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# **Evaluation of Tsogolo la Thanzi - Healthy Future Home- Grown School Feeding Project in Malawi from 2020 to 2023**

Decentralized Evaluation report - Volume I (Main Report)

World Food Programme Malawi

DE/MWCO/2023/021

September 2024

# Acknowledgments

NRMC (A subsidiary of Intellectap) evaluation team wishes to acknowledge the guidance, support and cooperation received from all the participants in the evaluation.

NRMC takes this opportunity to sincerely thank the distinguished government officials from the Ministry of Education, and Directorates of Planning of School Health, for their time and precious input.

The NRMC Evaluation Team expresses its gratitude to Mr. Simon Denhere, Deputy Country Director, WFP Country Office in Malawi, Mr Jean Providence Nzabonimpa and Ms. Jennifer Sakwiya from WFP Regional Bureau for South Africa for their quality guidance and review, Ms. Nicole Carn, Mr Jason Nyirenda, Ms. Monica Msiska, Ms. Sandra Kamvazina and other colleagues at WFP Country Office and district offices for their valuable suggestions and guidance for the evaluation.

We are thankful to the team from Kadale Consultants for their partnership with the NRMC team during the evaluation, particularly on data collection.

Lastly but not the least, the evaluation team wishes to acknowledge the cooperation received from all informants, including school head teachers, teachers, parents, smallholder farmers, and representatives of school management committees and parent-teacher associations, during the primary survey.

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

1. The activity evaluation commissioned by the WFP Malawi Country Office (CO) covers September 2020 to August 2023. The subject of the evaluation is the Tsogolo la Thanzi (TSOLATA) – healthy future home-grown school feeding programme (HGSF) refers to a European Union-funded (EUR 16 million) school feeding three-year programme (2020-2023) implemented with the Ministry of Education (School Health and Nutrition-SHN department), in coordination with Ministry of Agriculture and Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA), Ministry of Health (MoH). The report has two volumes. Volume 1, the main report, answers the evaluation questions for the end-term evaluation as articulated in terms of Reference presented in Annex I (Volume II containing all annexures).

2. The evaluation serves several critical purposes for accountability and learning. The objective of the evaluation is to highlight the existing circumstances and performance of TSOLATA-HGSF during the project period, determine the progress made towards achieving TSOLATA-HGSF objectives to equitably and in a transformative manner, assess the extent to which TSOLATA adequately adopted and mainstreamed gender, disability, protection and inclusive approaches, compatibility of TSOLATA-HGSF with other interventions, and assess TSOLATA's efficiency, impact, and sustainability in delivering results and underline the critical lessons learned that can inform future strategic and operational decisions.

3. As per the recent Malawi multidimensional poverty index report, about 58.8 percent of the people of Malawi have been estimated to be multi-dimensionally poor, with deprivations being higher in rural areas than urban areas. Malawi is among 28 African countries that highly depend on food aid due to adverse weather phenomena that destroy crops and livestock annually. About 5.4 million Malawians in rural and secondary urban areas face moderate or severe chronic food insecurity, with southern region districts like Balaka, Nsanje, and Chikwawa having the highest proportion at severe (Level 4). While the prevalence of high primary school net enrolment is reported in Malawi, the enrolment trends coincide with high drop-out and grade repetition rates, poor teacher-student ratio, and inadequate availability of infrastructure, including teachers and teaching-learning materials.

4. TSOLATA-HGSF aimed to enhance the nutrition and education of primary school children while also empowering smallholder farmers. By utilizing locally produced food, the programme reduces reliance on external supplies, strengthens local food systems, and improves children's nutrition and educational outcomes. The programme targeted 306,068 learners (159,155 girls, 146,913 boys) in 216 primary schools and 20,000 (equal proportion of men and women) smallholder farmers (SHFs) across four vulnerable districts in the southern region of Malawi districts, namely, Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe and Zomba. TSOLATA-HGSF tackled gender inequality by empowering women farmers through income generation and leadership roles. This frees up their time and boosts their decision-making power within households. Girls benefit from increased school attendance due to the programme's nutritious meals, improving their education and future prospects. By prioritizing women participation, offering gender sensitivity training, and monitoring progress, the programme fosters a more equitable and nutritious future for all.

5. Over three years, WFP with implementation partners has been carrying out TSOLATA-HGSF activities aiming to (i) Primary school learners and households in targeted communities applying better nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation practices and learners increase their intake of nutritious food; (ii) Smallholder farmers participating in TSOLATA-HGSF have increased knowledge and capacity in the production of diversified nutritious crops, as well as increased access to markets and; (iii) Government staff have increased their capacity to design and implement a national school meals programme.

6. The findings of the TSOLATA will primarily be used to serve three purposes: (i) to help WFP and its partners to inform the implementation of the school feeding interventions during second generation Country Strategic Plan; (ii) to inform programmatic changes that may be needed in the implementation of second phase of scaling up TSOLATA II; and (iii) to help the Government in developing the national school meals operational plan.

## Methodology

7. The end-term evaluation was comprehensive, adopting a mixed-method approach to assess and report on the TSOLATA programme's performance and results. It drew lessons and identified critical factors influencing programme outcomes through the lens of gender equity and disability inclusion. This thorough assessment considered coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, with gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) principles mainstreamed throughout. Sample respondents were identified from both intervention and non-intervention schools.

8. The evaluation involved quantitative and qualitative data collection methods with the review of WFP documents used for triangulation. The diverse voices of all stakeholders were heard to ensure their inclusion and to increase reliability and validity. The sample size was calculated by maintaining a similar sample size used in the baseline study to facilitate meaningful comparisons and analysis. The evaluation team administered quantitative surveys in December 2023 to 40 intervention and 40 non-intervention schools (equally distributed among all four districts), 2,374 households with primary school children (1,190 intervention/project and 1,184 non-intervention/non-project), 1,016 households with SHFs (496 intervention and 520 non-intervention) in four programme districts. The sampling frame for selecting households involved creating a list of villages within the school's catchment area and randomly selecting three villages. Based on geographical contiguity, these three villages were segmented into five clusters. A thorough listing of up to 150 households (30 houses in each cluster) was conducted. This formed the sampling frame for the selection of the households.

9. The evaluation involved collecting secondary and primary (qualitative and quantitative) data from women, girls, men, and boys from different stakeholder groups. A systematic literature review was conducted to build the context of TSOLATA and its results. The evaluation team conducted a multivariate exploratory analysis. Findings from primary and secondary data were triangulated to arrive at the conclusions. A gender balance was maintained within the sample, with 50 percent of selected households headed by women.

10. The qualitative data collection included a mix of focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), and in-depth interviews (IDIs). A total of 36 KIIs were conducted across four districts. FGDs primarily involved men in SHF groups (8), women in SHF groups (8), and parents of primary school children (8). In addition, IDIs were conducted with representatives, management teams of farmer organisations (FOs), representative cooperating partners, and programme beneficiaries - including a mix of women and men SHFs, women-led households, and mothers of girl children benefiting from the programme.

11. **Limitations and mitigation measures-** The methodology and team composition were designed to anticipate and address potential risks during the evaluation. Some of the operational risks identified were (i) difficulty in accessing specific affected populations and communities due to natural calamities, (ii) difficulty in accessing government institutional partners and representatives and (iii) unavailability of critical programme data during the data collection period (required for answering evaluation questions related to the efficiency of TSOLATA-HGSF). To mitigate these risks, we collaborated closely with WFP Country Office representatives at national and district levels, who provided valuable support in implementing field movement plans and other measures. The evaluation team utilized secondary data sources such as past evaluations, pilots, and monitoring data to achieve the best estimates. It further captured farmers' perception on the relevance and utility of TSOLATA-HGSF interventions to (i) establish contribution/attribution and (ii) comment on the financial and technical efficiency of interventions.

## Key Findings

12. **Gender equity and disability inclusion:** TSOLATA-HGSF has made gender parity from the design to the overall implementation phase, specifically in beneficiary numbers and school enrolments, while actively engaging smallholder farmers, particularly women, to enhance their economic and social empowerment. Aligned with WFP's gender policy (2022), the programme was designed and implemented with high accountability and emphasis on including the most vulnerable populations. Increased women participation in critical components, such as farmer organizations (FOs), school management committees (SMCs), parent-teacher associations (PTAs), food committees, and mother groups, has been a notable achievement. The evaluation indicates that the boy's continuity in the programme is longer than the girl's as they drop out



because of various challenges like gender disparities and cultural norms persisted, requiring further attention for greater inclusivity.

13. TSOLATA-HGSF has demonstrated gender equity in improving school enrolment, attendance, and retention among boys and girls in targeted schools and communities. Teachers and parents underlined that schools witnessed higher attendance due to school meals. A higher proportion of girl learners attended schools compared to boys.

14. It also noted that the programme prioritises children with disabilities in various aspects, including receiving meals and prioritising distribution. However, over 90 percent of the parents of children with disabilities (92 percent intervention, 95 percent non-intervention) expressed dissatisfaction with the support that the schools provide for children with disabilities. Parents also reported that their child missed class due to the unavailability of specialised teaching materials, insufficient support service, and inadequate disabled-friendly facilities in the school. Personal challenges like menstruation and bullying persist, hindering the full participation of children with disabilities.

15. FOs play a vital role in improving the lives of farmers, particularly women SHFs, by providing resources, training, and market access, leading to economic and social empowerment. In intervention areas, FOs comprise 53 percent women SHFs and 47 percent men SHFs, compared to non-intervention areas, where 56 percent are men SHFs, and 44 percent are women SHFs. The evaluation also observed that women possess leadership positions within FOs. Access to schools as alternate markets has notably benefited households headed by women SHFs. The evaluation also found the need for implementing comprehensive sex-disaggregated indicators and monitoring systems to track and evaluate the programme's impact on different genders across various indicators, ensuring equitable outcomes. Women SHFs supported under TSOLATA-HGSF have benefited through FOs as they have access to alternate markets and assured payments.

16. **Coherence:** TSOLATA-HGSF is well aligned with the WFP Strategic Plan, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), SDGs, the Government of Malawi's national implementation plan (2021-2020), the health and nutrition, education, social protection and other relevant policies, ministerial frameworks, strategies and plans promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth. The programme further aligns with Malawi Vision 2063, the country's long-term aspiration to become an inclusive, wealthy, and self-reliant nation by 2063.

17. The programme synergises effectively with other interventions, including government and WFP initiatives and those from UNICEF, FAO, and the European Union. These collaborations create a comprehensive approach to enhancing food security and nutrition in Malawi. TSOLATA-HGSF laid a strong foundation for these collective efforts by empowering farmers and strengthening the food system. The programme differs from centralised models by sourcing food locally and ensuring culturally appropriate meals, with significant community involvement in planning and implementation. It also complements programmes like the United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE) and AFIKEPO, aligning efforts to address nutrition and education challenges for various demographic groups.

18. Additionally, TSOLATA-HGSF integrated with WFP's asset creation and livelihood interventions, supporting SHFs by enhancing market access and building resilience against climate risks. The programme works alongside the World Bank's Social Support for Resilient Livelihoods Project to provide social assistance and technical support, improving the well-being of vulnerable households. A key strength of TSOLATA was its flexibility and adaptability to local contexts. This adaptability, strong community ownership and local economic support enhanced the programme's sustainability.

19. **Effectiveness:** TSOLATA-HGSF has significantly improved school enrolment, attendance, and student retention rates. Most parents (95 percent) confirmed that the programme positively impacted school enrolment. The evaluation team estimated the school attendance rate to evaluate the schools' performance in attracting students to attend school consistently. The intervention schools have better attendance scores (83.04 percent) compared to non-intervention schools (76.95 percent) ( $p = 0.001$ ,  $d \approx 0.07$ ). TSOLATA-HGSF led to a 3 percent overall increase in school enrolment, particularly in Nsanje and Zomba districts, despite a prior 1.9 percent decrease in the 2021/2022 academic year. While the programme effectively attracted out-of-school students back to class, the dropout rate across the four districts averaged 5 percent, with the

highest rate in Chikwawa at 7.8 percent. The programme also achieved high student retention rates, with 95 percent of students remaining enrolled and completing their classes, indicating the value students place on the education provided. In the 2022-2023 academic year, intervention schools achieved a retention rate of 95 percent, higher than the 91 percent observed in non-intervention schools. This trend was also evident in 2021-2022, with intervention schools maintaining a retention rate of 94 percent compared to 89 percent in non-intervention schools.

20. Further, TSOLATA-HGSF has significantly improved dietary diversity and hunger reduction among beneficiaries while increasing awareness of nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation practices within communities and schools. Three out of four parents expressed that their children received school meals every five days last week. The programme successfully executed all the planned activities, training community members, school children, SMC members, and teachers, and distributing nutrition information and education communication (IEC) materials as training guides. However, effectiveness is diluted by occasional shortages of food commodities due to inadequate forecasting, budgeting, or logistical challenges, which have hindered regular school meal provision. Despite the high execution rate of awareness campaigns, less than half of the intended children were reached. Findings showed a slight improvement in households with an "acceptable" Food Consumption Score (FCS) but also indicated an increase in households with a "poor" score, likely due to vulnerabilities from natural disasters like tropical cyclone Freddy.

21. The evaluation findings indicate that SHFs in the intervention area (compared to non-intervention) have experienced an increase in crop production, with the majority cultivating two or more crops per agricultural season. Extrapolating these results to the targeted smallholder farmers, it is confirmed that 90 percent of them have actively engaged with the school meals programme across all four districts. Additionally, farmers received support through training on relevant subjects and thematic areas (almost equal proportion of men and women). A general perception is that these are repeat trainings and can be avoided. Among those who attended training, most of the farmers reported being benefited.

22. WFP engaged with government ministries to support the design, implementation, and review of national school feeding policies and programmes, localised evidence generation, and advocacy efforts, resulting in improved regulatory frameworks and strategic planning for school health and nutrition. Two regulatory frameworks and a strategic inter-ministerial coordination paper were developed alongside a Value for Money study. Approximately 70 government officials were trained to enhance their management skills for the school feeding programme.

23. **Efficiency:** TSOLATA-HGSF is more cost-efficient than the centralised distribution model. Cost per meal was higher in the centralised distribution model than in HGSF. The findings indicate that the cost per meal for the TSOLATA-HGSF component is US\$ 0.059, compared to the centralised distribution model, which costs US\$ 0.07. It can, therefore, be inferred that the cost per meal was higher in the centralised distribution model than in TSOLATA-HGSF. TSOLATA-HGSF has constituted a planning and review mechanism at the national and district levels. However, the efficiency of TSOLATA-HGSF was hampered by the non-availability of an online platform that facilitates timely reporting of data (aspects such as procurement and financial management) and its utilisation for planning and timely decision-making. Additionally, there is a complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) through a toll-free number and suggestions box in schools. The discussion with parents, however, indicates that the majority of times, parents raise issues with the PTA committee and prefer amicable resolution through in-person engagement.

24. **Impact:** The programme has improved dietary intake, diversity, and health outcomes for the community. The findings indicate a statistically significant difference between the baseline (62 percent) and the endline (80 percent) values. Dietary diversity is defined as the consumption of at least three out of the six food groups defined in Malawi. Providing school meals and the overall programme components transformed the community, enhancing the learning ecosystem through improved school enrolment, attendance, and student retention rates. Although attendance among children with disabilities is high, there are considerable challenges due to insufficient school support, bullying, and lack of specialised resources, highlighting the need for improved facilities and services. The school feeding component will likely have a long-term health impact through enhanced nutritional outcomes. Improved educational and health outcomes will have a generational impact on the population as they contribute to nation-building. However,

successive climate disasters have hindered overall academic and nutritional progress. The evaluation team found no evidence of unintended negative outcomes related to time poverty or protection concerns.

25. The creation of social institutions like farmer cooperatives/FOs has significantly improved farmers' quality of life by providing access to stable markets with better prices, enhancing their economic well-being. Earnings from produce sales to schools have enabled investments in income-generating activities, timely procurement of farming inputs, improved household food quality, and access to healthcare. Trainings have enhanced agricultural practices, modern irrigation use, post-harvest loss reduction, financial management, promoting economic empowerment and self-reliance. However, payment delays and production challenges (due to climate events) remain areas of concern.

26. **Sustainability:** TSOLATA-HGSF has established a strong foundation for sustainability through community benefits, strategic collaborations, and capacity-building efforts, aligning with WFP and the Government of Malawi's commitment to sustainable interventions. The deep collaboration between the WFP, the Ministry of Agriculture, and other government entities demonstrates strong ownership and support for the programme. The involvement of communities in intervention design, implementation, and monitoring has fostered community ownership. The programme's focus on capacity building for local institutions, farmer organisations, and community members has been pivotal. Despite these achievements, climate events such as cyclones and droughts have severely impacted food security, particularly for households headed by women. The farming community reported substantial losses in productivity due to these events, emphasising the need for resilient and climate-smart practices to sustain programme gains. To ensure lasting impact, the programme must prioritise resilient and climate-smart practices, engaging communities in intervention selection and bolstering institutional capacities in line with WFP and Government of Malawi's sustainability objectives.

### Overall conclusions

27. TSOLATA-HGSF demonstrated a strong commitment to gender inclusivity, from design to implementation. Vulnerable districts were strategically selected based on food security and education indicators, addressing Malawi's unique challenges, especially for households headed by women and children.

28. TSOLATA-HGSF adopted a comprehensive approach to holistic development closely aligned with Malawi's development goals. It directly contributes to its goals by promoting learners' nutrition and health. It also strengthens the national school meal programmes, benefiting students and local farmers supplying the food. Despite obstacles like cyclones, natural calamities, and the pandemic, TSOLATA-HGSF successfully increased overall enrolment, sustained attendance, and improved health and nutrition outcomes. The key messages on hygiene and sanitation have led to behaviour change, as evidenced by increased adoption of these practices by both children and parents.

29. TSOLATA-HGSF has created stable and alternative markets for smallholder farmers. Farmers have benefited from training in post-harvest management, storage, and crop diversification, leading to improved market access and stability. The creation of social institutions such as farmer cooperatives significantly improved farmers' quality of life, providing access to stable markets, better prices, and assured procurements.

30. TSOLATA-HGSF's focus on building local capacity, supporting the local economy through agricultural resilience, and fostering community ownership will ensure the longevity of school feeding initiatives and long-term sustainability. It has demonstrated success and built community capacity, but continued support from the World Food Programme (WFP) will be necessary to scale the programme nationwide.

31. Despite notable achievements, climate events have posed challenges, leading to setbacks in food security. Vulnerabilities must be addressed to ensure programme resilience, especially among households headed by women. To achieve lasting impact, TSOLATA-HGSF must prioritise resilient and climate-smart interventions.

## Lessons learned

32. To enhance their effectiveness, integrated programmes such as HGSP should foster collaboration and coordination among multi-stakeholders (education, agriculture, nutrition, health, NGOs). This will require key stakeholders' active engagement in designing and implementing interventions. It is prudent that communities are engaged during planning and decision-making processes as it will create ownership, contribute to achieving desired outputs, and ensure the sustainability of interventions. Rigorous monitoring of interventions can potentially improve the programme's efficiency and effectiveness. At the same time, it provides programme managers with evidence for delivering sustainable impact. Strengthening disaster preparedness plans, adaptation of pro-climate strategies and new technologies, capacity development of staff on climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, and community education are crucial interventions that need to be included for enhancing resilience in dealing with extreme weather events.

## Recommendations

The recommendations presented below are based on the evaluator's assessment of the importance, urgency, and nature (strategic or operational) of actions, considering the conclusions presented in the previous section.

33. **Recommendation 1.** Support the Government of Malawi in creating an enabling learning environment for children with disabilities. [Strategic, Short to Medium Term]
- **Sub recommendation 1.1** WFP should consider sensitising and building the capacities of teachers and representatives of the Ministry of Education so that they can adapt school curricula for individualised teaching and devise learning approaches for children with disabilities. Further, WFP should conduct training for teachers and staff on understanding the needs of these students and providing necessary support to accommodate their needs. [Strategic, Short to Medium Term]
  - **Sub recommendation 1.2.** WFP should also support the Government of Malawi in standardising design and construction of disabled-friendly school facilities (infrastructure). [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
34. **Recommendation 2.** With a focus on improving the quality of education, WFP, in collaboration with partner organisations such as UNICEF, should provide technical assistance to the Government of Malawi in facilitating digital learning. [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
- **Sub recommendation 2.1.** WFP should create a digital library that hosts updated content for primary classes and can be accessed by both students and teachers. [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
  - **Sub recommendation 2.2.** WFP should create a platform for online classes. [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
  - **Sub recommendation 2.3.** WFP should equip teachers with the necessary competencies to become digitally competent and exploit the potential of digital technologies in the enhancement of teaching and learning. [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
35. **Recommendation 3.** Strengthen programme monitoring through management information systems (MIS). [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
- **Sub recommendation 3.1.** WFP should invest in designing and implementing a comprehensive gender-disaggregated M&E framework (indicators) to monitor and track the programme's impact and ensure equitable outcomes (integrate GEWE and protection indicators into a gender action plan for TSOLATA-HGSP and conduct yearly gender and protection assessments). [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
  - **Sub recommendation 3.2.** WFP should support the Government of Malawi in strengthening monitoring (through MIS) across all relevant levels (school, district, and EMIS levels). It should also support digitising templates for home-grown school feeding management processes, including budgeting, financial management, food procurement, food storage, and record-keeping procedures. [Operational, Short to Medium Term]

36. **Recommendation 4.** WFP should integrate TSOLATA-HGSF with other climate resilience programmes, particularly those aimed at addressing climate-induced vulnerabilities. The combined investments should focus on asset creation, increased food systems resilience, strengthening education, and health and nutrition services. This will promote livelihoods, empower women and marginalised groups, and improve coping mechanisms for climate-induced vulnerabilities. [Strategic, Medium to Long Term]
37. **Recommendation 5.** Integrate community-driven alternate learning approaches with support from partners such as UNICEF (for out-of-school children, especially girls) within HGSF. [Strategic, Short to Medium Term]
- **Sub recommendation 5.1.** WFP should conduct awareness campaigns in collaboration with community leaders, emphasising the benefits of alternative learning programs and encouraging enrolment of out-of-school children. [Strategic, Short to Medium Term]
  - **Sub recommendation 5.2.** WFP should organize training sessions for parents to familiarise them with the alternative learning approaches. [Strategic, Short to Medium Term]
38. **Recommendation 6.** WFP should strengthen the capacities of Ministry of Education representatives (at the national level) in operationalising and coordinating activities under the HGSF. [Operational, Short to Medium Term]
39. **Recommendation 7.** TSOLATA-HGSF should strengthen its existing linkages with formal financial institutions to design different financing instruments/mechanisms and engagement models to meet the working capital requirements of SHFs/FOs. Addressing delayed payments from schools is crucial to alleviating cash flow issues and ensuring farmers can meet their basic needs and manage agricultural inputs effectively. [Operational, Short to Medium Term]

# 1. Introduction

1. This report is for the term evaluation of the Decentralized Evaluation of Tsogolo la Thanzi (TSOLATA) - Healthy Future Home-Grown School Feeding (HGFS) Project in Malawi. The WFP Malawi Country Office (WFP CO) commissioned the evaluation, covering activities implemented from September 2020 to August 2023. The evaluation was undertaken by NR Management Consultants India Pvt Ltd (A subsidiary of Intellect Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd.) in partnership with Kadale Consultants, Malawi. The evaluation commenced at the end of August 2023. The report has two volumes: Volume 1, the main report, answers the evaluation questions for the end-term evaluation as articulated in the summary terms of reference presented in Annex I of Volume II containing all annexures.

## 1.1. Evaluation features

### 1.1.1. Purpose, objectives, and rationale for the evaluation

2. The evaluation was commissioned at the end of the first phase of implementation of TSOLATA-HGFS. The implementation of the first phase of TSOLATA-HGFS (2020-2023) entailed a crucial transition from a centralised model of school feeding to a primarily home-grown school feeding (HGFS) model in four intervention districts, namely, Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe, and Zomba. TSOLATA-HGFS will be going into the second phase, which will entail expansion to new districts. The geographic coverage of the programme being implemented has been included in Annex XIX of Volume II of the report. The evaluation, therefore, serves three purposes: (i) to inform WFP and its partners on the learnings from the implementation of the school feeding interventions that can be considered for second generation Country Strategic Plan; (ii) to inform programmatic changes that may be needed to implement the second phase of scaling up TSOLATA II; and (iii) to help the Government develop a national school meals operational plan.

3. As a WFP decentralised evaluation, the current evaluation served the dual and mutually reinforcing objectives of a) accountability and b) learning. Accountability to affected populations is tied to WFP commitments to include beneficiaries as critical stakeholders. By assessing and reporting on the outcome level progress, this evaluation assessed the TSOLATA-HGFS's coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and performance on gender equity and disability inclusion, thereby fulfilling its accountability to donors, development partners, and beneficiaries. Additionally, the evaluation placed more weight on the learning objective to draw lessons, identify critical factors influencing TSOLATA-HGFS outcomes, derive promising practices, inform operational and strategic decision-making, and guide the future scale-up of TSOLATA-HGFS.

### 1.1.2. Scope of the evaluation

4. The evaluation covers evaluation activities undertaken under TSOLATA-HGFS in four districts of Malawi, targeted learners in 216 primary schools across Chikwawa (67 schools), Nsanje (36 schools), Phalombe (66 schools) and Zomba (47 schools). These four districts benefitted from WFP's School Meals Programme (during the period 2010-2018)<sup>1</sup> given the presence of irrigation schemes and availability of farmer organisations such as cooperatives, unions and clusters and potential linkages with WFP's livelihood programmes in the same areas. The scope of the evaluation addressed the proposed vital evaluation questions, including all activities and processes related to TSOLATA-HGFS formulation, implementation, resourcing, monitoring, and evaluation through the lens of the criteria of coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Notably, relevance as a criterion has not been studied, as evidence is

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<sup>1</sup> WFP Malawi, between 2010 and 2018, implemented the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition school feeding programme supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 13 districts in Malawi, which included the four TSOLATA districts.

already from similar school feeding evaluations conducted in Malawi. Specific questions listed under these criteria have been answered through appropriate data collection, analysis, and triangulation processes detailed in the evaluation matrix. The evaluation ensured that gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE), and equity are mainstreamed throughout. For acronyms and abbreviations, please refer to the end of Volume I of the report or Annex XX of Volume II of the report.

### **1.1.3. Main stakeholders and primary users of evaluation**

5. The primary users of this evaluation report are WFP Malawi country office, the European Union, the Government of Malawi, the WFP Regional Bureau (RB) for Southern Africa, WFP Headquarters divisions and the WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV). WFP country office is in the final year of implementing a five-year Country Strategic Plan (CSP 2019-2023), and school feeding is at the centre of its integration strategy. The findings will, therefore, be used by WFP and its partners to inform the implementation of school feeding interventions during second-generation CSP. The evaluation findings will inform the WFP country office about the programmatic changes that may be needed to implement the scaling up of TSOLATA-HGSF to four new districts. TSOLATA-HGSF also aims to increase the Government's capacity to design and implement a national school meals programme. The findings will, therefore, help the Government develop its operational plan for the national school meals programme. The Regional Bureau (RB) for Southern Africa will use the findings to provide strategic guidance and programme support and extract lessons for sharing across the region. WFP Headquarters divisions and WFP Office of Evaluation will use the findings for wider organisational learning, accountability, and annual reporting to the Executive Board.

### **1.1.4. Timing and duration of fieldwork**

6. The evaluation was conducted between 1 September 2023 and 31 March 2024 by a team composed of a team leader, an economic analyst, a research specialist, and two research associates. Data collection was undertaken from 10 December 2023 to 31 January 2024. The evaluation timeline has been detailed in Annex II of Volume II of the report. A tentative field movement plan indicating the movement plan for enumerators in Malawi has also been provided in Annex VI of Volume II of the report.

### **1.1.5. Gender dimensions of the evaluation**

7. TSOLATA-HGSF focuses on mainstreaming disability inclusion in access to education, school meals programmes, school attendance for girls and access to specially blended food for malnourished women and children through take-home ration. The mainstreaming of gender was focused on design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting. It further focused on ensuring equal participation of women and girls in implementing all activities under TSOLATA-HGSF. GEWE and accountability to affected populations are part of the guiding principles for WFP's action. TSOLATA-HGSF initially targeted 280,000 learners across 200 primary schools but ultimately reached 306,068 learners in 216 schools. The design of TSOLATA-HGSF was structured to ensure equal participation, achieving a balanced enrolment with 51 percent girls and 49 percent boys out of the total targeted learners.

8. The evaluation was guided by WFP's latest Gender Policy 2022. Aligning with these principles, the evaluation team understands that development programmes affect women, men, boys, and girls differently. Hence, the evaluation emphasised how gender, equity, and disability inclusion objectives and GEWE mainstreaming principles were included in TSOLATA-HGSF's design and implementation modalities and whether WFP and system-wide objectives on GEWE have guided the evaluation subject. The gender, equity, and disability inclusion dimensions were also integrated into the evaluation criteria as appropriate. The evaluation also focused on presenting findings disaggregated by sex and providing empirical insights that users can use and build upon.

9. The evaluation (methodology, criteria, questions, and analysis) has considered the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) indicators related to gender equality and human rights. The data collection was conducted in a gender-sensitive manner. In addition to addressing gender dimensions throughout the evaluation, the core team also explored any potential unintended impact that the project activities may have had on the existing gender roles and dynamics.

## 1.2. Context

10. Malawi is a landlocked country in Sub-Saharan Africa with a population of about 20.9 million<sup>2</sup> that is rapidly expanding at a rate of 3 percent per year.<sup>3</sup> As per World Bank classification, Malawi is a low-income country, ranking as the 4<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world, with 70 percent of its population living on less than US\$ 2.15 per day per capita. The country has high levels of poverty as well as inequality in terms of regions, districts, and rurality with the Gini coefficient standing at 38.5 percent (2022).<sup>4</sup> About 58.8 percent of the people of Malawi have been estimated to be multi-dimensionally poor, with deprivations being higher in rural areas (65.7 percent) as compared to urban (20.0 percent).<sup>5</sup> The country also faces several challenges in achieving development outcomes, with a current ranking of 172 out of 191 countries in the 2022<sup>6</sup> Human Development Index.

### 1.2.1. Nutrition and school feeding needs in Malawi

11. Chronic malnutrition, stunting, and micronutrient deficiencies continue to challenge public health systems in Malawi. The proportion of people failing to consume a minimum caloric intake of 2,215 calories per day (or national poverty rate) has been consistently high over the last decade at 51 percent.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, 2 percent of women of reproductive age suffer from anaemia. Outcomes have been especially worse for children as recent estimates found stunting in children aged 6-59 months (2022)<sup>8</sup> to be 37 percent, while 12.8 percent of children under 5 were underweight and 2.6 percent of children under 5 experienced wasting (2020).<sup>9</sup> Only 7.8 percent of infants between 6-23 months consumed a minimum acceptable diet while the national prevalence of anaemia among children aged 6-59 months is relatively high at 62.6 percent.<sup>10</sup> As per the most recent estimate available, the proportion of timely initiation of breast milk and exclusive breastfeeding were 76.9 and 61.2 percent, respectively.<sup>11</sup> While Malawi's progress along the achievement of sustainable development goal (SDG) 2 (ending hunger and achieving nutrition and food security) has been moderate with regards to wasting, undernourishment, and prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity, limited to no change has been observed on reduction of underweight prevalence.<sup>12</sup>

12. Poor nutrition outcomes have significant costs in terms of children's development, academic capabilities, and the country's overall growth. According to the Cost of Hunger in Africa study (2015), the annual cost of child undernutrition was US\$ 567 million whereby, stunted students were more likely to underperform in school while undernourished children had lower cognitive and physical capacity and typically risked repetition, thus creating costs for the family, the student, and the education system. Low awareness and knowledge among caregivers, low capacity of frontline personnel to provide nutritional services, poverty, the inability of families to afford nutritional diets, and high food costs are some of the most prominent contributing factors. Maternal education and care practices such as timely initiation of breastmilk, exclusive breastfeeding,<sup>13</sup> complementary feeding, and usage of curative and preventive health

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<sup>2</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/malawi-population>

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/country/MW>

<sup>4</sup> <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2023-24>

<sup>5</sup> Malawi, NSO, Malawi Multidimensional Poverty Index Report (2022):

<https://www.undp.org/malawi/publications/second-malawi-multidimensional-poverty-index>

<sup>6</sup> Human Development report (2023-2024): <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2023-24>

<sup>7</sup> Poverty and Equity Brief; World Bank (2023):

[https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext\\_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global\\_POVEQ\\_MWI.pdf](https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_MWI.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> WFP Malawi Country Brief (2022)

<sup>9</sup> World Bank Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MALN.ZS?locations=MW>

<sup>10</sup> Government of Malawi. 2017. Malawi National Micronutrient Survey 2015-16. National Statistics Office.

<sup>11</sup> Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (2015-16):

<https://internationalbreastfeedingjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13006-019-0232-y>

<sup>12</sup> SDG Progress (2021): WFP document library.

<sup>13</sup> Machira K., Chirwa T. Dietary consumption, and its effect on nutrition outcome among under-five children in rural Malawi. PLoS One. 2020;15(9) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7489506/>



services,<sup>14</sup> have also been noted to influence nutrition outcomes for children in Malawi. Meanwhile, Malawi's poor education, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure and outcomes further exacerbate health-related challenges. The 2019-2020 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey also highlights that 83 percent of children under five years face food insecurity due to climate change impacts and poverty. As of 2023, the compounding effects of recurrent climate shocks, disease outbreaks, economic instability, and acute food insecurity have rendered about 573,000 children under five at risk of suffering from malnutrition, while over 62,000 children under five are at risk of severe acute malnutrition or wasting.<sup>15</sup>

## 1.2.2. Education in Malawi

13. With education reforms, Malawi has a high primary school net enrolment rate (NER) of 91 percent (88 percent boys, 93 percent girls).<sup>16</sup> However, its performance on several related indicators presents a challenging scenario. High enrolment trends coincide with issues like high drop-out and grade repetition rates, poor teacher-student ratio, and inadequate availability of infrastructure, including teachers and teaching-learning materials. While the national policy of automatic promotion between grades 1-4 reduced repetition rates and improved standards for teacher-student ratio across the country, dropouts continue to be a challenge.<sup>17</sup> About 5 percent of students (4 percent boys, 6 percent girls) overall drop out of formal education, while the completion rate for primary school is only 48 percent (46 percent boys, 50 percent girls).<sup>18</sup> The proportion of out-of-school children of primary school age is 6 percent (7 percent boys, 5 percent girls), which increases through the junior secondary (16 percent overall, 15 percent boys, 16 percent girls) and senior secondary levels (34 percent overall, 31 percent boys, 37 percent girls).<sup>19</sup> With a literacy rate of 68 percent (71 percent adult male, 65 percent adult female)<sup>20</sup> and a Youth literacy rate of 71 (70 percent male, 72 percent female),<sup>21</sup> the education system also grapples with poor learning outcomes. While some of the most common factors for drop-out include prioritization of family responsibilities, poverty, truancy, and long distances between home and school, it is higher among girls due to reasons such as child marriage, early pregnancy, negative attitudes of parents towards girl's education, poor academic performance due to low quality of education, and lack of female teachers in schools.<sup>22</sup>

14. As per a recent estimate (2022),<sup>23</sup> only 19 percent (17 percent boys, 20 percent girls) of children aged 7-14 have foundational reading skills, while only 13 percent (12 percent boys, 13 percent girls) have foundational numeracy skills. 41 percent of 3-4-year-olds are not on track as per the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI).<sup>24</sup> Factors like poverty, rurality, region, ethnicity, and parents' education influence such outcomes. Challenges were further exacerbated by the closure of schools during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which resulted in a tripling dropout rate during the pandemic academic year.<sup>25</sup> Compounded by the effects of tropical storm Ana, Malawi witnessed a 0.26 per cent drop in enrolment of primary school children during the academic year 2021-2022.<sup>26</sup> Enrolment and attendance rates deteriorated between 2019 and 2021, largely due to school closures in response to COVID-19. In 2021

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<sup>14</sup> <https://archive.unu.edu/unupress/food/V182e/ch13.htm>

<sup>15</sup> May 2023: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136817>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.education.gov.mw/index.php/edu-resources/documents-and-publications/category/8-press-release?download=143:2023-emis-report-final>

<sup>17</sup> <https://cgdev.org/blog/what-happened-student-participation-after-two-rounds-school-closures-malawi-and-how-have>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.education.gov.mw/index.php/edu-resources/documents-and-publications/category/8-press-release?download=143:2023-emis-report-final>

<sup>19</sup> [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Malawi\\_Factsheet\\_InDesign-FINAL-2.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Malawi_Factsheet_InDesign-FINAL-2.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?locations=MW>

<sup>21</sup> [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Malawi\\_Factsheet\\_InDesign-FINAL-2.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Malawi_Factsheet_InDesign-FINAL-2.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS) data (2022)

<sup>23</sup> Malawi Education Fact Sheets I 2022: [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Malawi\\_Factsheet\\_InDesign-FINAL-2.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Malawi_Factsheet_InDesign-FINAL-2.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> ECDI: ECDI is a 10-item module implemented in MICS6 to measure the percentage of children aged 3-4 who are developmentally on track in 4 domains, namely: literacy-numeracy, physical, social emotional, and learning domains.

