



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Evaluation of the project "Afikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi (Pillars 1 and 4)"



**Project Evaluation Series
42/2024**

**Evaluation of the project
“Afikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi
(Pillars 1 and 4)”**

Project code: UNJP/MLW/071/EC

Required citation:

FAO. 2024. *Evaluation of the project "Afikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi (Pillars 1 and 4)" – Project code UNJP/MLW/071/EC*. Project Evaluation Series, No. 42/2024. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3032en>

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

© FAO, 2024



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: "This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original [Language] edition shall be the authoritative edition."

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules and any arbitration will be conducted in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

Third-party materials. Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

Sales, rights and licensing. FAO information products are available on the FAO website (www.fao.org/publications) and can be purchased through publications-sales@fao.org. Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request. Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: copyright@fao.org.

Abstract

This report summarizes the final evaluation of the project “Afikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi”. Afikepo, a six and a half-year nutrition-sensitive agriculture project funded by the European Union and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), aimed to develop children's full potential through nutrition and agriculture interventions. This final evaluation serves a dual purpose of accountability and learning. It evaluates the project's results, examining their relevance to target beneficiaries, national needs and priorities. Furthermore, it identifies valuable lessons pertinent to potential scaling, replication or follow-up initiatives in Malawi that may adopt similar approaches and project design elements. The evaluation included analysis of the project's theory of change (TOC), a desk review, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The primary users of this evaluation are: the European Union’s European Development Fund (EDF), FAO and UNICEF project management teams, the Ministry of Agriculture Departments including the Department of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES), the Ministry of Health’s Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS, the Ministry of Local Government, Unity, and Culture through the district councils. The evaluation covered the entire implementation period of the project, from July 2017 to December 2023 and specifically focused on two pillars: agriculture for nutrition security and improved maternal, infant and young child feeding and care practices; and governance, human capacity building, research, monitoring and evaluation and fortification jointly implemented by FAO and UNICEF. The Afikepo project strongly aligns with Malawi's national priorities on food security, nutrition and resilience building. Through interventions like integrated household farming and the promotion of nutrition-sensitive agriculture, Afikepo addresses critical challenges being faced by rural communities, contributing directly to national goals of improving food security and reducing malnutrition. This highlights the project's alignment with Malawi's national priorities in food security, agriculture development and resilience building. Afikepo effectively promoted knowledge of animal source foods, increased livestock ownership and biofortified crop production. The project successfully built capacity at grassroots and household levels, enhancing community involvement in food production and financial security. Challenges such as regional variations in food consumption, livestock procurement issues, limited extension services and obstacles to integrated homestead farming were identified. Sustainability remains challenged by the need for sustained funding, volunteer motivation and timely incentives. The report recommends developing a clear exit strategy, enhancing gender-sensitive interventions, addressing food consumption challenges, improving hygiene initiatives and optimizing project management.

Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements	vi
Abbreviations	vii
Executive summary.....	viii
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Purpose of the evaluation	1
1.2 Intended users	1
1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation.....	1
1.4 Methodology.....	2
1.5 Limitations	4
1.6 Structure of the report.....	4
2. Background and context of the project.....	5
2.1 Description of the project	5
2.2 Theory of change	6
3. Findings.....	7
3.1 Relevance.....	7
3.2 Effectiveness	10
3.3 Efficiency	15
3.4 Sustainability	18
3.5 Cross-cutting issues.....	20
3.6 Lessons learned	22
4. Conclusions and recommendations.....	25
4.1 Conclusions	25
4.2 Recommendations	26
Bibliography	29
Appendix 1. People interviewed.....	31
Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix	35
Appendix 3. Afikepo theory of change.....	43
Appendix 4. Afikepo Results Framework	44
Appendix 5. Project progress at output level against agreed upon end-of-project targets	54
Appendix 6. Summary of Afikepo outcome and output indicators at endline	65

Table and figure

Table 1. Key evaluation questions	2
Figure 1. Site mapping	3

Acknowledgements

The FAO Office of Evaluation would like to thank all those who contributed to this evaluation. The evaluation was conducted by four independent consultants – Sithabiso Gandure (team leader), Tendai Museka Saidi (team member), McDonald Chabwera (team member) and Lucky Mfungwe (team member), – with overall guidance and support from Renate Roels (FAO Office of Evaluation, evaluation specialist).

The Evaluation Team would like to thank the following FAO Malawi Country Office personnel: Samuel Kirichu and Misheck Fombe (monitoring and evaluation) for facilitating the evaluation process, providing the necessary documentation for data collection and overall logistics arrangements. Appreciation also goes to Patrick Kombe, the Afikepo FAO National Coordinator and the FAO field personnel for facilitating meetings with key stakeholders as well as acting as key informants for this evaluation.

The Evaluation Team would also like to thank the national partners in the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS, UNICEF, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the European Union for their valuable input into the findings of the evaluation. Finally, the Evaluation Team would like to thank the District and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees, care groups and men and women at the village levels for their inputs into the evaluation.

Abbreviations

CBTT	Community-based Behaviour Tracking Tool
DAES	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
DNHA	Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
KAP	knowledge, attitudes and practice
KULIMA	Kutukula Ulimi m'Malawi project
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
NNIS	national nutrition information system
TOC	theory of change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

Executive summary

Introduction

1. This report presents the final evaluation of the project “Afiikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi”. Afiikepo, a Chichewa word meaning “let them (children) develop to their full potential” was a six and a half-year nutrition-sensitive agriculture project funded by the European Union and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with the Government of Malawi - through the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES) and the Ministry of Health, Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA).
2. This final evaluation covered Afiikepo Pillars 1 and 4 jointly implemented by FAO and UNICEF.¹ Hence, the evaluation assessed the two strategic objectives/outcomes drawn from these two Pillars. These included: i) to increase and diversify dietary intake of safe and nutritious foods to achieve optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts; and ii) to strengthen multisectoral governance of nutrition contributing to both national and district development planning and monitoring, as well as informing national level policies.
3. The evaluation aimed to answer six main questions:
 - i. EQ 1. To what extent are the Afiikepo project objectives relevant to the needs and priorities of the targeted population and stakeholders?
 - ii. EQ 2. To what extent were the expected Afiikepo project results achieved?
 - iii. EQ 3. How efficient was FAO at delivering the Afiikepo project in terms of expenditure and timeliness?
 - iv. EQ 4. Will the results achieved continue beyond the life of the Afiikepo project?
 - v. EQ 5. To what extent has the Afiikepo project incorporated gender and social inclusion considerations, and environment and social safeguards in design and implementation?
 - vi. EQ 6. What are the key lessons generated by Afiikepo project?
4. The evaluation generated evidence from three main sources: an analysis of the project’s theory of change (TOC); a desk review of project-generated literature and reports; focus group discussion with beneficiaries and key informant interviews with stakeholders involved in project implementation.

Main findings

Relevance

5. The Afiikepo project strongly aligns with Malawi's national priorities on food security, nutrition and resilience building. Through interventions like integrated household farming and the promotion of nutrition-sensitive agriculture, Afiikepo addresses critical challenges facing rural communities, contributing directly to national goals of improving food security and reducing malnutrition.

¹ Afiikepo pillars included: i) agriculture for nutrition security and improved maternal, infant and young child feeding and care practices; ii) primary health care, therapeutic care, support and treatment; iii) integration of behavioural change and communication for optimal maternal and young child feeding and care (knowledge, attitudes and practices) among communities, learners, professional and frontline workers through nutrition education; and iv) governance, human capacity building, research, monitoring and evaluation and fortification.

