six months and e. Doughnuts as snack food (Credit W. Kumwenda)



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