<sup>25</sup> <https://cgdev.org/blog/what-happened-student-participation-after-two-rounds-school-closures-malawi-and-how-have>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.education.gov.mw/index.php/edu-resources/2022-education-statistics/category/10-reports?download=74:2022-malawi-education-statistics-report-emis>

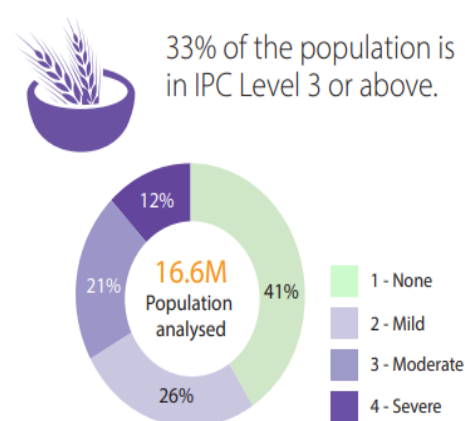
change in enrolment rate was -1 percent (compared to 6 percent in 2019) and attendance was at 76.9 percent (compared to 94 percent in 2019).<sup>27</sup> Despite the Government of Malawi's focus on promoting distance learning measures, massive learning loss occurred for students in schools that could not effectively adopt remote learning due to inaccessibility, capacity gaps, teacher discontent, and strikes.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.2.3. Agriculture and food security in Malawi

15. With an overall contribution of 21.8 percent (2022)<sup>29</sup> to the gross domestic product (GDP), the agriculture sector in Malawi is one of the most important sectors in the country. The sector employs about 85 percent of the population, with 82 percent of the country's total population living in rural areas (2022).<sup>30</sup> It is the main source of household income for over 50 percent of its population.<sup>31</sup> Despite this, the agriculture sector in Malawi operates below its capacity by relying mainly on rain-fed crop production. The dependence on rainfed agriculture has led to farmers' high vulnerability to the effects of natural disasters, especially dry spells and floods. Some other sectoral challenges to agricultural livelihoods include poor management of land, water, and soils, low adoption of agricultural technologies, low access to finance and farm inputs, low mechanization and technical skills, lack of availability of irrigation systems, and weak linkages to markets.<sup>32</sup>

16. Malawi is among 28 African countries highly dependent on food aid due to adverse weather that destroys crops and livestock almost every year.<sup>33</sup> According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Chronic Food Insecurity (IPC CFI) Report (2022), about 5.4 million Malawians living in rural and secondary urban centres faced moderate or severe chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI Levels 3 and 4). Refer to Figure 1 for details. Southern Region districts like Balaka, Nsanje, and Chikwawa districts have the highest proportion of the population classified as IPC CFI Level 4 (severe), while most northern and central districts have moderate food insecurity levels. WFP estimated 3.8 million Malawians across 21 districts (i.e., 20 percent of the population) to be acutely food insecure at the peak of the hunger season or lean season (October 2022 – March 2023). Of these, 3.2 million are from rural areas, while 623,000 are in the four cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe and Mzuzu.<sup>34</sup>

**Figure 1: Food insecurity in Malawi as per IPC Report (2022)**



17. With an economy saddled with rapidly rising inflation rates (that increased in April 2023 at 28.8 percent, up from 15.7 percent in April 2022), exchange-rate instability (due to economic consequences of COVID-19, and conflict in Ukraine), an ongoing cholera outbreak as well as impacts of cyclone Freddy (early 2023), Malawi's food security outcomes are projected to further fall.<sup>35</sup> As agrarian livelihoods are

<sup>27</sup> Terms of Reference document

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.voanews.com/a/africa\\_teachers-malawi-strike-over-covid-19-risk-allowances/6202407.html](https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_teachers-malawi-strike-over-covid-19-risk-allowances/6202407.html)

<sup>29</sup> World Bank Data (2022): <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=MW>

<sup>30</sup> World Bank Data (2022): <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=MW>

<sup>31</sup> Malawi Poverty Assessment Report (2022): <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/08/escaping-poverty-in-malawi-requires-improved-agricultural-productivity-climate-resilience-and-structural-transformation>

<sup>32</sup> Sector Position Paper (JICA,2022): <https://www.jica.go.jp/Resource/malawi/english/activities/c8h0vm00004bpbzlh-att/agriculture.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

<sup>34</sup> USAID Country Profile: <https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/Malawi-Nutrition-Profile-Mar2018-508.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Malawi Post Disaster Need Assessment Report April 2023: <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/malawi-2023-tropical-cyclone-freddy-post-disaster-needs-assessment-april-2023>

jeopardized, food access, consumption, dietary diversity, and nutrition have also reduced, particularly for low-income households.<sup>36</sup>

#### 1.2.4. Climate and other vulnerabilities

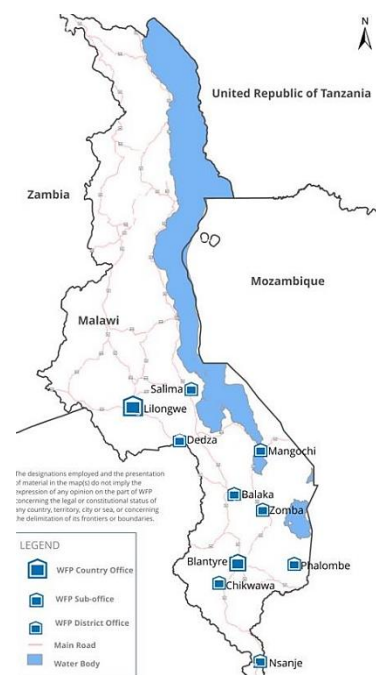
18. Malawi's developmental challenges are significantly compounded by recurrent climate-related shocks and a long-standing refugee caseload.<sup>37</sup> Ranking fifth in the 2021 Global Climate Risk Index, Malawi is highly susceptible to increasing climate and environmental shocks, including flooding, drought, cyclones, and extreme heat. As highlighted in previous sections, these vulnerabilities have further stalled the country's progress on nutrition, education, health, and well-being outcomes.<sup>38, 39</sup> With an estimated death toll of about 1,200 people, the recent cyclone Freddy, for instance, destroyed over 200,000 hectares of cropland across 15 districts in south Malawi, including four TSOLATA- HGSF districts. Malawi's Country Climate and Development Report (2022) predicts that climate change impacts could result in large GDP losses on an annual basis and further worsen social and economic inequalities.

#### 1.2.5. WFP school feeding interventions and other development assistance in Malawi

19. Since 2010 (refer to Figure 2 for WFP presence in Malawi), WFP has pioneered school feeding interventions in Malawi and has remained one of the country's largest providers of school meals. In partnership with the Government of Malawi, WFP's school feeding programme has been implemented across some of the most food-insecure districts of Malawi to address immediate hunger, incentivize children and families to attend school and develop children into healthy and productive adults. With its ambitious vision of achieving food and nutrition security by 2030, WFP has implemented its National School Meals strategy focusing on improving its HGSF model to capitalize on integration with other livelihoods (e.g., WFP's food assistance for assets – FFA, Smallholder Agricultural Market Support – SAMS) and nutrition interventions (e.g., lean season assistance, refugee food assistance and cash plus activities)<sup>40</sup> implemented by WFP and partners.

20. School feeding in Malawi has been implemented by WFP via two models: (i) centralized model and (ii) home grown school feeding (HGSF). The centralized model entails distributing in-kind food commodities and daily nutrition meals of corn soya blend plus (CSB+) procured by WFP. The HGSF model enables local food production and procurement of commodities for school meals in a manner that benefits local producers and economies while promoting food security and resilience.<sup>41</sup> The

Figure 2: WFP in Malawi



<sup>36</sup> Malawi Food Security Update Report (2023): 24 May 2023: <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/malawi-food-security-outlook-update-april-2023>

<sup>37</sup> UNHCR Country profile:

<https://www.unhcr.org/countries/malawi#:~:text=As%20of%20December%202021%2C%20Malawi,away%20from%20the%20capital%20Lilongwe>

<sup>38</sup> According to UNHCR (2023) data, As of December 2021, Malawi hosts 52,678 persons of concern (PoCs) to UNHCR. The majority live in the Dzaleka refugee camp located in the Dowa district, 41 kilo metres away from the capital Lilongwe. 45% of the PoCs are women, and 48% are children. Of the total PoC population, 21,530 have refugee status, 30,910 are asylum seekers, with 238 others of concern, making the refugee situation a challenge in the country's development.

<sup>39</sup> Malawi Country Climate and Development Report (World Bank, 2022):

[https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099545010272237260/pdf/P1772201ced75ce9182e7142761bde013662bc\\_a4fe42.pdf](https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099545010272237260/pdf/P1772201ced75ce9182e7142761bde013662bc_a4fe42.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> WFP Malawi Country Brief, February 2023:

<sup>41</sup> WFP School Feeding Programme Factsheet (2021): [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000131157/download/?\\_ga=2.101903812.498384744.1695915837-821631510.1667217847](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000131157/download/?_ga=2.101903812.498384744.1695915837-821631510.1667217847)

centralized model was implemented during the period 2010 and 2018, along with the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition School Feeding Programme supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 13 out of 28 districts in Malawi. These districts included the four TSOLATA-HGSF districts.

21. Following the completion of the USDA-supported school feeding programme, an extensive analysis of vulnerability trends (combination of poverty rates, food security indicators, susceptibility to weather-related shocks, education performance indicators, and nutrition indicators) led WFP to implement TSOLATA-HGSF in four districts of Zomba, Phalombe, Chikwawa, and Nsanje. Additionally, WFP implemented a UN Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE III, 2020-2024) in four other districts of Mangochi, Dedza, Salima and Kasungu. Collectively through these two programmes, WFP is targeting close to 600,000 children in eight districts of Malawi (Chikwawa, Dedza, Kasungu, Mangochi, Phalombe, Nsanje, Salima, and Zomba) supported by funding from the Governments of Norway (2021-2024), European Union (2020-2023) and Iceland (2017-2024).<sup>42</sup> Other humanitarian and development actors, including UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs, also have efforts aligned with the TSOLATA-HGSF programme. For comprehensive information, please refer to the coherence section of the findings as well as Tables 14 and 15.

22. Through its Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2019-2023,<sup>43</sup> WFP has committed to assisting the Government of Malawi and development partners under the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) in improving shock-responsive social protection, school feeding, nutrition, resilience building, and emergency response in Malawi. WFP has provided the Government of Malawi with technical assistance to positively impact households, build community resilience, improve synergies across programs, and augment the Government of Malawi's capacity and ownership of social protection programs, including providing school meals. WFP Malawi also acts as the lead convenor for the UN Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE III, 2020-2024) with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNDP) and Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience Project with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNICEF and UNDP. In doing so, WFP is in pursuit of achieving sustainable development goals 2, 4, 5, 12, 13 and 17.<sup>44</sup>

### 1.2.6. Government policies and programmes

23. School feeding has been a key safety net within the policies and strategies of the Government of Malawi. The Government's Malawi National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy (NMNP) 2018-2022, National Multi-Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan (2018-2022), and National School Health and Nutrition Strategic Plan (2018-2022) – all emphasize integrating nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions along with school feeding and school-level interventions.

24. This integrated approach has also been reflected in other policies such as the National Social Support Programme (MNSSP II) 2018-2023 as well as the National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020-2030 (NESIP), which promotes primary education and reduced incidence of hunger through school meals. The Malawi National Growth and Development Strategy (MNGDS III 2018-2022) also recognized school meal programmes supported by multi-sector coordination (across education, health, agriculture, gender, and social welfare) as a crucial pathway to achieve the Government of Malawi's goal of improving food and nutrition security and access to basic and equitable education. Previously, this multi-sectoral approach was

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<sup>42</sup> Home Grown School Feeding in Malawi Brief (2023): <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/home-grown-school-feeding-malawi-march-2023#:~:text=WFP%20currently%20supports%20the%20implementation,2023%20and%20Mangochi%20with%20funding>

<sup>43</sup> [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000101928/download/?\\_ga=2.16913978.22137891.1713936715-1543185110.1705035524&\\_gac=1.82785636.1712645033.Cj0KCQjwq86wBhDiARIsAJhuphkU87t3VOQ7g4khs9ejjPGDCrbdldHXq39Rzvu\\_r0K-FcEvo2PyUYAaAoveEALw\\_wcB](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000101928/download/?_ga=2.16913978.22137891.1713936715-1543185110.1705035524&_gac=1.82785636.1712645033.Cj0KCQjwq86wBhDiARIsAJhuphkU87t3VOQ7g4khs9ejjPGDCrbdldHXq39Rzvu_r0K-FcEvo2PyUYAaAoveEALw_wcB)

<sup>44</sup> (i) Achieving food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture (SDG 2); (ii) Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4); (iii) Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (SDG 5); (iv) Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12); (v) Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (SDG 13) and (vi) Revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG 17).

also highlighted under the National School Health and Nutrition Policy (2017), the National Agriculture Policy (2016), and the National Agricultural Investment Plan (NAIP, 2017), which articulated the need for establishing linkages between school meals, improved nutritional status and enhanced access to markets for smallholder farmers.

### 1.2.7. Gender inequalities in Malawi

25. Gender inequalities and limited access to equitable rights, resources, education, and opportunities, along with issues of gender-based violence (GBV)<sup>45</sup> have continuously challenged Malawi's progress towards SDG 5 (gender equality). As of 2022, Malawi ranked 173 out of 188 countries on the United Nation's Gender Inequality Index (GII) with the eighth highest child marriage rates in the world.<sup>46</sup> As indicated in the previous section, issues like child marriage, early pregnancy, and negative attitudes of parents toward girl's education contribute to a much higher prevalence of dropouts among girls as they move up toward higher academic grades.<sup>47</sup> A decline in girls' and women's economic and educational opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the challenges of child marriage and teen pregnancy as an inadvertent consequence. During the same period, the country also witnessed one of the greatest declines in the Global Gender Gap Index 2022 (ranking 132 out of 146 countries), performing poorly along dimensions of economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and political empowerment.<sup>48</sup>

26. Despite women's important contribution to food production and nutrition security across households, gender disparity in terms of equal pay, equal access and control over land, economic resources, and technology specially create impediments to the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment and instead, contribute to their vulnerability.<sup>49</sup> The country has adequate legal and policy frameworks such as the National Gender Policy (2015), National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2025), National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage (2018-2023), ratification of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and regional agreements like the Maputo Protocol, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, etc.). However, limited and fragmented allocation of resources for implementation, entrenched social norms, and effects of pandemic and natural disasters have constrained progress on reducing gender gaps or preventing GBV<sup>50</sup> in the country.

### 1.2.8. Other vulnerable groups in Malawi

27. According to the World Bank, an estimated 10 percent of children in Malawi live with disabilities. As per a recent estimate (2022), 9281 secondary school students were reported as special needs students in the 2022 academic year, whereas in 2023, it was reported that 11,271 students were special needs students of the total student enrolment. The highest number of learners are reported to be visually impaired, with 4,072 students, followed by students with learning difficulties and 4,051 special needs students. A 2019 study by the Malawi University of Education highlighted that many schools in Malawi lack infrastructure that

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<sup>45</sup>[https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment#:~:text=Gender%20Based%20Violence%20\(GBV\)%20remains,%2C%20political%20participation%2C%20and%20literacy](https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment#:~:text=Gender%20Based%20Violence%20(GBV)%20remains,%2C%20political%20participation%2C%20and%20literacy).

<sup>46</sup> <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/africa/malawi?typeofmeasure=60d60d6b064342cea4a2ae8a265b80f6>

<sup>47</sup> Education Management and Information Systems (EMIS) data (2022)

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/09/malawi-must-step-up-efforts-to-address-critical-gender-gaps-to-unlock-untapped-economic-potential-and-empower-women>

<sup>49</sup> USAID(2020): [https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment#:~:text=Gender%20Based%20Violence%20\(GBV\)%20remains,%2C%20political%20participation%2C%20and%20literacy](https://2017-2020.usaid.gov/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment#:~:text=Gender%20Based%20Violence%20(GBV)%20remains,%2C%20political%20participation%2C%20and%20literacy).

<sup>50</sup> Malawi Gender Assessment and Gender-Based Violence Assessment (2022): <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099320004212218085/p1763950d03f8907f0958a0e8334972fdb3>

caters to students with disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators, or adapted washrooms. Equality in school is important, and the inclusion of special needs materials helps towards access to education for all.

28. Children living with disabilities in Malawi face significant barriers to education and nutrition security. The prevalence of disabilities in Malawi is not precisely documented but estimates suggest that a significant portion of the school-aged population may have specific dietary requirements. These needs can arise from allergies, digestive issues, or other medical conditions. Standard school meals in Malawi might not cater to these varied needs, potentially leading to malnutrition or exclusion from the programme. A 2018 report by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine found that children with disabilities in Malawi are more likely to experience bullying or social isolation at school. Lunchtime, often a social event, can be particularly challenging. School feeding programs must be designed to create a welcoming environment where all children feel comfortable eating and socializing with their peers.

### **1.3. Subject being evaluated**

#### **1.3.1. Subject evaluated**

29. Tsogolo la Thanzi (TSOLATA) – Healthy Future refers to a European Union-funded (EUR 16 million) school feeding three-year programme (2020-2023). The programme was implemented across four vulnerable districts in the southern region of Malawi, namely Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe, and Zomba. TSOLATA -HGSF was implemented with the Ministry of Education (School Health and Nutrition), in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and under the overall coordination of the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA) in the Ministry of Health.

30. TSOLATA-HGSF aimed at (i) supporting increased knowledge and awareness on nutrition and healthy dietary practices for 306,068 children in 216 primary schools through the provision of diversified school meals (HGSF model); (ii) augmenting the knowledge and capacity of smallholder farmers participating in HGSF for increased production of diversified nutritious crops, as well as increased access to markets; (iii) strengthening the capacity of government staff (national and district levels) to design and implement a National School Meals Programme. The programme contributes to the 'AFIKEPO' Nutrition Programme in Malawi<sup>51</sup> that focuses on achieving optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants, and young children. It is also aligned with the 'Four Pillars Approach' adopted by the National Nutrition Committee (2015), which aims to enable children's full potential development by implementing nutrition-sensitive interventions targeted at school learners, their families, and surrounding communities.

31. School meal interventions in Malawi started in 1999. TSOLATA-HGSF is based on the experiences of the WFP country office in implementing a centralized model of school feeding (from 2010 to 2018) under the USDA McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition programme in 13 districts of Malawi. It focuses on transitioning from a centralized model to home-grown school feeding (HGSF) model to capitalize on integration with other livelihoods and nutrition-sensitive interventions. The country has endorsed HGSF as a strategy to contribute to the agricultural and economic empowerment of farmers and improve the nutrition and education of its children. The universal provision of school meals in all public primary schools was sent as a cabinet directive in 2007.<sup>52</sup> The smallholder farmers are also linked through the HGSF model to supply food commodities to the schools. Additionally, TSOLATA-HGSF utilizes locally produced food, reducing reliance on external supplies and strengthening local food systems.

#### **1.3.2. Strategic objectives**

32. The TSOLATA activities are aligned to support AFIKEPO strategic objectives 1 and 2 and support WFP's country strategic plan objectives (SO1: End hunger by protecting access to food, SO2: Improve

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<sup>51</sup> The AFIKEPO nutrition programme, implemented by the FAO and UNICEF in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, is a multi-sectoral effort that integrates agriculture, health and nutrition actions to address the problem of food and nutrition insecurity and undernutrition across ten districts in Malawi. TSOLATA programme targets different districts than those targeted under AFIKEPO.

<sup>52</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/wfp-malawi-school-meals-programme-smp-april-2018>

nutrition, SO3: Achieve food security and SO4: Support SDG implementation. The strategic objectives, foundational results, and expected outcomes have been presented in the results framework in Annex XII of Volume II of the report.

### 1.3.3. Programme outcomes

33. TSOLATA-HGSF aims to achieve three main outcomes: (i) Primary school learners and households in targeted communities are applying better nutrition, hygiene and sanitation practices, and learners have increased their intake of nutritious food; (ii) Smallholder farmers participating in TSOLATA-HGSF have increased knowledge and capacity in the production of diversified nutritious crops, as well as increased access to markets and; (iii) Government staff have increased their capacity to design and implement a national school meals programme. To achieve these, several key interventions are undertaken by WFP in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, including relevant ministries. The results framework/line of sight is presented in Annex XII of Volume II of the report.

### 1.3.4. Planned outputs and beneficiaries

34. TSOLATA-HGSF initially targeted 280,000 learners in 200 primary schools and 20,000 smallholder farmers across four districts. However, in the second year, the target was revised to 305,000 children in 216 primary schools. The end of year 2<sup>53</sup> however, highlights 306,068 children (159,155 girls, 146,913 boys) received diversified school meals in 216 schools. The project supported direct purchase of locally produced food commodities such as cereals, legumes, tubers, fruits, and vegetables from 20,000 smallholder (equal proportion of men and women) farmers for supply to 216 primary schools. Refer to Table 1 for a breakdown of the number of learners and schools by district.

**Table 1: Programme beneficiaries (targeted vs. actual)**

District	No. of schools	Planned number of children	Actual number of children reached		
			Total	Boys	Girls
Chikwawa	67	75 350	75 350	36 921	38 429
Nsanje	36	50 063	50 063	23 029	27 034
Phalombe	66	117 579	118 703	38 164	60 539
Zomba	47	62 008	61 952	30 412	31 560
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>305 000</b>	<b>306 068</b>	<b>149 873</b>	<b>156 095</b>

35. School meals provided under TSOLATA-HGSF are prepared by community volunteer cooks (individuals from the local community who contribute their time and skills to prepare meals for schoolchildren) with guidance from food committees and school health and nutrition teachers. Meals are prepared according to the menu developed in each district (based on the seasonal food availability calendar) with the participation of schoolteachers and community members. Food committees are also trained in safe water, sanitation, and hygiene practices, food preparation, handling, storage, and distribution. TSOLATA-HGSF also aimed at enhancing primary learners' and households' knowledge and skills on aspects related to improved nutrition and healthy dietary practices, hygiene and sanitation. Integrated with WFP's overall sustainable livelihoods approaches, TSOLATA-HGSF also focused on strengthening local food systems by building capacities of smallholder farmers (on crop diversification and production, post-harvest handling, financial literacy, specific crop management, etc.) as well as improving access to markets by linking them to schools.

<sup>53</sup> Tsogolo la Thanzi (TSOLATA) – Healthy Future Achieving Sustainable School Meals Programme in Malawi Contribution Agreement - FED/2020/420-454, Year 2 Report.

36. TSOLATA-HGSF also supports a range of capacity-building activities for stakeholders at the community level (school management committees, parent teacher associations, volunteer cooks, teachers, food committees, finance, and procurement committees) on better nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation practices. Representatives at the district and national levels (for ministries of education, agriculture, and health, district nutrition coordinating committee, and district councils) were trained on designing and implementing the national school meals programme.

### **1.3.5. Programme budget**

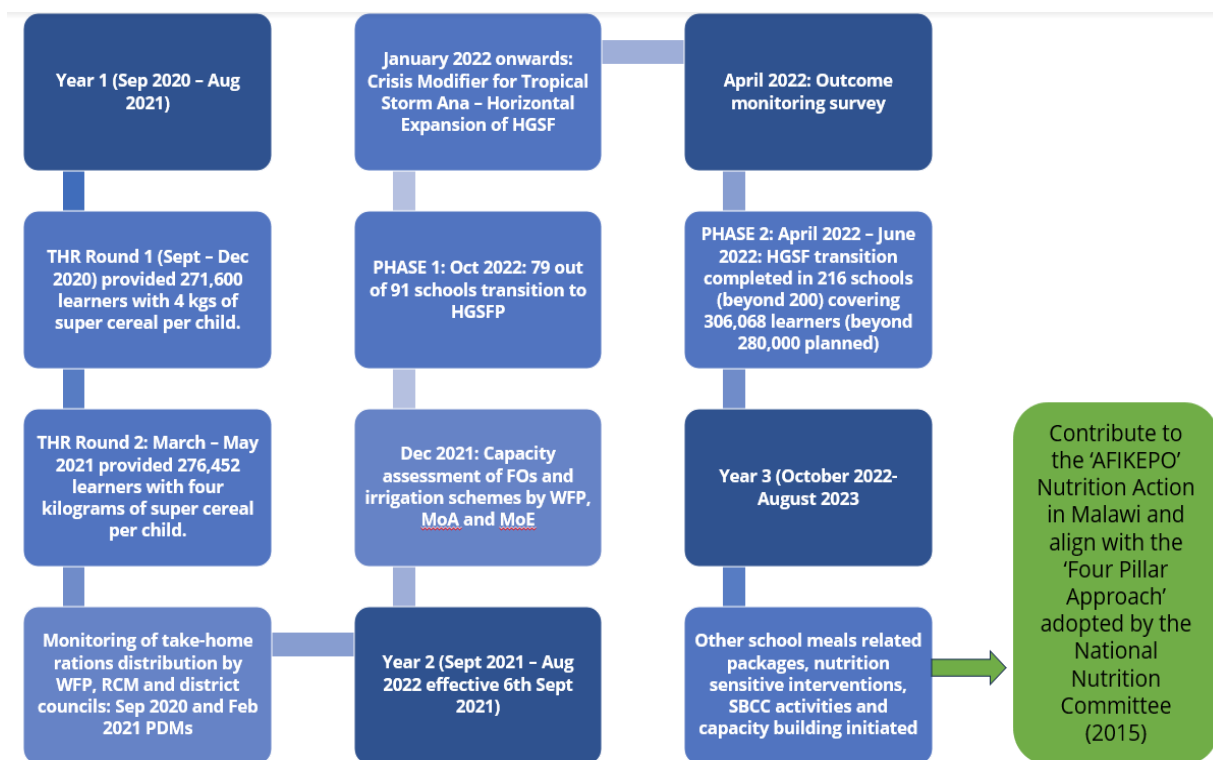
37. The total budget of TSOLATA-HGSF is EUR 19 million. The EU contribution to the programme is EUR 16 million. For the balance amount, WFP leveraged other confirmed development partners' contributions (from UN Agencies such as FAO and UNICEF, as well as other partners implementing AFIKEPO, such as GIZ) that supported the implementation of home-grown school meals (Outcome 1 of the action), capacity building and support to smallholder farmers (Outcome 2), and advocacy and capacity strengthening efforts at the national level (Outcome 3).

### **1.3.6. Programme timelines**

38. TSOLATA-HGSF was implemented from September 2020 to December 2023. However, the activities outlined in the design document were completed between September 2020 and August 2023. Since its initiation, the programme has been constantly affected by the evolving COVID-19 pandemic context, a series of tropical storms/cyclones, and resultant vulnerabilities, which adversely impacted the roll-out plan of the home-grown school feeding model. Refer to Figure 3 for timelines.



**Figure 3: TSOLATA roll-out September 2020 – August 2023**



### 1.3.7. Modalities of engagement

39. As can be referred from Figure 3, through the introduction of crisis modifiers<sup>54</sup> under the Education Cluster COVID-19 Response Plan, early interventions in the first year of implementation were limited to take-home support (a mix of corn-soya blend and cash-based support) in partnership with the Red Cross Malawi, district councils and private banks (for cash assistance). With approval from the Government of Malawi on the resumption of school meals, the second year of implementation entailed a two-phased transition of 216 schools from a centralized model to an HGSF model guided by detailed capacity assessments and systematic prioritization of ready-to-transition schools (assessment conducted by WFP) with support from the Ministry of Education.

40. WFP empowered schools to purchase food locally through competitive tendering processes. Schools received funds from WFP through district councils on a termly basis to procure food commodities. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) and memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the district councils guided the funds transfer process from WFP to the district and school for food procurement. Participating schools signed contracts with farmers organizations (FOs) to procure specific quantities of diversified foods within an agreed timeframe. The school management committees (SMC) and parent and teacher association (PTA) committees oversaw fund management, procurement plans, and purchases and were responsible for handling, storing, and preparing the meals. As implementers of the project account personnel, the district council conducted monthly funds management and review of school records for adherence to financial management and food procurement guidelines. The Ministry of Agriculture contributes significantly to the success of the WFP Malawi HGSF programme. Their involvement helps ensure the programme promotes local food production, strengthens community livelihoods, and provides schoolchildren with nutritious meals sourced from within Malawi.

<sup>54</sup> A “Crisis modifier” is a mechanism to rapidly address and respond to short-term additional needs in the project areas, to protect the investment being made in in promoting the uptake of better nutrition practices.

41. In addition to school meals, a range of other nutrition-sensitive interventions (e.g., development of menus, cooking demonstrations, and training, the establishment of school gardens, etc.), interpersonal SBCC interventions (on good nutrition, WASH, etc.), and capacity building (at district and national levels) were also implemented. Similar to Year 1, in response to tropical storm Ana and other vulnerabilities (on account of global economic instability), WFP used crisis modifiers to provide take-home rations (THR) for children and supported schools that were worst hit. In the third year of its implementation, the TSOLATA-HGSF introduced non-food support such as distributing materials for school gardens (garden tools, seeds, fencing materials, irrigation equipment, and training materials), and information, education, and communication (IEC) materials. The changes in modalities of engagement over the implementation period can be referred to in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: TSOLATA implementation modalities over time**

Plan	Modality	No. of beneficiaries			Period	Remarks
		Total	Boys/ Male	Girls/ Female		
Actual scenario year 1	Take-home Rations – using super cereal (centralized modality)	280 000	138 000	142 000	September 2020 – September 2021	All learners received take-home rations
Year 2 and beyond	Centralized modality (in school meals) – using super cereal	163 144	*NA	*NA	October 2020 – March 2022	For schools with HGSF potential but require more time for preparations
	HGSF	116 856	*NA	*NA	November 2021 – March 2022	These are 79 schools and areas in the four districts with potential for surplus production and linkage to smallholder farmers. While the initial plan was for 91 schools and 133,000 children, the number was revised based on anticipated levels of food supply.
	HGSF	306 068	146 913	159 155	April 2022 onwards	All 216 schools transitioned to HGSF and procured from smallholder farmers. A phased approach of transitioning 216 schools from April 2022 was completed by June 2022 and an additional 25,000 children in 16 schools reached
	SHFs linked to the HGSF market (Year 2)	11 090	5 434	5 656	2022	

Plan	Modality	No. of beneficiaries			Period	Remarks
		Total	Boys/ Male	Girls/ Female		
	SHFs linked to the HGSF market (Year 3)	12 223	5 566	6 657	2023	
<b>Total number of children (216 schools)</b>		<b>306 000</b>			<b>End of TSOLATA I</b>	
*NA – Not available						

Source: Evaluation Terms of Reference

### 1.3.8. Implementation partners

42. Through multiple rounds of changing implementation modalities, different stakeholders played key roles in supporting TSOLATA-HGSF implementation. Details of implementation partners and their involvement in the evaluation are provided in Annex XIV of Volume II of the report.

### 1.3.9. Results framework

43. The design of TSOLATA-HGSF can be understood from the results framework. The framework provides an understanding of the activities designed and the expected results. The result framework has been reconstructed as part of the country strategic plan (CSP) evaluation in 2022. The reconstructed theory of change is in Annex XIII of Volume II of the report.

44. WFP has a country monitoring, review, and evaluation (MRE) plan for measuring progress toward programme outcomes and objectives of the CSP. As part of this, all school meals programme activities are monitored at the process, output, and outcome level throughout the programme's life cycle. The WFP country office has staff in each district to monitor activities, including conducting quality checks of activities and collaborating with district-level government officials to support capacity-strengthening and government ownership.

45. WFP's monitoring reports capture information related to the direct outputs of TSOLATA-HGSF. This includes the number of students assisted, the number of meals served, the amount of food distributed, and the number of FOs providing food to the schools as part of the smallholder farmer's programme. Output monitoring is typically collected through monthly reports submitted after each month of activities.

### 1.3.10. Gender integration and disability inclusion

46. WFP is committed to ensuring that all its programs are gender transformative and that all WFP employees are responsible and accountable for implementing the gender policy and working towards its objectives. Through the implementation of TSOLATA-HGSF, the WFP country office has actively encouraged women and girls to participate in programme implementation, fostering a sense of agency and leadership. This aligns perfectly with WFP's commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women (GEWE) and ensures that all voices are heard in shaping the programme's success.

47. The programme has integrated disability inclusion and gender equality across all its interventions, including providing school meals, promoting access to education for children of all genders, managing school meals, capacity building of community members, and supporting smallholder farmers. TSOLATA-HGSF tackles gender inequality by empowering women farmers through income generation and leadership roles. This frees up their time and boosts their decision-making power within households. Girls benefit from increased school attendance due to the programme's nutritious meals, improving their education and future prospects. By prioritizing women participation, offering gender sensitivity training, and monitoring progress, the programme fosters a more equitable and nutritious future for all. The implementation process involves active targeting, inclusion, and prioritization of girl children, women-led households, and women smallholder farmers as beneficiaries while promoting leadership and participation of mothers and

women representatives of local bodies across all activities. Through such approaches, WFP has achieved several gender and disability inclusion outcomes in the past, including improvement of attendance for girls, higher decision-making among female members of households, and leadership of women in school meals committees.<sup>55,56</sup>

## **1.4. Evaluation methodology, limitations, and ethical considerations**

### **1.4.1. Evaluation approach and methodology**

48. The evaluation methodology is guided by the ToR and underpinned by TSOLATA-HGSF's logical framework. The team used the 'Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research' approach for the evaluation. The framework helped identify areas of strength and weakness in the intervention's implementation and assess its effectiveness. This conceptual framework is described in detail in Annex III of Volume II of the report.

49. The evaluation was designed to cover all activities implemented as part of TSOLATA-HGSF. The evaluation adopted a mixed-method concurrent quasi-experimental design to enable the comparability of targeted and non-targeted groups in the same districts on key indicators of interest. This also helped provide an overview of the outcomes and insights into the challenges, barriers, and promising practices to take forward in the next phase. Mixed methods were suitable because they provided a practical way to understand multiple perspectives, different types of causal pathways, and multiple types of outcomes—all common features of implementation research problems. The overall methodology of this evaluation is aligned with the baseline methodology to allow for comparisons of key indicators with the baseline figures captured in 2021.

50. The evaluation involved a literature review, qualitative and quantitative data collection (household survey, IDIs, FGDs, KIIs, etc.) with women, girls, men, and boys from different stakeholder groups. The evaluation also attempted to measure and compare the costs and benefits of the TSOLATA-HGSF to assess its economic viability and impact. A gender assessment of the intervention was conducted to inform the gender analysis that the country office plans to use for its country strategy plan (2024-2028). The evaluation team conducted a multivariate exploratory analysis. Findings from primary and secondary data were triangulated to arrive at the conclusions.

51. Towards understanding the resilience of households with respect to hunger and food security, the evaluation considered three important indicators: the Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity (CARI), the Household Hunger Scale (HHS), and the Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI). These indicators provided valuable insights into the population's food security and nutrition status and helped assess the impact and effectiveness of TSOLATA-HGSF. These indicators were also used in the TSOLATA-HGSF's baseline assessment. A summary of the methodology, presenting the method of data collection, target groups, nature of the interviews, and indicative outputs is presented in Figure 4 below. The communication and knowledge management plan of the evaluation, as articulated by WFP Country office, has been included in Annex XVI of Volume II of the report.

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<sup>55</sup> WFP. 2018. Final Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi - 2013 to 2015.

<sup>56</sup> WFP. 2019. Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi 2016 to 2018

**Figure 4: Summary of methods of data collection**

	Secondary Review	Primary Data Collection				
<b>Method of data collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme proposal</li> <li>• Logical/Result frameworks</li> <li>• Baseline evaluation report and outcome survey report</li> <li>• Annual reports</li> <li>• Routine monitoring data (cost related data (overhead, expenditure)</li> <li>• MIS documents</li> <li>• Contract documents</li> <li>• Orientation documents</li> <li>• WFP annual country reports</li> <li>• Previous school feeding valuation reports</li> <li>• Country strategy plan document</li> <li>• Household survey reports (IHS5) – 2020</li> <li>• Malawi education statistics report</li> <li>• SDG progress report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ <b>Quantitative Survey with School going children, Parents and Small Holding Framers</b></li> <li>➢ <b>Focus Group Discussions</b></li> <li>➢ <b>KIIs with programme level stakeholders and relevant government staff</b></li> </ul>				
<b>Target Group/Sources of Information</b>		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Qualitative</th> <th>Quantitative</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> <b>KIIs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFP programme team/ field officers</li> <li>• RB, OEV</li> <li>• School principals</li> <li>• Government representatives</li> </ul> <b>IDIs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local level government representatives</li> <li>• NGOs/ CSOs</li> <li>• Women and Men SHFs/ Women-led households/ Mothers of girl children</li> </ul> <b>FGDs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women &amp; Men SHF groups</li> <li>• Parents of primary school children</li> </ul> <b>Donors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Union</li> </ul> </td> <td> <b>Beneficiaries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School going children</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Small Holding Framers</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Qualitative	Quantitative	<b>KIIs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFP programme team/ field officers</li> <li>• RB, OEV</li> <li>• School principals</li> <li>• Government representatives</li> </ul> <b>IDIs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local level government representatives</li> <li>• NGOs/ CSOs</li> <li>• Women and Men SHFs/ Women-led households/ Mothers of girl children</li> </ul> <b>FGDs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women &amp; Men SHF groups</li> <li>• Parents of primary school children</li> </ul> <b>Donors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Union</li> </ul>	<b>Beneficiaries</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School going children</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Small Holding Framers</li> </ul>
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**Indicative Outputs of Data Collection**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish alignment of the programme with government priorities/initiatives, other actors and WFP interventions such as livelihoods</li> <li>• Assess the compatibility of TSLOTA HGSF with other interventions</li> <li>• Review of project targets specified for the programme</li> <li>• Explore scope of sustainability; key considerations for project design and implementation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish progress made towards achieving the TSOLATA objectives</li> <li>• Review whether TSOLATA deliver results in an economic and timely way</li> <li>• Establish the positive or negative, intended or unintended higher-level effects of the programme</li> <li>• Identify key enablers and barriers</li> <li>• Provide evidence-based findings to inform operational and strategic decision-making</li> <li>• Provide analysis and recommendations for WFP on its role in establishing and implementing effective structures to support the HGSF policy</li> <li>• Wherever appropriate sex disaggregated analysis will be provided</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

**1.4.2. Evaluation questions and evaluation criteria**

52. The evaluation team assessed TSOLATA-HGSF according to the criteria of coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, along with gender equity and disability inclusion. Criteria were selected as per the needs of the relevant stakeholders and the context of the evaluation, and they were applied thoughtfully to support a high-quality, useful evaluation. Notably, relevance as a criterion was not evaluated as evidence was already from similar school feeding evaluations conducted in Malawi. Evidence from other school meal programme evaluations suggests that the school meal programme is highly relevant to beneficiary needs, considering the fact that three out of four children do not consume breakfast before the school meal provision, and the on-site meals are appreciated for being universal and non-discriminatory.<sup>57</sup> Table 3 presents the evaluation criteria and the key questions that were examined. Gender equity and disability inclusion were mainstreamed throughout the study, and gender dimensions were factored into the sub-questions/key information areas for each evaluation question. The key information areas to answer each question, along with source and data collection methods, were highlighted in the detailed evaluation matrix presented in Annex IV of Volume II of the report.

**Table 3: Key questions examined through the evaluation**

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Gender equity & disability	EQ 1 – To what extent does the TSOLATA HGSF equitably and in a transformative manner cater for the needs of women, men, girls and boys in the targeted

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/publications/malawi-school-meals-programme-evaluation>

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
inclusion	communities?
Coherence	EQ 2 - How compatible is the TSOLATA HGSF with other interventions implemented by WFP (programme integration), the Government and other stakeholders?
Effectiveness	EQ 3 - To what extent did TSOLATA achieve its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups of men, women, girls and boys?
Efficiency	EQ 4 - To what extent did TSOLATA deliver results in an economic and timely way?
Impact	EQ 5 - To what extent did TSOLATA generate or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects?
Sustainability	EQ 6 - To what extent will the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue?

### 1.4.3. Sampling

53. The sample size was calculated by maintaining a similar sample size used in the baseline study to facilitate meaningful comparisons and analysis. The baseline sample size was statistically powered enough, with a post-hoc power analysis indicating a power of 98.5 percent. This high level of power, based on an incidence of 50 percent for group 1 and 45 percent for group 2, and an alpha of 0.05, provides strong assurance that the baseline sample size was appropriate. The detailed sampling protocol and sample distribution are presented in Annex III of Volume II of the report.

54. **Quantitative sampling:** For quantitative sampling, 80 schools (40 intervention schools and 40 non-intervention/control schools) were selected, with 20 schools allocated per district. These selections were evenly divided between schools participating in the programme (intervention) and non-intervention schools (10 schools in each category per district). To facilitate this selection, two lists of schools (intervention and control schools) were compiled from the programme/district school office.

55. To facilitate school selection, the evaluation team collected two lists of schools (intervention and control) from the programme/district school office. All schools in the list were rated on the perceived impact of the cyclone (using a quick and short Delphi Method) on (i) the impact on the district, and (ii) the impact on TSOLATA-HGSF interventions. This was based on the opinion of the representatives' district council. The cumulative scores obtained from these ratings were used to create a ranked list of schools, sorted from high to low impact. Subsequently, this ranked school list was stratified into high, medium, and low categories. Four high-impact schools and three schools each from medium and low-impact zones were selected. A random sampling approach was applied to select up to 10 schools from each category (intervention and control), drawing four schools from high and three schools from medium and low strata.