6. The Afikepo project addressed beneficiary needs, focusing on food security, nutrition and women's economic empowerment. However, some community concerns were identified as well as cultural misalignment of interventions.
7. The Afikepo project design was informed by previous studies and stakeholder consultations. Positive aspects include its adoption of evidence-based practices, such as the care group model, and its ability to adapt to external challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, challenges arose from the split into two projects (Afikepo and Kutukula Ulimi m'Malawi project [KULIMA]), leading to coordination issues initially.

Effectiveness

8. The project had some improvements in dietary diversity among infants and young children. However, the component of livestock distributions achieved uneven levels of success across districts, with some of the animals dying soon after distribution, and the project failed to register significant improvements in the consumption of animal source foods by adolescent girls. Efforts to promote biofortified foods and integrated homestead farming showed some progress, yet further attention would have been needed to meet targets and enhance household nutrition and resilience effectively.
9. Afikepo achieved commendable success in capacity building, especially in the production and utilization of improved crop varieties among frontline workers, household training in the production and utilization of the same and finally the provision of nutrition extension services and economic empowerment. However, noticeable gaps exist in leadership capacity building at the community level.
10. The project achieved significant success in training field level workers, community-based facilitators and care group leaders in appropriate technologies for food utilization, processing and hygiene. Additionally, households demonstrated high levels of awareness and compliance with sanitation and hygiene practices, but financial constraints are affecting access to sanitation facilities.
11. The Afikepo project strengthened district level capacity to monitor, report and make data-informed decisions through the national nutrition information system (NNIS). However, NNIS reporting rates remained low with evidence of poor ownership to drive project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) initiatives.
12. The Community-based Behaviour Tracking Tool (CBTT) system received positive reception by the community, strengthening community ownership of the project.

Efficiency

13. The Afikepo project demonstrated a commitment to enhancing community well-being through substantial resource allocation for procurement and distribution of essential items. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the quality of supplied products, facilitated by stringent FAO procurement processes. However, inefficiencies in procurement and supply distribution, delayed funding disbursements and inadequate needs assessment impacted effectiveness and outcomes.

Sustainability

14. The Afikepo project showed strong prospects for sustainability through government alignment and community ownership. However, challenges in incentive distribution and funding reliance are threats to sustainability. The project utilized national, districts and community platforms to achieve high visibility which have high prospects of being sustained.

Gender, environment and social safeguards (cross-cutting issues)

15. The project design effectively integrated gender considerations, aligning with FAO policies on gender equality. However, certain aspects of the design led to a disproportionate emphasis on empowering women, potentially marginalizing men's involvement.
16. The Afikepo project was an environmentally low risk project that incorporated land resource management and climate-smart agriculture practices in its programming.

Lessons learned

17. Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee and the Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee ensuring the sustainability of care groups beyond project support is crucial for sustaining behavioural change initiatives. While initial support is beneficial, over-reliance on external inputs hinders sustainability. Community contributions and institutionalization are key for sustainability of interventions.
18. The comprehensive implementation of a contextualized care groups model and nutrition-sensitive agriculture curriculum, while maintaining checks and balances on quality, has proven to be instrumental in facilitating the adoption of improved dietary practices and interventions within the project.
19. In a project with significant resource allocation and multiple stakeholders involved at various levels, time efficiency is critical for procurement and logistical arrangements to ensure smooth implementation. Delays in procurement and delivery of agricultural inputs and cooking demonstration's items/equipment, often stemming from FAO processes, can significantly impact the effectiveness of projects like Afikepo.

Conclusions and recommendations

20. The Afikepo project effectively aligns with Malawi's priorities, focusing on nutrition interventions that enhance food security and resilience. It has successfully promoted knowledge of nutritious foods, improved and implemented biofortified crop production. To sustain its outcomes, addressing implementation challenges and securing ongoing funding are essential. The nutrition programme under the greening and growing initiative funded under the Multi-Donor Trust Fund in the ten Afikepo districts, is expected to provide a sustainability pathway for Afikepo interventions. The report provides the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1. Future project designs should develop an exit strategy with a clear and sustainable funding strategy to support post-project Afikepo interventions. They should prioritize continuous dialogue with stakeholders at all levels to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of project interventions and enhance gender-sensitive interventions that actively engage men in project activities.

Recommendation 2. Develop and implement targeted interventions addressing challenges in achieving optimal consumption and sustainability of animal source foods, livestock ownership and biofortified crop

production, while prioritizing community education and empowerment for long-term sustainability and resilience.

Recommendation 3. Given the incomplete training of cluster leaders and care group leaders due to the large numbers of people to be trained against the number of scheduled trainings, prioritize and expedite the training process for key community stakeholders.

Recommendation 4. Enhance community-led hygiene initiatives to promote consistent handwashing practices and improve access to affordable soap and durable sanitation facilities, prioritizing vulnerable households and leveraging existing community structures.

Recommendation 5. Optimize project management and implementation practices by strengthening coordination mechanisms with stakeholders and improving efficiency of FAO procurement processes and funding disbursement.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

1. This final evaluation of the project "Afikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi" serves a dual purpose of accountability and learning. It evaluates the project's results, examining their relevance to target beneficiaries, national needs and priorities. Furthermore, it identifies valuable lessons pertinent to potential scaling, replication or follow-up initiatives in Malawi that may adopt similar approaches and project design elements.

1.2 Intended users

2. The primary users of this evaluation are: the European Union's European Development Fund (EDF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) project management teams, the Ministry of Agriculture departments including the Department of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES, the Ministry of Health's Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA), the Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture through the district councils. Secondary users include: i) project developers and implementers such as the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI); and ii) other donors, organizations and institutions interested in supporting or implementing similar projects.

1.3 Scope and objectives of the evaluation

3. The evaluation covered the entire implementation period of the project, from July 2017 to December 2023 that was informed by the holistic 'four pillars approach' adopted by the National Nutrition Committee in July 2015, namely: i) agriculture for nutrition security and improved maternal, infant and young child feeding and care practices; ii) primary health care, therapeutic care, support and treatment; iii) integration of behavioural change and communication for optimal maternal and young child feeding and care (knowledge, attitudes and practices) among communities, learners, professional and frontline workers through nutrition education; and iv) governance, human capacity building, research, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and fortification.
4. FAO and UNICEF were jointly implementing Pillars 1 and 4. UNICEF was the social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) technical lead, which also included supporting with community development and strengthening the adolescent component. Other implementing partners were also engaged through subcontracting within the time frame of the project to assist with the implementation of different components of the project and these included Harvest Plus (which assisted with strengthening access to biofortified foods) and the University of Malawi (which supported with strengthening monitoring). Hence, the evaluation assessed the two strategic objectives/outcomes drawn from these two pillars and their respective outputs:
 - i. Strategic Objective 1: To increase and diversify dietary intake of safe and nutritious foods to achieve optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts.
 - Output 1.1; Improved availability and accessibility of affordable, adequate, diversified and nutritious foods for all seasons for the target groups.

- Output 1.2: Increased utilization of adequate, diversified, safe and nutritious foods of the Malawi six food groups for the target groups taking account of seasonality, cultural acceptability and preferences.
- ii. Strategic Objective 2: To strengthen multisectoral governance of nutrition contributing both to national and district development planning and monitoring as well as informing national level policies.
 - Output 2.1: An effective food and nutrition security information system established at national and district levels, which complements other existing information systems and contributes to development planning and monitoring mechanisms.
- 5. Nonetheless, the evaluation also considers achievements by other implementation partners where applicable. The evaluation looked at the findings and conclusions of the mid-term review (MTR) conducted by the European Union in 2021 by assessing the extent to which the recommendations were implemented. The evaluation also looks at factors related to the project's enabling environment that were likely to influence project implementation, the achievement of results, as well as their sustainability.
- 6. The evaluation assesses the overall project performance in terms of the evaluation criteria and questions reflected in Table 1. Appendix 2 contains the evaluation matrix that details the evaluation questions and subquestions and expands and clarifies upon the corresponding indicators, relevant sources of evidence and data collection tools.