56. Village sampling involved creating a list of villages within the school's catchment area (specific neighbourhoods or areas that a school serves) and randomly selecting three villages. Based on geographical contiguity, these three villages were segmented into five clusters. A thorough listing of up to 150 households (30 houses in each cluster) was conducted. This formed the sampling frame for the selection of the households. From this sampling frame, 30 households with children from grades III-V who attended a common school were selected for the parent interviews. Overall, a gender balance was maintained within the sample, with 50 percent of selected households headed by women. A proportion of the households selected for the interviews included smallholder farmers (SHF), who were also household heads.

57. The sample size for smallholder farmers (SHFs) was 1,016 (intervention and control). This included 496 men and 520 women farmers. The process for identifying these farmers was as follows: The list of Farmer Organizations (FO) and individual farmers supplying food to the school was obtained from the school principal. The evaluation team also approached the farmer organizations (FOs) requesting a list of farmers, including men and women. These combined lists formed the sampling frame. Efforts were made

to include SHFs from FOs and individual suppliers. The table below provides the distribution of samples across target groups for the quantitative surveys. The total sample was 3,390 household interviews (calculated using a sample size comparable to the baseline study). The detailed quantitative sample size breakdown can be found in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Quantitative sample sizes**

Types	Sample
Households with primary school children	2 374 (intervention and control)
Households with SHFs	1 016 (intervention and control)
<b>Total household interviews</b>	<b>3 390</b>
School Head	80

58. **Qualitative sampling:** The qualitative sample had a mix of focus group discussions (FGDs), Key informant interviews (KIIs), and in-depth interviews (IDIs). The sampling for the qualitative evaluation is provided in Table 5 below. A total of 36 KIIs were conducted across four districts. The informants were selected purposively based on input from the WFP Programme team. Annex VIII of Volume II of the report provides an overview of the key informant interviews conducted during the inception and evaluation stages. Updated information on the Evaluation Reference Group, which contributed to the evaluation's credibility, utility, and impartiality, is provided in Annex XV of Volume II of the report. Focus group discussions primarily involved men in SHF groups (8), women in SHF groups (8), and parents of primary school children (8). The methodology included identifying homogeneous groups corresponding to each target category in each of the four districts. Each FGD consisted of 7-9 participants to facilitate in-depth discussions. Participants/parents were chosen from households with children attending the corresponding school but not included in the household survey, ensuring comprehensive coverage and varied perspectives. Some parents were expected to be SHFs, while others were selected from lists obtained from the FO and schools, varying by the crops they cultivated. In addition, IDIs were conducted with representatives, management teams of FOs, representative cooperating partners, and programme beneficiaries - including a mix of women and men SHFs, women-led households, and mothers of girl children benefiting from the programme. Two beneficiaries from each district were randomly selected from the household listing. Furthermore, a purposive selection through the snowballing method identified 'special instances' that were developed into case stories for the evaluation report.

**Table 5: Qualitative sampling**

Stakeholders	Districts (All 4 taken together)	At Lilongwe	Number of interactions
<b>Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)</b>			
WFP programme representative, programme team, field teams RBJ, among others	4	4	36
School principals/representatives from PTA, SMC, VNCCs, ANCCs, school nutrition clubs, care groups	12		
National level government officials (Department of School Health and Nutrition, Ministry of Education; Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA), Ministry of Health; Department of Agricultural Extension Services (DAES), Ministry of Agriculture; Directorates of Planning of School	-	4	

Stakeholders	Districts (All 4 taken together)	At Lilongwe	Number of interactions
Health and Nutrition)			
District level government officials (representatives from district councils, DNCCs, DECs)	8	-	
<b>In-depth Interviews (Purposely selected through snowballing)</b>			
Representatives, management teams of farmer organizations	4	-	15
Representative cooperating partners*	3	-	
Programme beneficiaries	8	-	
<b>FGDs with TSOLATA-HGSF beneficiaries</b>			
Men SHF groups	8	-	24
Women SHF groups	8	-	
Parents of primary school children	8	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>75</b>
<i>*No cooperating partner in Chikwawa</i>			

#### 1.4.4. Data collection

59. All the tools administered focused on gathering information about the impact, changes, and overall outcomes achieved since the baseline study of TSOLATA-HGSF. The primary data collection was conducted through field visits by the local partner, Kadale Consultants Limited, with technical oversight and regular virtual supervision from NRM. The team who conducted the evaluation and their specific tasks are detailed in Annex XVIII of Volume II of the report. The survey was administered with school-going children, parents, smallholder farmers, and school heads, and a qualitative component, including KIIs, IDIs, and FGDs, was conducted with relevant stakeholders. All KIIs at the national level and most of the KIIs at the district level were virtually conducted by NRM. The tools developed for the evaluation are presented in Annex V of Volume II of the report. The training schedule for the data collection team has been included in Annex XVII of Volume II of the report.

60. The quantitative questionnaires covered key programme outcomes, including food consumption and expenditure, hygiene and sanitation practices, the status of the availability of WASH facilities in schools, intake of nutritious food, and nutritional status. Other outcomes included the production of diversified nutritious crops and access to the market, disaggregated by gender. The qualitative tools focused on understanding beneficiaries' experience with the project activities and getting their views on what was missing from a home-grown school feeding programme and what WFP could do better.

61. With regard to secondary data, a detailed review of literature was conducted to build the context of TSOLATA and its results. Combined with these, the desk review examined findings from the baseline, outcome survey report, evaluation for Malawi HGSFP, national-level secondary data, and WFP monitoring data to build the contribution of TSOLATA-HGSF design. budgets, annual work plans, and data from the management information system (MIS) documents were also reviewed to estimate costs and measure tangible benefits. A detailed data collection approach has been added in Annex III of Volume II of the report. Bibliographic information, including the documents reviewed for this evaluation, is provided in Annex IX of Volume II of the report.



### 1.4.5. Data analysis

62. The questionnaires were developed in line with the ToR and TSOLATA-HGSF documents. Information on planned achievement across some indicators was taken from project monitoring reports, annual reports, baseline study, and outcome survey reports of WFP. The evaluation questions (as specified in the ToR) and key information areas were mapped (presented in Annex IV of Volume II of the report) with the type of tools and facilitated the identification of data triangulation methods and assessment of the reliability and validity of the data collected. As indicated earlier, the analysis of primary data was supported by secondary data.

63. Considering that the difference-in-difference analysis was not possible during the baseline, the team collected data from control schools for the end-term evaluation. The data analysis aimed to highlight how the values established during the baseline study changed and what progress had been made. This helped the team gauge whether the project implementation was on track and identify the areas where delays had happened. The data analysis also provided a descriptive analysis of sex-disaggregated data, setting the benchmark values in intervention and control schools and allowing for ensuing evaluation to estimate the extent of change attributable to the project.

64. The evaluators first documented the qualitative data from the FGDs, IDIs, and KIIs and then coded and analysed them. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The analysis focused on providing the reasons for the change observed. It was used to gather an in-depth understanding of internal and external factors that may have affected TSOLATA-HGSF implementation, as well as their effect on the outcome and impact indicators. It also helped identify unintended impacts and understand the reasons. The qualitative analysis was also used to understand beneficiaries' perceptions about the services they received under TSOLATA-HGSF, the value they perceived from these services, the change brought about because of TSOLATA-HGSF interventions, and their overall experience. Overall, this method enabled us to gather diverse perspectives, uncover hidden insights, and ensure a comprehensive analysis that informed the evaluation's findings and recommendations.

65. Data obtained for gender-related questions were analysed comprehensively to report on the gender dimensions of the evaluation. Data on indicators were also disaggregated by sex, age, and disability-related information wherever applicable. The evaluation aligned with the guidance from the Technical Note on Integrating Gender in WFP Evaluation, 2019, and the gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) framework to adequately focus on the gender dimensions of TSOLATA-HGSF. Data on people living with disabilities and the issues they face in the context of TSOLATA-HGSF was also collected and analysed. The evaluation design (methodology and the analytical framework) considered the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) indicators, specifically relating to gender equality and human rights. The evaluation was guided by WFP's latest Gender Policy (2015-2020).

66. The raw data obtained from the field was checked by the data analyst for consistency errors, duplicity of cases, and missing data (refer to Annex III of Volume II of the report) for a detailed note on data cleaning and analysis).

### 1.4.6. Triangulation approaches

67. The methodology entailed a desk review of the project and other related documents. This also comprised a primary survey, including quantitative and qualitative methods. Data was triangulated from the primary survey, desk review, and secondary analysis (comparison of perspectives of different stakeholders on the same issue) to assess the reliability and validity of the data (refer to the evaluation matrix in Annex IV, Volume II of the report).

68. The findings were synthesized to determine the status of the key performance indicators, understand beneficiaries' expectations regarding addressing food insecurity and improving well-being, and examine TSOLATA-HGSF intervention logic's alignment with the Government's agenda, needs, learnings, promising practices, and critical considerations for scaling up (independently). The baseline and endline methodologies were comparable, as both employed the design of a quasi-experimental and mixed method, allowing for the comparison of targeted and non-targeted groups in the same districts on key indicators of interest. The evaluation design included similar key performance indicators, data collection tools, and

sampling methods to ensure consistency and reliability in assessing programme outcomes. The sampling plan was designed in consultation with the WFP CO and TSOLATA-HGSF programme team and followed the baseline methodology to maintain similar sample sizes and ensure meaningful comparisons. The baseline and endline evaluations assessed key indicators such as enrolment, attendance, retention, food consumption, dietary diversity, household expenditure, and adoption of better health and hygiene practices. Additionally, the evaluation considered important indicators like the Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity (CARI), the Household Hunger Scale (HHS), and the Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) to understand household resilience regarding hunger and food security. Data triangulation revealed some contradictions in findings and opinions among stakeholders. To manage these divergent results, discrepancies were systematically re-analysed across data sources and stakeholder perspectives. This involved integrating quantitative and qualitative data to validate findings and uncover underlying patterns. Conclusions were drawn by reconciling these differing findings through thorough analysis and stakeholder consultations, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the programme's outcomes and impacts. The analysis also triangulated data to measure the Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity (CARI), Household Hunger Scale (HHS), and Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) as key indicators to assess the food security and nutrition outcomes of the programme. Moreover, cross-validation of findings from multiple data sources was conducted to ensure consistency and reliability. By comparing methodologies and data collection approaches, the evaluation addressed discrepancies and verified the conclusions' robustness.

#### 1.4.7. Ethical issues and related safeguards

69. WFP decentralized evaluations must conform to WFP and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical standards and norms. The contractors undertaking the evaluations are responsible for safeguarding and ensuring ethics at all stages of the evaluation cycle. This includes but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, or other vulnerable groups who may face barriers to full participation in society), and ensuring that the evaluation results in no harm to participants or their communities.

70. The study team understands the 2020 UNEG norms, standards, and ethical guidelines and adheres to ethical practice and code of conduct during all stages of the evaluation cycle, following its own ethical guidelines and that of the clients. This includes but is not limited to, ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including girls, women, and socially excluded groups), and ensuring that the evaluation results in no harm to participants or their communities. The team especially catered to the engagement needs of sensitive population groups such as women and girls and social and religious minorities. The team for this assignment was guided by the UNEG ethical guidance principles and ensured that no violations such as data collection without consent, collective data not pertaining to this assignment, or accessing areas within the institution premises for which approval has not been taken are committed during the data collection. Details of ethical issues, related risks, safeguards, and measures have been provided in Annex III of Volume II of the report.

#### 1.4.8. Risks, limitations and mitigation measures

71. The risks anticipated, limitations faced, and mitigation measures adopted during the evaluation are presented below refer to Table 6.

**Table 6: Risks, limitations and mitigation measures**

Risks/Limitations	Mitigation measures
Lack of availability of data due to (i) difficulty in accessing certain affected populations and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The ET deployed experienced and trained enumerators and moderators to conduct interviews and discussions. These were hired locally based on their understanding of the local context,</li> </ul>

Risks/Limitations	Mitigation measures
<p>communities due to natural calamities; (ii) difficulty in accessing government institutional partners and representatives(iv) mobilizing at least 6 respondents for FGD due to farming season;</p>	<p>languages, norms, and culture and their ability to mobilise an adequate number of respondents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The ET conducted comprehensive training for the data collection team on ethical standards, sampling framework and data consistency practices to ensure they are well-equipped to handle potential challenges during data collection.</li> <li>▪ The ET regularly engaged with the WFP CO and local stakeholders, including school administration and government officials, to navigate political and social dynamics and gain support during data collection. The field movement plan was prepared and executed in consultation with representatives of WFP-CO at the national and district levels.</li> </ul>
<p>Data Inconsistency &amp; Data Security</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ET adopted strong quality assurance mechanisms for the evaluation, Guidance notes were prepared for the field team (training was also conducted) to capture necessary information adequately.</li> <li>▪ Regular monitoring of data collection processes and validation of data was conducted to identify and rectify inconsistencies in real time. Logical checks were built into the data collection application to ensure adequate warnings for data inconsistency.</li> <li>▪ ET ensured that data privacy is respected and that there is no breach of confidentiality. Stringent data security measures were implemented to protect sensitive information, including encryption, secure storage solutions, and strict access controls.</li> </ul>
<p>Unavailability of critical programme data during the data collection period (required for answering evaluation questions related to the efficiency of TSOLATA-HGSF)</p>	<p><b>Limitation</b></p> <p>The WFP country office provided the evaluation team with TSOLATA-HGSF monitoring data, such as annual reports, baseline, and outcome survey reports, along with other data. However, these reports did not include adequate information to do a comprehensive analysis on aspects related to, change in unit prices of food commodities, commodities purchased by schools, food commodities FOs sell to schools, number of meals served and sex-disaggregated data on SHF. External factors and risks, such as the impact of cyclones, significantly affected the program. Quantifying the monetary impact of these disruptions on program outcomes became a limitation. Moreover, agriculture data/statistics (at the national and district level) from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Government of Malawi was unavailable.</p> <p>Without agriculture statistics, the ET could not establish end-term values on aspects such as crop yield and farmers' income. The absence of secondary data from the Government of Malawi and inadequate programme data restricted the evaluation team's ability (i) to establish contribution /attribution of crop production and farmers' income data with the interventions under TSOLTA-HGSF and (ii) assess the programme's financial and technical efficiency comprehensively (and conduct a cost-benefit analysis).</p> <p><b>Mitigation measures</b></p>

Risks/Limitations	Mitigation measures
	The ET utilized secondary data sources such as past evaluations, pilots, and monitoring data to achieve the best estimates. It further captured farmers' perception on the relevance and utility of TSOLATA-HGSF interventions to (i) establish contribution/attribution and (ii) comment on the financial and technical efficiency of interventions.

#### 1.4.9. Integration of gender into the methodology

72. Gender equity and disability inclusion were mainstreamed throughout the study, and gender dimensions were factored into the sub-questions/key information areas for each evaluation question. The study focused on analyses of sex-disaggregated data in school meal provision, access to education, literacy, attendance, and retention. It also provides sex-disaggregated data (depending on availability) on the status of TSOLATA-HGSF outcomes.

73. Additionally, the study examined the gender roles envisaged in the design and implementation of the programme with respect to (i) enhancing the involvement of women across all activities, (ii) participation in decision-making in farming and farmer organizations, school management committees; (iii) enhancing ownership of school feeding activities (preparation and distribution of hot meals) and (iv) participation in capacity building activities for local women smallholder farmers responsible for food supplies to HGSF supported schools.

## 2. Evaluation findings

### 2.1. Gender equity and disability inclusion

#### **EVALUATION QUESTION 1 (EQ 1) - To what extent does the TSOLATA HGSP equitably and in a transformative manner cater to the needs of women, men, girls, and boys in the targeted communities?**

74. TSOLATA HGSP was reviewed to assess the extent to which it consciously and systematically targeted and achieved transformative change and upheld gender equity and human rights principles in its design and implementation. The evaluation found that through outreach, capacity building, and sensitization with the implementing partners and engaging with the community members, active efforts were made to ensure equitable and gender-inclusive participation of community members, learners, and their parents in implementing the school meals programme.

#### **EQ1.1. To what extent is the intervention in line with the needs and priorities of the most vulnerable groups (women, children, men, people living with disabilities/ natural calamities)?**

75. TSOLATA HGSP, with its strong focus on improving the health and nutritional status of learners and the community, is grounded in a solid evidence base and robust understanding of the key deprivations and needs of the most vulnerable group. Malawi is a low-income and shock-prone country in which the malnutrition rate remains among the highest in Southern Africa. The geographical selection was meticulously carried out, focusing on districts<sup>58</sup> with the highest vulnerability concerning food security and nutrition. These districts also exhibit the lowest education outcomes, dropout rates, and gender gaps<sup>59</sup>. Moreover, these programme districts were previously part of the school meal programme (SMP) supported by USDA (2016 to 2018). The evaluation highlights that over the past five years, the food security situation predominantly remains stressed in most of the targeted districts.<sup>60</sup> The evaluation, therefore, finds that these were appropriate districts for implementation. In this context, TSOLATA HGSP demonstrates a clear commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. The selection of beneficiaries followed government guidelines that prioritized vulnerable groups while also ensuring the inclusion of all eligible individuals.

76. Across recurrent natural calamities, disease outbreaks, and economic devaluation, farmer households and communities, in general, have experienced high levels of vulnerability, particularly in terms of loss of crops and assets, large-scale food insecurities, and poverty. As per the World Bank Integrated Household Survey data 2019/2020, findings indicate that between 2010 and 2019, the absolute number of poor increased by 2 million, leaving 9 million people in poverty.<sup>61</sup> Among the districts, Chikwawa, Phalombe, and Nsanje were some of the most affected districts. This increase in poverty was exacerbated by limited coping strategies in the face of frequent climate shocks and low agricultural productivity, leading to heightened household vulnerability. Malawi ranks 167 out of 187 in the Notre Dame-Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index country ranking.<sup>62</sup> The latest weather shocks to hit Malawi were cyclone Freddy in February 2023, tropical storms Ana and Gombe in early 2022, and cyclone Idai in March 2019. All these events caused significant damage to the agricultural sector, housing, and living conditions, contributing to

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<sup>58</sup> Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe, and Zomba

<sup>59</sup> EMIS Report

<sup>60</sup> Evaluation of the School Meals Programme in Malawi with financial support from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

<sup>61</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099920006302215250/pdf/P174948072f3880690afb70c20973fe214d.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> University of Notre Dame (August 2024). Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative's (ND-GAIN) Country Index. <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

the persistence of poverty. Furthermore, the situation amplifies poverty gaps, as households with fewer assets are more vulnerable to the negative effects of such disasters. The mere anticipation of natural disasters can lead to a situation where some households remain stuck in poverty, which in turn reinforces the existing inequalities within society. The study also suggests households with one female adult are particularly vulnerable to poverty (56 percent) and even more so if there are children in the household (59 percent). The lack of financial resources drives low education levels, and having no money for fees or uniforms is the main reason for never attending school or dropping out.<sup>63</sup>

77. The primary focus of the programme is on school children, the baseline data of the TSOLATA HGFS suggests fewer learners were enrolled in schools for the 2021/2022 academic year compared to 2019/2020 (-1.9 percent) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, TSOLATA-HGFS led to a notable increase in school enrolment, particularly in Nsanje and Zomba districts, with an overall enrolment rate increase of 3 percent. However, there was a gender disparity, with more boys enrolled compared to girls, and a decline in girl enrolment in Chikwawa and Phalombe. Despite this, 95 percent of parents acknowledged the programme's positive impact on enrolment. Detailed findings on attendance, enrolment, dropout, and retention are provided in EQ5.1.

78. Furthermore, TSOLATA HGFS prioritizes "individuals with disabilities" in various aspects, including receiving meals and prioritizing distribution. This was also highlighted across KIIs, FGDs, and IDIs with parents, schools, and community members, where it was shared that meal servings start with those with disability. Under the leadership of village chiefs, both men and women were actively engaged to ensure that school meals were efficiently and sustainably provided at schools. However, the quantitative survey with parents highlighted that 63 percent of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of support and specialized resources, leading to class absences due to various barriers, including inadequate facilities, bullying, transportation issues, and personal challenges like menstruation. In EQ 1.5, paragraphs (108 and 109), the problem has been comprehensively discussed.

79. While school children are the primary focus, TSOLATA HGFS "indirectly supports families by providing food security" (KII, FEMSMC04, CHIKWAWA), benefiting all members of households. This reduces pressure on families, particularly women, who often shoulder the burden of ensuring food security. As parents mentioned (KII, MALES MCCHAIR09, PHALOMBE), school meals "address nutritional needs and provide children with food security". Small savings help families invest in key areas of education, nutrition, and their children's health. In addition to that farmers found the training highly relevant and beneficial (FGD, FEMALE, SHF20, ZOMBA). "Previously, farmers lacked understanding of market importance, farm management, and record-keeping, but now they have greatly benefited" (IDI, MALE, FO17, ZOMBA). This newfound knowledge has enabled them to achieve higher yields and improve their livelihoods. "We now see schools as providing a secure market for their produce" (FGD, MALE, SHF04, NSANJE), a belief essential for economic stability. "The HGFS programme has significantly helped by ensuring our children do not miss school and providing farmers with reliable markets for their crops" (IDI, MALE, FO01, CHIKWAWA). TSOLATA HGFS has therefore attempted to holistically address key systemic gaps by addressing the genuine needs of the most vulnerable populations, particularly children, women small-holder farming households in the communities.

80. However, there is space for improvement, as acknowledged: "When it comes to addressing the community's needs, I will give it a 4 on a scale of 1 to 5. It has improved the economic status of farmers as well as the nutrition of students. Even though the programme hasn't reached out to all the schools in the district, sometimes there are delays in disbursement of funds for food procurement" (KII, FEM GOV OFFICIAL05, PHALOMBE). Expanding programme reach and ensuring timely resource allocation would further strengthen the effectiveness in addressing vulnerabilities.

## **EQ 1.2. What proportion of the HGFS market was captured by the smallholder farmers? How many smallholder farmers were integrated into the value chain?**

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<sup>63</sup>Poverty assessment report:

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099920006302215250/pdf/P174948072f3880690afb70c20973fe214d.pdf>

81. Findings from the discussions with SHFs, both men and women, across four districts highlight that TSOLATA HGFSF has actively supported SHFs in enhancing their knowledge and capabilities to cultivate diverse and nutritious crops, facilitating improved market access. Further, FOs have played a critical role in uplifting farmers' livelihoods, especially women smallholder farmers, by providing access to resources, training, and market opportunities, thus empowering them economically and socially. They act as a bridge between farmers and schools, ensuring smooth food delivery for school meal programmes. FOs provide financial security through various means, facilitating access to farm inputs and essential resources. Furthermore, FOs invest in knowledge by offering diverse training programs. This empowers farmers with the skills and knowledge needed to enhance their productivity and income. Ultimately, these combined efforts support individual farmers, their families, and the entire community.

82. Most (95 percent) of the intervention schools sourced food items from FOs. The remaining (5 percent) schools reported purchasing directly from local farmers. Most of these farmers are likely to be smallholder farmers. Most schools (92 percent) procured 100 percent of their requirements exclusively from FOs. The remaining (8 percent) schools purchased (between 70 percent to 90 percent) their food items from FOs, and the rest was mobilized through voluntary contributions.

83. A statistically significant higher proportion of the sampled farmers was found to be members of FOs in the intervention than non-intervention areas (97 percent vs. 37 percent;  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d \approx 0.63$ ).<sup>64,65</sup> Among them, the majority (98 percent) of intervention farmers actively sell their crops to the HGFSF market through FOs, while a small proportion (2 percent) choose to operate independently. Evidence, therefore, shows that the majority of the HGFSF market is serviced by SHFs, mainly through FOs.

84. Women play a significant role in the cohort of farmers involved in FOs and supplying to the HGFSF market. Typically, a FO (in the intervention areas) has up to 53 percent women-SHF vs. 47 percent men-SHF. The reverse is observed in non-intervention areas: a significantly higher proportion of men than that of women are SHFs, though with a small size effect (56 percent vs. 44 percent,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d \approx 0.17$ ). The statistical trend was corroborated with qualitative inputs from a FO representative: *"The programme, prioritizing women, in the FO with which I am involved, consists of 12 women farmers and 8 men farmers, with female representatives holding leadership positions such as Vice Chair, Treasurer, and Vice Secretary"* (IDI, MALE FO, NSANJE). The access to schools as an alternative market has positively impacted the women-SHFs.

### **EQ 1.3. What percentage of smallholder farmers transitioned from subsistence farming to surplus production, including the capacity to interact with financial and output markets?**

85. TSOLATA HGFSF used a multi-pronged approach to empower SHFs to transition from subsistence farming to surplus production. The programme also provided them with better access to alternative markets and access to finance for improved production. The main strategies adopted by TSOLATA HGFSF include promoting diversification, multiple cropping, improved irrigation, market access through FOs, and potentially, production planning plays a role in creating more sustainable and profitable outcomes. The findings also indicate that TSOLATA HGFSF has enhanced market access for farmers.

86. In assessing the proportion of farmers who transitioned from subsistence farming to surplus production, the analysis indicates the following 5 crops – maize, rice, groundnut, pigeon-pea, and soybean across two agriculture seasons (2021-2022/ 2022-2023). Refer to Figure 5 for details. Based on the discussion with farmers, it emerges that crops such as maize, rice, groundnut, pigeon pea, and soybean across the four districts are majorly grown for sale. The evidence shows that a significantly higher proportion of farmers in the intervention areas sold surplus for profit during the 2022-2023 agricultural season than those in non-intervention areas (35 percent vs. 21 percent,  $p < .001$ ,  $d \approx 0.17$ ). However, the proportion of farmers selling surplus did not increase significantly from the 2021-2022 season. Additionally, in the 2022-2023 season, the proportion of smallholder farmers selling surplus was the same for men and women in intervention areas (32 percent each) but higher for men than women in non-intervention areas (22 percent men vs. 19 percent women). Evidence from qualitative interactions suggests gender disparities

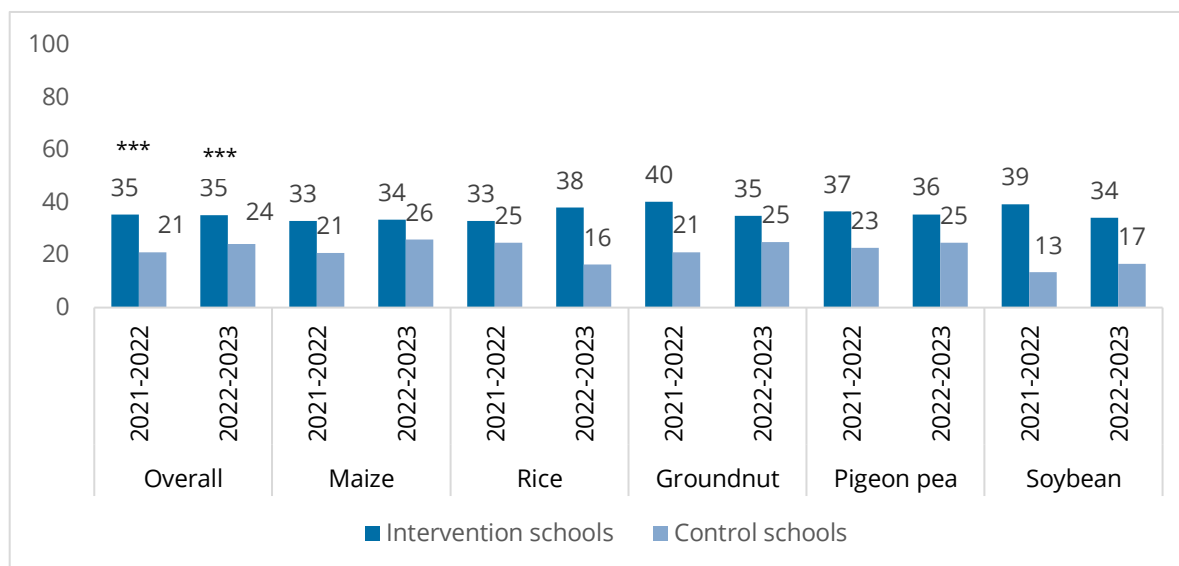
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<sup>64</sup> Associations found to be statistically significant are indicated by \* for  $p < .05$ , \*\* for  $p < .01$ , and \*\*\* for  $p < .001$ .

<sup>65</sup> Effect size according to Cohen's conventions.

in agriculture, including unequal access to land and resources for women. These inequities often arise from traditional inheritance biases. To address this, the programme design and implementation have been tailored to prioritize women, ensuring they receive preferential support and opportunities. A detailed analysis can be found in EQ1.4. The analysis also indicates a decline in the proportion of farmers selling surplus produce for profits across 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 in both intervention and non-intervention areas. Qualitative interactions with most farmers attribute this to decreased productivity attributed to the recent climate events and flooding in the last 3-4 years.

**Figure 5: Percentage of farmers selling their crops in the market**



\* Statistical significance (Overall) was observed for the proportions of intervention and control schools. Associations with a significance level of  $p < .001$  are indicated by \*\*\*.

87. A majority (94 percent - including both men and women) of farmers indicate that FOs have been able to streamline the selling process, aiding farmers in aggregating produce and negotiating better deals. Another 88 percent (87 percent men, 89 percent women) of the SHFs sell through FOs. As they find it time-efficient, it helps them with collective marketing and transportation arrangements. FOs also play a vital role in knowledge dissemination, with 95 percent (94 percent men, 96 percent women) of SHFs benefiting from FO-provided training. This has enabled farmers to adopt improved agricultural practices and make informed decisions.

88. As per the quantitative survey with smallholder farmers, a quarter of the sample farmers in the intervention areas reported taking loans for cultivation. In some cases, the farmers who obtain loans as a group for cultivation are represented by a farmer organisation. In these instances, the group's trust or reputation serves as the collateral for the loan. Among them, 40 percent (40 percent of men, 39 percent of women) take secured loans from FOs or cooperatives, and 20 percent (22 percent of men, 19 percent of women) go to local money lenders. The analysis indicates that more than 70 percent of the SHFs take loans for cultivation. The interest rate range is between 20 percent to 50 percent. Most of the 70 percent take loans from the informal market – local money lenders. Although TSOLATA HGSF has found linkages with formal sources of capital such as banks. This linkage needs to be strengthened further. Additionally, findings indicate that delayed payments from schools have created cash flow issues for farmers. Such delays have hindered farmers' ability to meet their basic needs, support their children's education, and service loans, including the delayed purchase of agricultural inputs for the next production cycle.

#### **EQ 1.4. To what extent was the intervention based on a sound gender analysis?**

89. In this evaluation, the evaluation team adopted a gender equity continuum to analyse the aspect of gender equity. Gender transformation is an intentional process of moving beyond addressing gendered challenges at an individual level to redressing structural causes of inequalities and reshaping unequal power dynamics that perpetuate them. The programme actively encouraged equitable participation from



both mothers and fathers in school meal initiatives. This included decision-making, contributing resources (cash or labour), and maintaining school gardens and facilities. Based on the extent to which interventions achieve these, they can be located on the gender equity continuum as follows. The findings from the evaluation suggest that gender equality issues are mainstreamed throughout TSOLATA-HGSF, including design and implementation. Aligned with WFP's Gender Policy (2022), TSOLATA-HGSF was designed and implemented with high accountability and emphasis on including the most vulnerable populations. As confirmed by multiple WFP and government representatives, the selection of programme districts was based on sound vulnerability analysis. The programme focused on and carved out areas for increased participation of women in leadership and decision-making roles.

90. To access gender roles and dynamics, the evaluation explored three key components such as a) the role of women in ensuring nutritional and educational outcomes, b) the role of women in FOs, and c) their roles in community empowerment. Women were represented in various forums such as school management committees (SMC), PTA, food committees, and mother groups. This empowered the women to ensure the achievement of nutritional and educational outcomes. Women are actively involved in these committee activities by ensuring effective school management, overseeing food quality and nutrition, deciding on food-related issues, determining what to cook, and addressing issues related to student attendance, retention, dropout rates, and issues specifically related to girls (mother groups), thereby supporting positive educational outcomes. A typical SMC comprises approximately 5-7 women and 3-5 men, signifying women's leadership within the programme and amplifying gender roles in its management. The findings further indicate that women constitute 53 percent of the FOs memberships. In the non-intervention areas, 56 percent of SHFs are m, and the remaining 44 percent are women SHFs. TSOLATA - HGSF's focus on gender mainstreaming is also demonstrated in the composition of the FO leadership teams. The evaluation indicates that women occupied 55 of 132 executive/management leadership positions across the FOs. Most FOs actively promote equal participation, striving for a "good representation 50/50" split between men and women. This commitment is evident in the cooperative's structure, with women holding leadership positions like Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. During training, content and pedagogy ensured that issues of gender, equality, equity, and social empowerment were well addressed.

91. Further discussions with FOs often require "initial membership fees", connections, or established networks, posing challenges for farmers from vulnerable backgrounds, a category that disproportionately includes women. Financial barriers to participation also exist: "*Farmer groups require money contributions for farming, so farmers are removed from the groups if they cannot afford to pay.*" These factors combine to create a vortex that disadvantages women farmers, hindering their ability to achieve equal footing in the agricultural sector. The discussion with the women SHFs highlights the limited participation of women during the price setting/determination process through FOs. "*There is no change in terms of discrimination of women farmers among their FO because they are not given any chance to share their views while a decision on price settings is made*" (FGD, FEMSHF20, NSANJE).

92. There is evidence to indicate that women SHFs have limited access to agricultural inputs. A women SHF during the IDI narrated, "*Most women face finance constraints as such women farmers that are not married usually face capital /money issues to buy different necessary farm inputs, this has affected production since they are not able to produce enough.*" (IDI, FEMFO03, CHIKWAWA). Despite the efforts to achieve equality, challenges remain for women in SHFs. Another woman SHF during the FGD highlighted, "*Land is easy to find, but men find more land and high production in crops than women.*" (FGD, FEMSHF09, CHIKWAWA). Lack of access to opportunities and resources for women also emerged during discussions. "*Men SHFs can find extra work, which enables them to find extra money. While women SHFs find it hard to find money.*" (FGD, FEMSHF09, CHIKWAWA). A combination of these factors leads to exclusion, hindering women's full participation in deriving the programme benefits.

93. Throughout the programme's design and implementation, particularly amidst the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, emphasis was placed on promoting disability inclusion and gender equality in accessing education. The programme played a significant role in empowering women, who predominantly received cash take-home rations. TSOLATA-HGSF also incorporated gender

messaging into its pre-distribution discussions for all activities to enhance women's inclusion, participation, and influence in household decision-making processes.

94. It was observed that no gender assessment was conducted during the programme implementation. Despite the programme's gender targeting and implementation of gender-responsive activities, it was found that there were areas that need to be improved. KIIs with school principals revealed gender disparities during meal preparation in schools, where predominantly women volunteers from the villages, often parents of school-going children, are randomly selected to participate in food preparation. As stated by a parent, *"Cooking is done by volunteers (mainly women) from the villages. Most of the volunteers are mothers of school-going children. From each village, 2-3 volunteers are involved in food preparation. They rotate weekly so every parent is involved in the school feeding programme."* (FGD, FEMPARENT09, PHALOMBE). FGDs with parents also indicated that most individuals involved in meal preparation are women. This reinforces traditional gender roles, as the labour-intensive task of meal preparation at schools is primarily carried out by women from the communities, who already shoulder responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, firewood, and water collection at home. Consequently, the involvement of women in laborious meal preparation may inadvertently increase their burden, conflicting with the goals outlined in Objective 2 of WFP's 2022 Gender Policy, which advocates for equal participation of men and women in programme design and implementation. However, TSOLATA-HGSF could provide employment opportunities for cooks. The eligible women or groups of women will be employed and paid by the programme, thereby serving as a gender empowerment strategy by extending prevailing social norms. By employing these cooks, TSOLATA-HGSF can significantly enhance women's economic empowerment within the community. This employment strategy not only promotes gender equality but also stimulates local economies, ultimately contributing to sustainable development goals.

95. The evaluation also found the presence of cultural norms like child marriage and early sexual initiation. During FGDs with parents, concerns were raised about the challenges faced by girl children, particularly their involvement in sexual relationships at a young age, which negatively impacts their education. It is imperative to sensitize communities directly and advocate for the elimination of child marriage and sexual initiation. This issue was previously discussed in the USDA-SMP in 2019. Collaborative interventions such as the JPGE programme can expand coverage and conduct social mobilization activities to address these issues effectively.

96. As promoted by a PTA member, while acknowledging that *"Girls have better educational outcomes compared to boys"* and that *"most boys see their friends stealing, doing businesses, drinking beer as such they tend to drop out of school to go do what their peers are doing"* (KII, FEMPTA05, CHIKWAWA) the findings underscore the stark contrast in attendance rates between boys and girls in earlier grades. While school enrolment and attendance have witnessed an upsurge, dropout rates are still high. Both boys and girls face challenges staying in school. This advantage seems to disappear in adolescence. The reasons often differ based on gender. Our interactions with the girl learners, as well as interaction with teachers, highlight that many of them failed to attend school after a cyclone due to damaged clothes and a lack of availability of sanitary pads. Girls also *"shoulder household responsibilities"* (IDI, MALEPRINCI12, ZOMBA), especially when grandparents raise the child. Early marriages, pregnancies, and poverty were cited as other reasons for girls to drop out of school more often. Boys are more likely to drop out due to pressure to earn money, either influenced by peers or the desire to contribute to the household income. This is particularly true during the farming season.

97. The intervention schools were found to be considering steps to address some of these challenges. Mother groups support female students, and the SMC is actively considering a boarding facility for girls to ensure their safety and education. SMC and other school committees are also committed to addressing these issues. While the schools demonstrate efforts towards inclusion, multiple challenges for girls' education remain.

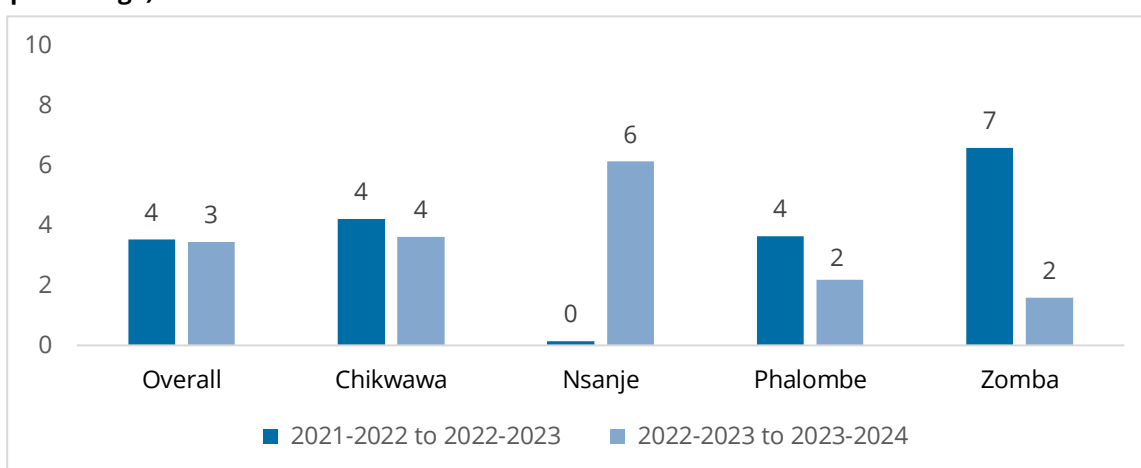
98. The programme's overall targeting is gender-sensitive, with numerous gender-sensitive activities in place, although there are notable shortcomings. Monitoring data are lacking in baseline figures and targets mentioned in the logical framework. Sex-disaggregated data/indicators are unavailable for various outputs, such as the number of school officials, teachers, and SMC/PTA members trained, and the number of smallholder farmers supported/trained in post-harvest loss handling and storage. Improvements in gender

analysis can be achieved by integrating gender equality and empowerment of women (GEWE) and protection indicators into monitoring processes and conducting annual gender and protection assessments to monitor gender protection indicators.