Table 1. Key evaluation questions

Topic	Evaluation question
Relevance	EQ 1. To what extent are the Afiikepo project objectives relevant to the needs and priorities of the targeted population and stakeholders?
Effectiveness	EQ 2. To what extent were the expected Afiikepo project results achieved?
Efficiency	EQ 3. How efficient was FAO at delivering the Afiikepo project in terms of expenditure and timeliness?
Sustainability	EQ 4. Will the results achieved continue beyond the life of the Afiikepo project?
Gender, environment and social safeguards (crosscutting issues)	EQ 5. To what extent has the Afiikepo project incorporated gender and social inclusion considerations, and environment and social safeguards in design and implementation?
Lessons	EQ 6. What are the key lessons generated by Afiikepo project?

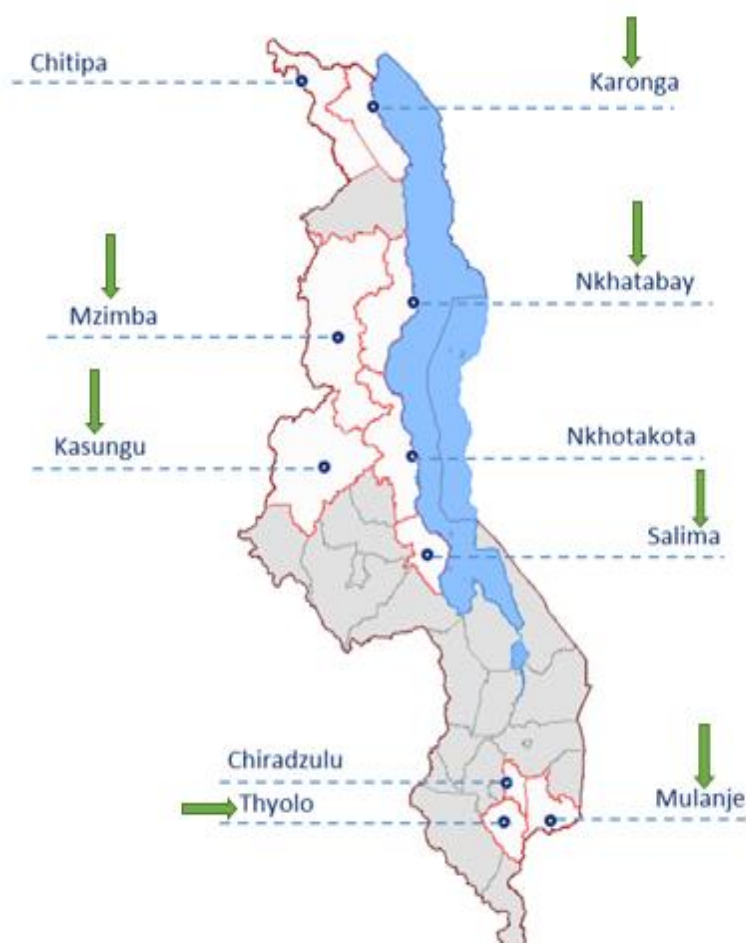
Source: Elaborated by the Evaluation Team.

1.4 Methodology

- 7. The evaluation followed a theory-based approach with an emphasis on the results chain of the project. The theory-based approach allowed the Evaluation Team to test the causal linkages of the Afiikepo project theory of change (TOC) (see section 2.2). The evaluation adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards (UNEG, 2023) and was in line with the FAO Office of Evaluation Manual and methodological guidelines and practices (FAO, 2019).
- 8. A mixed-methods approach comprising quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques was used. A gender lens was systematically applied to all evaluation data collection tools and questions.

9. The evaluation relied on purposive sampling strategies for the selection of districts to visit during the data collection mission. The sites visited by the Evaluation Team are shown in Figure 1. Seven out of ten districts were visited: Northern region (Karonga, Mzimba, Nkhatabay); Central region (Salima, Kasungu) and Southern region (Mulanje, Thyolo). With guidance from FAO project personnel, the following factors guided the site selection:
- representativeness of project components;
 - geographic dispersion so that regional representation would be ensured;
 - logistical and other qualitative factors, such as easy access within the time constraints.

Figure 1. Site mapping



Source: FAO. n.d. *Malawi Country Office monitoring report*. Lilangwe. Refer to the disclaimer on copyright page for the names and boundaries used in this map.

1.4.1 Data collection methods

10. Document review: As an entry point, the Evaluation Team conducted an in-depth review of project documents sourced from the project personnel and partners. The documents that were reviewed included, among others, the project design document, Afikepo project technical and financial reports, the MTR, the knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) reports, TOC and national key policy documents on agriculture development and food and nutrition security.
11. Key informant interviews (KII): KIIs using semi-structured questions formed a core component of data collection for this evaluation and were the main tool that informed the analysis. They offered a critical vantage point in exploring the institutional perspectives on the performance of the

Afikepo project. The KII list was compiled in consultation with FAO project personnel, also taking into consideration document review. The list of stakeholders consulted is in Appendix 1.

12. Focus group discussions (FGDs): FGDs were conducted with care groups, promoters and Village and Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees, District Coordination Committees and, in some districts, beneficiary mothers that benefited through the Afikepo project.

1.4.2 Data analysis

13. A qualitative data analysis methodology was used. As a first step, data was transcribed and notes compiled. As a second step, using a thematic framework analysis informed by the evaluation matrix questions, data was sorted and charted. Finally, emerging themes were identified, with relationships between themes being used to interpret the research findings.
14. The evaluation triangulated different sources of information to verify and substantiate judgements and assessments and to ensure a correct interpretation of the results. It also supported the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. Validation of the evaluation findings was integrated during the evaluation process through dialogue with FAO project personnel, with findings tested, nuanced and discussed with them. The remote debriefing and presentation of findings further allowed for triangulation and validation of findings.

1.5 Limitations

15. The evaluation encountered several limitations. First, the end line project evaluation was conducted between December 2023 and March 2024, when the final project technical and financial reports were not yet accessible to the Evaluation Team. Reports available were that from year one of the project (2017), to year five (June 2022). This compromised the depth of analysis that the evaluators could make and the quality of conclusions on the effectiveness and efficiency of research findings.
16. Second, in terms of scope, the evaluation was conducted concurrently with the evaluation of the Kutukula Ulimi m'Malawi project (KULIMA) within the same time frame, by the same Evaluation Team. Consequently, data collection and consultations were combined, which compromised the depth of questioning for each project. Due to donor requirements for separate reporting, extra time was needed to conduct separate results analyses, two separate debriefings and prepare two separate evaluation reports.
17. Third, district consultations with coordination committees extended longer than anticipated, averaging around two hours per session because questions were being posed for both KULIMA and Afikepo projects. This prolonged duration increased the risk of respondent fatigue, potentially impacting the quality of responses provided.
18. To mitigate these limitations, where possible the Evaluation Team conducted key informant interviews with FAO personnel and partners. Interviews for KULIMA and Afikepo were held separately, as different project focal points exist.

1.6 Structure of the report

19. Following this introduction, section 2 presents the project's background, context and TOC. Section 3 presents the main findings for each evaluation question. Conclusions and recommendations follow in section 4. The Appendices include a list of people interviewed, the evaluation matrix, the TOC figure and the project's results matrix.

2. Background and context of the project

2.1 Description of the project

20. Afikepo, a Chichewa word meaning, “let them (children) develop to their full potential” was a six and a half year nutrition-sensitive agriculture¹ project funded by the European Union and implemented by FAO and UNICEF in collaboration with the Government of Malawi – through DAES and DNHA.
21. While FAO and UNICEF provided technical assistance and supported with project implementation, the Ministry of Health’s DNHA was responsible for the overall Afikepo nutrition project implementation and coordination at both the national and district level through the leadership of Principle Nutrition HIV & AIDS Officers. The Ministry of Agriculture, DAES was responsible for overseeing capacity building activities among extension workers, the production of resource/information, education and communication (IEC) materials, knowledge, management and learning.
22. The Afikepo project was a multisectoral project of EUR 41 000 000 (USD 45 337 923) that integrated agriculture, health and nutrition actions to address food and nutrition insecurity in line with the priorities and commitments of the Government of Malawi, the European Union and other external development partners (EDPs). The project was conceived originally as a single intervention² with the KULIMA project and therefore, the projects pursued closely related objectives in identical target areas. Afikepo was implemented in ten districts covering 11 District Nutrition Coordinating Committees, namely Chitipa, Karonga, Mzimba South and North, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota, Salima, Kasungu, Mulanje, Chiradzulu and Thyolo. the Afikepo project was designed to complement the KULIMA project by focusing on improving food production and utilization, with a specific emphasis on the nutritional adequacy of diet, with important related aspects of food preparation methods, hygiene, water and sanitation.
23. Underpinned by a four-pillar approach adopted by the National Nutrition Committee in July 2015, FAO and UNICEF jointly implemented Pillar 1 (Agriculture for nutrition security and improved maternal, infant and young child feeding and care practices) and Pillar 4 (Governance, human capacity building, research, monitoring and evaluation and fortification)) translated to strategic objectives/outcomes 1 “Increase and diversify dietary intake of safe and nutritious foods to achieve optimal nutrition for women of child bearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts”, and 2 “To strengthen multi-sectorial governance of nutrition contributing both to national and district development planning and monitoring as well as informing national level policies”, respectively, and implemented through three outputs: 1.1 – Improved availability and accessibility of affordable, adequate, diversified and nutritious foods for all seasons for the target groups; 1.2 – Increased utilization of adequate, diversified, safe and nutritious foods of the Malawi six food groups for the target groups taking account of seasonality, cultural acceptability and preferences; and 2.1 – An effective food and nutrition security information system established at national and district levels, which complements other existing

¹ Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is a food-based approach to agricultural development that puts nutritionally rich foods, dietary diversity and food fortification at the heart of overcoming malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. This approach stresses the multiple benefits derived from enjoying a variety of foods, recognizing the nutritional value of food for good nutrition, and the importance and social significance of the food and agricultural sector for supporting rural livelihoods. The overall objective of nutrition-sensitive agriculture is to make the global food system better equipped to produce good nutritional outcomes (FAO, 2014)

² See more on the split of the two programmes under Finding 3 and Finding 9.

information systems and contributes to development planning and monitoring mechanisms. This is illustrated in the project Results Framework in Appendix 4.

24. The Afikepo project adopted a community-based participatory Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture approach combined with nutrition education and counselling to reach beneficiaries and focused on community empowerment, capacity building of government functionaries, intensive skill development and developing resilience of the communities for sustainable change. The project sought to strengthen nutrition governance in the country, particularly supporting implementation of activities related to improving data collection, analysis and strategic use of nutrition and agriculture information at community and district levels.
25. The approach was aligned to FAO’s Strategic Framework (2022–2031) two betters that align to related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Better production 1 emphasizes green innovation for sustainable agricultural production, targeting SDG 2.0 which emphasizes a world free of hunger by 2030. Better environment 3 focuses on biodiversity and ecosystem services for food and agriculture which aligns with SDG 2.1 as it states that by 2030 there should be access by all, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

2.2 Theory of change

26. The intervention logic of the Afikepo project aimed to enhance nutrition security in Malawi by increasing and diversifying dietary intake of safe and nutritious foods to achieve optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts. It also aimed to strengthen multisectoral governance of nutrition, both to national and district development planning and monitoring, as well as informing national level policies.
27. Afikepo was initially developed without a TOC, but one was later formulated for the European Union-commissioned MTR (Delegation of the European Union Malawi, 2021). The reconstructed TOC (Appendix 3) illustrates how the programmatic outputs and inputs link to outcomes and impacts. Activities concerning availability and access to food aim to facilitate food security at household level. Complemented by activities in dietary diversification and improved food utilization, the project then achieves both nutrition and food security, ensuring mothers, adolescent girls and children practice optimum nutrition; whereas activities concerning the governance, monitoring and evaluation are meant to create an enabling environment that quickly identifies and respond to challenges and threats to food and nutrition security within communities. Activities under governance, monitoring and evaluation would therefore strengthen overall resilience to shocks and ownership by both community members and duty bearers. These improvements are expected to collectively enhance nutrition security in Malawi.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

EQ 1: To what extent are the Afikepo project objectives relevant to the needs and priorities of the targeted population and stakeholders?

EQ 1.1: To what extent was the Afikepo project aligned to national priorities as outlined in policies and plans?

EQ 1.2: To what extent was the Afikepo project relevant to the needs of beneficiaries?

EQ 1.3: To what extent did the project incorporate previous learnings and how have these been reflected in the design of the intervention?

Finding 1. The Afikepo project strongly aligns with Malawi's national priorities on food security, nutrition and resilience building. Through interventions like integrated household farming and the promotion of nutrition-sensitive agriculture, Afikepo addresses critical challenges faced by rural communities, contributing directly to national goals of improving food security and reducing malnutrition.

28. Afikepo strongly aligns with Malawi's national policies on food and nutrition security, agriculture development and resilience building, as outlined below:

- i. *Malawi 2063:* Launched in 2021, the vision is grounded on the aspiration of “an inclusive wealthy and self-reliant nation”, with a pillar on agriculture productivity and commercialization. While the Malawi 2063 builds more on a commercial agriculture point of view, the Afikepo project aligned to this vision through building household skills for increased productivity through natural resources management, climate-smart agriculture, resilient agriculture by promoting diversification, and income generation with the ultimate project goal of improving food and nutrition security.
- ii. *Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III (MGDS III) 2017–2022:* The government aims to enhance food and nutrition security under Outcome 7. Afikepo's interventions, including integrated household farming, livestock pass-on schemes, and promotion of children, adolescents and women's nutrition, are in line with this goal. Rural Malawi continues to face food and nutrition insecurity, affecting households, especially those reliant on farming for income, with 50.8 percent living below the poverty line (NSO, 2021).
- iii. *National Agriculture Policy 2016–2020 (NAP):* Afikepo improved access to quality seeds (improved varieties – orange-fleshed sweet potatoes (OFSP), iron-rich NUA 45 beans³ and maize) and livestock. It also promoted climate-smart agriculture among households improving equitable access to information and skills contributing to Policy Priority 1: Sustainable Agricultural Production and Productivity of the NAP. Afikepo also facilitated improvements in household consumption of the biofortified foods, promoted agriculture diversification and nutrition education aligning with Policy Priority Area 5: Food and Nutrition Security of the NAP.
- iv. *National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy (NMNP) and its Strategic Plan of 2018–2022:* Afikepo engages women and youth at the community level and implements capacity-

³ NUA 45 “magic” bean is biofortified and provides valuable food and nutrition security for small-scale farmers and their families. It is rich in protein, iron and zinc; improves soil fertility, and produces higher yields than local bean varieties (ILRI, 2021).

building activities to reduce nutrition-related mortality among children under five and the general population through strengthening nutrition-sensitive programming, hygiene and sanitation and screening of undernutrition among children. Strengthening community structures for effective coordination and implementation of nutrition-sensitive and specific interventions also aligns with these policies.