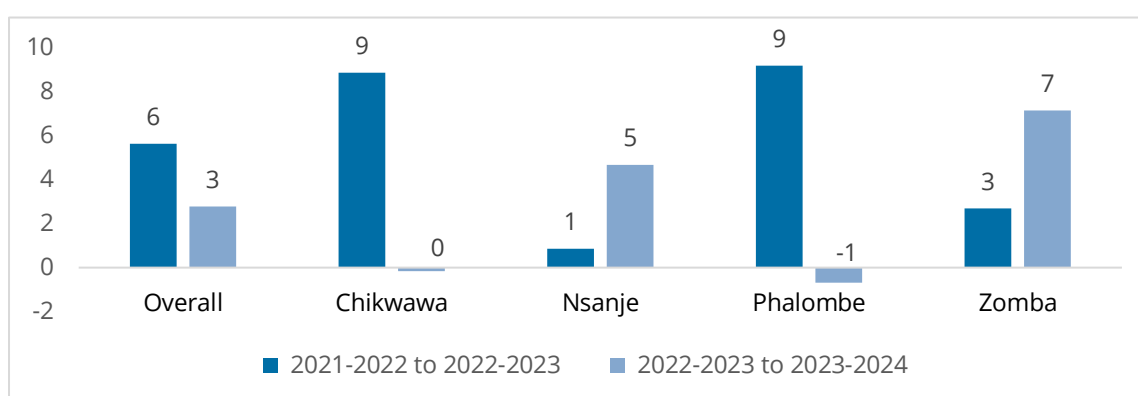
**EQ 1.5. Were there any gender and disability inclusion effects of TSOLATA HGSP on school enrolment/attendance/retention among targeted schools/communities?**

99. TSOLATA-HGSP has demonstrated gender equality in school enrolment, attendance, and retention among boys and girls (refer Figure 6 and 7) in targeted schools and communities. There is a notable increase in the number of learners enrolled between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic years. Enrolment by gender reveals that more boy learners enrolled at the schools than girls. In Chikwawa and Phalombe, the enrolment rates for the girl learners are negative, indicating a decline in the number of girls enrolled between the two academic years. The overall enrolment trends for boys for the two academic years were similar. Across the same academic sessions, the enrolment rates of girl learners have decreased.

**Figure 6: School enrolment trends (Boys) between academic years 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 (in percentage)**



**Figure 7: School enrolment trends (Girls) between academic years 2021/2022 to 2023/2024 (in percentage)**



100. TSOLATA HGSP has positively impacted girls' retention. Student retention rates are significantly higher in intervention schools compared to non-intervention schools. Specifically, boys in intervention schools (Column A: 95.1 percent) and girls in intervention schools (Column C: 94.6 percent) both show higher retention rates than their counterparts in non-intervention schools (Column E: 91.9 percent for boys and Column G: 92 percent for girls). Within the intervention group, boys have a slightly higher retention rate than girls (Columns A and C), but the difference is minimal. The consistently high rates in intervention

schools, especially in Nsanje, and the significant statistical differences highlight the positive impact of the intervention programs on student retention. Gender-wise disaggregation is provided in Table 7, while overall disaggregation can be found in Table 9. One of the parents from Nsanje mentioned, "For girls, the programme is keeping them at school." (FGD, FEMPARENT01, NSANJE). The assurance of proper nutrition has encouraged parents to send their daughters to school. As a parent expressed, "Yes, the programme has benefited our children who are students at the school because they can attend classes and stay there without worrying about what they are going to eat at school." (FGD, FEMPARENT02, NSANJE). Furthermore, TSOLATA HGFS has contributed to increased school enrolment among girls. A parent articulated, "school meals attracted more girls to register and attend schools." (FGD, FEMPARENT02, NSANJE).

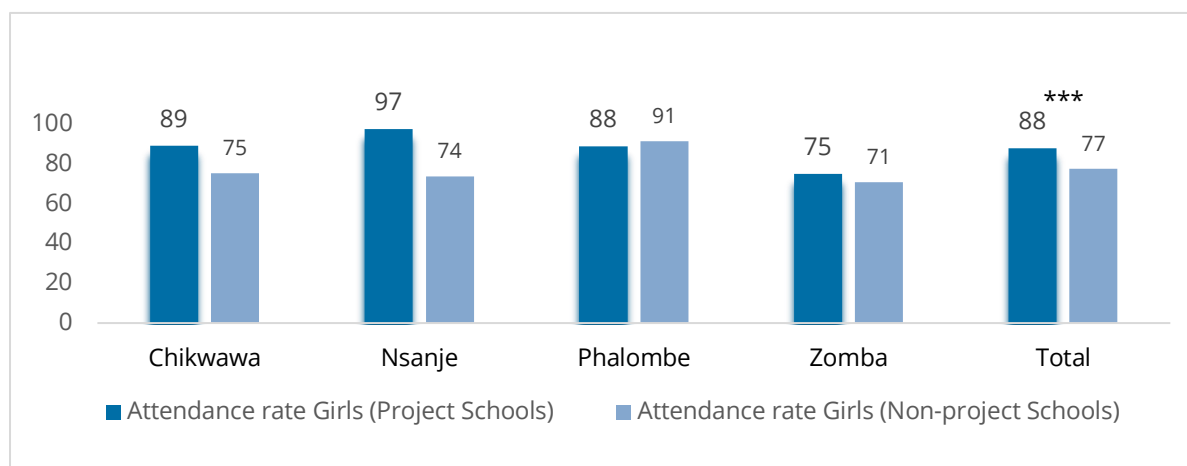
**Table 7: Student retention rate (in percentage)**

	Project Schools (Student Retention Rates)				Non-Project Schools (Student Retention Rates)			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	Boys	Boys	Girls	Girls	Boys	Boys	Girls	Girls
	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022
Chikwawa	92	94.4	92	93.6	89.9	91.1	90.2	91.2
Nsanje	98	97.3	97.6	97.4	93	94.5	92.4	94
Phalombe	94.6	95.4	94.8	95.9	90.3	90.5	90.6	92.9
Zomba	96	95.4	94.8	95.3	95.4	96.4	95.1	94.9
<b>Overall</b>	<b>95.1***</b>	<b>95.6***</b>	<b>94.6***</b>	<b>95.5***</b>	<b>91.9</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>93.3</b>
Statistical significance was observed while comparing the proportions between project and non-project schools across different columns (e.g., Column A vs Column E, Column B vs Column F, Column C vs Column G, Column D vs Column H). Associations found to be statistically significant are indicated by * for p<.05, ** for p<.01, and *** for p<.001								

101. "The programme has also brought about significant improvements in health and hygiene practices among children" (IDI, FEMPARENT11, PHALOMBE). The improved health status of children is evident as they "are healthy, their appearance says it all, and they don't get sick easily as they were in the past" (IDI, FEMPARENT04, NSANJE). Enhanced focus and concentration have been observed among children, with many of them working harder since hunger issues have been addressed. A respondent noted, "Enhanced Focus and Concentration: They seem to be working hard since hunger issues have been addressed" (IDI, FEMPARENT07, CHIKWAWA).

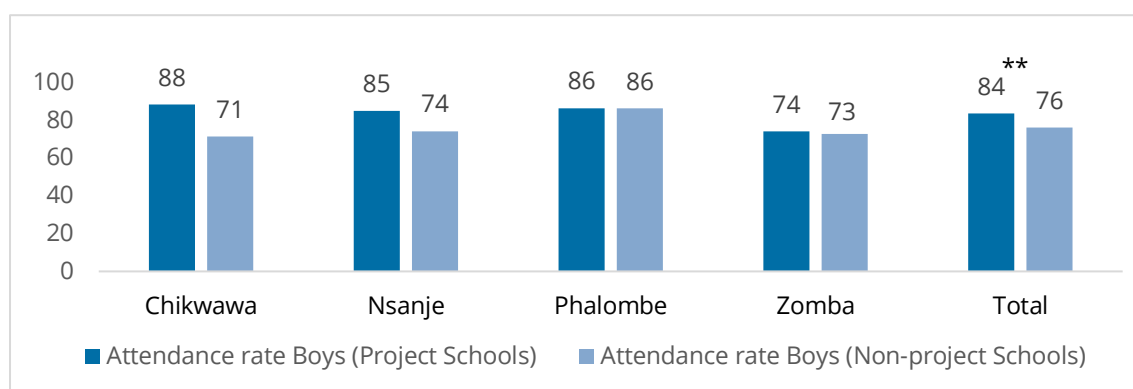
102. The schools witnessed improved attendance due to school meals: "The programme has enabled the students to attend school even though their parents cannot afford to provide for their breakfast because they know that they will certainly eat at school. This has greatly improved the number of students attending school. However, attendance dropped during and after the cyclone" (FGD, FEMPARENT07, CHIKWAWA). More children are motivated to attend classes, knowing they will receive meals. A higher proportion of the girl learners (87.65 percent) attended schools than boys (83.69 percent). Notably, 97 percent of girls in Nsanje have the highest school attendance rate, while only 75 percent of girls in Zomba attend school. Figure 8 and Figure 9 further show that the school attendance rates for both boys and girls in intervention schools differ significantly from those in non-intervention schools (Girls p<.001, d≈0.13; Boys p<.01, d≈0.09).

**Figure 8: School attendance trends across project and non-project schools (Girls) (in percentage)**



\*Statistical significance (Total) was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools. Association is marked with \*\*\* p<.001.

**Figure 9: School attendance trends across project and non-project schools (Boys) (in percentage)**

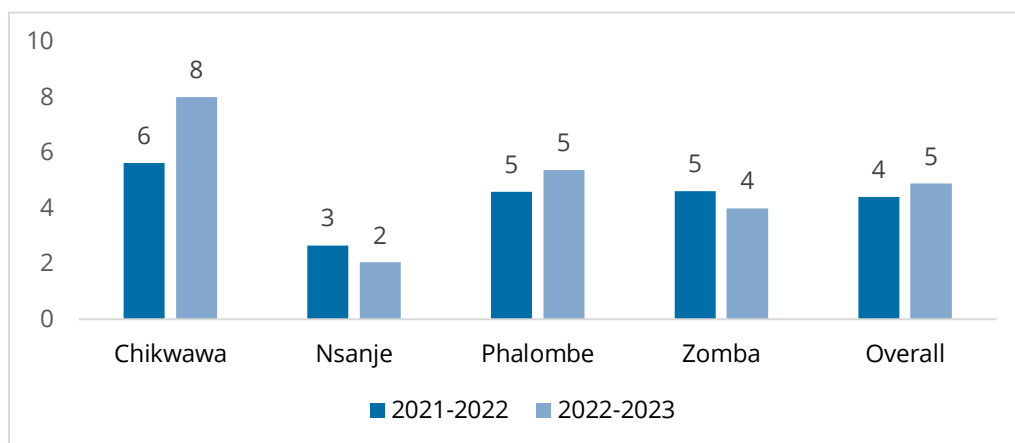


\*Statistical significance (Total) was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools. Association is marked with \*\* p<.01.

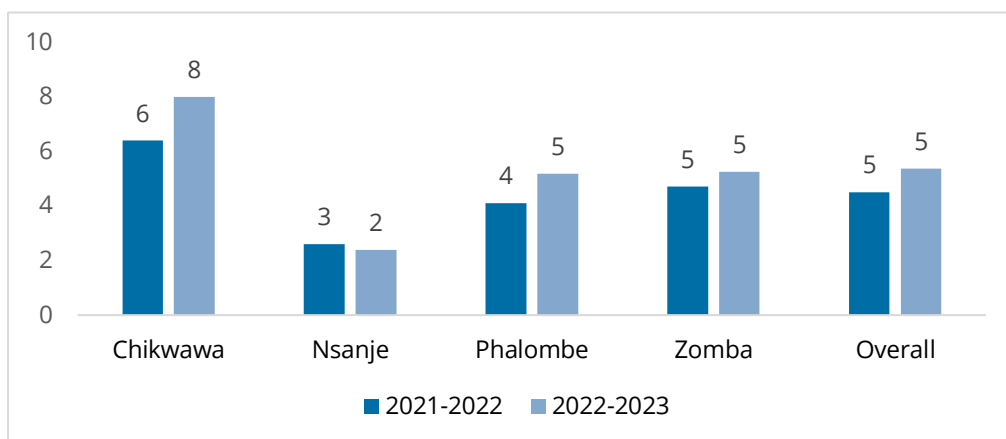
103. For boys, the programme has led to a decrease in absenteeism. A parent from Nsanje indicated, "For boys, the rate of absenteeism has decreased" (FGD, MALEPARENT01, NSANJE). Additionally, there has been an enhancement in personal hygiene habits among boys. Providing school meals has significantly contributed to increased attendance and punctuality among boys. One Chikwawa parent stated, "Education has greatly improved in the past 2-3 years. For instance, school attendance has increased. Children are attending school more because of the school meals provided" (FGD, MALEPARENT05, CHIKWAWA). Moreover, the programme has led to improved academic performance, with most boys doing better in school. A parent from Phalombe mentioned, "The performances in class have also improved as they are now performing well" (FGD, MALEPARENT11, PHALOMBE).

104. The overall average dropout rate for the four districts was 5 percent. The dropout rates for the girl learners are marginally higher compared to the boy learners. Chikwawa district had the highest dropout rates for both the girl and the boy learners (8 percent), and Nsanje district had the lowest dropout rates (refer to Figure 10 and Figure 11).

**Figure 10: School dropout trends academic years 2019/2020 to 2022/2023 | Boys (in percentage)**



**Figure 11: School dropout trends academic years 2019/2020 to 2022/2023 | Girls (in percentage)**



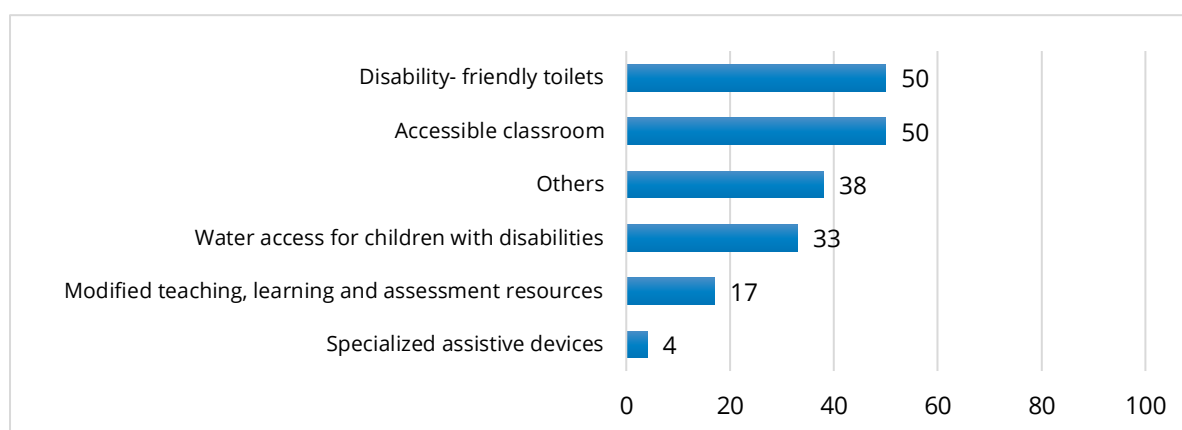
105. Teachers from schools emphasized the importance of school meals in increased enrolment, attendance, and retention of students. *"The introduction of school meals programme has played a crucial role in increasing the enrolment rate as children eat at school"* (IDI, FEMPTACHAIR07, PHALOMBE). Eighty-five percent of teachers identified school meals as the primary factor influencing enrolment, attendance, and retention, among other reasons. Positive relationships with community members, the presence of mother groups fostering a supportive environment for education, and the availability of women teachers assisting girls during menstruation are factors that stimulate girl child participation in the school meal programme. The comparison between intervention and non-intervention areas on the factors affecting enrolment, attendance, and retention is presented in Annex X of Volume II of the report.

106. An analysis of the information shared by the parents during the quantitative survey reveals that 10 percent of the children are disabled; among them, 80 percent of children with disability attend school regularly. Further, teachers revealed that 63 percent of children with disabilities are prioritized in the school meal programme. Furthermore, children with disabilities are given special consideration during mealtimes and served first. To further enhance their dining experience, a non-queuing policy has been implemented specifically for children with disabilities, ensuring a smooth and efficient meal distribution process. To facilitate their participation in the school meal programme, children with disabilities are granted access to essential areas such as the feeding shelter, storeroom, and kitchen, further underscoring the school's commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all students. However, only half of the schools offer amenities like disability-friendly toilets and accessible classrooms for children with disabilities. The data also suggests that only 1 in 5 schools offer modified teaching, learning, and

assessment resources, demonstrating efforts to accommodate diverse learning needs among students with disabilities.

107. Over 90 percent (92 percent intervention, 95 percent non-intervention) of the parents from the sample expressed that the school lacks support for children with disabilities, and 63 percent of the parents said their child missed their classes due to the unavailability of specialized teaching materials, insufficient support service and inadequate disabled friendly facility in the school premises. Another 37 percent miss their classes due to bullying, have trouble walking, and lack accessible transportation. Refer to Figure 12 for the support provided at school for children with disabilities. *"Sometimes, because of my child's disability, she forgets when her period is due, so she ends up going to school without the right clothes. When this happens, her friends laugh at her, which affects her emotions. It also makes her feel different from others and affects how well she does in school. She's only 14 and in the third grade. We can't afford menstrual products like pads due to financial difficulties. So, she misses more school days during her menstrual cycle"* (FGD, FEMPARENT13, ZOMBA) - Parent of an Autistic child.

**Figure 12: Support provided at school for children with disabilities (in percentage)**



108. Towards maintaining and improving school attendance and retention, the schools have implemented various support mechanisms and interventions. A school monitor indicated that *"children's attendance is monitored through registers and involves teachers to check on the children through their parents and guardians when there is poor participation and attendance in school"* (IDI, MALESMCCHAIR02, NSANJE). Furthermore, the school conducts *"reward ceremonies for well-performing children at the end of the school term with parents."* The involvement of parents is evident as *"Mother support groups reach out to families and encourage to educate children"* and *"Chiefs are engaged to keep reminding their people on the importance of school and fine those families that are not encouraging their children to go to school"* (IDI, FEMSMC04, CHIKWAWA).

#### Key findings- Gender equity and disability inclusion

- TSOLATA-HGSF demonstrated a strong commitment to gender inclusivity, from design to implementation. Vulnerable districts were strategically selected based on food security and education indicators, addressing Malawi's unique challenges, especially for households headed by women and children. The evaluation highlighted active efforts to ensure gender-inclusive participation through outreach, capacity building, and community engagement. The programme aimed to involve learners, parents, and community members equitably. TSOLATA-HGSF's gender-inclusive approach, evidence-based foundation, and impact on enrolment demonstrate its commitment to vulnerable communities.
- Key components, such as FOs, SMCs, PTAs, food committees, and mother groups, actively involved women. Gender parity was evident in beneficiary numbers and school enrolment, reflecting a well-designed and implemented programme. Encouragingly, 95 percent of parents recognized the

programme's positive impact on enrolment, emphasizing its importance.

- Despite obstacles like cyclones, natural calamities, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme successfully increased overall enrolment and sustained attendance, improving health and nutrition outcomes. TSOLATA-HGSF led to a significant increase in school enrolment, particularly in Nsanje and Zomba districts, resulting in an overall enrolment rate rise of 3 percent.
- While TSOLATA-HGSF has made progress, delays in fund disbursement for food procurement remain an issue. The evaluation highlights that gender disparities persisted, with more boys enrolled than girls (Chikwawa and Phalombe districts experienced a decline in girl enrolment), and boys showed greater continuity in the programme than girls. Cultural norms and challenges specific to girls need further attention to enhance inclusivity. Additionally, individuals with disabilities faced obstacles due to inadequate facilities and bullying.
- To strengthen gender empowerment, the programme should develop proper indicators and track progress. Integrating these into the existing programme design and implementation framework and creating a gender action plan would provide valuable insights and evidence to track progress.

## 2.2. Coherence

### EQ2 – How compatible is the TSOLATA HGSF with other interventions implemented by WFP (programme integration), the Government, and other stakeholders?

#### EQ 2.1 To what extent was TSOLATA HGSF coherent with the policies and programmes of other partners operating within the same context?

109. TSOLATA-HGSF exemplifies a comprehensive approach to holistic development, strongly aligning with the country's development goals. TSOLATA-HGSF adheres to Sustainable Development Goals, the national strategic plan, and Malawi's constitutional rights. These include the fundamental human right to food and development, alongside freedom from social injustice. TSOLATA-HGSF directly contributes to these goals by promoting learners' nutrition and health status, strengthening Malawi's national school meal programmes, and empowering communities and farmers.

- **Alignment with constitutional rights:** TSOLATA-HGSF contributes to the community's constitutional rights as outlined in Article 30.2. This article guarantees economic, social, and cultural resilience and rights, including the fundamental human right to food and the right to development. Furthermore, Article 30.3 emphasises the state's duty to eradicate social injustices and inequalities, and the programme policies are aligned with the obligation. Moreover, TSOLATA-HGSF also finds strong grounding in Article 13 of the directive principles of state policy. This article emphasizes the importance of health and nutrition. TSOLATA-HGSF aligns with the principle that the State shall actively promote the welfare and development of its people. TSOLATA-HGSF achieves this by focusing on ensuring adequate nutrition for all, a critical factor in promoting good health and self-sufficiency. A snapshot of alignment with the various policies is presented in Table 7 in Annex X of Volume II of the report.
- **Alignment with the SDGs:** TSOLATA-HGSF's comprehensive strategy effectively tackles multiple SDGs, promoting a holistic and sustainable development trajectory for children and communities in Malawi. TSOLATA-HGSF emphasizes achieving the SDGs by adopting a multi-faceted approach, directly contributing to SDG 2: Zero Hunger, by promoting improved nutrition and food security through better hygiene and diversified crop production within targeted communities. The focus on child well-being aligns with SDG 4: Quality Education, as improved health and nutrition through school meals enhance learning potential. Furthermore, by empowering farmers, particularly women, with knowledge and market access, TSOLATA-HGSF advances progress towards SDG 5: Gender Equality. TSOLATA-HGSF's emphasis on sustainable practices resonates with SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Finally, the



collaborative effort between WFP, the Government, and local communities embodies the spirit of SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals.

- **Alignment with the WFP strategic plan and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF):** TSOLATA-HGSF is aligned with the five outcomes of the WFP Strategic Plan (2022-2025). The programme targeted primary school learners and households with messages on adopting better nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation practices. It also provided learners with nutritious food. Furthermore, it enabled the capacity of smallholder farmers to produce diversified nutritious crops and increased access to markets. These aligned with the first three outcomes of the WFP strategic plan namely: people are better able to meet their urgent food and nutrition needs; people have better nutrition, health and education outcomes; and people have improved and sustainable livelihoods. Similarly, the programme focussed on building the capacity of government staff to design and implement the national school meals programme in an effective and efficient manner thereby demonstrating alignment with the fourth and fifth outcomes of the Strategic Plan, namely, national programmes and systems are strengthened, and humanitarian and development actors are more efficient and effective. The programme's approach also aligns with strategic priority areas 1 and 3 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) namely: sustainable, diversified and inclusive economic growth (Priority area 1) and human capital development (Priority area 2).
- **Alignment with the Government of Malawi national implementation plan:** TSOLATA-HGSF is fully aligned with the Malawi national implementation plan for 2021–2030 by focusing work on three pillars: support sustainable, diversified, and inclusive growth; strengthen institutional governance; and ensure sustainable investments and outcomes in human capital development. Similarly, Outcome 2 empowers smallholder farmers to participate in the school meals programme. By increasing farmers' knowledge and capacity to produce diverse, nutritious crops and improving their access to markets, the programme directly contributes to Pillar 1 of the implementation plan. It also aligns with the plan's focus areas on agricultural diversification, irrigation development, anchor farms, inputs, mechanization, structured markets, research and innovation.
- Outcome 1 of TSOLATA-HGSF (Beneficiaries applying better nutrition, hygiene and sanitation practices and learners have increased intake of nutritious food) is aligned with Pillar 1 of Malawi's implementation plan for 2021–2030 on agricultural productivity and commercialization and the enabler related to human capital. It is also aligned with the national multisector nutrition policy and strategic plan, the national education sector investment plan, the national strategic plan for integrated early childhood development, the national agriculture investment plan and the second Malawi national social support programme. TSOLATA-HGSF's Outcome 3, which strengthens the capacity of government staff to design and implement a sustainable national school meals programme, directly aligns with the economic infrastructure enabler of Malawi's 2021-2030 implementation plan. This focus on capacity building also reinforces TSOLATA's Outcomes 1 and 2 of the national food systems transformative integrated policy and the Ministry of Health's master supply chain transformation plan.
- **Alignment with ministerial frameworks:** The TSOLATA-HGSF aligns with the National Multi-Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan (2018-2022), National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy, National Health Policy (2016), Infant and Young Child Nutrition Policy and Guidelines (2003), focusing on the activities, such as promoting dietary practices, healthy eating habits, reducing malnutrition, encouraging hygiene and sanitation behaviours – all crucial aspects of successful school meal programmes. TSOLATA HGSF adheres to the Education Sector Investment Plan (2018-2022), and National Early Childhood Development Policy (2016), which includes holistic development in early childhood, including promoting good nutrition, improving access, equity, and quality of education in Malawi. It acknowledges the role of school meals in enhancing learning outcomes and student health, indirectly supporting school meal programmes.

- **Alignment with other school meal/ education programmes:** TSOLATA-HGSF aligns with other nutrition programmes such as AFIKEPO Nutrition Programme (2017-2026), Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP II) 2018-2023, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition (McGovern-Dole) project. TSOLATA HGSF directly contributes to AFIKEPO's overall objectives of enhanced nutrition security in Malawi. Further, it aligns with United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE), which focuses on addressing socioeconomic, cultural, health, nutrition, and gender-related challenges and strengthening the capacity of teachers and project stakeholders to promote girls' education.
- MNSSP II is designed to address food security and nutrition, poverty reduction, and livelihood support for vulnerable households. TSOLATA-HGSF directly contributes to this goal by providing access to nutritious meals and fostering economic opportunities for SHFs within the community.
- **Alignment with UN Agencies and other stakeholder initiatives:** UN Agencies, civil society organizations, line ministries, and donors developed a National Multi-Sector Adolescent Nutrition Strategy (2019-2023). Building from the nutrition policies, government departments and UNICEF supported a weekly iron-folic acid (IFA) programme in 2019 and the World Bank and EU supported the nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) programme in Malawi. Overall, the programme components support improving dietary diversification, through household food security through harvested produce from nutrition demonstration plots. This aligns directly with the IFA and NSA programme components. The programme adopts an integrated, multi-sector approach to improve the betterment of the community.

110. TSOLATA-HGSF further aligns with Malawi Vision 2063, the country's long-term aspiration to become an inclusive, wealthy, and self-reliant nation by 2063. This vision is supported by a ten-year implementation plan (2021-2030) that aims to elevate Malawi to lower-middle-income status and achieve most SDGs by 2030. A list of programmes of government and other development partners and alignment with TSOLATA-HGSF is presented in Table 8 in Annex X of Volume II of the report. Overall, TSOLATA-HGSF components are coherent with existing programmes of the Government of Malawi and other development partners.

## **EQ2.2 What have been the complementarities and synergies between TSOLATA, and other interventions implemented by the Government, other actors, and WFP interventions such as livelihoods?**

111. TSOLATA-HGSF demonstrates strong complementarities and synergies with other interventions, such as school meal programmes and initiatives related to livelihood, nutrition and health, education, and gender in Malawi. These interventions are implemented by the Government, WFP, and other stakeholders such as UNICEF, FAO, and the European Union. The combined efforts create a more comprehensive approach to improving food security and nutrition in Malawi. TSOLATA-HGSF lays the foundation by empowering farmers and strengthening the food system.

112. Discussions with government representatives demonstrate the strong will of the Government of Malawi departments, such as education and agriculture, towards the HGSF programme. Though both the HGSF model and the centralized model of school feeding aim to provide meals to the children, they differ significantly in their approach, implementation, and intended outcomes. The centralized programme procures food from centralized suppliers or distributors, whereas the HGSF model sources food from local SHF within the community. This approach has multiple outcomes, such as the economic prosperity of the local farmers, capacity development of the various/ government departments, supporting local farmers. The model has a strong focus on community involvement, with various stakeholders such as parents, farmers, FOs, community leaders, PTA, SMC, mother group, area nutrition coordination committee, village nutrition committee, area development committee, healthy surveillance committee, etc. playing a role in programme planning, implementation, and monitoring.

113. TSOLATA-HGSF complements other programmes focused on child health, education, agriculture, and livelihoods in Malawi. The United Nations Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE), supported by UNFPA, UNICEF, and WFP, aims to address barriers to girls' education and promote equality in education. One

component of the JPGE is school meal provision, which is implemented as part of the TSOLATA-HGSF programme.

114. The AFIKEPO programme,<sup>66</sup> supported by the European Union, and TSOLATA have different target populations and delivery mechanisms. AFIKEPO primarily targets pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 years of age. TSOLATA HGSF, on the other hand, targets primary school-going children (6 to 13 years of age). Both programs share common goals of engaging communities to address malnutrition and improving nutritional and health outcomes for vulnerable groups. This complementary approach contributes to a comprehensive response to nutrition challenges in the country, addressing the needs of different population groups at various life cycle stages.

115. TSOLATA-HGSF supports infrastructure by investing in local food production, storage, and distribution facilities. It provides non-food items such as information, education, communication materials, and school garden equipment to primary schools, fostering educational enrichment and practical agricultural skills. By enhancing agricultural infrastructure and creating sustainable school gardens, the programme ensures continuous operation and self-sufficiency, promoting economic growth, community development, and sustainable development goals. WFP supported asset creation and livelihood (ACL) interventions supporting SHFs, facilitating asset creation, climate risk management, and market access. By restoring land, water, and productive assets, WFP strengthens the foundation for agricultural production. Furthermore, WFP's climate risk insurance and anticipatory actions help mitigate the impact of environmental hazards on farming communities, ensuring the stability of food production and reducing risks associated with food insecurity. By collaborating with the private sector, governments, and UN agencies, WFP enhances market access for SHFs, enabling them to participate effectively in TSOLATA-HGSF. This synergy ensures a sustainable supply of nutritious food for children and promotes economic development and resilience within communities. The complementarities between WFP's ACL interventions and HGSF-TSOLATA create a positive impact, fostering food security and livelihood enhancement in vulnerable populations.

116. The World Bank-supported Social Support for Resilient Livelihoods Project focuses on social protection and livelihood support for vulnerable households. The project extends social assistance and livelihood support to help the households build resilience and improve their well-being. The project's focus includes cash transfers, livelihood support, and social assistance to poor and food-insecure households. The livelihoods component of the project is complemented by TSOLATA-HGSF through support to the local farmers by facilitating local market access, technical assistance on improved agriculture practices, and building their resilience against climate-induced vulnerabilities, thereby contributing to improved nutrition and education outcomes in communities.

117. Climate resilience and rural livelihoods programme in Malawi-Mozambique (MAMO II), supported by the development fund of Norway, focuses on building resilience to climate change, promoting sustainable agriculture, improving access to markets and livelihood opportunities, and enhancing food security and nutrition. It operates in Malawi and Mozambique, targeting rural communities in both countries. TSOLATA-HGSF and MAMO II share similarities in their focus on rural development and resilience-building. The programs differ in geographical scope, funding source, programme focus, and implementation arrangements. However, both programmes play crucial roles in promoting sustainable development and improving the livelihoods of rural communities in Malawi.

118. TSOLATA-HGSF is unique in its flexibility and adaptability to local contexts. This allows for customization based on regional agricultural practices, dietary preferences, and cultural norms. Moreover, TSOLATA-HGSF highlights its economic impact by supporting local economies in creating market demand for locally produced food items, thereby supporting smallholder farmers and promoting rural development. It is likely to be more sustainable in the long term, as it builds local capacity, promotes local economy through agricultural resilience, and strengthens community resilience to external economic and climate

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<sup>66</sup> <https://www.naosupportmw.org/programmes/nutrition-and-food-security/afikepo>

shocks such as food price volatility or supply chain disruptions. Moreover, the sense of community ownership will ensure the long-term viability of the school feeding programme.

119. Executing these programmes on the ground involves various specific activities tailored to address identified needs and achieve desired objectives. While not all programmes operate in TSOLATA-HGSF districts, their collective efforts contribute significantly to the country's development. Initiatives such as providing nutritious meals sourced from local farmers, supporting livelihood creation through asset development, and implementing climate resilience projects are key components.

120. Various resources are utilized, including financial support, technical assistance, and infrastructure development. Beneficiaries targeted range from vulnerable populations, such as school children and smallholder farmers, to entire communities facing food insecurity and climate-related risks. The outcomes include improved nutrition outcomes, enhanced livelihood opportunities, and strengthened resilience against climate shocks. Detailed information on specific activities, resources utilized, beneficiaries targeted, outcomes achieved, and complementarities and synergies with TSOLATA-HGSF is provided in Annex X in Volume II of the report.

121. The complementarities and synergies between TSOLATA and other interventions implemented by the Government, other actors, and WFP interventions such as livelihoods are evident in their alignment with shared objectives, collaboration with stakeholders, integration of interventions, targeting of similar populations, and capacity-building efforts. By coming together, these interventions address education, food security, nutrition, agriculture, livelihoods, and socio-economic and climate resilience among vulnerable populations in Malawi.

#### Key findings - Coherence

- **Holistic development approach:** TSOLATA-HGSF adopts a comprehensive approach to holistic development, closely aligned with Malawi's development goals. By addressing nutrition, health, and education, it contributes significantly to the well-being of learners and communities.
- **Alignment with national goals:** TSOLATA-HGSF is well-aligned with Malawi's constitutional rights, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and national strategic plans. It plays a crucial role in improving nutrition and health outcomes among learners.
- **Coherence with existing frameworks:** The programme complements existing initiatives, such as school meal programmes, livelihood projects, and gender-focused interventions (e.g., AFIKEPO, United Nations Joint Programme (UNJP), McGovern-Dole SMP, MAMO II, ACL). This synergy fosters a comprehensive approach to enhancing food security and nutrition in Malawi.
- **Direct impact:** TSOLATA-HGSF directly contributes to its goals by promoting learners' nutrition and health. It also strengthens the national school meal programmes, benefiting students and local farmers supplying the food.
- **Long-term sustainability:** TSOLATA-HGSF's focus on building local capacity, supporting the local economy through agricultural resilience, and fostering community ownership will ensure the longevity of school feeding initiatives and long-term viability.

## 2.3. Effectiveness

### EQ 3 To what extent did TSOLATA achieve its objectives and its results, including any differential results across groups of men, women, girls, and boys?

**Outcome 1: Primary school learners and targeted households are applying better nutrition, hygiene and sanitation practices, and learners have increased intake of nutritious food (contributing to AFIKEPO Strategic Objective 2)**

## Indicators

### **Percentage of the supported schools that use at least three out of six food groups defined in Malawi (staple foods, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, animal-based foods, fats) for the preparation of school meals on 150 school days (AFIKEPO indicator 2.3)**

122. Analysis of data disaggregated by sex: The dietary diversity for children in intervention schools has improved significantly,<sup>67</sup> compared to the baseline and is relatively higher than in the non-intervention schools. The findings from the primary survey indicate a statistically significant difference with a small effect size between the endline and the baseline values on the proportion of the sample households that consume at least three out of the six food groups defined in Malawi (80 percent vs. 62 percent,  $p < .001$ ,  $d \approx 0.17$ ). The findings show that Chikwawa has the highest proportion of households (83 percent) consuming at least three out of six groups, while Nsanje has the lowest (79 percent). Analysis of data on the consumption of at least three out of six food groups (disaggregated by sex) indicates a significant difference between the households headed by men (85 percent) and households headed by women (73 percent) within the intervention schools ( $p < .001$ ,  $d \approx 0.12$ ). No significant difference was observed between the households headed by men (77 percent) and households headed by women (74 percent) in non-intervention schools.

### **Percentage of primary school learners (including girls of reproductive age), communities and programme development agents (PDAs) trained in nutrition (and nutrition-related topics e.g., primary health, sanitation and hygiene) at various levels in AFIKEPO districts adopting improved nutrition, sanitation and hygiene knowledge and practices. (AFIKEPO indicator 2.4)**

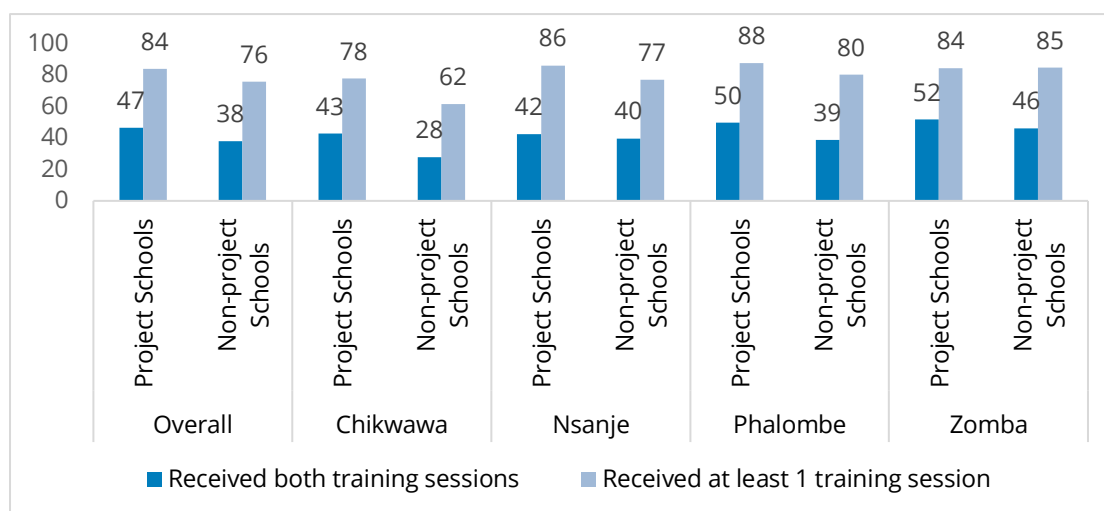
123. Analysis of secondary reports, such as the programme's annual report (year 2), indicates that out of the planned 69 awareness campaigns for children addressing crucial topics such as nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation, the programme implemented 66 campaigns (96 percent). Further, 93 percent of the planned awareness campaigns for teachers (201 out of 216) were conducted. This shows there were challenges in executing the programme design. The evaluation findings suggest that these awareness campaigns reach only 41 percent of children. However, the level of exposure remains unclear.