- v. *Malawi National Resilience Strategy (2018–2030)*: Afiikepo supports the resilience strategies through the promotion of integrated household farming and agricultural diversification which address Pillar 1 indicators on under-fives and women dietary diversification. It also responded to pillar four of the policy through ensuring natural resources for sustainable livelihoods through improved soil carbon from the practice of agroforestry and integrated homestead farming (IHF).
- vi. *National Gender Policy, 2015*: Through the project, women's access to agriculture information and technologies was enhanced through demonstration plots and IHF, building the capacity of girls, boys, women and men to produce and utilize diverse and nutritious food. With these interventions, Afiikepo responded to Policy Priority 3 on agriculture, food security and nutrition. Through engaging women, men and adolescents in climate-smart agriculture and natural resources management and more specifically through community-based tree nurseries, the distribution of seedlings of fruits and agroforestry trees and the promotion of energy saving stoves, the project also contributed towards Policy Priority 4 on natural resources, environment and climate change management of the FAO Policy on Gender Equality.

Finding 2. The Afiikepo project addressed beneficiary needs, focusing on food security, nutrition and women's economic empowerment. However, some community concerns were identified as well as cultural misalignment of interventions.

- 29. The beneficiaries of the Afiikepo project included pregnant women, mothers of children under five year olds and adolescent girls. Food and nutrition insecurity significantly affected these target participants, as revealed in numerous focus group discussions with care groups. Beneficiaries expressed how they initially had little to no income, relying on their husbands to provide. Beneficiaries in turn highlighted improvements in skills related to the production and preparation of diverse dietary foods, hygiene and sanitation practices, and infant and young child feeding. They also mentioned how the project was grounded in activities that promote women empowerment and income generation through the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) which resulted in improvements in women autonomy. These enhancements contributed to improved food security and nutrition within communities, with members of Area and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees acknowledging some improvements in nutrition behaviours in their areas.
- 30. However, some members of the Area and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees expressed concerns that the project overlooked community needs by not conducting necessary assessments to ensure culturally acceptable interventions. For instance, in a focus group discussion in Salima, the distribution of rabbits in a Muslim community faced resistance, highlighting challenges stemming from cultural sensitivities. Additionally, a national-level key informant emphasized the project's difficulty in meeting water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) indicators due to the absence of portable water provisions, a critical community need, and exclusion of stakeholders from project planning. Government representatives felt that the exclusion of the water sector as a key stakeholder resulted in significant oversight in the planning for and implementation of accessible water sources for families.

Finding 3. The Afikepo project design was informed by previous studies and stakeholder consultations. Positive aspects include its adoption of evidence-based practices, such as the care group model, and its ability to adapt to external challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, challenges arose from the split into two programs (Afikepo and Kulima), leading to coordination issues initially.

31. The Afikepo design was informed by previous studies and evaluations. For instance, the 2014/2015 nutrition sector mapping emphasized the importance of community-based supported initiatives for local ownership and sustainability of project activities. Consequently, stakeholder involvement from all relevant nutrition sector ministries at various levels and communities was ensured to guarantee ownership.
32. Interviews with key informants, including FAO project personnel, revealed that the Afikepo and KULIMA project were jointly designed from a food systems perspective, focusing on food production, efficient food use through markets, and promoting good consumption practices. Recognizing the need for a multisectoral project with agriculture as an entry point to address malnutrition determinants, the project initially planned to integrate these aspects. However, it was later split into two complementary projects, leading to challenges in coordinating outreach mechanisms due to differing community structures between DAES which made use of the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach, and DNHA which made use of the care group model approach.
33. Though both the FFS approach and the care group model approach are community outreach approaches, they follow two different governance structures that have not been integrated at community level, resulting in siloed interventions between DNHA and DAES. This means that each approach has activities streamlined through its relevant ministry and hence monitoring and reporting done through the exact same route. The leadership of a project therefore often detects which route is best based on the overall outcomes the project needs to achieve. In this case, the leadership of Afikepo was within DNHA, with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Nutrition Education and Communication Strategy (NECS) 2011–2016, taking precedence as a guiding policy.
34. To address these challenges, the project adopted the government institutionalized care group model, outlined in the SUN NECS 2011–2016. This model, previously successful with various implementing partners,⁴ aimed to harmonize community mobilization structures. Initially designed to follow the FFS approach, the project realigned its strategy in the first year to integrate existing structures into the care group model.
35. Some key informants commended the project's ability to maintain high relevance by adapting and responding rapidly to changes in the external environment requiring both programmatic and policy responses. For example, midway through implementation, the communities faced challenges due to COVID-19, leading to government restrictions on mobility and community gatherings. In response, the project, with European Union approval, reallocated its budget to support communities with water, hygiene and sanitation supplies. Collaborating with DNHA and DAES, the project developed standard operating procedures for nutrition-sensitive agriculture programming during the pandemic. Awareness was raised through various channels, including multimedia platforms.

⁴ World Relief and Feed the Children through the Tiwalere 1 and 2 projects (USAID, 2019), and SNIC programme; Concern Worldwide (2017) and Save the Children (All Africa, 2016) through the SNIC programme; World Vision and the World Food Programme through the Stunting Reduction Programme (WFP, 2014).

3.2 Effectiveness

EQ 2: To what extent were the expected Afiikepo project results achieved?

EQ 2.1: To what extent did Afiikepo activities and outputs contribute to the expected outcomes?

EQ 2.2: What major factors influenced achieving the objectives of the project?

3.2.1 Outcome level achievements

Finding 4. The project had some improvements in dietary diversity among infants and young children. However, the component of livestock distributions achieved uneven levels of success across districts, with some of the animals dying soon after distribution, and the project failed to register significant improvements in the consumption of animal source foods by adolescent girls. Efforts to promote biofortified foods and integrated homestead farming showed some progress, yet further attention would have been needed to meet targets and enhance household nutrition and resilience effectively.

36. Consumption of animal source rich foods in adolescent girls. Data from focus group discussions with care groups indicated that as much as adolescent girls formed care group structures that performed in line with the adult attended care groups, consumption of animal source foods was generally low among this specific age group. These results are similar to the findings of the endline survey, which was conducted towards the end of 2023 (UNICEF, 2024). The northern region districts and lakeshore areas recorded the highest consumption of animal source foods, attributed mainly to better access to these products because the Northern part of the country holds the highest numbers of both small and large livestock in comparison with its population. It is part of the culture of Ngoni and Tumbuka tribes to keep herds and flocks, a phenomenon that is rarely observed in the southern part of the country. Conversely, Nkhata Bay showed an increase, while Thyolo district experienced a significant drop with the climate and natural disasters that happened towards the end of the project.
37. Nutrition education. The project successfully promoted knowledge of animal source foods among participating households through various awareness at community level as indicated by the findings from the field mission that was conducted during the final evaluation assignment. Discussions with partners confirmed that nutrition-sensitive agriculture packages for adolescents included food production components alongside nutrition education and counselling, supported by dedicated adolescent nutrition platforms. Field interactions with care groups confirmed their understanding of the importance of consuming eggs, milk, milk products, and flesh foods such as fish and meat.
38. On the supply side, FAO led in the distribution and promotion of small livestock through the pass-on small livestock approach. The final evaluation through focus group discussions with Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees found that in many communities across the ten project implementation districts, livestock did not thrive well. The final evaluation also found that despite the Afiikepo project's efforts to distribute small livestock, the mortality rates were high in the southern region due to the variations in agroecological zones, and some were lost due to the effects of tropical cyclone Freddy which brought about a heavy down pour and floods.
39. These results are contrary to those from the endline survey which showed that the percentage of households owning small livestock or chickens improved from 51 percent at baseline to 64.4 percent at endline. This indicated a small but positive change in livestock ownership, which can contribute to household food security and income generation. Our findings agree with those from the annual knowledge, attitudes and practice surveys that were conducted by FAO as part of regular monitoring (FAO, 2021; 2022) which showed varied livestock ownership across districts, with some experiencing low pass-on rates. This was the case because of some factors that were

uniform across all the implementing districts such as pests and diseases, poor kraal quality,⁵ limited access to veterinary services, vaccination shortages especially in areas where pig production was promoted, and poor sanitation which was facilitated by the effects of cyclone Freddy in the southern region of the country. These results are an indication that despite the project putting so much emphasis in the final year of its implementation, some of these livestock did not survive within the first three months of distribution due to the factors that have been discussed above. This shows that to increase livestock ownership takes more than distributing animals – it also requires veterinary services, fodder, etc.

40. The final evaluation mission learned through discussions with partners that throughout project implementation, there was inadequacy of livestock on the ground, attributing issues to FAO's slow procurement processes which led to late distribution of livestock in respective areas across all the implementing districts. The focus group discussions with Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee members in the most parts of the southern region indicated a high mortality rate in the initial livestock distributions because agroecological zones were rarely put into consideration during the initial procurement phase. The final evaluation noted that in most areas where pigs were distributed, about 60 percent died within the first two months due to variations in weather conditions. These mortality rates were linked to challenges with livestock adaptability, limited availability of animal health experts who were not involved in the initial steps of project roll out, especially in the southern parts of the country where more high mortality rate was also registered, and community capacity to manage livestock effectively was very limited because government Veterinary Officers were not fully trained by the project and therefore felt left out. There was strong consensus from stakeholders consulted at national and district levels, that the limited linkages between the supply of livestock and the education received on how to sustainably utilize animal products limited their consumption. In addition, the poor linkages also affected the rate at which the small livestock were passed on from one household to the other as was intended by the project.
41. Integrated homestead farming in promoting sustainable agriculture. The final evaluation, through interaction with key informants at the community level indicated some gaps in the adoption of integrated homestead farming. This trend is similar to the findings of the endline survey that indicated the percentage of households practicing integrated homestead farming, involving small livestock rearing, vegetable cultivation, fish farming and crop production (at least three of these activities), surpassed the baseline but falling short of the target (see Appendix 2). Specifically, only 16.2 percent of households were engaged in integrated homestead farming, while the target was set at 21 percent practices. Data from the key informant interviews and focus group discussions indicated that the target was not fully achieved due to distant water sources in some places and the impact of cyclone Freddy, which destroyed crops, fruit trees and swept away livestock especially in the southern parts of the country. Moreover, also a prolonged dry spell affected participation.
42. Promotion of biofortified foods to improve food and nutrition security. The Afikepo project made a huge investment in the distribution of biofortified foods such as the orange-fleshed sweet potato, orange maize and Nua bean varieties. The Afikepo Endline Evaluation (UNICEF, 2024) showed an increasing trend in biofortified crop production, consumption and preservation at household level, from 68 850 households at baseline to 202 500 households at MTR. Despite this, there was a decline observed in consumption of biofortified foods among women of reproductive age (15–49 years) and adolescent girls when compared to 2022. Some of the reasons cited to low production and consumption in this group include: difficulty accessing seeds in the market and

⁵ An enclosure or housing for small livestock (goats, sheep, etc.).

the belief that biofortified crops are not good for health, that growing biofortified crops is associated with poverty and limited taste compared to other crops grown. These trends are similar across both genders and all age groups as they normally consume from the same plate. An interesting finding was established during a focus group discussion with care group members in Nanseta in Thyolo district where it was mentioned that orange maize were distributed to the communities back in 2001/2002 when Malawi experienced famine. These yellow maize varieties remind the older generations of the difficult times they survived and they associate yellow maize with poverty, hence the low adoption and utilization rates.

3.2.2 Availability and accessibility of affordable, adequate, diversified and nutritious food

Finding 5. Afikepo achieved commendable success in capacity building, especially in the production and utilization of improved crop varieties among frontline workers, household training in the production and utilization of the same and finally the provision of nutrition extension services and economic empowerment. However, noticeable gaps exist in leadership capacity building at the community level.

43. With reference to the endline report, Afikepo demonstrates commendable achievements in training and graduating field-level workers such as Agriculture Extension Development Officers, Assistant Veterinary Officers, Senior Health Surveillance Assistants, Assistant Environmental Health Officers, Community Development Assistants, Primary Education Advisers, Child Protection Workers, Health Surveillance Assistants and Community-Based Facilitators. These trainings reached out to a high number of targeted frontline as shown by 91.2 percent and 94.6 percent respectively (see detailed results in Appendix 4). The District Nutrition Coordinating Committees were mandated to conduct regular training with the Area and Village Nutrition coordinating Committees following topics that were deliberately selected as good practices in community nutrition as promoted by the Afikepo project. These figures underscore the project's effectiveness in equipping key personnel with the necessary skills for promoting diversified food production, business development and natural resources management at the grassroots level, as observed from the interaction with the nutrition coordinating committees and key extension workers at the community level.
44. Data from the endline evaluation and project tracking tool indicate that the Afikepo project introduced and revamped the community nutrition coordinating structures that later enhanced the capacity building of project beneficiaries at household levels, in training them in various aspects of diversified food production and resource management. This high level of participation underscores strong community involvement especially in laying a solid foundation for sustainable development and resilience. In addition, there was reach in delivering nutrition extension services to vulnerable groups, including under-fives, women of childbearing age and adolescent girls.
45. The development of VSLAs through Afikepo support achieved an 83.4 percent success rate (FAO and UNICEF, 2023). Membership in VSLAs at the household level remained consistent compared to 2022. There was a noticeable increase in the percentage of care group members who utilized loans or borrowed cash from VSLAs, indicating a growing trend from the initiation of the project up to the period when the project ended. These funds were primarily used to bolster businesses, acquire household essentials, and purchase food items for household consumption. Discussions with the Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee and women's groups applauded VSLAs for providing financial security at the household level. On average, women emphasized their ability to borrow through VSLAs, pay fees and utilize the funds for emergencies such as illness, funerals, hunger and educational expenses. Notably, one participant in a focus group discussion highlighted how the cash borrowed through VSLAs enabled her to start a small-scale business in buying and selling agriculture produce, especially cereals.

46. Cluster leaders do household visits to monitor and teach on hygiene and optimum feeding practices. They also conduct screening of malnourished children and refer them to the health surveillance assistants for further assistance. However, the project faced challenges in training cluster leads and care group leaders, with achievement falling below targets by 32 percent and 28 percent, respectively. Project personnel noted that while the intention was to train all cluster leaders, the large number of cluster leaders and the number of training sessions did not cater for all of them until the project phased out. This led to training fewer cluster leaders than originally intended, underscoring a notable gap in developing leadership capacity at the community level.