124. Most (84 percent) of the community members had received training on topics such as a) nutrition, b) health, nutrition, and WASH (refer to Figure 13). A significantly higher proportion of the community members in the programme areas had received training and messages on health, nutrition, and WASH. Compared to the other districts, a lesser proportion (78 percent) of the households in Chikwawa received any of the training.

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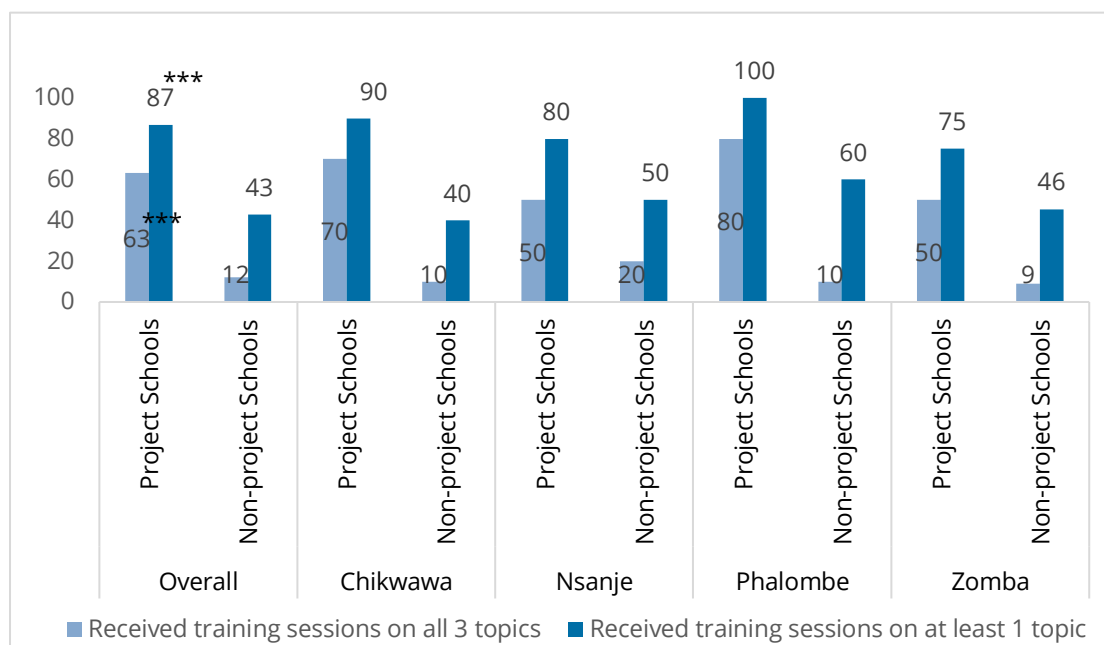
<sup>67</sup> Significant difference at 95% confidence interval (2 tailed)

**Figure 13: Percentage of community members who received training**



125. The evaluation team analysed the training received by the SMC (refer to Figure 14) on the three topics 1) Hygiene and sanitation, 2) Nutrition and dietary diversification, and 3) Safe water access and preparation for consumption. While most SMCs (87 percent) received training on at least one of the topics, only two-thirds (63 percent) of the SMC members had training on all three topics.

**Figure 14: Percentage of School Management Committees that received training sessions**



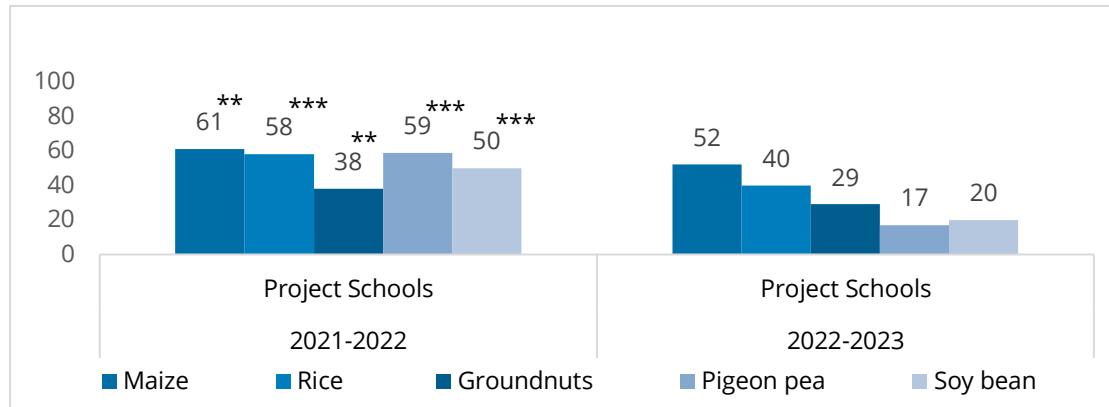
\*Statistical significance (overall) was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools. Associations with a significance level of  $p < .001$  are indicated by \*\*\*.

**Percentage change of targeted nutrient-rich commodities (measured in kilogram) set aside for home consumption by targeted households (both smallholder and participating households)**

126. More than half of the farmers reported storing their produce for future consumption. Compared to the agriculture season 2021-2022, a lesser proportion of the farmers across the five crops reported storing their produce for future consumption (refer to Figure 15). According to smallholder farmers, effective crop planning enables them to allocate specific land for home consumption versus commercial purposes: “Yes,

as farmers, we have targets for every crop we produce. For example, I may have two or three pieces of land to cultivate, and I demarcate that one piece of land is for home consumption while the other piece of land is for business. We increase production on the land designated for the business to maximize profit" (FGD, MALESHF02, ZOMBA). The evidence suggests that strategic planning influences farmers' decisions on storing produce for personal use versus sale. Additionally, increased market access and better storage facilities have enabled more farmers to sell their produce. Moreover, farmers are empowered to make more informed decisions about their agricultural activities. This includes planning their crops to balance between home consumption and commercial production.

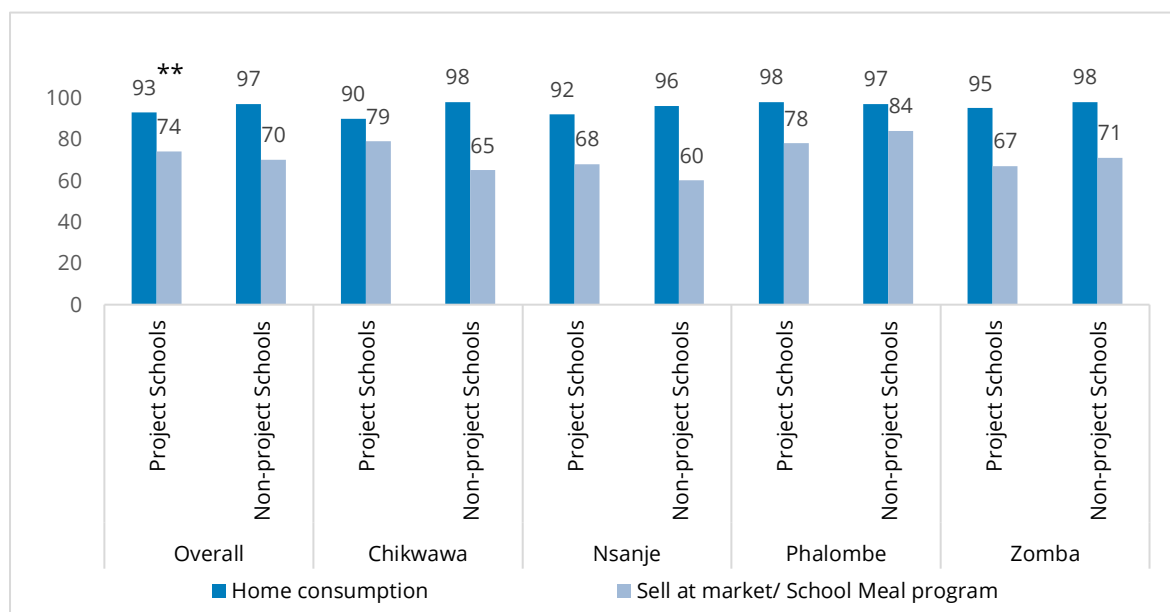
**Figure 15: Proportion of farmers storing their produce for future use (personal consumption)**



\* Statistical significance was observed for the proportions of project schools in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. Associations are marked with \*\* for  $p < .01$  and \*\*\* for  $p < .001$ .

127. At the household level, a majority (overall 93 percent, men 96 percent, women 93 percent) of the farmers reported that produce is used for the family's consumption (refer to Figure 16). Another three-fourths of the farmers mentioned that some of the produce is sold to the school and used as seeds for the next season.

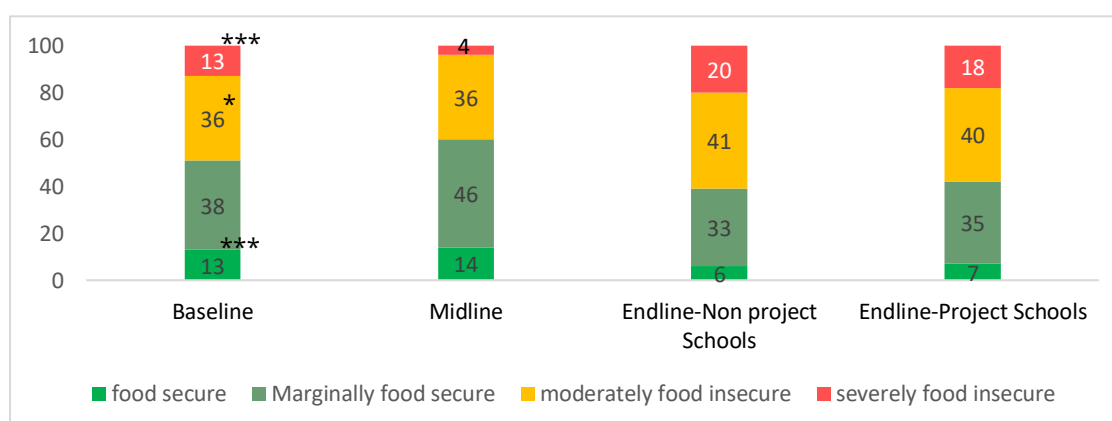
**Figure 16: End-use of agricultural produce as reported by the household head (in percentage)**



\* Statistical significance (Overall home consumption between project and non-project schools) was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools. The association is marked with \*\* for  $p < .01$ .

128. **Food Security Index:**<sup>68</sup> Overall, 58 percent of the households interviewed were classified as food insecure (refer to Figure 17), suffering from either moderate food insecurity (40 percent) or severe food insecurity (18 percent). The remaining 42 percent of households were classified as food secure (marginally secure 35 percent, food secure 7 percent). The baseline (FSI 51 percent) and endline (FSI 42 percent) difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.18$ ). When FSI is disaggregated by districts, Zomba (80 percent) has the highest proportion of food-insecure households, followed by Phalombe (78 percent). Compared to households headed by men (FSI 73 percent), a higher proportion of the households headed by women reported being food insecure (FSI 82 percent).

**Figure 17: Food Security Index**



\* Statistical significance was observed for categories between the proportions of baseline and endline values (food severely, moderately and food secure). Associations are marked with \* for  $p < .05$ , \*\* for  $p < .01$  and \*\*\* for  $p < .001$ .

#### Number of learners benefiting from school meals programme with AFIKEPO support (AFIKEPO indicator 2.1.4)

129. The progress report prepared by WFP indicates that by the end of year 2 of project (2023), 306,068 learners (159,155 girls, 146,913 boys) benefitted from the school meals programme. The survey responses from parents (both boy child and girl child, across all districts) also suggest that almost all the intervention schools are providing school meals. However, on average, 72 percent of the parents (of all the districts) expressed that their children received meals all five days last week (days before the survey). Further, 55 percent of those children who received meals (all five days) reported feeling hungry even after consuming the meals. It suggests that the meals (portion size) may not be adequate. During the FGDs, parents articulated that the children believed they received less food than usual (smaller meal portions). Parents also informed the evaluation team that the meals, while nutritious, were sometimes overly diluted with water to increase their quantity. The KIIs with school principals reflect that there have been instances of shortage of food commodities on account of inadequate forecasting/budgeting or logistical challenges that have hindered regular school meal provision. During the quantitative survey with schoolteachers, it was found that only 75 percent of both programme and non-programme schools have complete data records, while the remaining 25 percent only have partial data. Despite this, schoolteachers also reported issues with the school meal provision, indicating that many schools reported the data was not available.

#### Number of school officials, teachers, and PTA members trained on school feeding procurement, management, finance, food preparation, and safe water access/preparation.

130. The progress report prepared by WFP indicates that by the end of year 3 of the project (2023), 216 school committees, comprising 2,520 school officials, teachers, and PTA members, received training on overall home-grown school feeding management, including budgeting, financial management, food

<sup>68</sup> Food Security Index (FSI)- FSI is the population's overall food security status. It is a composite measure that assesses a population's access to food, its affordability, and the stability of food systems.



procurement, food storage, and record-keeping. Additionally, 31 technical staff members at the district level were trained in procurement procedures, financial management, and school meal management. The programme records also indicate that 925 volunteer cooks were trained in safe food preparation and storage techniques. Further, the councils provided supportive supervision and coaching through monthly visits to ensure adherence to implementation guidelines.

131. The findings from the primary survey indicate that school officials, teachers, and PTA members in 82 percent of the intervention schools included in the survey had received training on school feeding procurement, management, finance, and food preparation. During the KIIs with school principals/representatives from PTA and SMCs, it emerged that the learnings from the training are being practised for (i) monitoring food management and preparation in the kitchen, thereby ensuring that food does not lose its nutritional value by being overcooked; (ii) procurement of services - releasing tender advertisements for farmer organizations, selecting a bidder, and preparing desired reports to finance committee and; (iii) recording dates and quantity of produce procured by the school. This indicates that the training conducted by WFP has contributed to developing the capacities of the key programme functionaries and harmonized operations between various committees engaged in the school feeding programme for effective implementation.

**Number of different nutrition, sanitation and hygiene messages developed and disseminated (including school menus with local recipes of diversified and nutritious meals).**

**Number of schools promoting home-grown school meals, school nutrition, and hygiene, school gardens, orchards, and woodlots (to be reported against AFIKEPO indicator 2.1.1).**

**Proportion of people reached through interpersonal SBCC approaches on good nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), disaggregated by activity type.**

132. WFP has supported the Department of Nutrition HIV and AIDS in developing a nutrition information and education communication (IEC) materials list for training guides. The materials covered various themes, such as school gardens, food safety, sanitation, and hygiene. Cooking demonstration guides and local recipe books were also developed. The progress report also indicates that six different nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene-related messages were developed and disseminated by WFP. By the end of the second year,<sup>69</sup> WFP had supported 216 schools with cooking demonstrations based on developed menus, targeting food committees and surrounding community members. The survey findings reveal that more than half (55 percent) of sample intervention schools had organized cooking demonstrations. The menus provided at least four food groups and met a minimum of 30 percent of recommended nutrition intakes for school-going children. It also supported the establishment of orchards, vegetable gardens, and woodlots in 83 schools.

133. The year 2 progress report indicates that six different nutrition, sanitation, and hygiene messages were developed and disseminated. The dissemination was done through 201 awareness campaigns conducted on nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation targeting teachers, 66 campaigns targeting primary school children, and 25 campaigns targeting community members. During the survey, 46 percent of intervention schools reported conducting sensitization activities (through awareness campaigns) for school children, 54 percent of intervention schools reported conducting sensitization activities for teachers, and 74 percent of intervention schools reported conducting sensitization activities for SMC/PTA members. All the sample intervention schools reported the availability and usage of soap and water by children (both boys and girls) at handwashing facilities within the school. More than three-fourths (77 percent) of the parents confirmed participating in the sensitization activities on hygiene and sanitation. Of these, 71 percent of parents identified at least three key hygiene practices. During FGD, parents appreciated WFP for undertaking sensitization activities as it encouraged both boys and girls to wash their hands at critical times, such as before eating meals and after using the toilet. They expressed that they also follow the hygiene and sanitation practices highlighted during sensitization. It can, therefore, be inferred that the key messages on

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<sup>69</sup> Second Year Annual Report, WFP

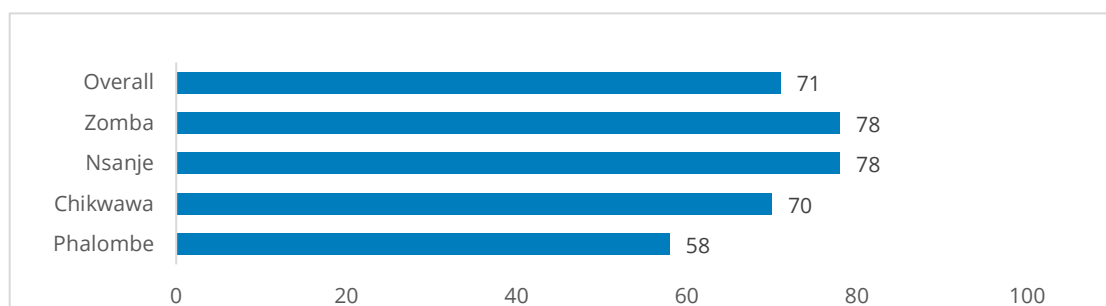
hygiene and sanitation have increased awareness and led to behaviour change as demonstrated through the increased adoption of these practices by children and parents.

**Outcome 2: Smallholder farmers participating in home-grown school meals have increased their production of diversified nutritious crops and increased access to markets. (linked to AFIKEPO Strategic Objective 1)**

**Percentage of targeted smallholder farmers reporting increased production of diversified nutritious crops**

134. While most farmers across the four districts agree that there has been an increase in crop production, there are significant interdistrict variations (refer to Figure 18). While 78 percent of the farmers in Zomba and Nsanje agree to increased production, 58 percent of the farmers in Phalombe agree to an increase in crop production.

**Figure 18: Proportion of the farmers who agree that they have seen an increase in crop yield**



135. To understand crop diversification, the evaluation team used a modified version of the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI)<sup>70</sup> to assess crop diversity concentration and the proportion of farmers practising crop diversification can be found in Table 8. HHI is calculated using data on production quantity and production area for each crop cultivated. The analysis indicates that in the farming season 2022-2023, one-fifth of the farmers had high crop diversity. Although this has reduced marginally from the previous farming season (2021-2022). The proportion of farmers who practised high crop diversification is similar across the four project districts. Most of the farmers had diversified moderately. The proportion of such farmers is also similar across the four districts. Out of the four project districts, in Phalombe, a significantly lesser proportion of farmers were in the high diversity category; it had the highest proportion of farmers in the moderately diversified category.

**Table 8: Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (in percentage)**

	Overall		Chikwawa		Nsanje		Phalombe		Zomba	
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>High Diversity (HHI &lt; 0.1)</b>	23	21	22	23	24	23	18	17	28	23
<b>Moderate Diversity (0.1 &lt;= HHI &lt; 0.3)</b>	56	56	56	54	56	54	60	65	51	52

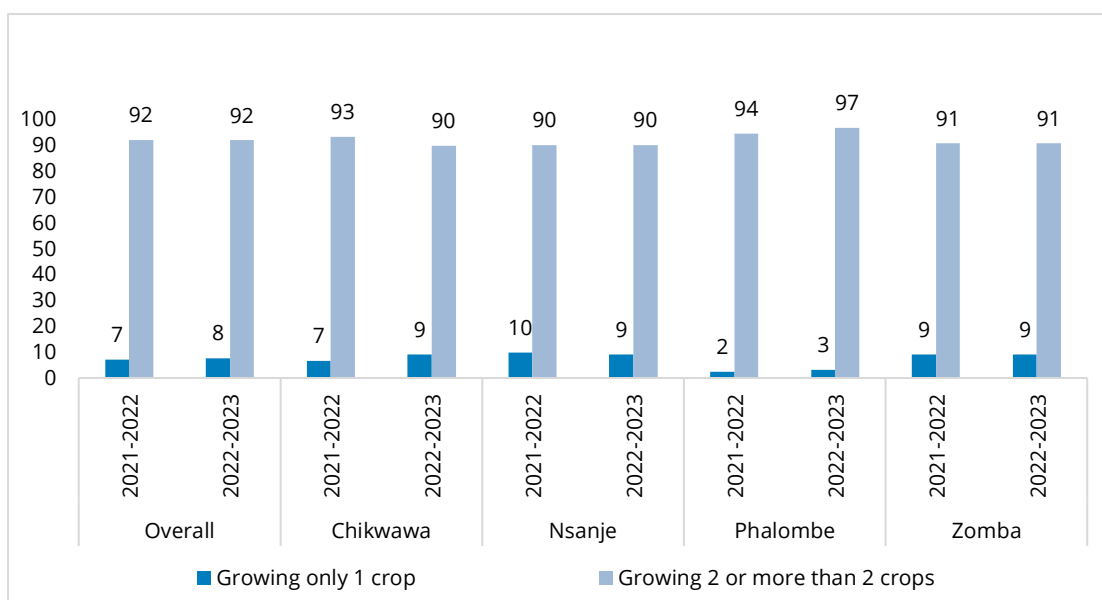
<sup>70</sup> Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI)-HHI is a tool for assessing crop diversity concentration of crop production within a specific region or agricultural system. HHI is calculated using data on production quantity and production area for each crop cultivated.

	Overall		Chikwawa		Nsanje		Phalombe		Zomba	
<b>Low Diversity (0.3 ≤ HHI &lt; 0.5)</b>	13	14	15	12	13	17	13	12	12	14
<b>Very Low Diversity (HHI ≥ 0.5)</b>	8	9	6	11	7	6	8	6	9	12

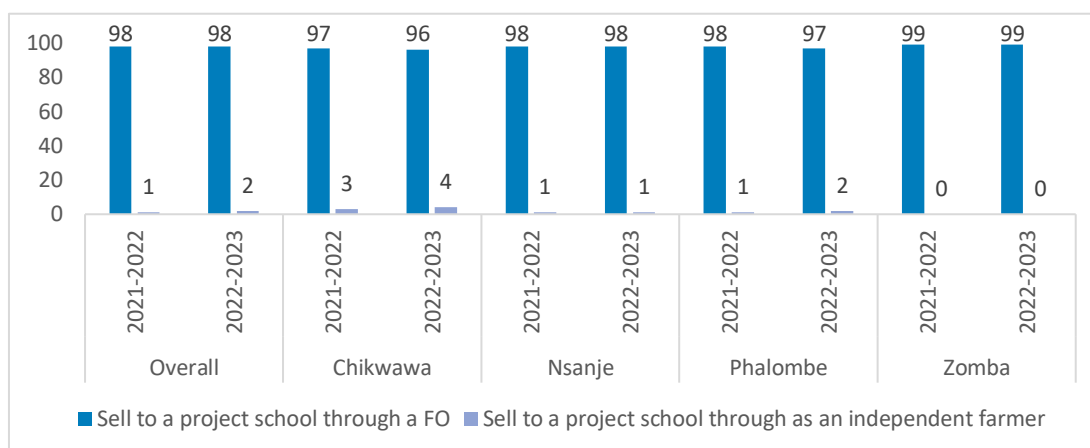
### Percentage of smallholder farmers within the community that produce diversified food to sell to supported primary schools

136. Crop diversification means growing more than one crop in an area. Commonly, it can mean adding more crops to an existing rotation. Diversification can be accomplished by adding a new crop species or a different variety, such as changing the current cropping system. Diversification can also be implemented to replace low-value commodities with high-value commodities, such as vegetables and fruits. It is recognized as one of the most feasible, cost-effective, and rational ways of developing a resilient agricultural cropping system. To respond to this outcome, the evaluation team looked at all farmers who currently cultivate 2 or more crops (refer to Figure 19 and Figure 20). Overall, a majority (92 percent) of the farmers cultivate 2 or more crops in an agriculture season, and this is a similar trend across all the programme districts. Overall, most (98 percent) of the farmers in the last season sold at least one of their produce to a programme-supported school. In Zomba, almost all farmers sell to a programme-supported school.

**Figure 19: Proportion of farmers who cultivate 2 or more crops**



**Figure 20: Proportion of the farmers who sell to the programme/HGSF schools**



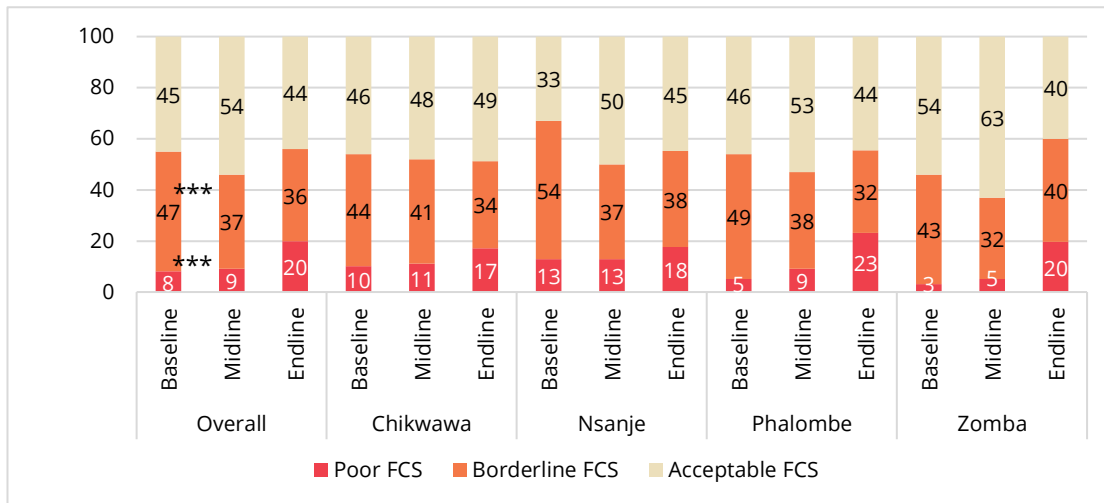
**Percentage of targeted households with poor, borderline, and acceptable Food Consumption Score<sup>71</sup>, disaggregated by gender**

137. As per the household survey, 44 percent of the households were classified as having acceptable food consumption (45 percent during baseline), 36 percent as having borderline food consumption (47 percent during baseline,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d \approx 0.22$ ), and 20 percent as having poor food consumption (8 percent during baseline,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d \approx 0.32$ ). The analysis reveals a significant increase in households with poor food consumption from baseline (8) to endline (20) ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $d \approx 0.35$ ), indicating a worsening food insecurity situation over time. Notably, the districts of Phalombe and Zomba exhibited the highest variability, with Phalombe's poor FCS rising sharply from 5 at baseline to 23 at endline ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $d \approx 0.53$ ), and Zomba's increasing from 3 to 20 ( $p < 0.001$ ,  $d \approx 0.55$ ). Across districts, Chikwawa district has the highest proportion of households (49 percent) having acceptable food consumption, while Zomba has the least proportion (40 percent). Comparison with the baseline value of acceptable food consumption at the district level indicates that Chikwawa (49 percent as compared to 46 percent during baseline) and Nsanje (45 percent as compared to 33 percent during baseline) have witnessed an increase in the proportion of households classified as having acceptable consumption. The other two districts have witnessed a decrease in the number of households classified as acceptable food consumption. Zomba district has witnessed the worst decline (45 percent as compared to 33 percent during baseline). It is important to highlight that, in terms of the poor food consumption score, all the districts have witnessed an increase in the proportion of households when compared with the baseline values. In the case of Phalombe (45 percent as compared to 33 percent during baseline) and Zomba (45 percent as compared to 33 percent during baseline), the difference is statistically significant.

138. Based on the responses from respondents within non-intervention schools, Phalombe has the highest proportion of households with acceptable food consumption (49 percent) compared to the other three districts. Chikwawa has the highest proportion of households with poor food consumption (21 percent). When comparing project and non-project schools, the proportion of households with a borderline FCS was 36 percent in project schools and 40 percent in non-project schools. The difference between these groups is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ,  $d \approx -0.08$ ). Refer to Figure 21, Figure 22 and Figure 23.

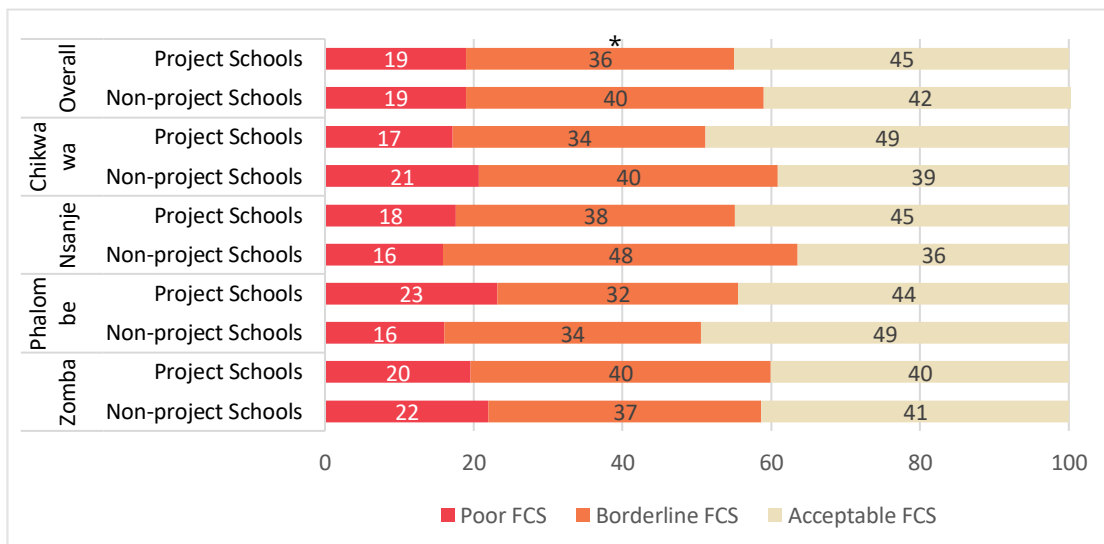
<sup>71</sup> Food Consumption Score (FCS) -The FCS indicator is a composite score based on households' dietary diversity, food consumption frequency, and relative nutritional value of different food groups. The FCS aggregates household-level food consumption data, in terms of frequency over the previous seven days and weights the data according to the relative nutritional value of the consumed food groups. The FCS is a proxy indicator of households' food intake or caloric consumption.

**Figure 21: Household food consumption by district (in percentage)**



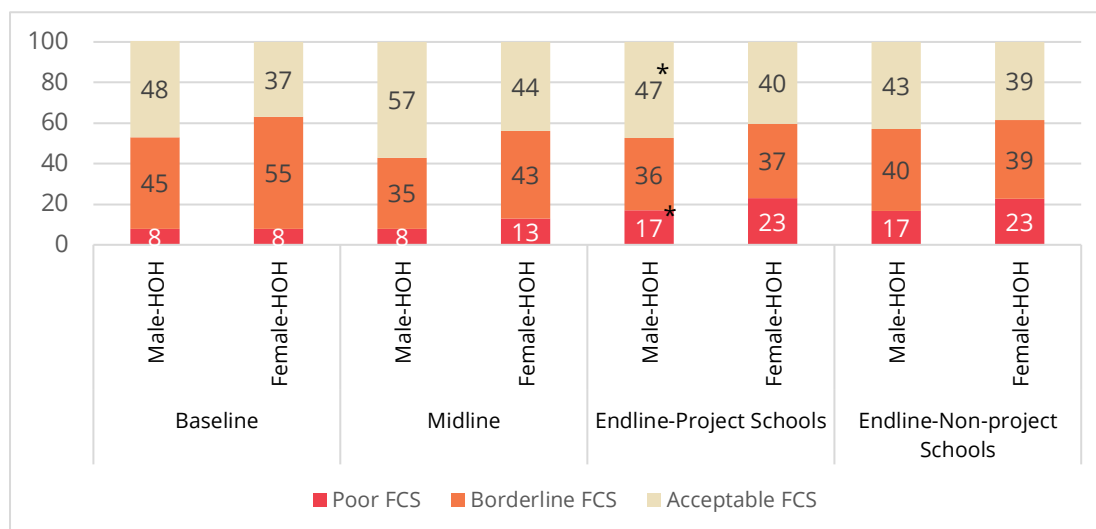
\*Statistical significance was observed for categories between the proportions of baseline and endline (overall). Associations are marked with \*\*\* for  $p < .001$ .

**Figure 22: Household food consumption in intervention and non-intervention schools (in percentage)**



\*Statistical significance was observed for categories between the proportions of project and non-project schools (overall). Associations are marked with \* for  $p < .05$ .

**Figure 23: Food Consumption Score (gender-wise) (in percentage)**



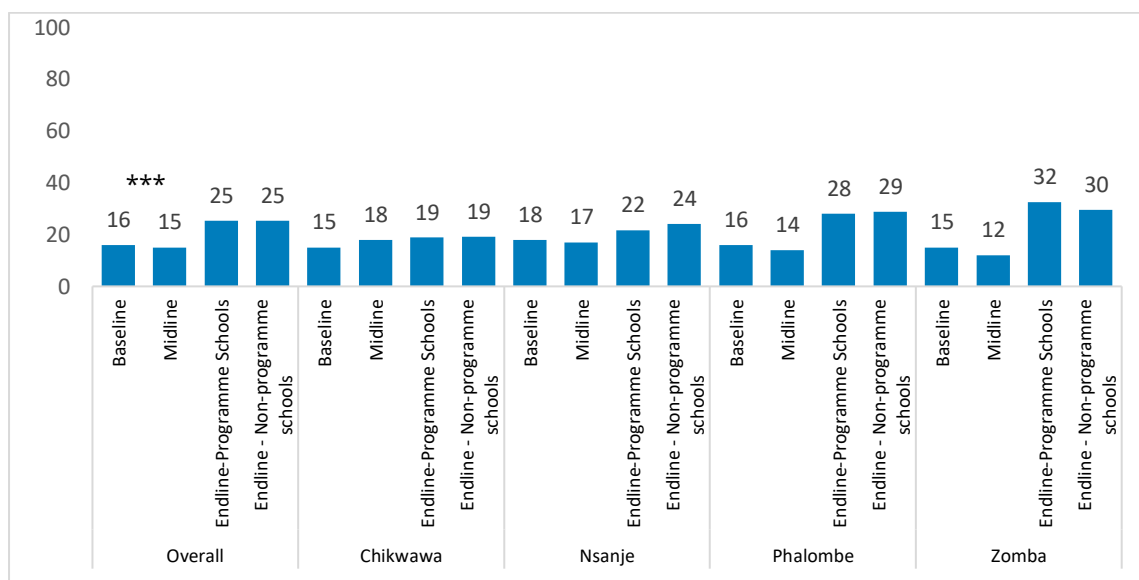
\*Statistical significance was observed for categories (acceptable FCS and Poor FCS) between households headed by men and women in the endline-values for project schools. Associations are marked with \* for  $p < .05$ .

139. The analysis highlights an increase in the proportion of households (from baseline to end-term) with a "Poor" Food Consumption Score. The FCS for households across the intervention and control areas underlines that maintaining consistent dietary adequacy is a challenge. This increased vulnerability can be attributed to the impact caused by the series of natural disasters such as tropical cyclone Freddy (March 2023). During the FGDs with parents of students from the primary schools, they blamed recurring climate events such as cyclones and floods for reduced access and availability of affordable food resources. The survey findings also indicate that the proportion of households with an "Acceptable" Food Consumption Score has remained similar or marginally increased between baseline to end-term across the intervention and non-intervention households. This marginal increase in the acceptable food consumption score might not suggest sustained dietary adequacy, as the slight improvement does not significantly offset the challenges posed by natural disasters and economic constraints faced by the households. Therefore, WFP needs to continue building capacity for the Government and the affected population to address these ongoing issues and ensure long-term food security and dietary adequacy.

140. **Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI):**<sup>72</sup> The analysis (refer to Figure 24 and Figure 25) reveals that at the endline, the rCSI was higher (25) compared to baseline (16) or midline (15). The rCSI was similar at endline across intervention (25) and non-intervention areas (25). However, each district shows a trend of increasing rCSI (typically resorting to more negative consumption-based coping strategies) from baseline to end-term. At the end-term, Zomba District was found to have the highest levels of negative coping (rCSI 32) followed by Phalombe (rCSI 29). Also, the rCSI is higher among households headed by women (28), meaning that households headed by women typically resort to more negative consumption-based coping strategies than households headed by men (rCSI 23).

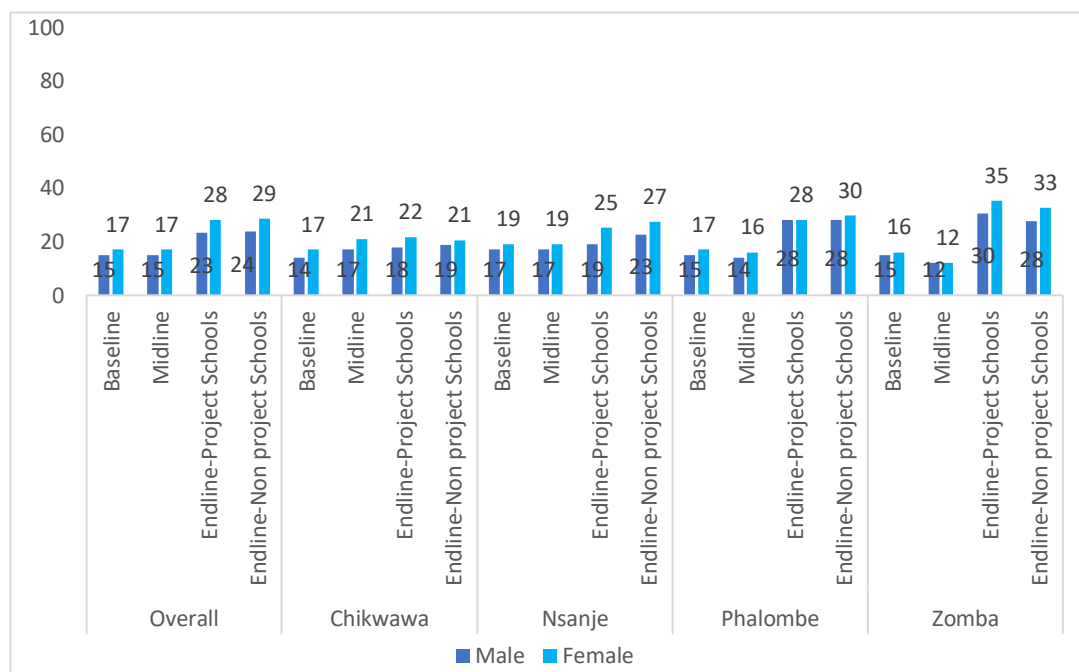
<sup>72</sup> The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) – The rCSI is an indicator used to compare the hardship faced by households due to a shortage of food. The index measures the frequency and severity of the food consumption behaviours the households had to engage in due to food shortage in the 7 days prior to the survey.

**Figure 24: Reduced Coping Strategy Index by district**



\* Statistical significance was observed for categories between the baseline and endline value proportions for project schools. Associations are marked with \*\*\* for  $p < .001$ .