3.2.3 Increased utilization of adequate, diversified, safe and nutritious foods

Finding 6. The project achieved significant success in training field-level workers, community-based facilitators and care group leaders in appropriate technologies for food utilization, processing and hygiene. Additionally, households demonstrated high levels of awareness and compliance with sanitation and hygiene practices, but financial constraints are affecting access to sanitation facilities.

47. FAO end of project results framework shows that the training of field-level workers and community-based facilitators in appropriate technologies for food utilization, processing and hygiene surpassed expectations, with achievements of 105.5 percent and 107.3 percent respectively. Community-based facilitators trained in similar technologies achieved even higher at 107.3 percent. This suggests strong community engagement and effective dissemination of knowledge, indicating a thorough coverage and effectiveness in training. A total of 76.3 percent of cluster leads were trained in these technologies.
48. While the majority (82.1 percent of the target) of households have access to handwashing facilities, efforts are needed to further increase accessibility and promote consistent handwashing practices, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Achievements were recorded in regard to the primary caregivers adoption and washing practices, with 97.8 percent washing hands at recommended times. The field mission established a high knowledge and practice in water, sanitation and hygiene practices across the implementing districts, but these were slightly defeated by the effects of cyclone Freddy that washed away some hand washing facilities and made water sources unsafe.
49. However, qualitative findings from the final evaluation field mission, which aligned with those from the endline survey, showed that most households did not practice water, sanitation and hygiene activities. For instance, some households had a hand washing facility but no hand washing agents such as soap. In some instances, households had traditional pit latrines which were not durable, especially after heavy rains. Discussions with care groups also showed that households did not have enough money to buy soap for hand washing.

3.2.4 Multisectoral governance, planning and monitoring

Finding 7. The Afikepo project strengthened district level capacity to monitor, report and make data informed decisions through the national nutrition information system (NNIS). However, NNIS reporting rates remained low, with evidence of poor ownership to drive project monitoring and evaluation initiatives.

50. An assessment by the Evaluation Team of project annual reports and reports by some district level key informants during the mission revealed that district level capacity to collect, report and review district nutrition data, and develop plans from it, was strengthened.
51. The project supported this through training of district level M&E Officers, supporting of District Nutrition Coordinating Committees with district review meetings and field monitoring visits. The project also introduced knowledge, attitudes and practices surveys, which strengthened data

informed decision-making, assisting districts with responsive planning to meet district specific needs, and tying them into area specific plans through the Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees. While overall the interviewed district key informants expressed appreciation of the support received, some expressed how frequency of the district M&E activities was dependent on the Afikepo project resources and initiative, with frequency in review meetings and/or field monitoring visits dropping when there was no project personnel to drive these. Key informants at district level felt this was indicative of a lack of ownership by the district teams, that extended also to members of the District Nutrition Coordinating Committee who were implementing partners but were not willing to fund such activities.

52. According to the project results tracking tool, NNIS reporting as a key output progressively improved. The project reports also estimated that a good number of operational care groups reporting timely by project end. However, an enquiry with the national level key informant interviews reviewed that reporting rates within the NNIS were poor at both community and district level. As an example, data shared by DNHA revealed that Nkhatabay and Mulanje districts had not submitted their monthly district multisector nutrition progress reports in the year 2023; Chiradzulu, Chitipa, Kasungu and Nkhatabay had not submitted a single monthly traditional authority community nutrition progress reports in the same year. According to FAO personnel, discrepancies in data between the FAO project indicator tracker shared with the Evaluation Team and the DNHA data was due to an assumption the project team had made. While reporting through the project-based monitoring and evaluation system (the Community-based Behaviour Tracking Tool [CBTT]) had been consistent through deliberate supportive supervision of the care group structure and its community governing bodies, an assumption had been made that the same level of reporting consistency was being followed through with the government-based monitoring and evaluation system, the NNIS, which was in fact not the case.
53. Although the indicator "Number of Districts Submitting Data using the National Nutrition Information System on Timely Basis" appeared within FAO's results matrix, the Organization did not have the mandate for this system, and therefore had very little influence over the indicator. This was also mentioned by some key informants at national level. However, discrepancies in reporting between the two entities is also suggestive of a poor working relationship between DNHA and FAO. Ideally, FAO could have easily requested accurate data from DNHA to present in the project indicator tracker had their relationship been good, instead of reporting based on assumptions.
54. An analysis of project reports by the Evaluation Team, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with the communities revealed that poor reporting on the NNIS was due to i) NNIS experiencing technical challenges limiting access; ii) late and inconsistency reporting by sectors affecting the uploading of data into the system; iii) poor internet connectivity; iv) turnover of critical personnel at the districts level; and v) a lack of demand by district personnel on utilizing data to inform decisions.

Finding 8. The CBTT system received positive reception by the community, strengthening community ownership of the project.

55. The project rolled out and used the CBTT system which ensured data collection and reporting from household level, through cluster leaders, through care groups and promoters, up to the Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees and district level. Reporting tools made from carbonless copy paper were being used which had been harmonized with the NNIS reporting template. The majority of Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees hailed it, stating that "...it was key as it assisted in identifying key behaviour problems,

such as the low uptake of iron folate tablets among adolescent girls, and addressing these, including better reporting". The CBTT dialogue reporting chart initiated community dialogue on nutrition behaviours that needed strengthening, facilitating behaviour change as it improved community ownership of the project, and facilitating community solutions through community engagement and inclusion. One district key informant also spoke of emulating the system in their own nutrition programming as an organization. The CBTT also facilitated the Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees nutrition-sensitive agriculture action plans.

56. Despite these excellent reports on the CBTT, there were a few reports of poor performance. For instance, a few Area and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees members in Nkhatabay expressed that "the system had been a total flop despite training on it twice in their areas". The CBTT therefore seemed to work best when communities received adequate supervisory support in utilizing data for decision-making, which would improve confidence among community structures.
57. As for the Nutrition Action Plans, focus group discussions with the Area and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees revealed that members coordinated well in their efforts to support care groups leading to positive impacts. As such, most of the community structures met for planning purposes with support from the project and managed to execute most of their planned activities on the Nutrition Action Plans. A few Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee members across all districts stated how nutrition action plans were however partly executed due to the provision of little resource, if any, to set up their target number of demonstration plots and for transportation to support and supervise community activities, with reports in Karonga on the integrated household farming failing especially on fruit production due to poor management.

3.3 Efficiency

EQ 3: How efficient was FAO at delivering the Afikepo project in terms of expenditure and timeliness?

EQ 3.1: To what extent were Afikepo activities implemented in terms of timeliness and cost-effectiveness?

EQ 3.2: To what extent were FAO's project management and partnerships cost-efficient in delivery of Afikepo activities?

Finding 9. The Afikepo project demonstrated a commitment to enhancing community well-being through substantial resource allocation for procurement and distribution of essential items. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the quality of supplied products, facilitated by stringent FAO procurement processes. However, inefficiencies in procurement and supply distribution, delayed funding disbursements and inadequate needs assessment impacted effectiveness and outcomes.