**Figure 25: Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) by gender**



### Number of smallholder farmer households participating in the school meals programme (AFIKEPO 2.3.1)

141. The end of year 2 progress report indicates that 11,090 farmers (men 48 percent, women 51 percent) have participated in various trainings conducted by WFP. At the end of year 3, 12,223 farmers (men 46 percent, women 54 percent) participated in various integrated resilience interventions and are selling raw materials and food commodities to schools. The findings from the survey indicate that 93 percent of the sample smallholder farmers are selling their produce to schools under the school meals programme. Almost all smallholder farmers sell their produce through their farmer organizations. During FGDs, farmers

also expressed that engaging with TSOLATA-HGSF has provided them with an alternate market and helped them avoid uncertainties in selling their produce and price fluctuations in traditional markets. Extrapolating the survey results with the target smallholder farmers (20,000), it can be assumed that about 90 percent (18,060) of farmers are engaged with TSOLATA-HGSF across four districts.

### Number of smallholder farmers supported/trained in post-harvest loss, handling and storage (messages and techniques)

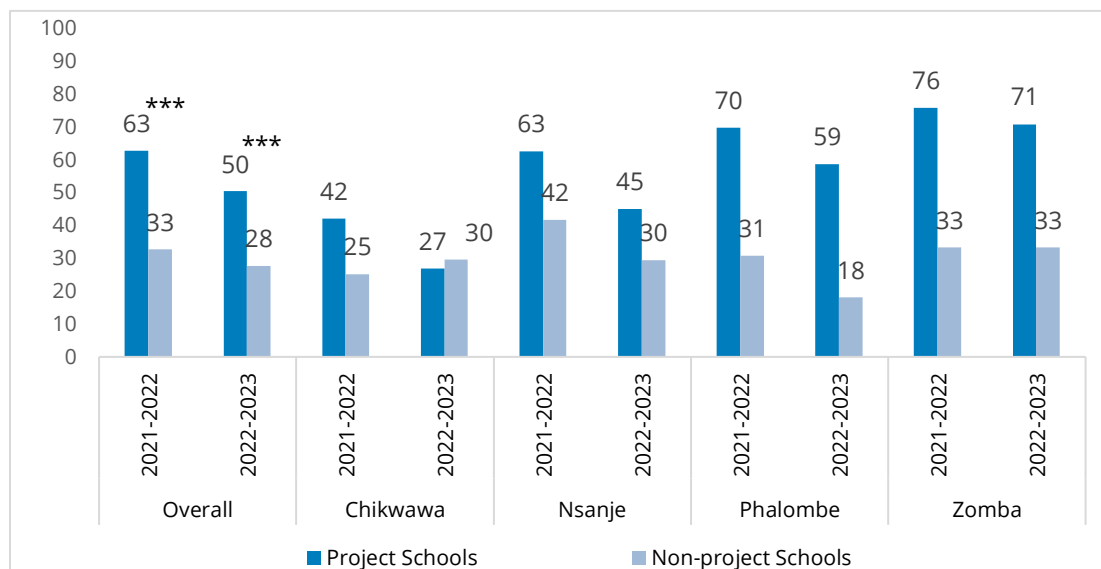
142. The survey findings indicate that 78 percent of the sample smallholder farmers have received training on post-harvest crop management. 30 percent (almost equal proportion of men and women) of the sample smallholder farmers who have received training in post-harvest crop management are from Zomba. Chikwawa represented the minimum proportion (20 percent, higher proportion of women) of sample farmers who received training on post-harvest loss management.

143. More than two-thirds (67 percent, 304 in number, 145 men, 159 women) of the sample smallholder farmers confirmed receiving training on the storage of commodities. On this aspect also, Zomba has the maximum proportion of trained farmers, while Chikwawa has the least proportion. Extending the sample with the targeted number of smallholder farmers, it can be estimated that training on post-harvest crop management and storage of commodities would have been received by around 14,000 and 12,000 farmers, respectively.

### Number of smallholder farmers supported/ trained in increasing and diversifying their production and improving productivity (AFIKEPO 2.3.2)

144. Farmers received support through training on several relevant subjects and thematic areas (refer to Figure 26 and Figure 27). Discussions with the smallholder farmers highlighted that “crop diversification and production” was one of the topics for training.

**Figure 26: Proportion of farmers who received training on crop diversification and production**



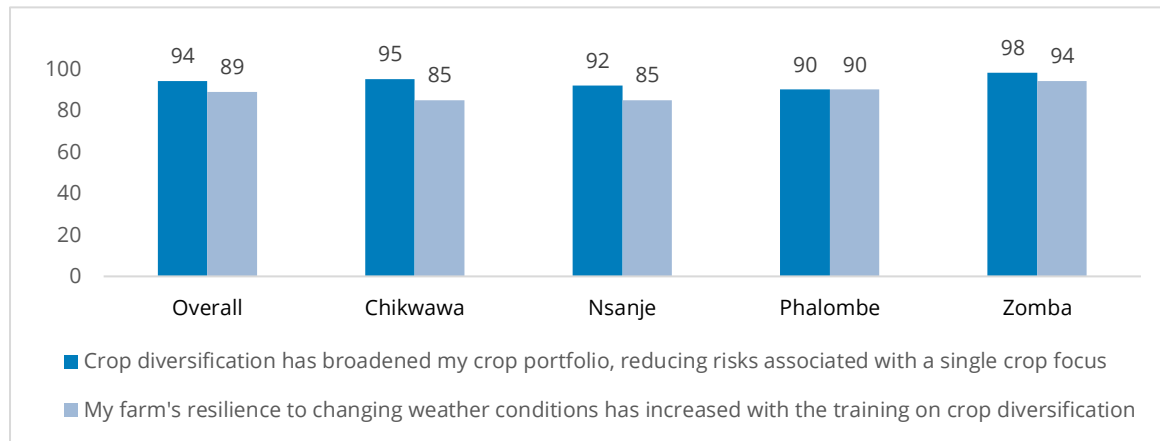
\* Statistical significance was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools (Overall). Associations with a significance level of  $p < .001$  are indicated by \*\*\*.

145. Figure 26 reveals that a higher proportion (63 percent) of the farmers attended training in the season 2021-2022 compared to the proportion of farmers (50 percent) in the season 2022-2023. Notably, farmers from project schools in Zomba had the highest training attendance rates among the four districts, with 76 percent participation rate in 2021-2022 and 71 percent participation rate in 2022-2023, outperforming farmers from other districts in both seasons. Figure 27 highlights farmers perception (among those who attended the training) on the benefits of training. It depicts SHFs agreement with the following two statements related to crop diversification across different locations, 1) “Crop diversification has broadened my crop portfolio, reducing risks associated with a single crop focus”, 2) “My farm’s resilience to changing



weather conditions has increased with the training on crop diversification". Overall, respondents strongly agree (85 percent to 95 percent) with the first statement, while their agreement with the second statement is slightly lower (82 percent to 90 percent). The graph highlights variations across locations, offering insights into farmers' perceptions of crop diversification benefits.

**Figure 27: Farmer's perception of benefits of the training on crop diversification (in percentage)**



### **Outcome 3: Government staff are designing and implementing a sustainable national school meals programme**

**Number of national school health and nutrition policies, programmes, and systems components improved as a result of capacity strengthening through this action.**

**Number of government staff engaged in capacity-strengthening initiatives facilitated by WFP to enhance management of school feeding.**

**Number of capacity needs assessments supported, and plans developed.**

146. WFP has strategically engaged with the Ministry of Education, particularly with the Minister of Education, Secretary for Education, and Directorates of Planning of School Health and Nutrition, to drive the goal of universal access to school meals for health and nutritional outcomes. WFP supported the Government of Malawi in four main areas, namely, (i) Evidence generation - localized evidence generation to inform advocacy, design, and implementation of projects in the education agenda; (ii) Technical support - designing of the national school feeding programme including operational planning and roadmap/targets; costing; review/update of policies and strategic plan as well as implementation support; (iii) Advocacy - supporting advocacy with other development partners, including facilitating south-south exchanges, supporting linking Malawi to regional and global initiatives and coalitions as well as supporting the Ministry of Education to lead multi-sectoral coordination; (iv) Expansion of HGSF - supporting implementation, including design of sustainable projects for the Government.

147. The WFP annual reports indicate that two regulatory frameworks, including the School Health and Nutrition (SHN) Operational Plan and Roadmap and review of the SHN Strategic Plan (2018-2022), were supported by WFP through TSOLATA-HGSF. WFP also developed a strategic paper based on the request from the Government of Malawi. The strategic paper aimed at strengthening inter-ministerial coordination between ministries of education, health, agriculture, economic planning, and development towards the delivery of comprehensive school nutrition, including HGSF. Additional support was also provided to the Ministry of Agriculture for developing strategies related to market access initiatives for smallholder farmers. Furthermore, as part of evidence generation to inform high-level advocacy, decision-making, and programming, a 'Value for Money' study has commenced under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and in coordination with WFP and Harvard University Chan School of Public Health. The findings of the study were not released at the time of data collection for the endline evaluation. The progress reports

further highlight that close to 70 government officials (across various departments and intervention districts) were trained by WFP as part of its capacity-strengthening initiatives.

148. During discussions, representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Government of Malawi recognized WFP technical support in the preparation of an Integrated School Health and Nutrition Policy and the availability of information, tools, and other resources to support the designing and implementation of a national school feeding programme. They also articulated the need for more officials to be trained in thematic areas such as procurement, financial management, and monitoring the implementation of school meal programmes.

**Number of district officers trained in nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, commodity management, and cross-cutting issues.**

149. Available documentary evidence shows that close to 130 district officials (across different departments) were trained during the tenure of TSOLATA-HGSF. During discussions, district officers (across districts) acknowledged the utility of these trainings on aspects such as preparing seasonal food availability calendars, adjusting food menus to cope with food availability, and promoting consumption of diversified meals during their engagement with parents and communities.

<b>Key findings- Effectiveness</b>
<p>Food Security Index (FSI):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall, 58 percent of the households interviewed were classified as food insecure, with 40 percent experiencing moderate food insecurity and 18 percent facing severe food insecurity.</li> <li>▪ The remaining 42 percent of households were classified as food secure, with 46 percent marginally secure and 7 percent fully food secure.</li> <li>▪ When FSI is disaggregated by districts, Zomba has the highest proportion of food-insecure households (80 percent), followed by Phalombe (78 percent).</li> <li>▪ Notably, households headed by women reported a higher proportion of food insecurity (82 percent) compared to households headed by men (73 percent).</li> </ul> <p>Children's meals and hunger:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On average, 72 percent of parents across all districts reported that their children received meals on all five days of the previous week.</li> <li>▪ Surprisingly, 55 percent of these children still felt hungry after consuming the meals, suggesting that portion sizes may be inadequate.</li> <li>▪ During focus group discussions (FGDs), parents expressed that their children believed they received smaller meal portions than usual.</li> </ul> <p>Challenges in school meal provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with school principals revealed instances of raw material shortages due to inadequate forecasting, budgeting, or logistical challenges.</li> <li>▪ These challenges have hindered regular school meal provision.</li> </ul> <p>Impact of WFP training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The training conducted by the World Food Programme has enhanced the capacities of programme functionaries.</li> <li>▪ It has also harmonized operations among various committees involved in the school feeding programme, leading to effective implementation.</li> </ul> <p>Behaviour change through sensitization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sensitization efforts have resulted in behaviour change among children and community members.</li> <li>▪ A total of 201 awareness campaigns focused on nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation were conducted for teachers, primary school children, and community members.</li> <li>▪ During the survey, 46 percent of intervention schools reported conducting sensitization activities.</li> </ul>

#### Hygiene and sanitation awareness:

- The key messages on hygiene and sanitation have led to behaviour change, as evidenced by increased adoption of these practices by both children and parents.

#### WFP support and cooking demonstrations

- TSOLATA-HGSF supported 216 schools with cooking demonstrations based on developed menus.
- These demonstrations targeted food committees and surrounding community members.
- The menus provided at least four food groups and met a minimum of 30 percent of recommended nutrition intakes for school-going children.

#### Crop diversification and Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI):

- The evaluation team used a modified version of the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) to assess crop diversity concentration.
- In the 2022-23 farming season, one-fifth of farmers had high crop diversity, although this decreased slightly from the previous season (2021-2022).
- The proportion of farmers practising high crop diversification is similar across the four project districts, with most farmers diversifying moderately.

#### Smallholder farmers and school meals programme:

- A majority (92 percent) of farmers cultivate two or more crops in an agricultural season across all programme districts.
- The survey findings indicate that 93 percent of sample smallholder farmers (454 in number) sell their produce to schools under the school meals programme.
- Almost all smallholder farmers sell their produce through their farmer organizations.
- The programme has provided an alternate market, helping farmers avoid uncertainties in selling their produce and price fluctuations in traditional markets.

## 2.4. Efficiency

### EQ4 – To what extent did TSOLATA deliver results in an economical and timely way?

#### EQ4.1 Was TSOLATA implemented in a cost-efficient and timely way?

150. The WFP country office provided the evaluation team with TSOLATA-HGSF monitoring data, such as annual reports, baseline, and outcome survey reports, along with other data. However, these reports did not include adequate information to do a comprehensive analysis on aspects related to, change in unit prices of food commodities, commodities purchased by schools, food commodities FOs sell to schools, number of meals served and sex-disaggregated data on SHF. External factors and risks, such as the impact of cyclones, significantly affected the program. Quantifying the monetary impact of these disruptions on program outcomes became a limitation. Moreover, agriculture data/statistics (at the national and district level) from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Government of Malawi was unavailable. Without agriculture statistics, the evaluation team could not establish endline values on aspects such as crop yield and farmers' income. The absence of secondary data from the Government of Malawi and inadequate programme data restricted the evaluation team's ability (i) to establish contribution /attribution of crop production and farmers' income data with the interventions under TSOLATA-HGSF and (ii) assess the programme's financial and technical efficiency comprehensively (and conduct a cost-benefit analysis). The evaluation team utilized secondary data sources such as past evaluations, pilots, and monitoring data to achieve the best estimates. It further captured farmers' perception on the relevance and utility of TSOLATA-HGSF interventions to (i) establish contribution/attribution and (ii) comment on the financial and technical efficiency of interventions. Based on literature review and discussion with representatives of the Ministries of Agriculture and Education, it emerged that the cost per meal for the HGSF component is US\$ 0.059 (a comparison with the centralised distribution model is provided in EQ 4.3). Discussions with the WFP representatives at district and national level highlighted their advocacy efforts to resume the implementation of TSOLATA-HGSF activities after an interruption during the COVID-19 pandemic. A quick resumption of school meals by the

Ministry of Education (effective 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021) based on guidelines supported by WFP, identification and selection of the targeted number of schools in each district and timely completion of the capacity assessment of FOs and procurement of fuel-efficient stoves, pots and portable hand washing stations highlight that year 2 onwards (post COVID-19) implementation was fast-tracked. This not only ensured making up for the time loss due to COVID-19 but also ensured that the yearly targets were achieved.

#### **EQ4.2 Which specific part of TSOLATA HGSF was more cost-efficient than others?**

151. As stated above, the evaluation team faced challenges due to inadequacy of data needed to assess the cost-efficiency of different components of the TSOLATA HGSF programme. Critical information such as programme budget/expenditure statements, details on food commodities purchased by schools, sales data from farmers/farmer organisations, unit prices, and data on students assisted, meals served, and food distribution was inaccessible. These data limitations, along with external factors including natural calamities and unavailability of national agricultural statistics, hindered the evaluation team's ability to identify which parts of the TSOLATA HGSF programme were most cost-efficient. This challenge is discussed in the limitations section, but it is essential to note that these data constraints directly affected the evaluation findings for EQ4.2.

#### **EQ4.3 What is the cost of feeding one child in the targeted districts throughout a school year? Are there more cost-efficient approaches to HGSF?**

152. Discussions with the Ministries of Agriculture and Education representatives yielded a range for cost-per-meal. This estimate was used to assess if the programme was cost-efficient or not. While the representative from the Ministry of Agriculture estimates that the cost per meal (for the HGSF component) ranged between US\$ 0.057 - US\$ 0.6,<sup>73</sup> the representative from the Ministry of Education believed that the cost per meal (for the HGSF component) ranged between US\$ 0.05 - US\$ 0.06. They both conveyed that the cost per meal was higher in the centralized distribution model (US\$ 0.069 - US\$ 0.072). The literature review also corroborates the consensus that within the WFP portfolio of programs, the HGSF component is more cost-efficient. Early findings from the currently underway "Value for Money of School Feeding Programs in Malawi" estimate that the cost per meal for the HGSF component is US\$ 0.059, compared to the centralized distribution model, which costs US\$ 0.07. Based on this discussion, it can be concluded that the TSOLATA-HGSF is more cost-efficient than the centralized distribution model.

#### **EQ4.4 Were the payments to farmers and schools done in a timely and efficient manner?**

153. Based on the menu advised by the WFP and the Government of Malawi, schools undertake forecasting exercises for stocks and prepare a budget for the term<sup>74</sup> (3 terms in a school calendar year). This is then shared with the district council for review and approval. The approved budget is shared with the ministry and WFP for final approval and funds disbursement. Based on the discussions with the school principals/ representatives and the Department of Education at the district, it emerged that the fund disbursement requests are sent over emails or manually. The entire cycle from requisition (from school) to actual fund transfer (to school) spans across 6-8 weeks (per term). During the discussions, school principals and the representatives from the Department of Education expressed that procedural complexities and the absence of an online platform (MIS) are the reasons for delays. This hinders schools from receiving upfront funds and timely disbursements. This is corroborated by the smallholder farmers; almost one-half (45 percent of the sampled farmers) across the districts reported a delay in payment by two or more months. During the FGDs, farmers expressed that the payment delay impacts their ability to effectively address basic needs and support their children's education. The delay also hampers their ability to procure timely inputs for the next production cycle, forcing them to take loans at higher interest rates.

154. TSOLATA-HGSF has constituted a review mechanism at the national and district level. At the district level, the District Nutrition Coordinating Committee (DNCC) monitors the implementation of the HGSF Programme. The District Commissioner heads the DNCC and has representations from education, health,

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<sup>73</sup> Malawian Kwacha 100 = US\$ 0.057 as on June 7, 2024, <https://www.xe.com/>

<sup>74</sup> This is done on a term basis to factor price fluctuation of commodities.

and agriculture departments. DNCC meetings are held every month. There are district monitors who are responsible for monitoring visits to schools (mandated to cover all the schools during a term), taking community feedback on the performance of HGSF, and suggesting areas of improvement. The monitors use a checklist with areas they must focus on and review. They observe, record details, and then make recommendations. Additionally, there is a complaint feedback response mechanism (CFM) through a toll-free number and suggestions box in schools. The CFM can be used by the community to register complaints, highlight issues that they see as stumbling blocks, and provide suggestions on how best to address these. In practice, as is evident from discussions with parents, in most cases, parents raise issues with the PTA committee and prefer amicable resolution through in-person engagement.

155. The discussions with the representative's department of education and WFP (at the district level) confirm that DNCC meetings are held regularly. These meetings have regular participation of various departments. They perceive DNCC as a useful platform for planning, coordinating, and supporting the implementation of TSOLATA-HGSF activities. Regarding monitoring by district monitors, the discussion with WFP and the Government of Malawi representatives at the district level highlighted irregularities in the schedule of visits due to the lack of funds available to support transportation. The efficiency of HGSF is hampered by the non-availability of an online platform that facilitates timely reporting of data (aspects such as procurement and financial management) and its utilization for planning and timely decision-making.

#### Key findings - Efficiency

- TSOLATA-HGSF is more cost-efficient compared to the centralized distribution model. Cost per meal was higher in the centralized distribution model than HGSF.
- The entire cycle from requisition (from school) to actual fund transfer (to school) to support the distribution of homegrown school meals spans across 6-8 weeks (per term). This hinders schools from receiving upfront funds and timely disbursements to FOs. Procedural complexities and the absence of an online platform (MIS) are the reasons for delays.
- Farmers expressed that the payment delay impacts their ability to effectively address basic needs and support their children's education. The delay also hampers their ability to procure timely inputs for the next production cycle and forces them to take loans at higher interest rates.
- There is a complaint feedback response mechanism (CFM) through a toll-free number and suggestions box in schools. In practice, as is evident from discussions with parents, parents raise issues with the PTA committee in most cases and prefer amicable resolution through in-person engagement.
- Regarding monitoring by district monitors, the discussion with WFP and the Government of Malawi representatives at the district level highlighted irregularities in the schedule of visits due to the lack of funds available to support transportation. The efficiency of HGSF is hampered by the non-availability of an online platform that facilitates timely data reporting (aspects such as procurement and financial management) and its utilization for planning and timely decision-making.

## 2.5. Impact

### EQ5 – To what extent did TSOLATA generate or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects?

156. Overall, TSOLATA-HGSF had a transformative impact on the community. TSOLATA-HGSF has impacted the learning ecosystem through improved school enrolment, attendance, and student retention rates. The school feeding component will likely have a long-term health impact through improved nutritional outcomes. Improved educational and health outcomes will have a generational impact on the population as they contribute to nation-building.

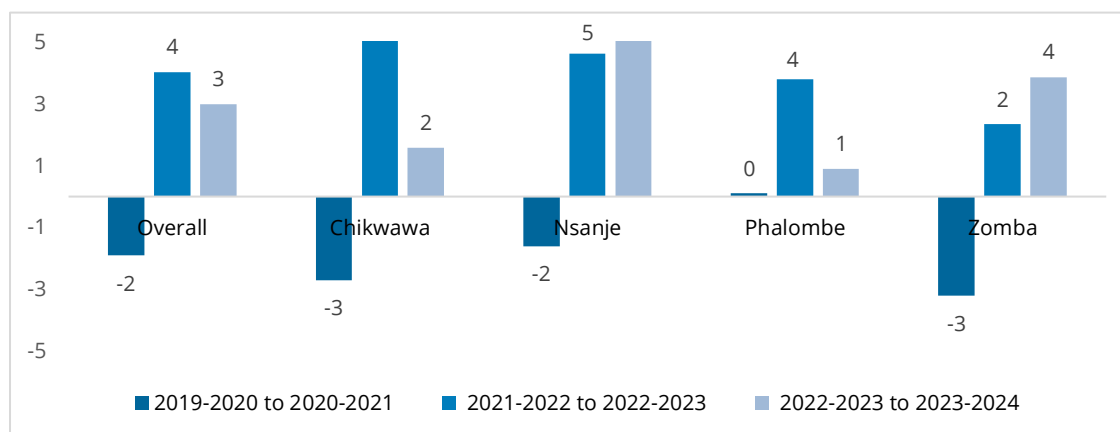
157. The creation of social institutions such as the farmer cooperatives/FOs had a major impact on the farmer’s quality of life. The farmers now have access to stable and alternative markets that deliver better prices and assured procurements. Right pricing has improved the economic well-being of the farmers. The money earned from the sale of produce to the schools has helped them to invest in other income-generating activities such as animal husbandry. Incremental income is also used to procure timely and affordable inputs for farming, afford better quality and adequate quantity of food for the household, and access to healthcare.

158. Training provided under TSOLATA-HGSF helped the farmers improve their agricultural practices, use modern irrigation methods, reduce post-harvest loss, and use better storage practices for improved productivity and increased earnings. Training in financial management has helped farmers with prudent financial practices and set them on a path to economic empowerment and self-reliance. However, successive climate disasters have set back the community’s academic and nutritional progress.

**EQ5.1 What were the effects of TSOLATA HGSF on school enrolment/ attendance/ retention among targeted learners/communities? (intended and unintended)?**

159. There is an increase in the number of learners enrolled (**Enrolment Rate**)<sup>75</sup> between the two academic years, and the programme was successful in attracting more out-of-school students back to school (refer to Figure 28 and Figure 29). The analysis indicates that overall, the change in enrolment between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 academic sessions for the four project districts was 3 percent.

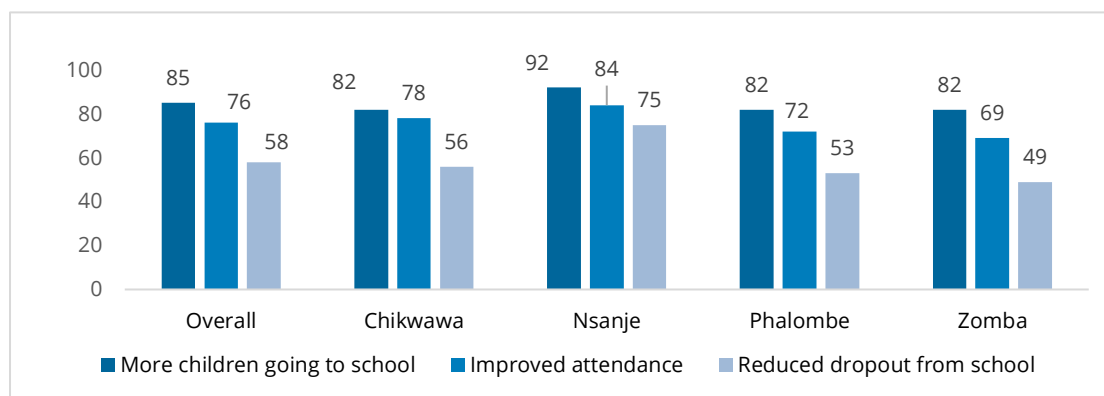
**Figure 28: Change in school enrolment trends between academic years 2019/2020 to 2023/2024 (in percentage)**



160. The two districts of Nsanje (5.45 percent) and Zomba (3.9 percent) enrolled more students than the last academic session. These two also emerge as trendsetters in school enrolments. However, a deep dive into the enrolments by gender reveals that more boy learners enrolled at the schools than girls. Detailed sex-disaggregated, district-wise data has been discussed in EQ 1.5 under the theme of gender equity and disability inclusion section. An overwhelming majority (95 percent) of the parents confirmed that TSOLATA-HGSF positively impacts school enrolment. These sentiments are echoed across the programme districts.

<sup>75</sup> The enrolment rate is the percentage change of enrolment between two academic years. A positive value would indicate an increase in enrolment or improved/ increase in access to education. A negative value would mean a decrease in the number of enrolled students. In the context of the programme, a positive value will also indicate towards the effectiveness of the school feeding programme to attract more children back to school.

**Figure 29: Parent's perception of school enrolment, attendance, and dropout trends across project areas (in percentage)**



161. A school principal from Nsanje indicated, "The education has improved; many children have enrolled at the school and attend classes in large numbers. Education is improving by the day, and at least 90 percent of the enrolled students attend school. Another 10 percent of the children drop out because of a lack of resources. Girls drop out of school because of pregnancies and early marriage" (KII, MALESPRINCI06, NSANJE). Another principal member in Chikwawa indicated that "Increased enrolments is also attributed to outreach activities to sensitize and encourage the parents to send their children to school. There is a positive response as demonstrated by the improvement in school enrolments" (KII, MALEPRINCI07, CHIKWAWA). While mother support groups reach out to families and encourage them to educate children, village chiefs are engaged to keep reminding their people of the importance of school and fine those families that are not encouraging their children to go to school. This has made more attend for fear of paying penalties.

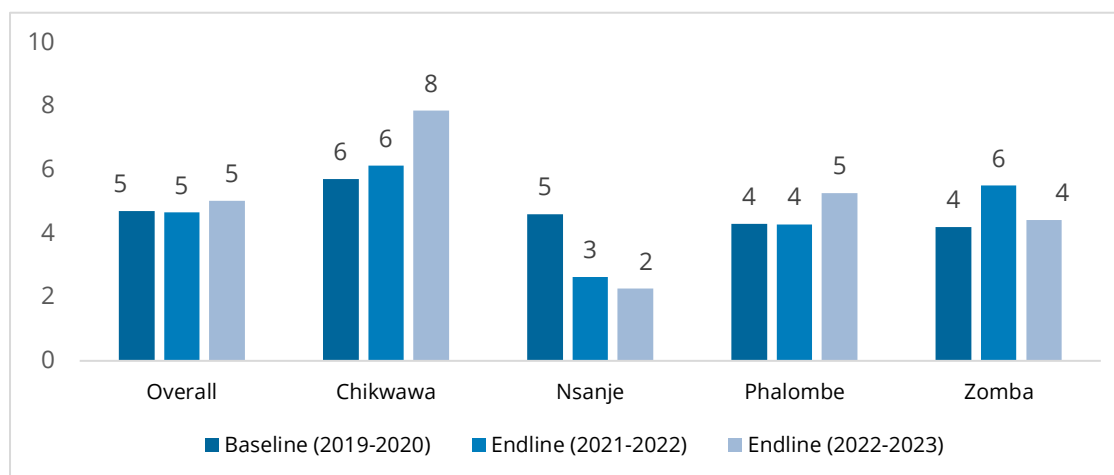
162. Based on the discussion with the stakeholders, the evaluation team also understood an increase in re-enrolments: "Many children that dropped out of school came back to school due to the school meals" (IDI, Parents, Zomba). Also, teachers in many schools point out, "There's a growing demand for the number of students who are enrolling at the school each academic year. As a result, most classes, especially standard 1, are overcrowded, which hinders students' concentration" (IDI, FEMPARENT10, PHALOMBE).

163. The enrolments in the two districts of Nsanje and Zomba enrolled a greater number of students than the last academic session. These two also emerge as trendsetters in school enrolments. However, the overall enrolment trends for boys for the two academic years were similar. Detailed information has been added in EQ1.5.

164. This could be due, in part, to COVID-19, hyperinflation/ high prices, and three climate events in quick succession. This could have forced households to withdraw children from school to earn extra income to compensate for the high prices and for addressing household chores. It is also worth noting that the climate events could have impacted data and record-keeping at the school level. The data used for the analysis was provided by the school administrators. This data is not collected from the District Education Management Information System (DEMIS) data. We understand from our discussions that there are often discrepancies between DEMIS and school-collected/ reported data. This indicates the need to invest in better programme management and MIS infrastructure for evidence-based decision-making.

165. The overall average dropout rate for the four districts was 5 percent (refer to Figure 30). Chikwawa district had the highest dropout rate (7.8 percent), and Nsanje district had the lowest dropout rate (2.3 percent). The difference between girl learners and boy learners has been discussed in EQ1.5.

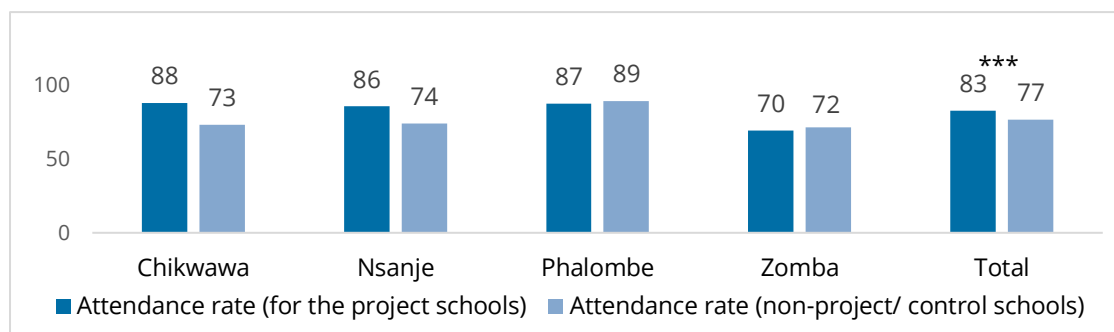
**Figure 30: School dropout trends for academic years 2019/2020 to 2022/2023 (in percentage)**



166. Towards evaluating the performance of the schools in attracting students to consistently attend school the evaluation team estimated the school attendance rate.<sup>76</sup> The intervention schools have better attendance scores (83.04 percent) compared to non-intervention schools (76.95 percent) ( $p = 0.001$ ,  $d \approx 0.07$ ). A higher proportion of the girl learners attended schools (more details have been added in EQ1.5). Thus, the schools attracted a high proportion of learners to attend school.

167. Student attendance is a key indicator in assessing the effectiveness of any educational intervention. The indicator compares the proportion of students present in the school on the day of the survey to the number of children enrolled (disaggregated). The attendance could also be measured during spot check visits on a given number of days in a semester/ school year. Most schools have high attendance rates. If the school's attendance rate is below, it indicates that the school is facing challenges in getting (refer to Figure 31) students to come to school regularly, and this needs to be looked into by the District Nutrition Coordinating Committee (DNCC) and required support to be provided.

**Figure 31: School attendance trends across programme and non-programme schools (in percentage)**



\*Statistical significance was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools (Total). Association is marked with \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

168. The implementation of school meals significantly enhanced student attendance. The programme ensured that students would receive a meal at school, encouraging regular attendance even when their parents could not provide breakfast at home. This led to a substantial increase in school attendance. "However, attendance rates dropped during and after the cyclone" (KII, MALEPRINCI07, CHIKWAWA). More

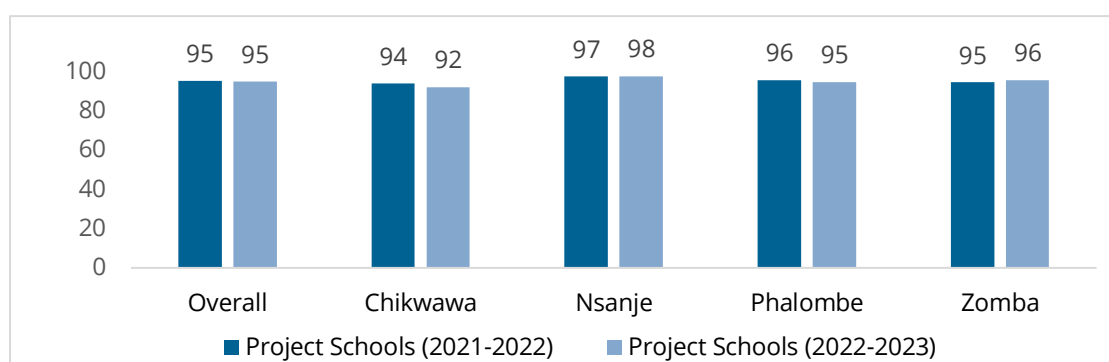
<sup>76</sup> Calculated the percentage of students who attended school on the day of data collection ((Total number of students present on the day of data collection/ Number of children enrolled in 2023-24) \*100)



children are motivated to attend classes, knowing they will receive meals. Parents in Chikwawa mentioned that “Learners take breakfast before starting their classes, improving their attendance and concentration. The communities benefit because their children can eat in the school. Most children come to school with an empty stomach. Many families fell into the poverty trap after the pandemic and are yet to recover. Attendance of learners has improved because they can eat in school every day.” “Education has greatly improved in the past 2-3 years. For instance, school attendance has increased. There was a marked improvement in attendance and punctuality. Children are attending school more because of the school meals provided meals. At first, our children used to run away from classes because they were hungry, but now they are sure when they go to school, they will only come home after knocking off” (FGD, MALEPARENT05, CHIKWAWA).

169. The schools demonstrate very high retention rates (95 percent, refer to Figure 32 and Table 9). The student retention rates were estimated to understand the proportion of students who remain enrolled and complete their classes. A high student retention rate means the current learners value the education and opportunities available at the school. This part would be attributed to the TSOLATA-HGSF and, in part, to the teaching in the class. The retention rates in the intervention schools were higher than those of the non-intervention schools. There were no significant differences in the intervention schools' retention rate of girl and boy learners.

**Figure 32: School retention trends as programme and non-programme schools for academic years 2021/2022 to 2022/2023 (in percentage)**



**Table 9: Student retention rates (in percentage)**

District	Project Schools (Student Retention Rates)		Non-Project Schools (Student Retention Rates)	
	Overall	Overall	Overall	Overall
	2022-2023	2021-2022	2022-2023	2021-2022
Chikwawa	92.1	93.9	89.7	91.8
Nsanje	97.7	97.4	93.4	94.3
Phalombe	94.7	95.7	89.8	90.9
Zomba	95.6	94.5	95.2	96.6
<b>Overall</b>	<b>95***</b>	<b>95.3***</b>	<b>91.8</b>	<b>93.2</b>

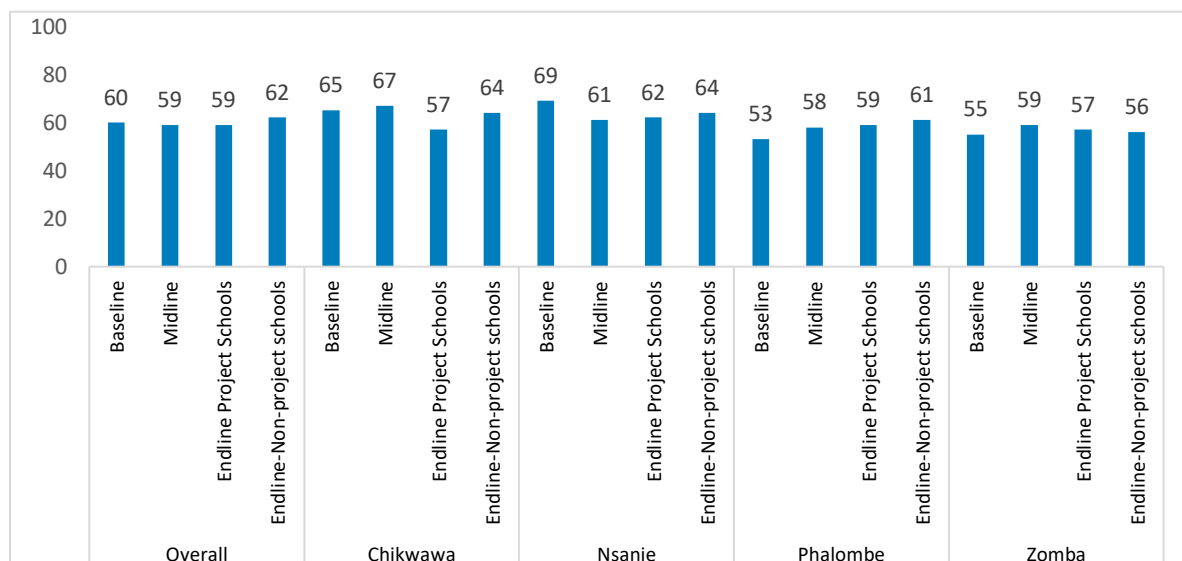
Statistical significance was observed while comparing the proportions between project and non-project schools across different columns (e.g., Overall, 2022-2023 programme school vs. Overall 2022-2023 non-programme schools, etc.). Associations found to be statistically significant are indicated by \* for p<.05, \*\* for p<.01, and \*\*\* for p<.001

170. A high proportion of households have benefitted from the programme. The TSOLATA-HGSF has directly contributed to a reduction in household expenses for buying food. Parents save money, as

articulated in many of the discussions with the community members and households - "Since children eat meals at school, this has reduced financial burden as the money is used for other things at home. The money that would be given to children for snacks at school is now used for other purposes like getting kitchen salt" (FGD, FEMPARENT03, NSANJE). The household interview in the survey also indicates that the money saved is invested in other income-generating activities and provisioning on other meals for the day - "The school meals programme has helped us farmers and parents save money on buying food. The money saved is diverted to other useful farm activities. Some of the money saved is diverted to buy afternoon and evening meals. This helps our households, especially the children, to access all three meals of the day" (IDI, FEMPARENT10, PHALOMBE).

171. **Food Expenditure Share (FES):**<sup>77</sup> On average, 59 percent of the household budget was spent on food in the intervention areas at the end-term (refer to Figure 33). In comparison, on average, 62 percent of the household budget was spent on food in the non-intervention areas. At baseline and midline, 59 percent and 60 percent of the household budget, respectively, was spent on food in the intervention areas. Since in these households, a significant proportion of the household budgets are spent on food, this becomes a problem in times of shock, as these households may not have the flexibility in expenditure and thus are forced to adopt adverse coping strategies rapidly.

**Figure 33: Food Expenditure Share (in percentage)**



172. **Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity (CARI console):**<sup>78</sup> CARI is an approach used to aggregate different food security indicators into one index to report overall food security status. The CARI classifies households into four descriptive groups: food secure, marginally food secure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure. The prevalence of food security reached 58 percent among TSOLATA-HGSF households and 61 percent among non-TSOLATA households. The difference between TSOLATA and non-TSOLATA households is not statistically significant at p-value=0.13362. Refer to

<sup>77</sup> Food Expenditure Share (FES) - FES is an indicator used to measure households' economic vulnerability. It determines the economic vulnerability without the need of having a reference to a poverty line or minimum expenditure basket. The higher the share of households' consumption expenditures on food - out of the total consumption expenditure - the more vulnerable the households are to food insecurity.

<sup>78</sup> Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity (CARI)- CARI is an approach used to aggregate different food security indicators into one index to report on population overall food security status. The Food Security Console (or CARI console) is the final output of the CARI, it presents the food security indicators into a summary table and distributes the percentage of population for each indicator based on a specific cut-off point. The console itself provides a clear snapshot of the rates of different types of a population's food security levels at quick glance.

Table 10 for the CARI console to see the detailed and comprehensive differences between baseline, midline, and endline.

**Table 10: Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity (CARI) (in percentage)**

Domain		Indicator	Endline (Project School) (n=1,204)				Endline (Non-project School) (n=1,217)				Midline (n=2,160)				Baseline (n=3,470)			
			Food secure (1)	Margi nally Food secure (2)	Moder ately food insecu re (3)	Severe ly food insecu re (4)	Food secure (1)	Margi nally Food secure (2)	Moder ately food insecu re (3)	Severe ly food insecu re (4)	Food secure (1)	Margi nally Food secure (2)	Moder ately food insecu re (3)	Severe ly food insecu re (4)	Food secure (1)	Margi nally Food secure (2)	Moder ately food insecu re (3)	Severe ly food insecu re (4)
Current Status	Food Consumption	Food consumption score	Acceptable	Acceptable and rCSI>= 4	Border line	Poor	Acceptable	Acceptable and rCSI>= 4	Border line	Poor	Acceptable	Acceptable and rCSI>= 4	Border line	Poor	Acceptable	Acceptable and rCSI>= 4	Border line	Poor
			42	N/A	40	19	45	N/A	36	19	54	N/A	34	9	45	N/A	47	8
Coping Capacity	Economic Vulnerability	Food expenditure share	score <50%	50%-65%	65%-75%	score >75%	score <50%	50%-65%	65%-75%	score >75%	score <50%	50%-65%	65%-75%	score >75%	score <50%	50%-65%	65%-75%	score >75%
			29	22	19	31	36	22	13	28	30	34	18	18	29	27	19	25
	Asset Depletion	Livelihood coping strategy <sup>79</sup> categories	None	Stress	Crisis	Emergency	None	Stress	Crisis	Emergency	None	Stress	Crisis	Emergency	None	Stress	Crisis	Emergency
13			13	16	58	11	12	17	59	21	36	32	11	26	27	12	35	

<sup>79</sup> Livelihood Coping Strategies- Livelihood coping strategies indicator used to understand the medium and longer-term coping capacity of households and their ability to overcome challenges in meeting their essential needs in the future. The indicator is derived from a series of questions about how households manage to cope with shocks that stress their livelihoods.

<b>Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity (CARI)</b>	6	33	41	20	7	35	40	18	14	46	36	4	13	38	36	13
	39		61		42		58		60		40		51		49	

173. Further, TSOLATA-HGSF has also reduced out-of-pocket expenditure on illness and health care. Mothers indicated that a lesser proportion of children fall sick for a lesser duration. This is primarily attributed to the meals available at the school, which are nutritious food. Discussions with the mothers reveal that children now rarely complain about headaches (due to hunger issues). In the past, the households had to buy medications/ painkillers. These savings from reduced out-of-pocket expenditures on healthcare (doctors, hospitals, and medications) are now used for other productive activities.

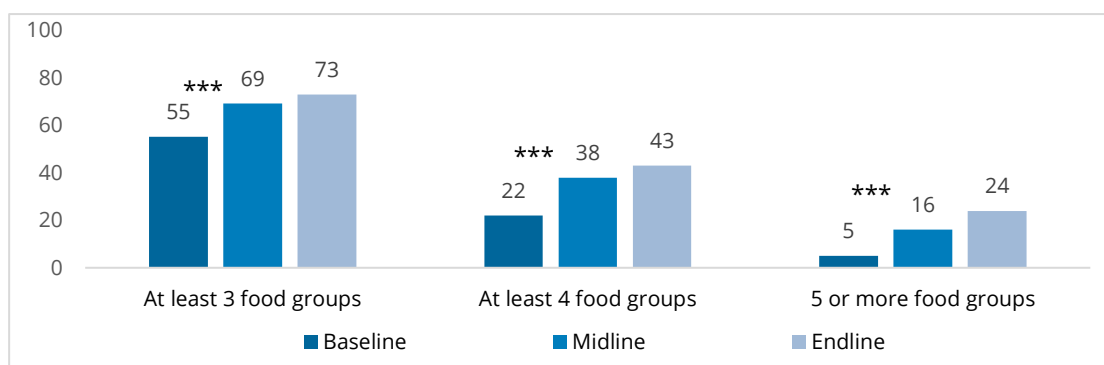
174. **Household Hunger Scale (HHS):**<sup>80</sup> The analysis shows that at the endline, 35 percent of the households experienced no or light hunger (Baseline 49 percent, Midline 52 percent), and 62 percent experienced moderate hunger (Baseline 50 percent, Midline 45 percent). Only 3 percent of the households reported that they had experienced severe hunger (Baseline 1 percent, Midline 3 percent). Overall, households headed by women were generally hungrier than households headed by men.

175. **Food Security Index (FSI):** Overall, 58 percent of the households interviewed were classified as food insecure, suffering from either moderate food insecurity (40 percent) or severe food insecurity (18 percent). The remaining 42 percent of households were classified as food secure (marginally secure 46 percent, food secure 7 percent). When FSI is disaggregated by district, Zomba (80 percent) has the highest proportion of food-insecure households, followed by Phalombe (78 percent). Compared to households headed by men (FSI 73 percent), a higher proportion of the households headed by women reported being food insecure (FSI 82 percent).

176. TSOLATA-HGSF has improved dietary intake, dietary diversity (food group consumption), and health outcomes. The school meals menu is diverse and covers all the six food groups. TSOLATA-HGSF has imparted the community with knowledge of the importance of these food groups (refer to Figure 34). It has also offered a reliable source of nutrition for both boys and girls since the school meals offered at least comprise 3 food groups in a day. The school prepares different food items. While this helps address dietary diversity, it also prevents situations of monotonous diets. Children like the variety and relish the food.

*"Meals are well balanced and nutritious. The school prepares food with different food groups, such as groundnuts, maize, and vegetables. The programme has no challenges in ensuring diverse food groups - 3 food groups comprising vegetables, legumes, and whole grains are served daily"* – (KII, MALEPTA05, CHIKWAWA).

**Figure 34: Awareness of food groups among mothers (in percentage)**



\*Statistical significance was observed for the proportions of baseline and endline values for each category. Associations with a significance level of  $p < .001$  are indicated by \*\*\*.

177. More than two-thirds (67 percent) of the households in the community are now aware of the various (four or more) food groups. In a discussion with the mothers, they indicated that *"Our children have improved their health; they no longer get sick as they used to before because we did not know six food groups. Improved Dietary diversity, nutrition, and overall health of children. The children now look healthy and happier."*

<sup>80</sup> Household Hunger Scale- The household hunger scale (HHS) indicator is a proxy for food access. The HHS is built around three questions regarding the perceptions of a household on varying degrees of hunger by the number of times a household has experienced hunger within the past 30 days prior to the survey. The approach is based on the idea that the experience of household food deprivation causes predictable reactions that can be captured on a scale.

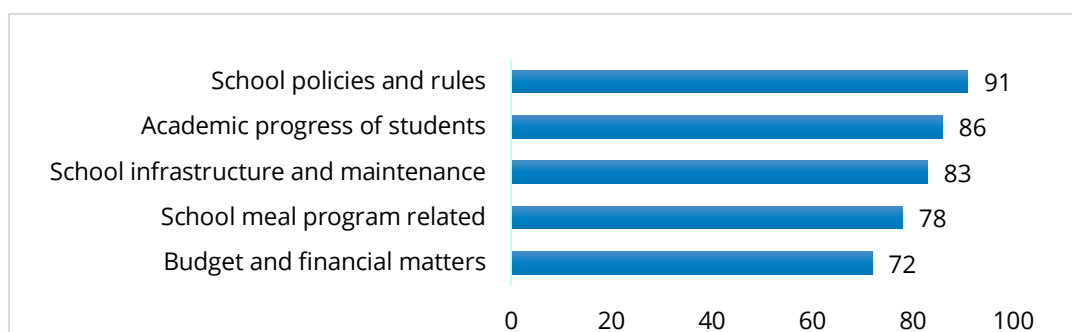
"Children are provided for and receive diversified school meals on all five school days. Earlier, we used to provide soybean porridge only and children used to skip meals. We then started diversifying; for instance, on different days, the learners were served 'Mgaiwa' porridge mixed with groundnut powder and vegetables, samp, sweet potatoes, etc. This was well received by the learners" (KII, MALESMC11, PHALOMBE).

178. **Dietary Diversity Score (DDS):**<sup>81</sup> The analysis shows a trend of increasing proportion of households that consumed four or more than four food groups with poor FCS scores from baseline (28 percent) to end-term (52 percent). Each district shows a trend of increasing proportions of households that consumed four or more than four food groups from baseline to endline. This change can be attributed to better integrating the school ecosystem into the food value chain and increased awareness among parents at the household level. The two districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje were more successful in ushering in change than Phalombe and Zomba. A household headed by a man is more likely to provide children with better nutrition than households headed by women, ostensibly due to income disparity.

179. The practice of dietary diversity has now permeated into the kitchens at the home. The knowledge imparted at schools and community outreach has improved the awareness of dietary diversity. Children discuss these back home after school. They transfer the new knowledge within the household. This has contributed to a mindset change in the community through the children. "In the early days, pounding pumpkin leaves and adding them to the porridge was astounding. Many children used to wonder what kind of food this is. But now, the children are used to it, and back home, they ask their mothers to add pounded vegetables to the porridge" (KII, MALEPRINC111, ZOMBA).

180. The creation of the SMC and PTA in the schools had a very catalytic impact on the implementation and management of the programme and the nutrition outcome of the learners. These committees demonstrate community ownership of the programme. The SMC and PTA take part in managing and delivering nutritious meals to the children by formulating management plans, making budgets for school meals, identifying meals/menus, and procuring food for the school (refer to Figure 35). The bodies ensure food procurement, management, preparation, distribution, etc. They monitor food management and preparation in the kitchen. For example, they make sure that food does not lose its nutritional value in the kitchen by being overcooked.

**Figure 35: Discussion agenda of the SMC and PTA (in percentage)**

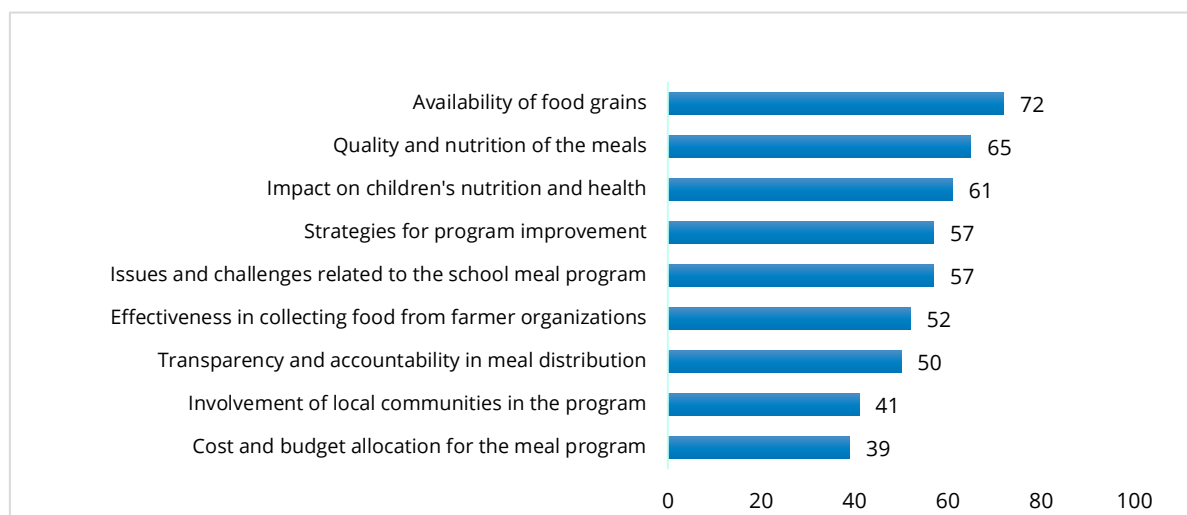


181. The SMC and PTA also ensure community involvement, participation, and ownership of various programmes. PTA organizes meetings before implementing any activity. Parents are called for discussions and informed (refer to Figure 36). Their suggestions on supporting the interventions are solicited. School and SMC members conduct outreach to parents to encourage enrolment, for regular attendance, and to prevent dropouts. The SMC has played a significant role in driving up the enrolments at the schools. As a SMC member (Treasurer, Zomba) explained, "We go to households of children who are not going to school and find out what is happening. We advise them to encourage their children to attend school. We tell parents that

<sup>81</sup> Dietary Diversity Score (DDS): DDS aims to reflect the economic ability of households to access a variety of foods. The data for this indicator is based on households' self-reporting of the 12 food groups consumed in the previous 24 hours.

poverty should not be the reason to miss school. They (parents) should motivate their children to attend school. It is their (parents') duty to take care of the house" (KII, MALESMC10, ZOMBA).

**Figure 36: SMC and PTA discussions on the school meal programme (in percentage)**



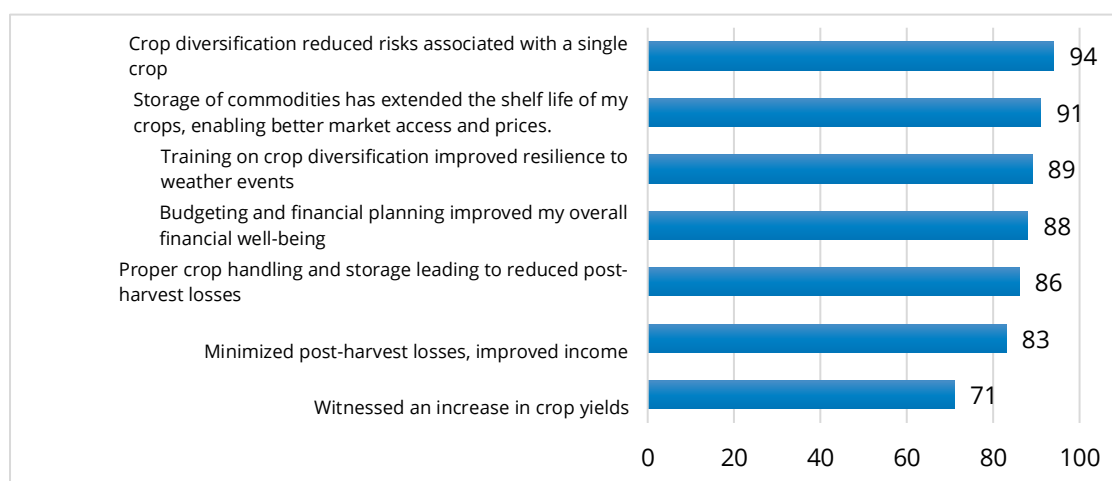
182. PTAs, on their part, have conducted meetings with parent to encourage them to send their children to school. A PTA chair informed the evaluation team, *"We follow up with irregular students for attendance and motivate them to attend school regularly."* These forums also indicate that while attendance has increased, it has not been sustained. They mentioned, *"When the school cooks food for the children, a lot of children attend school, but once the school stays for a week without providing food, many children stop coming to school. Children are attracted to school meals due to the hunger they face in their households. One term each child was given MK6,000 which increased children's attendance"* (KII, MALEPTA04, NSANJE).

183. Absenteeism is higher among girls due to household responsibilities. The committee, on its part, organizes SMC/PTA meetings and outreach activities and engages with the parents to promote enrolment and curb absenteeism. In promoting girl learner enrolment and attendance, the PTA engages with the mother group that goes around the villages and finds schoolgirls (who have various reasons for not attending school and after reasoning with them) and encourages them to attend/ go back to school.

184. Forums such as the PTA act as grievance redressal mechanisms and have proven helpful in addressing the community's concerns on the school and TSOLATA-HGSF interventions (refer to Figure 37). These have been like a bridge between the parents and the teachers. PTAs play a crucial role in taking them up with the Headteachers and finding resolutions.



**Figure 37: Impact of the HGSF programme on the community (in percentage)**



185. TSOLATA-HGSF has a transformative impact on the local economies in many ways, as described in the following sections. TSOLATA-HGSF has been instrumental in improving the economic status of the local communities. There is a general understanding in the communities that those members of the FO/ cooperative that supply to schools have witnessed an increase in income compared to farmers/ community members who are currently not members of any cooperative. The schools emerged as a stable and reliable alternative market for the farming communities, particularly for those members of the FO. Increased incomes have led to increased quality of life and food security for farmers and families. At the district, officials summarized, *"The programme has helped improve the lives of farmers as they produce and sell the crops to get income. The farmer's financial level has improved because they now have stable markets and are making a profit compared to many years ago. Thus, food security has improved since the farmers harvest the produce and have food for the whole family, community, and schools"* (KII, MALEDO08, PHALOMBE).

186. Farmers vouch for improved income that has led to an increase in family's resilience and coping in times of hardships. The improved incomes have enabled parents to invest in children's education. As a farmer nicely surmised, *"When I sell my produce and receive the money, I can buy some things for my household that will help us gain additional income in cases where we run out of money. For instance, I could buy goats and pigs, which I sold when I had problems with school supplies for my children."* Improved incomes enabled farmers to afford assets and improve their quality of life - *"I have also managed to buy things like a television, a bicycle, and all this has been through the farming from this scheme"* (IDI, MALEFO06, CHIKWAWA).

187. TSOLATA-HGSF has also improved the nutrition and dietary practices in the community. More parents are now aware of dietary diversification, i.e., six food groups. A higher proportion of households consume more food groups daily. Parents indicated: *"We noticed an improvement in children's health due to improved diets; children are healthy now because they are getting nutritious meals from the school meals."* The evaluation also found improved dietary practices in families. Families inform, *"We can eat at least three food groups in a day in our families. We have better diets, and you can see an overall development in the community"* (KII, MALEDO08, PHALOMBE).

188. The training imparted has introduced financial prudence in the communities. The farmers immediately receive money from selling produce to the schools. Farmers have now learned how to manage money better. In recent years, many farmers have used the money to build their own houses. Many farmers have opened shops and started animal farming to complement earnings from farming. Improved incomes from agriculture result in incremental investment into Agri-practices. Farmers have purchased oxcarts and cattle to aid farming and fertilizer to boost production. Improved income and timely receipt of money from crop sales have enabled farmers to invest in their farms and avoid loans. As one farmer from Zomba puts it very succinctly, *"As for my life, it has changed. This is because I used to get fertilizers on loan, but*

*two years ago, I managed to buy fertilizers on my own. I have stopped taking loans to buy fertilizers due to money earned by supplying farm produce to school"* (FGD, MALESHF12, ZOMBA).

189. Farmers are now more resilient and can grow crops in dry seasons. They practice modern irrigation practices on their farms and can access garden crops, such as vegetables and sweet potatoes, throughout the year, unlike in past years. Both children and families have access to these in the households. FOs formed under TOSLTA-HGSF are also known to provide food not only to schools but also to the community at large during the crisis.

190. TSOLATA-HGSF enhanced the availability of healthy foods to the students. Food grain/staples are procured from local farmers and members of the FO at the beginning of every term, and fresh vegetables are procured daily. An overwhelming majority (90 percent) of the schools provided meals on five or more school days. Principals from the school that provides regular meals said, *"The school committees procured food in a timely and budgeted manner by measuring the amount of food needed by each child. In estimating the food quantity to be procured, we assume that each child be given 119 grams of food per day"* (KII, MALESMC02, NSANJE). The remaining 10 percent of the schools were irregular in serving the meal. While 5 percent of the schools served meals for 3-4 days, another 5 percent served for two or fewer days. School teachers indicate that the key challenges in providing regular school meals include unavailability of food stocks (81 percent), unavailability of cooking fuel (11 percent), and unplanned absence of cooks (5 percent). The evaluation team did not find any evidence of unintended negative outcomes related to time poverty or protection concerns programme.

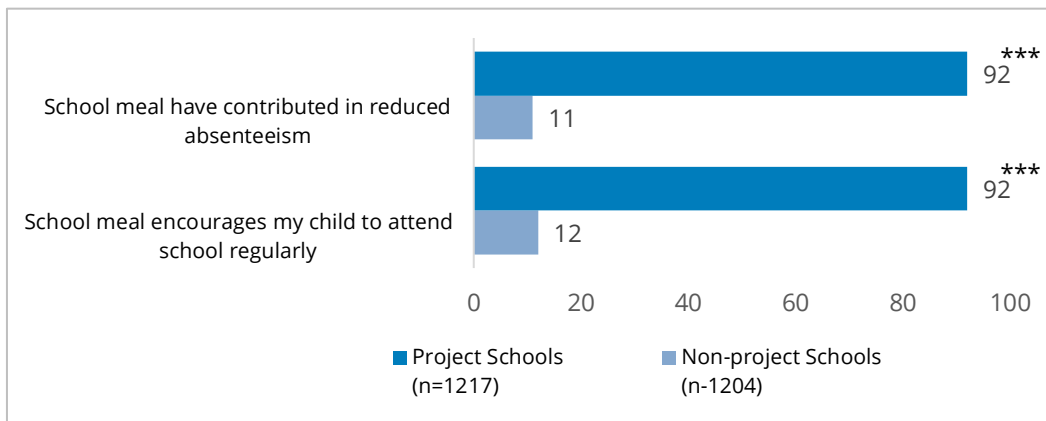
191. The schools are provided funds and empowered to manage the procurement process, providing them with experience and skills in managing food procurement processes. The findings indicate that the schools will need additional mentoring and handholding in better demand estimation, prior procurement planning, and logistics management.

#### **EQ5.2 Did a specific part of TSOLATA HGSF achieve a greater impact than another?**

192. Towards developing an understanding of the achievements of the various parts of the TSOLATA-HGSF, evaluation team first deconstructed the programme into: 1) School nutrition, 2) Farmer's empowerment through training, 3) Mobilization of SHF farmers through FOs, and 4) Disability. The evaluation team then examined the various components. The analysis is discussed in the following sections.

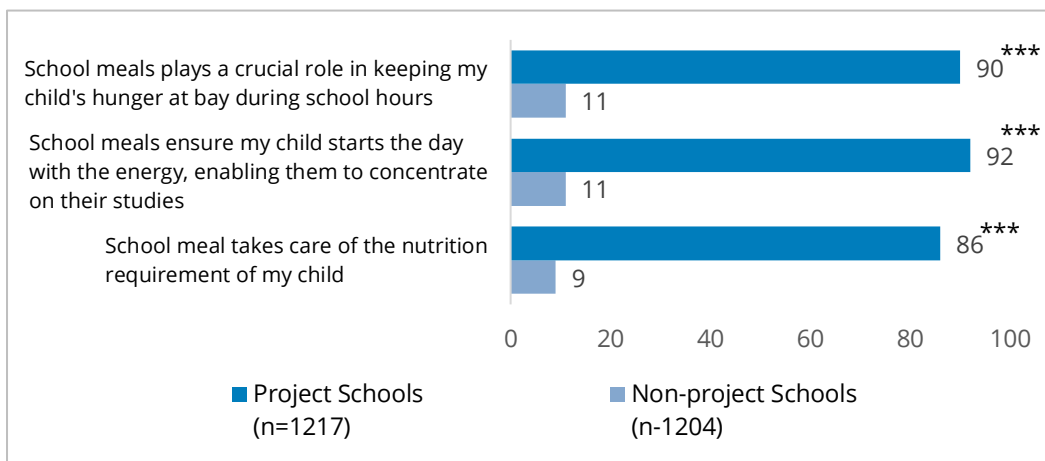
193. The school nutrition component had a significant impact on the status of the households, the nutritional outcomes for the children, and ensuring enrolment and school attendance (refer to Figure 38 and Figure 39). The school meals component of the programme has contributed to improved attendance across the schools. In a discussion with parents, they summarized that *"School attendance has greatly improved in the past 2-3 years. Children are now attending school more because of the meals provided at the school. At first, our children used to run away from classes because they were hungry, but now they attend all classes at the school"* (FGD, MALEPARENT02, CHIKWAWA). "Another parent indicated that *"The programme has ensured high school enrolment. The schools currently have a lot of children being enrolled than it had in the past when school meals did not provide meals"* (IDI, FEMPARENT01, NSANJE).

**Figure 38: Impact of school meals on Attendance and absenteeism (in percentage)**



\*Statistical significance was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools. Associations with a significance level of  $p < .001$  are indicated by \*\*\*.

**Figure 39: Impact of school meals (1/2) (in percentage)**



\*Statistical significance was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools. Associations with a significance level of  $p < .001$  are indicated by \*\*\*.

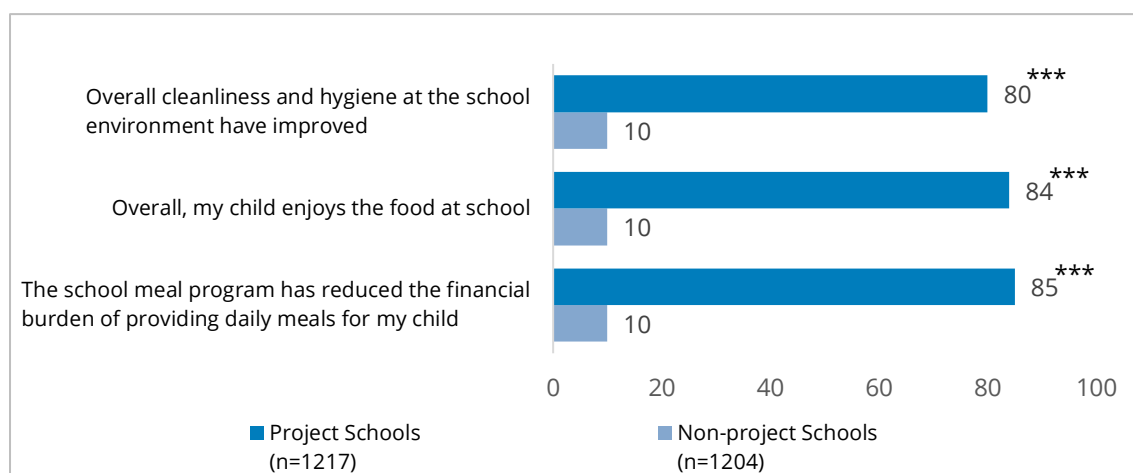
194. The parents appreciated the regularity, quality, and quantity of the food provided as school meals (refer to Figure 40). They believed TSOLATA-HGSF has offered a reliable source of nutrition for the students. Parents informed that *"My child has never complained about being hungry after receiving the school meal. Food is sufficient, and there is no hunger after meals. The only instances of dissatisfaction arise when my child arrives at school late and finds that her peers have already had their meals"* (IDI, FEMPARENT03, CHIKWAWA). The meal has also contributed to improving dietary diversity, nutrition, and improved health outcomes. Parents told the evaluation team that *"The school meals menu is diverse and covers all the six food groups, and the programme has imparted the community with the knowledge on the importance of these food groups. The children now look healthy and happier"* (IDIFEMPARENT12PHALOMBE).

"Our children have improved their health; they no longer get sick as they used to before because we did not know six food groups." Children stay in schools throughout the day: "In the past, the children used to knock off early from school, but since the coming in of school meals, the children stay at school the day" (FGD, MALEPARENT04, CHIKWAWA).

"Most of the children look healthier in the recent years since the introduction of the meals because higher per cent of the children in the community are poor and mostly, they usually have one meal per day" (IDI, FEMPARENT14, ZOMBA).

"Some children that were malnourished now have healthy bodies, and their education is going well. Some illnesses like headaches or weaknesses arising from hunger issues are no longer there. They may start again since the school is out of stock" (IDI, FEMPARENT1, ZOMBA).

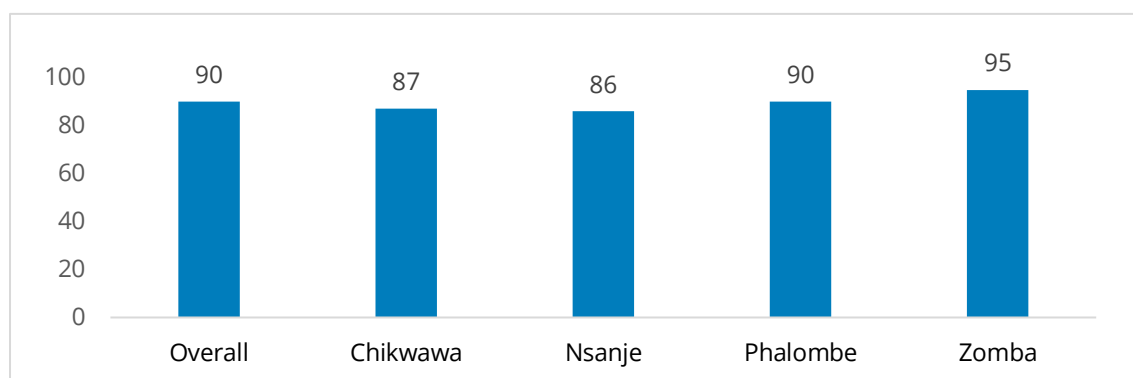
**Figure 40: Impact of school meals (2/2) (in percentage)**



\*Statistical significance was observed for the proportions of project and non-project schools. Associations with a significance level of  $p < .001$  are indicated by \*\*\*.

195. Evidence indicates that the TSOLATA-HGSF has eased the pressure on many poor households, providing them the financial space to utilize/ invest in other activities. Parents expressed complete satisfaction (refer to Figure 41), noting that the programme motivated them to send their children to school despite economic hardships, as hunger was no longer an issue. "I am completely satisfied with the SM as it encourages parents to send children to school despite poverty. We are just grateful to the programme that our poor children can now attend school because there are no longer hunger issues" (IDI, FEMPARENT02, NSANJE).

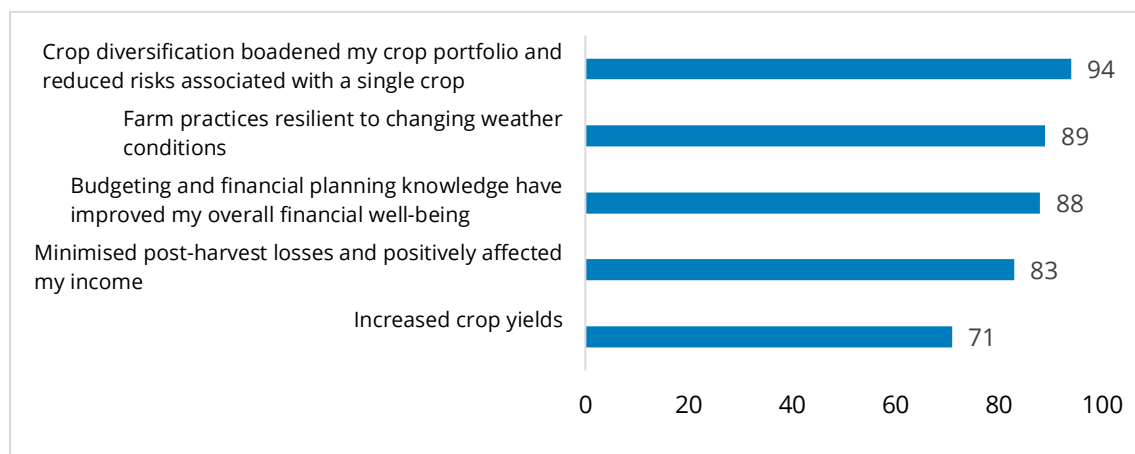
**Figure 41: Satisfaction with the training programs (in percentage)**



196. A high proportion (90 percent) of the farmers were satisfied with the training delivered by the programme. Many farmers find the training a valuable source of new knowledge and skills. The training has

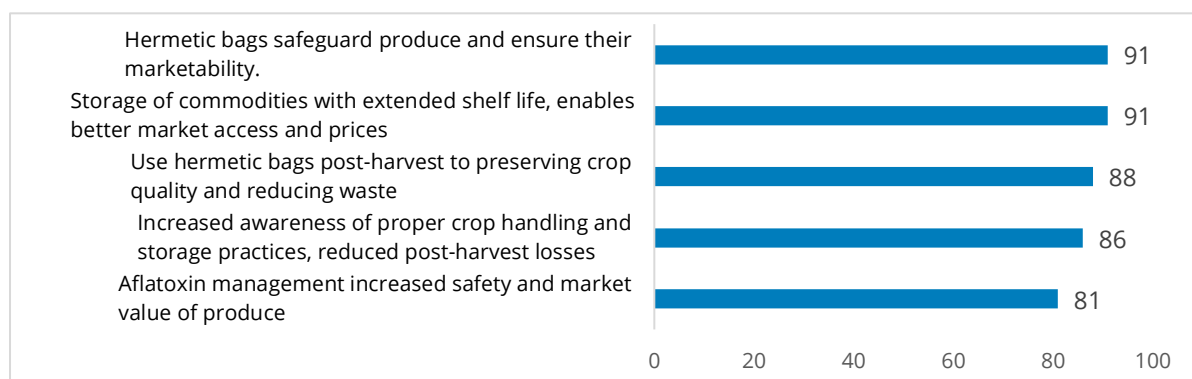
helped to adopt sustainable farming practices, improve soil health, and combat pests and diseases (refer to Figure 42). Farmers appreciate the opportunity to learn from experts and connect with other farmers. As one of the farmers mentioned *"We have attended many training programmes from the Government, WFP, World Vision and all these trainings had greatly impacted how we operate in our farms now. We have adopted new farming practices that we have been taught through this training, like - storing our farm produce in PIC bags, which do not need the application of chemicals. This has helped us to use the produce at whatever point it is needed. For instance, I can store it today, and if my relative needs food the next day, the produce will be safe for consumption, unlike if chemicals are applied because I will have to wait for a few months until it is ready for consumption"* (IDI, MALEFO06, CHIKWAWA).

**Figure 42: Improved agricultural practices (in percentage)**



197. The training has improved farming practices. The training helped farmers learn sustainable agriculture practices (refer to Figure 43). Farmers confirm improved quality and increased yields. They also mention learning modern post-harvest practices, reduced application of chemicals, proper drying, and the use of PICS bags (when available). Farmers mentioned, *"Our ways of thinking and farming have changed; for example, we didn't have a definite way of planting, but now we are practising pit farming and 'Sasakawa' (a method of planting one seed per station), which has also helped in increasing our yields"* (FGD, FEMSHF13, PHALOMBE).

**Figure 43: Managing post-harvest losses (in percentage)**



198. TSOLATA-HGSF has mentored the farmers in adopting modern agriculture practices and post-harvest practices, including modern storage processes for increased shelf life, and obtained better prices in the market. Also, the programme connected the farmers with reliable all-season alternative markets. Farmers informed that *"Our lives have improved, and our community is developing. Both men and women can generate income in their homes due to farming. Selling farm produce is easier because we no longer worry about where and who will buy our crop harvest as WFP buys from us through the programme. Earlier, we used to sell to*

*the vendors, but now we have a fixed market for our harvest, thanks to TSOLATA - HGSF programme. The programme has been able to usher in some prosperity among farmers. Many farmers have built themselves nice houses with corrugated iron sheets, and some farmers can also have some savings"* (IDI, MALEFO01, NSANJE).

199. Farmer organizations have played a significant role in improving not only the farming practices of their members but also the quality of life overall. Evidence indicates that joining FOs leads to increased incomes, reduced costs, and improved access to resources and markets, ultimately improving farmers' and their families' quality of life. Not only do the FOs provide monetary support and loans to meet the urgent needs of the member families, but they also provide loans to members for purchasing at lower prices, farm inputs such as seeds and pesticides, and ensure that the farmers have access to necessary resources for cultivation. FOs facilitate procurement by enhancing the affordability and availability of critical resources. As members of a FO tell us, *"As a group, we have children that depend on us. We are expected to take care of these dependents in terms of education, health, and general well-being. Through the FOs we borrow some money and can provide for our families in need. FOs also allow us to make decent earnings"* (FGD, FEMSHF04, NSANJE). This has also motivated others to join the FOs or adopt similar practices in the non-intervention areas.

200. Income augmentation is facilitated through increased access to organized and profitable markets, ensuring a steady demand for their produce, especially for TSOLATA-HGSF. Farmers reported getting better prices for their produce compared to market vendors. Farmers emphasized that FOs ensure fair compensation and transparent transactions in this context. FOs also follow up on delayed payments with schools, ensuring timely and fair prices for their produce. They also assist their members during disasters.

201. Many farmers point out that the incomes and profits of fellow farmers are much higher, motivating others to join: *"When our friends joined these groups, they would farm and sell their produce, which enabled them to buy livestock like goats after sharing the money from the sales. They would bring the goats home, motivating us to join the groups to buy goats"* (FGD, FEMSHF07, CHIKWAWA). Farmers report that selling through FOs has drastically reduced the costs of transporting and purchasing agricultural inputs. They also indicate that selling through cooperatives fetches them a better price for the produce compared to the local markets. Farmer emphasized, *"Selling our produce as cooperatives has changed a lot, and expenses on transport have almost reduced by half. Also, at the local market, for example, the price for rice was MK1500 per kilogram, but selling it through the cooperative and to the school ensured that we were able to get a fair price of MK3000 per kilogram"* (FGD, MALESHF18N, ZOMBA).

202. The training content and calendar designed for the farmers have had a transformative impact and significantly enhanced their knowledge and understanding of modern farming practices. This includes crop diversification, post-harvest management, reducing post-harvest loss, modern irrigation practices, including marketing strategies, and empowering farmers with knowledge and skills to improve their productivity and livelihoods. Farmers unanimously echoed that *"FOs provide a great platform for farmers to learn about new farming practices, technologies, and market trends, enhancing their agricultural knowledge and skills. The FOs offer unity and guidance to farmers, enabling collective decision-making, bulk sales, and representing farmers' interests to external stakeholders."*

203. The household survey conducted as part of the evaluation reveals a profound impact on children with disabilities, with 80 percent of children with disabilities attending school regularly. In 63 percent of the schools, children with disabilities are prioritized during meal distribution. However, only half of the schools offer amenities like disability-friendly toilets and accessible classrooms for children with disabilities. About 20 percent (1 in 5 schools) offered modified teaching, learning, and assessment resources, demonstrating efforts to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities. Children with disabilities are prioritized – they are at the forefront of the line and receive/serve their meals first. A non-queuing policy for providing school meals has been implemented in schools specifically for children with disability. They are provided with safe and prioritized passage during meal distribution. Additionally, the children have priority access to the feeding shelter, storeroom, and kitchen.

204. Many schools do not have special tools, toys, learning aids, or special facilities to address the unique requirements of children with disabilities. In such conditions, the child is forced to use the same common resources available to the other children. One of the main challenges is to support the girl learners when they are menstruating, especially at school. Most of the girl students do not have access to affordable menstrual products (sanitary pads), leading to absenteeism. *"The programme is not biased towards women,*

youth, people with disabilities, or any gender category. Everyone is encouraged to take part as long as they have the capacity" (KII, MALEGO05, CHIKWAWA).

### **EQ5.3 Was there any gender-specific impacts? Did TSOLATA HGSF influence the gender context?**

205. TSOLATA-HGSF demonstrated significant gains in empowering women stakeholders. There were many examples of evidence of increased leadership, decision-making and stewardship roles by women across key programme components. Additionally, TSOLATA-HGSF prioritized the economic empowerment of women farmers and ensured food/ nutrition security for the girl child. Gender issues were mainstreamed throughout the interventions, including creating social institutions like FO. As a programme manager nicely summarized during a discussion, *"When the programme first started engaging with the FOs in 2021, almost all top leadership positions, such as the chairperson, the vice chairperson, the treasurer, the secretary, and the vice secretary, were dominated by men. Of the five top positions, the woman was always the secretary, taking notes etc. But then we (the programme) had to say "no," levels must be changed, it's a new era. We also want women who are capable of leading"* (IDI, MALECP01, NSANJE). Gender-specific impacts are discussed in the ensuing sections.

206. **Increased participation of women in decision-making:** In comparison to the control (35 percent) areas, a significantly higher proportion of women smallholder farmers (97 percent) in the intervention areas were members of FO. Discussion with the members and office bearers of multiple FOs indicates that most of them are managed by teams that have women in leadership positions (Vice-Chair, Treasury, and Vice-Secretary). Women are in positions in the FO executive committee, making them a part of the decision-making process. Most management teams comprise approximately 8 men and 12 women farmers. Similarly, at cooperatives, women have more shares than men (women can have 50 shares, men have 2 shares).

207. Most FOs across the project district articulate, "Women farmers get the same opportunities as the men folk, and in most cases, women are favoured as they get access to several local markets as well." As members of FOs, women farmers also benefitted from better prices, priority loans, and access to alternative and secure markets. TSOLATA-HGSF, therefore, demonstrated positive gender outcomes and potentially has spillover effects on improving household food security and contributing to the overall well-being of the community.

208. **Ensuring nutritional security and promoting education of the girl child:** Women played key decision-making roles in key implementation committees (SMC, PTA, Food Committees, and mother groups) of the school feeding component of TSOLATA-HGSF. A large proportion of the schools have provisioned. Mother groups are particularly active in outreach and reaching out to families, encouraging them to educate children, particularly girls. As a principal from one of the schools summarized, *"Girls are doing better than boys in terms of performance, as demonstrated by the good percentage of girls who are progressing better in their classes than boys. The pass rate is higher for female learners than males"* (KII, MALEPRINCI07, CHIKWAWA).

209. TSOLATA-HGSF has served as a platform for nutrition education, integrating essential information about healthy eating habits and balanced diets into its activities. This education, reaching both girls and boys, will empower them to make informed choices about their food consumption, potentially creating a ripple effect within their households.

210. While TSOLATA-HGSF has adopted an inclusive approach, the implementation at the ground level needs to be monitored as it may impact gender-based programme outcomes. A mother of the girl learner pointed out, *"In schools, during the mealtime, girls and boys are made to attend in separate queues. This negatively affects the girl child more than the boy child. Separating the girls and boys when receiving their food makes the girlchild feel bad/ teaching them they are not equal. Boy children can fend for food themselves, which is not the same for a girl child. Due to lack of good nutrition, a girl child is prone to illnesses, making it impossible for her to continue with her education"* (IDI, FEMPARENT02, NSANJE).

211. Nonetheless, the findings are corroborated by evidence from the ground that for every 15 students who do not attend classes, 9 are girls, and 6 are boys. While enrolment rates are higher for boys, the dropout rate is high and common for girls. The reasons attributed include girls dropping out of school

because of early marriage and pregnancies, impact/ affected by natural disasters, long distances, and economic compulsions.

### **Key findings - Impact**

In summary, TSOLATA-HGSF had a transformative impact on the community. The programme has not only improved educational and health outcomes but also contributed to the economic empowerment of farmers. By addressing challenges and building on its successes, the programme can continue to make a generational impact on the population, contributing to nation-building in Malawi.

#### **Improved school enrolment and attendance:**

- TSOLATA-HGSF has significantly improved school enrolment, attendance, and student retention rates. Most parents (95 percent) confirmed that the programme positively impacted school enrolment.
- When students receive a meal at school, it encourages regular attendance, even when parents cannot provide breakfast at home.
- Outreach activities have been critical in sensitizing and encouraging parents to send their children to school, resulting in increased enrolments and re-enrolments. This leads to a substantial increase in school attendance, positively impacting educational outcomes.
- Absenteeism among girls: Girls tend to have higher absenteeism due to household responsibilities. One of the main challenges is to support the girl learners when they are menstruating, especially at school. Most of the girl students do not have access to affordable menstrual products (sanitary pads), leading to absenteeism.

#### **Health impact and nutritional outcomes:**

- The school feeding component of TSOLATA-HGSF is likely to have a long-term health impact through improved nutritional outcomes. Learners can now access nutritious meals, contributing to their overall well-being and academic performance.
- Additionally, school meals reduced out-of-pocket expenditures on illness and health care, benefiting both students and their families.
- Parents have appreciated regular, high-quality, and sufficient food provided as school meals.

#### **Economic wellbeing of farmers:**

- The programme has created stable and alternative markets for smallholder farmers.
- Farmers earn income by selling produce to schools, which they can then invest in other income-generating activities such as animal husbandry.
- Financial management training has empowered farmers to make prudent financial decisions.

#### **Nutrition and dietary diversity:**

- The school meals menu covers all six food groups, imparting knowledge about their importance to the community.
- Students receive a reliable source of nutrition, as the meals include at least three food groups.
- The practice of dietary diversity extends beyond school, influencing household kitchens and contributing to a mindset change in the community.

#### **Community ownership and impact:**

- The creation of SMCs and PTAs has catalytic effects on programme implementation and management. These committees demonstrate community ownership of the programme and positively impact learners' nutrition outcomes.
- The SMC has significantly contributed to increasing school enrolments.

#### **Impact of TSOLATA-HGSF:**

- TSOLATA-HGSF followed a home-grown school feeding approach, sourcing food locally. This benefits children (ensuring fresh and nutritious meals) and local farmers (providing a stable



market).

- TSOLATA-HGSF has improved the economic status of local communities.
- TSOLATA-HGSF has successfully eased the financial burden on many poor households. By providing school meals, families can allocate their limited resources to other essential activities.
- Farmers report increased income, which has enhanced family resilience during hardships and allowed parents to invest in their children's education.
- Financial prudence has been introduced in the communities.
- Communities are now more resilient and capable of growing crops even during dry seasons.
- Parents expressed satisfaction with the programme, which motivated them to send their children to school despite economic challenges.

**Challenges and setbacks:**

- Despite these positive impacts, the community faces challenges due to successive climate disasters.
- These setbacks affect both academic progress and nutritional outcomes.
- DEMIS data discrepancies: There are often discrepancies between DEMIS data and school-collected or reported data. These discrepancies significantly impede progressive programme design and monitoring.
- This highlights the need to invest in better programme management and management information system (MIS) infrastructure for evidence-based decision-making.

## 2.6. Sustainability

212. TSOLATA-HGSF's success in benefiting communities and the district serves as a strong foundation for its sustainability. While the model has demonstrated success and built the capacity of the communities, WFP's support will be needed to scale the programme countrywide. As articulated during the discussion with government functionaries, "*Sustainability stems from how much the community and the district have benefitted from the programme, which is a storyline that can be used to ensure that all the interventions under TSOLATA should continue*" (IDI, MALEDC01, NSANJE). The other factor that indicates programme sustainability is the depth of collaboration between various units of the Government, the programme, and the community. The collaboration between the WFP, the Ministry of Agriculture and other actors demonstrates the Government's ownership and support for the programme. During the discussion with District level officials, they opined that "*WFP works hand in hand with other sectors to implement the project. As the Ministry of Agriculture, we own the programme, and we work with WFP to implement the project*" (KII, MALEDO02, CHIKWAWA). Since all stakeholders realized the significant contribution of TSOLATA-HGSF on social and economic indicators, it is likely to continue.

213. However, based on the local evidence gathered during the evaluation, significant gains appeared to be lost to climate events. The quantitative analysis indicates a trend of increasing food insecurity and that a higher proportion of households headed by women are in the high-risk category. The discussions with the communities indicate the devastating impact of tropical cyclones and droughts, which have impacted biodiversity and livelihood opportunities and reduced food production.

214. During the discussions with the farming community, they said, "*Unforeseen events like cyclones and droughts have devastated livelihoods and productivity. Starting with cyclone Idai (2019), tropical storms Ana and tropical cyclone Gombe (2022), and then cyclone Freddy (2023) devastated the country and destroyed people's lives and livelihoods. Unpredictable weather patterns impacting yields. Floods, droughts, pests, and diseases have destroyed crops and resulted in significant crop loss. Heavy rains in the last few years have significantly decreased farm productivity*" (FGD, FEMSHF13, PHALOMBE). While they mentioned that the farmers have benefited from TSOLATA-HGSF in getting access to markets to supply their produce, they indicated that the harvest has reduced significantly post-storm.

215. As is evident, the country lacks economic diversification and is heavily dependent on natural resources and rainfed agriculture. As external factors, climate events have had and will continue to significantly affect the sustainability of the project outcomes. As such, TSOLATA-HGSF needs to focus on

resilient and climate-smart practices within the community to ensure that the gains made, continue and remain sustainable.

## **EQ6 - To what extent will the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue?**

216. WFP's approach of involving communities in intervention selection, implementation, and monitoring fosters a sense of ownership, which is crucial for long-term success. TSOLATA-HGSF successfully identified the natural owners/ custodians of the programme very early in the design stage itself and was able to engage with them deeply. As articulated by a corporate partner, *"In any implementation of a project of this nature, thinking about sustainability at the start of the programme is key. This programme was designed to ensure the key stakeholders stayed there even after WFP was to exit the programme and that they were to sustain the intervention. The programme puts the community at the centre of the project"* (IDI, MALECP09, PHALOMBE). The sense of ownership is very high with the community at the heart of the project.

217. TSOLATA-HGSF's utilization of the existing structures at district, community, and school levels (DNCC, District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordination Committee (DMECC), school committees, etc.) has not only facilitated continued programme implementation and programme ownership but also contributed to the development of the institutional capacities. Working with existing community structures ensured continued support and ready availability of technical assistance even after WFP was to exit. This will further ensure the continuity of the interventions.

218. The choice of cooperating partners was very strategic. It helped identify, test, and build capacities of institutions that can partner with the communities and the FO as and when WFP plans an exit. These institutions (cooperating partners), in turn, significantly reduce the Government's role and involvement in mentoring and handholding the communities and FOs. Both the communities and FOs have benefitted from the involvement of the cooperating partner (CP). The members from both the communities and the FOs inform that communities/ FOs have benefitted from improved market access translating into assured and timely payments, reduced food insecurity, and that the households were relieved from the issues of food and nutrition insecurity. The cooperating partners are more adept at identifying, adopting, and scaling cost-effective interventions, ensuring TSOLATA-HGSF 's long-term viability.

### **EQ6.1 To what extent did the intervention implementation consider sustainability, such as capacity building of national and local government institutions, communities, and other partners?**

219. Capacity development of the local institutions was one of the design principles of the programme. The evaluation findings suggest that activities were planned and executed to develop the capacities of the local/district-level government institutions. However, discussions with representatives, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture highlight that they require similar technical support at the national level for designing and operationalizing HGSF in other districts (scaling HGSF). TSOLATA-HGSF also invested in the capacity building and sensitization of implementing partners to ensure equitable participation of community members. It encouraged the parents of learners to meaningfully engage in activities that affect their lives and that of their children. Important development concepts such as gender-equality issues were mainstreamed throughout the programme, through training and capacity building. However, community members indicated that *"Limited training opportunities and the training were of (short durations), making it difficult for slow learners to grasp information"* (IDI, MALEFO01, NSANJE). However, evidence indicates that engagement with national-level stakeholders needs to be prioritized.

### **EQ6.2 To what extent is it likely that the benefits of TSOLATA HGSF will continue after WFP's work ceases?**

220. The analysis is presented in three sections. The sections delve into the three programme components 1) The farmer organizations, 2) The school feeding component, and 3) Training and capacity development of the farmers/ community members.

221. **Farmer Organizations:** TSOLATA-HGSF has invested in creating lasting institutions in the form of farmer organizations. These farmer organizations are provided with alternative markets in the form of

schools, and their capacity is built through a curated set of training that targets the end beneficiaries. These farmer organizations are improving the economic well-being of the farming communities that comprise a significant proportion of the population. Economic gains made by the community, attributable to the FOs, will ensure these remain relevant in the short to medium term. The FOs need to include other community stakeholders and diversify into other agriculture-related economic activities to ensure their social relevance and longevity. The FOs would need to constantly innovate to remain relevant in the social and economic context. However, the FOs will need capacity development support, specifically on thinking, planning, and rolling out market-based models/ opportunities for its members to remain economically relevant in the medium to long term.

222. **The School Feeding Component:** The school feeding component has significantly contributed to improving not only the children's nutritional status but also school enrolment and attendance. This will have a multiplier contribution to the economic prosperity of Malawi in the long term. Unlike a donor-driven agenda, TSOLATA-HGSF had significant government commitment and involvement. National policies promoting school feeding indicate the government's commitment to its long-term establishment. In an interview with a government official, they indicated, *"The government has created national policies whereby school feeding is part of government policies. There is a document whereby the Ministry pledged itself to support the programme."* (KII, MALEGO06, CHIKWAWA). The Government's interest in ensuring programme sustainability is also demonstrated through its ORD funding of the "school gardens" initiative. The government official also indicated that *"The government has enabled many schools to have their own gardens, which are mostly supported by the government through ORD funding"* (KII, MALEGO06, CHIKWAWA).

223. Also, the communities are significantly invested in TSOLATA-HGSF. This is evident from discussions with community members. The programme fosters a sense of ownership among communities, as evident in initiatives like school gardens and cost-sharing strategies. Communities are actively involved and contribute to the programme's longevity. As a government official indicated, *"Success is there for all to see - some schools have their own school gardens, and the produce is transferred to support TSOLATA-HGSF. The community also helped in the cost-sharing strategy of TSOLATA-HGSF whereby instead of the food lasting for two months, their vegetable gardens and orchards assist the programme, and food lasts three months. The community owns the school feeding programme in this area. It is a cost and effort sharing programme among the community and the Government, e.g., the provision of food security, and food preparation is done by the community"* (KII, MALEGO06, CHIKWAWA).

224. **Capacity development of the Farmers (community members):** Equipping communities with skills will enable them to sustain the benefits of the interventions independently after WFP's transition. While some communities are ready to be self-sufficient, others require further capacity building, particularly those who recently joined TSOLATA-HGSF. Community members articulated that they gained valuable knowledge and skills, such as modern farm practices and techniques and other income-generating skills and techniques, which they apply daily. This has led to improved livelihoods and increased income generation. Community members indicate they have *"benefited from the programme by learning new skills. For example, the school cooks benefitted from the knowledge and skills of preparing food and what type/ ingredients/ composition/ recipe for nutritious meals. Overall, community members think there is increased cooperation and coordination among them"* (IDI, FEMPARENT12, PHALOMBE). In this context, a government official stated that *"What WFP has done is to impart critical skills among a large cross-section of the beneficiaries, so that even if WFP is not there, using the skills they have imparted the communities can sustain the intervention"* (IDI, MALECP06, PHALOMBE).

225. Early and sustained engagement with communities is crucial for fostering ownership and participation. A few of the programme officials reflected that *"In this project, the engagement with the community started too late, that is why most community members are lagging in community participation of the project"* (KII, MALEGOV11, ZOMBA). They also think there is a need to engage with and do more advocacy with the community.

226. Beneficiaries actively participate and express a desire for the programme's continuation. Adjacent communities, inspired by the programme's success, adopt its interventions independently. As community members indicated, *"There is a huge enthusiasm among beneficiaries towards interventions that the WFP does."*

*Adjacent communities outside treatment of the programme areas try to adopt the interventions in their ways by adopting those kinds of technologies" (IDIMALECP07PHALOMBE).*

### **Key findings- Sustainability**

- TSOLATA-HGSF's success in benefiting communities and the district lays a strong foundation for its sustainability. The model has demonstrated success and built community capacity, but continued support from WFP will be necessary to scale the programme nationwide.
- The partnership between WFP, the Ministry of Agriculture, and other stakeholders demonstrates government ownership and support. Given the significant social and economic value realized by all involved parties, this aspect of the programme is likely to continue and sustain.
- Despite notable achievements, climate events have posed challenges, leading to setbacks in food security. Vulnerabilities must be addressed to ensure programme resilience, especially among households headed by women. To achieve lasting impact, the programme must prioritize resilient and climate-smart interventions.
- WFP's approach of involving communities in intervention selection, implementation, and monitoring fosters a sense of ownership critical for long-term success. The communities themselves are deeply invested in the programme, which is a positive sign for sustainability.
- The programme's utilization of existing structures at the district, community, and school levels (such as DNCC, DMECC, and school committees) has facilitated continued implementation and programme ownership. Capacity development of local institutions was a fundamental design principle of the programme. The programme actively invested in capacity building and sensitization of implementing partners to ensure equitable community participation.
- The strategic choice of cooperating partners played a crucial role in identifying, testing, and building the capacities of institutions that can collaborate with communities and the FO (Field Officers). Cooperating partners significantly reduce the Government's role in mentoring and supporting communities. Their expertise in identifying, adopting, and scaling cost-effective interventions ensures the programme's long-term viability.

# 3. Conclusions and recommendations

## 3.1. Conclusions

227. TSOLATA-HGSF demonstrated a strong commitment to gender inclusivity, from design to implementation. Vulnerable districts were strategically selected based on food security and education indicators, addressing Malawi's unique challenges, especially for households headed by women and children.

228. The evaluation highlighted active efforts to ensure gender-inclusive participation through outreach, capacity building, and community engagement. TSOLATA-HGSF aimed to involve learners, parents, and community members equitably. TSOLATA-HGSF's gender-inclusive approach, evidence-based foundation, and impact on enrolment demonstrate its commitment to vulnerable communities. The key conclusion by various thematic areas is summarized below.

### **Holistic development approach, alignment with national goals and coherence with existing frameworks and allied national programme**

229. TSOLATA-HGSF adopted a comprehensive approach to holistic development closely aligned with Malawi's development goals. Addressing nutrition, health, and education contributes significantly to the well-being of learners and communities. TSOLATA-HGSF is well-aligned with Malawi's constitutional rights, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and national strategic plans. It plays a crucial role in improving nutrition and health outcomes among learners. It complements existing initiatives, such as school meal programs, livelihood projects, and gender-focused interventions (e.g., AFIKEPO, UNJP, McGovern-Dole SMP, MAMO II, ACL). This synergy fosters a comprehensive approach to enhancing food security and nutrition in Malawi.

### **Direct impact of TSOLATA-HGSF**

230. TSOLATA-HGSF directly contributed to enhanced learners' nutrition and health through locally sourced school meals. Its approach has led to significant improvements in school enrolment, attendance, and retention rates, as well as boosting the economic status of local communities. The programme has eased the financial burden on poor households, increased family resilience, and allowed parents to invest more in their children's education. Additionally, it has promoted financial prudence and improved the capacity of communities to grow crops, even during dry seasons.

### **Long-term sustainability**

231. TSOLATA-HGSF's focus on building local capacity, supporting the local economy through agricultural resilience, and fostering community ownership will ensure the longevity of school feeding initiatives and long-term sustainability. TSOLATA-HGSF has laid a strong foundation for its sustainability. It has demonstrated success and built community capacity, but continued support from the World Food Programme (WFP) will be necessary to scale the programme nationwide.

232. The approach of involving communities in intervention selection, implementation, and monitoring has fostered a sense of ownership critical for long-term success. The communities themselves are deeply invested in the programme, which is a positive sign for sustainability. TSOLATA-HGSF's approach to capacity development of local institutions and utilization of existing structures at the district, community, and school levels (such as DNCC, DMECC, and school committees) has facilitated continued implementation and programme ownership. The partnership between WFP, the Ministry of Agriculture, and other stakeholders demonstrates government ownership and support. Given the significant social and economic value realized by all involved parties, this aspect of the programme is likely to continue and sustain.

233. Despite notable achievements, climate events have posed challenges, leading to setbacks in food security. Vulnerabilities must be addressed to ensure programme resilience, especially among households headed by women. To achieve lasting impact, TSOLATA-HGSF must prioritize resilient and climate-smart interventions.

234. The strategic choice of cooperating partners played a crucial role in identifying, testing, and building the capacities of institutions that can collaborate with communities and field officers. Cooperating partners significantly reduced the Government's role in mentoring and supporting communities. Their expertise in identifying, adopting, and scaling cost-effective interventions can ensure TSOLATA-HGSF's long-term viability.

235. DEMIS data discrepancies: There are often discrepancies between DEMIS data and school-collected or reported data. These discrepancies significantly impede progressive programme design and monitoring. This highlights the need for better programme management and management information system (MIS) infrastructure for evidence-based decision-making.

### **School meals programme, nutrition, and health outcomes**

236. TSOLATA-HGSF has successfully increased school enrolment, sustained attendance, and improved health and nutrition outcomes, despite challenges such as cyclones, natural calamities, and the pandemic. Outreach efforts have been crucial in encouraging parents to send their children to school, significantly improving enrolment and attendance rates. Providing school meals has further encouraged regular attendance, particularly for students without access to breakfast at home. However, challenges remain, including high absenteeism among girls due to household responsibilities and lack of access to menstrual products. Additionally, while most children received meals regularly, many reported feeling hungry after, indicating that meal portions may be insufficient

### **Empowering smallholder farmers**

237. TSOLATA-HGSF has significantly benefited smallholder farmers by creating stable and alternative markets for their produce and reducing uncertainties related to traditional market fluctuations. Farmers have earned income from selling to schools, which they can reinvest in other activities, while financial management training has empowered them to make better financial decisions. The programme has also provided valuable training in post-harvest management, crop diversification, and modern agricultural practices, enhancing market access, productivity, and earnings. Additionally, establishing farmer cooperatives has improved farmers' quality of life by providing stable markets and better prices. However, challenges like payment delays and climate-related production issues still need to be addressed.

### **Impact on the community**

238. TSOLATA-HGSF has improved knowledge and awareness of hygiene and sanitation, leading to positive behaviour changes among children and parents. Sensitization efforts have effectively encouraged the adoption of these practices within the community. Engagement with SMCs and PTAs had catalytic effects on programme implementation and management. These committees contributed to increasing school enrolments, thereby demonstrating community ownership of the programme.

### **Gender empowerment**

239. TSOLATA-HGSF has focussed on promoting gender parity in school enrolments and beneficiary numbers. Active engagement of key institutions with women in implementing programme interventions further supported gender empowerment. The evaluation, however, revealed that gender disparities persist within the TSOLATA-HGSF districts (Chikwawa and Phalombe), with more boys enrolled and showing greater continuity than girls. Cultural norms and challenges specific to girls, as well as obstacles faced by individuals with disabilities due to inadequate facilities and bullying, require further attention to enhance inclusivity. Further, the programme should develop proper indicators, integrate them into the existing monitoring framework, and create a gender action plan to track progress and provide valuable insights.

### **Disability**

240. While TSOLATA-HGSF made positive efforts to prioritise and support children with disabilities, improvements are needed in infrastructure and specialised resources to create a genuinely inclusive

educational environment. Parents expressed dissatisfaction due to various barriers, including inadequate facilities, inaccessible classrooms for children with disabilities, bullying and insufficient support services such as transportation. Observation visits also revealed a lack of disability-friendly amenities.

### **Impact of WFP training**

241. Trainings provided under TSOLATA-HGSF have significantly enhanced the capacities of programme functionaries and improved the harmonisation of operations among various committees, leading to more effective implementation of the school feeding programme. Training provided to community members, including SMCs, PTAs, food committees, and mother groups, has contributed to the programme's smooth operation and quality assurance. Farmers have also benefited from training in post-harvest management, storage, and crop diversification, which improved market access, productivity, and earnings. However, successive climate disasters have hindered farmers' progress, highlighting the need for additional training on agricultural best practices and disaster preparedness to support continued economic empowerment and self-reliance.

## **3.2. Lessons**

242. HGSF leveraged DNCC as a platform at the district level for planning, coordinating, and supporting the implementation of HGSF activities. At the national level, HGSF supported the Government of Malawi in establishing multi-sectoral partnerships to implement interventions and build capacity for smallholder farmers. To enhance their effectiveness, integrated programmes such as HGSF should foster collaboration and coordination among multi-stakeholders (education, agriculture, nutrition, health, NGOs). This will require key stakeholders' active engagement in designing and implementing interventions. Regular engagement with multiple stakeholders would also allow continuous feedback on ongoing interventions, provide an opportunity to explore complementarities and ensure alignment.

243. The programme has led to significant improvement in (i) dietary diversity among target beneficiaries within intervention schools, (ii) levels of awareness on nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation practices, and (ii) school enrolment, attendance, and student retention rates. Concerted efforts of TSOLATA-HGSF to enhance community participation (specifically women) within the implementation modalities (FOs, SMCs, PTAs, food committees, mother groups) can be considered as one of the factors that contributed to these achievements. It is, therefore, prudent that communities are engaged during planning and decision-making processes as it will create ownership, contribute to achieving desired outputs, and ensure the sustainability of interventions.

244. The evaluation highlights the need for rigorous monitoring of interventions. This, in turn, will improve the programme's efficiency and effectiveness. At the same time, it provides programme managers with evidence for delivering sustainable impact.

245. Despite notable achievements of HGSF, climate events have posed challenges, leading to setbacks in food security and exacerbating vulnerabilities, particularly among households headed by women. For countries like Malawi that are prone to multiple climate-related shocks, it is imperative that programmes focus on integrating shock sensitivity with the social protection system. Whilst doing that, such programmes should bring to the fore a strong linkage between climate change and social protection and demonstrate approaches that can leverage social protection to respond to climate change. Further, strengthening disaster preparedness plans, adaptation of pro-climate strategies and new technologies, capacity development of staff on climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, and community education are crucial interventions that need to be included for enhancing resilience in dealing with extreme weather events.

### 3.3. Recommendations

246. This section provides recommendations based on the findings of the evaluation (rationale) and proposed actions required to implement the recommendations. The recommendations also articulate stakeholders' views (on the way forward). The recommendations are mapped with the primary user audience(s) responsible for undertaking the proposed actions within the specified time frame and based on the priority accorded. The recommendations presented below are based on the evaluator's assessment of the importance and urgency of actions considering the conclusions presented in the previous section. A mapping table for the findings, conclusions, and recommendations is included in Annex VII of Volume II of the report.

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Recommendation grouping (3 options): By type By theme Short/medium/long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities (if applicable)	Priority: High/medium	By When
1	Recommendation 1: Support the Government of Malawi in creating an enabling learning environment for children with disabilities.	Parents have expressed that the school lacks support for children with disabilities. They also indicated lack of specialised teaching or assistance for children with disabilities, inadequate support services, and facilities for children with disabilities within the school are significant reasons for their child not attending school.	<b>Strategic</b>  Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	High	January 2025
1.1	Sub Recommendation 1.1  WFP (in collaboration with partners such as UNICEF) should consider sensitising and building the capacities of teachers and Ministry of Education representatives so that they can adapt school curricula for individualised teaching and devise learning approaches for children with disabilities. Further, WFP should train teachers and staff to understand these students' needs and provide the necessary		<b>Strategic</b>  Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	High	January 2025



#	Recommendation	Rationale	Recommendation grouping (3 options): By type By theme Short/medium/long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities (if applicable)	Priority: High/medium	By When
	support to accommodate them.						
1.2	Sub Recommendation 1.2 WFP should support the Government of Malawi in standardising the design and construction of disabled-friendly school facilities (infrastructure).		<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	WFP CO	Medium	June 2025
2	Recommendation 2: With a focus on improving the quality of education, WFP, in collaboration with partner organisations such as UNICEF, should provide technical assistance to the Government of Malawi in facilitating digital learning.	The evidence indicates increased enrolment and higher attendance rates. The unintended implication is that the teacher-to-student ratio (1:60) is now skewed and not conducive to learning.	<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	WFP CO, UNICEF	High	January 2025
2.1	Sub Recommendation 2.1 WFP should create a digital library that hosts updated content for primary classes and can be accessed by both students and teachers	The teachers also indicated that the pedagogical methods and tools used to engage with the students are dated and need to be modernised to retain the students' attention. The teachers	<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	WFP CO, UNICEF	High	January 2025

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Recommendation grouping (3 options): By type By theme Short/medium/long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities (if applicable)	Priority: High/medium	By When
2.2	Sub Recommendation 2.2 WFP should create a platform for online classes.	also indicated the need and their intent to upskill.	<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	WFP CO, UNICEF	High	January 2025
2.3	Sub Recommendation 2.3 WFP should equip teachers with the competencies to become digitally competent and exploit digital technologies' potential to enhance teaching and learning.		<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	WFP CO, UNICEF	High	January 2025
3	Recommendation 3: Strengthen programme monitoring through MIS.	The programme demonstrates gender parity in beneficiary numbers and school enrolment while actively engaging smallholder farmers, particularly women, to enhance economic and social empowerment. Despite progress, gender disparities and cultural norms persist, hindering inclusivity.	<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	High	January 2025
3.1	Sub Recommendation 3.1 WFP should invest in designing and implementing a comprehensive gender-disaggregated M&E Framework (indicators) to monitor and track the programme's impact and ensure equitable outcomes.  (Integrate GEWE and protection indicators into a gender action plan for TSOLATA-HGSF and conduct		<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	High	January 2025

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Recommendation grouping (3 options): By type By theme Short/medium/long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities (if applicable)	Priority: High/medium	By When
	yearly gender and protection assessments)						
3.2	Sub Recommendation 3.2 WFP should support the Government of Malawi in strengthening monitoring (through MIS) across all relevant levels (school, district, and EMIS levels). It should also support digitising templates for home-grown school feeding management processes, including budgeting, financial management, food procurement, food storage, and record-keeping procedures.	Farmers have articulated payment delays that create cash flow/ expense management issues. Funds are requisitioned and transferred manually, lacking an efficient online mechanism, leading to time-consuming procedures. Inefficient indenting and demand forecasting have led to frequent stockouts and delayed procurement.	<b>Operational</b> Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	High	January 2025
4	Recommendation 4: WFP should integrate TSOLATA-HGSF with other climate resilience programmes, particularly those aimed at addressing climate-induced vulnerabilities.  The combined investments should focus on asset creation, increased food systems resilience, strengthening education, and	Food insecurity is rising in programme areas. Emergency coping strategies are prevalent among households. Moderate hunger affects nearly two-thirds of households. Interdistrict trends show increased reliance on negative coping strategies. This indicated the need to explore the convergence of various programs and strategies	<b>Strategic</b> Medium to Long Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	Medium	June 2025

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Recommendation grouping (3 options): By type By theme Short/medium/ long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities (if applicable)	Priority: High/medium	By When
	health and nutrition services. This will promote livelihoods, empower women and marginalised groups, and improve coping mechanisms for climate-induced vulnerabilities.	for community welfare.					
5	Recommendation 5: Integrate community-driven alternate learning approaches with support from partners such as UNICEF (for out-of-school children, especially girls) within HGSE.	The findings reveal that enrolment /retention of children (especially girl child) in schools is dependent on the family's socioeconomic situation.	<b>Strategic</b> Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi, UNICEF	High	March 2025
5.1	Sub Recommendation 5.1 WFP should conduct awareness campaigns in collaboration with community leaders, emphasising the benefits of alternative learning programmes and encouraging the enrolment of out-of-school children.		<b>Strategic</b> Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi, UNICEF	High	March 2025
5.2	Sub Recommendation 5.2 WFP should organise training sessions for parents to familiarise them with the alternative learning approaches		<b>Strategic</b> Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi, UNICEF	High	March 2025

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Recommendation grouping (3 options): By type By theme Short/medium/ long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities (if applicable)	Priority: High/medium	By When
6	Recommendation 6: WFP should strengthen the capacities of Ministry of Education representatives (at the national level) in operationalising and coordinating activities under the HGSF.	The capacity strengthening interventions for district level officials, teachers, members food committee etc has greatly facilitated operationalization of HGSF in project districts. The discussions with representative Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi clearly highlights that they require similar technical support at the national level for designing and operationalizing HGSF in other districts (Scaling HGSF).	<b>Operational</b>  Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi	High	March 2025
7	Recommendation 7: TSOLATA-HGSF should strengthen its existing linkages with formal financial institutions to design different financing instruments/mechanisms and engagement models to meet the working capital requirements of SHFs/FOs. Addressing delayed payments from schools is crucial to alleviating cash flow issues and ensuring farmers can meet their basic needs and manage	Smallholder farmers relying on informal sources to borrow at high interest rates. Higher interest rates and significant cash flow issues exacerbated by delays in payments requires strengthening of linkages with formal financial institutions for affordable finance. Payment delays have hindered farmers' ability to meet their basic needs, support their children's education, and service loans,	<b>Strategic</b>  Short to Medium Term	WFP CO	Ministry of Finance & Private sector lending institutions	High	March 2025

#	Recommendation	Rationale	Recommendation grouping (3 options): By type By theme Short/medium/ long-term	Responsibility (one lead office/entity)	Other contributing entities (if applicable)	Priority: High/medium	By When
	agricultural inputs effectively.	including the delayed purchase of argi-inputs for the next production cycle.					

# Acronyms

<b>ACL</b>	Asset creation and livelihood
<b>ACLAN</b>	Area Community Leaders Action for Nutrition
<b>AEDC</b>	Agriculture Extension Development Coordinators
<b>AEDO</b>	Agriculture Extension Development Officers
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>ANCC</b>	Area Nutrition Coordination Committee
<b>BCI</b>	Biodiversity Conservation Initiative
<b>CAPI</b>	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
<b>CARI</b>	Consolidated Approach for Reporting on Food Insecurity
<b>CBA</b>	Cost Benefit Analysis
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CEPA</b>	Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy
<b>CFIR</b>	Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research
<b>CFM</b>	Complaint Feedback Response Mechanism
<b>CO</b>	Country office
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease
<b>CP</b>	Cooperating partner
<b>CSB+</b>	Corn-Soya Blend Plus
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSP</b>	Country Strategic Plan
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DAES</b>	Department of Agriculture and Extension Services
<b>DDS</b>	Dietary Diversity Score
<b>DE</b>	Decentralized evaluation
<b>DEC</b>	District Executive Committee
<b>DEMIS</b>	District Education Management Information System
<b>DEQAS</b>	Decentralized evaluation quality assurance system
<b>DMECC</b>	District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordination Committee
<b>DNCC</b>	District Nutrition Coordination Committee
<b>DNHA</b>	Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS
<b>EAM</b>	Evangelical Association of Malawi
<b>EC</b>	Evaluation committee
<b>ECDI</b>	Early Childhood Development Index
<b>EM</b>	Evaluation manager
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>EPA</b>	Extension Planning Area
<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation question
<b>ER</b>	Evaluation report
<b>ERG</b>	Evaluation reference group
<b>ET</b>	Evaluation team
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUR</b>	Euros

<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FCS</b>	Food Consumption Score
<b>FES</b>	Food Expenditure Share
<b>FFA</b>	Food Assistance for Assets
<b>FGD</b>	Focus group discussion
<b>FO</b>	Farmer organizations
<b>FSI</b>	Food Security Index
<b>FY</b>	Financial year
<b>GBV</b>	Gender based violence
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender equality and the empowerment of women
<b>GII</b>	Gender Inequality Index
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
<b>GoM</b>	Government of Malawi
<b>HGSF</b>	Home-grown school feeding
<b>HGSFP</b>	Home-grown school feeding programme
<b>HHS</b>	Household Hunger Scale
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IDI</b>	In-depth interview
<b>IEC</b>	Information, education and communication
<b>IFA</b>	Iron-Folic Acid
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>IPC</b>	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
<b>IR</b>	Inception report
<b>JPGE</b>	Joint Programme on Girls Education
<b>KAP</b>	Knowledge, attitudes, and practices
<b>KII</b>	Key informant interview
<b>LCSI</b>	Livelihood Coping Strategy Index
<b>MAMO II</b>	Climate resilience and rural livelihood programme in Malawi -Mozambique (2021-2025)
<b>MGD</b>	McGovern-Dole
<b>MIS</b>	Management information system
<b>MNGDS</b>	Malawi National Growth and Development Strategy
<b>MNSSP</b>	Malawi National Social Support Programme
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MoU</b>	Memoranda of understanding
<b>MRE</b>	Monitoring, review, and evaluation
<b>MTE</b>	Monitoring, tracking, and evaluation
<b>MVAC</b>	Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee
<b>NAIP</b>	National Agricultural Investment Plan
<b>ND-GAIN</b>	Notre Dame – Global Adaptation Initiative
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NER</b>	Net Enrolment Rate
<b>NESIP</b>	National Education Sector Investment Plan
<b>NESP</b>	National Education Sector Plan
<b>NMNP</b>	National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy
<b>NNCC</b>	National Nutrition Coordinating Committee



<b>NNIS</b>	National Nutrition Information System
<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>NRMC</b>	NR Management Consultants India Pvt Ltd, A subsidiary of Intellectap Advisory Services
<b>NSA</b>	Nutrition sensitive agriculture
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>OEV</b>	Office of Evaluation
<b>ORD</b>	Office of Research and Development
<b>PDA</b>	Programme Development Agents
<b>PHQA</b>	Post hoc quality assessment
<b>PICS</b>	Purdue improved crop storage
<b>POP</b>	Point of progress
<b>PPI</b>	Poverty Probability Index
<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teacher Associations
<b>RB</b>	Regional Bureau
<b>RBJ</b>	WFP Regional Bureau for Southern Africa
<b>RCM</b>	Red Cross Malawi
<b>rCSI</b>	Reduced Coping Strategies Index
<b>REO</b>	Regional evaluation officer
<b>REU</b>	Regional Evaluation Unit
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SAMS</b>	Smallholder Agricultural Market Support
<b>SBCC</b>	Social and behaviour change communication
<b>SBN</b>	Sun Business Network
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SHF</b>	Smallholder farmer
<b>SHN</b>	School Health and Nutrition
<b>SMC</b>	School Management Committee
<b>SMP</b>	School Meals Programme
<b>SO</b>	Strategic Objective
<b>SOP</b>	Standard operating procedure
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
<b>SRS</b>	Simple Random Sampling
<b>SUN</b>	Scaling Up Nutrition
<b>THR</b>	Take home ration
<b>TL</b>	Team leader
<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>TSOLATA</b>	Tsogolo la Thanzi
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluations Group
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UNJP</b>	United Nations Joint Programme

<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>USDA</b>	United States Department of Agriculture
<b>VNCC</b>	Village Nutrition Coordination Committee
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>YONECO</b>	Youth Net and Counselling

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