58. Procurement standards: The Afikepo project dedicated substantial resources to procuring and distributing various items at different levels of implementation to enhance the capacity of district coordination structures, the care group model and households. Supplies encompassed a wide range, from seeds, garden tools and livestock to kitchen demonstration kits, solar dryers, flipcharts, stationery, information and communications technology materials, reporting tools and transportation. Stakeholder interactions indicated a general satisfaction with the quality of the supplied products, facilitated by a stringent FAO procurement process that ensured observation of quality standards.
59. Programmatic delays during the transition to the care group structure: An analysis of project reports by the Evaluation Team revealed that, in order to align with existing nutrition policies like the SUN NECS 2011–2016, the project underwent a review and overhaul of its community approach to accommodate the care group model. The process of mapping out and fortifying the

community structure at the project's outset resulted in delays for other planned activities (such as the actual roll out of training which had been targeted at FFS in the original project document), during that period. One key informant reported that closer collaboration with the technical departments from the start could have prevented significant implementation challenges. Consequently, two years were spent deliberating the scale-up of community interventions.

60. Disbursement of funds: The Evaluation Team noted from the project annual reports that while most districts received funds directly, funds for Chiradzulu and Mulanje districts were routed through other organizations in the project's early years. This was due to both districts being classified as high risk due to previous poor compliance with funding regulations under the UN harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT). Consequently, FAO managed the districts' funds in the first year, and with assistance from UNICEF, also involved the Female Empowerment and Education Centre Trust and World Vision Malawi in subsequent years. However, this arrangement affected timely project implementation in the two districts, as switching between funding management institutions required new contractual negotiations and agreements, which inevitably took time.
61. National and district-level key informants also mentioned delays in funding disbursement in various districts. They indicated that these delays stemmed partly from late technical and financial reporting by some district councils, which raised questions about the government's capacity to implement a project of such magnitude. Additionally, they noted that delays were also caused by late disbursement by FAO, resulting in the purchase of fewer supplies at times. One Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee member expressed frustration during a focus group discussion, explaining that they would budget for fertilizer and seeds but would receive the money when the prices had already increased, causing delays. Sometimes, he mentioned, the budget would need to be completely revised.
62. In response to a recommendation from the European Union MTR, the project implemented Letters of Agreement with district councils during the fifth year of implementation (2021–2022), which significantly improved the timeliness of disbursements. This timely disbursement of funds at the district level was particularly appreciated by the District Nutrition Coordinating Committees consulted.
63. Procurement challenges. Inefficiencies in procurement and supply distribution were particularly notable at the community level. For instance, in Mzimba, the team visited the district two weeks before the project's closure in December 2023. Reports from one community indicated that chickens had been distributed that same week, while rabbits had arrived the week prior to the pass-on intervention. Due to the absence of prequalified suppliers for Ministry of Agriculture inputs, FAO supported the procurement of seeds and livestock by developing necessary guidelines and procedures for quality assurance. However, this led to delays in the procurement process as requests required multiple clearances for authorization. The Evaluation Team also observed that delays in funding disbursement by FAO also contributed to activity timeliness. The late disbursement of funding, especially for community-procured supplies such as fertilizer and seed, would result in money being disbursed to the Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees when prices for the products had gone up resulting in the purchase of fewer supplies. The late disbursement by FAO stemmed from delayed reporting to the donor and consequently release of funds. This contributed to a rushed procurement and distribution of supplies meant to meet project outputs.
64. Some inadequacies in the needs assessment to guide community interventions resulted in some financial inefficiencies. A notable instance highlighted in FAO's routine data review of 2021 was

in Salima district, where nearly 20 000 pineapple suckers distributed in 2020 to care groups had died due to non-suitability to the local climate conditions. This observation was corroborated through focus group discussions with Area and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees. Communities attributed this to a top-down implementation process that inadequately addressed agroecological zones or community needs. Another example given was that of distribution of rabbits in a Muslim community.

65. Expenditure, costs and project duration. The Afikepo project was initially planned for implementation from July 2017 to June 2022, encompassing nearly a five-year period with the anticipation of full utilization of planned activities and funding. However, due to delays in project implementation and a low funds absorption rate, the project underwent an extension until December 2023. Consequently, the project spanned a duration of six and a half years. In the annual financial report for year 4, only USD 20 532 300 (45.3 percent) of the total project budget of USD 45 337 923 had been utilized. Upon enquiry with various stakeholders, the Evaluation Team identified delays in both technical and financial reporting to the donor, along with the necessity for specific absorption milestones to be met to facilitate funds transfer, as contributing factors to the low burn rate.
66. Synergies with the KULIMA project. As the Afikepo and KULIMA projects were being implemented through different community outreach models, synergies between them became difficult to realize. Activities were therefore mostly implemented separately. The projects also had different Project Steering Committees at national level, leaving no room for joint decision-making as decisions were made independently. The limited synergies between the two projects were also documented in the European Union MTR and this necessitated efforts to strengthen relationships between Afikepo and KULIMA projects when the report was published.
67. Synergies on the ground presented themselves differently. In some communities, synergies between the two projects had been created to foster cross learning in food production and food utilization. The Evaluation Team had observed that care group volunteers and community-based facilitators in a community in Thyolo had been paired together, and dates for visiting demo plots were jointly planned. Similarly, Karonga and Salima were structuring their activities in a way to benefit from both projects.
68. At district level, Afikepo and KULIMA projects supervision visits and review meetings were being planned jointly. However, project management of resources was separate, with minimum synergies being reported in most areas. One such example was of a promoter from Mzimba who also served as a community-based facilitator, possessed two bicycles – one received in 2017 through the KULIMA project and another in 2020/21 through the Afikepo project – both of which were still in good working condition. Dates for visiting demo plots were jointly planned.

3.4 Sustainability

EQ 4: Will the results achieved continue beyond the life of the Afiikepo project?

EQ 4.1: To what extent are the achievements (outputs and outcomes) of Afiikepo likely to be sustainable?

EQ 4.2: To what extent have project efforts promoted visibility and added value to the project beneficiaries?

Finding 10. The Afiikepo project showed strong prospects for sustainability through government alignment and community ownership. However, challenges in incentive distribution and funding reliance are threats to sustainability. The project utilized national, district and community platforms to achieve high visibility which have high prospects of being sustained.

3.4.1 National and district level ownership

69. The care group model: The project was structured in alignment with an existing government policy (SUN NECS), leading to the establishment of care groups in areas where they had already been implemented through previous projects. This alignment also meant that supervisory roles for care groups were already under government purview, fostering a sense of ownership by both the government and community leadership. Interactions with village nutrition coordinating committees across the ten implementing districts revealed that many care groups were unable to operate without the project's free inputs, especially for the integrated household farming component. However, there was additional support from social networks, with some husbands encouraging their wives to continue their voluntary work, recognizing the benefits to their families. Despite these few challenges, most district stakeholders were positive that the gains of the Afiikepo project will be sustained at the community level.
70. Capacity building: Capacity of the care groups was bolstered through training and economic empowerment initiatives like VSLAs, facilitating the sustainability of household outreach and food security efforts. With a strong sense of community ownership, some care groups devised plans to sustain themselves by generating income from selling farm produce such as maize, orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, beans and soya. For instance, the Mathandani care group in Mzimba district expressed confidence that the One Million Kwacha prize they won from the performance based incentives would enable them to purchase livestock for sustainability. However, as the project neared its end, some winning care groups indicated that they had not yet received this prize.
71. Nutrition gained national recognition: Nutrition is now fully recognized at the national level. The Government of Malawi through DNHA planned to dedicate a budget line for nutrition activities in the district councils where Afiikepo project was implemented.
72. Good coordination at all levels of implementation. The Afiikepo project care group approach was hailed by most informants as effective in facilitating the seamless transfer of nutrition messages from the District Nutrition Coordinating Committee to the grassroots communities. The project enhanced the functionality of community structures such as Area and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committees, composed of government staff from various ministries including health, agriculture, education, social welfare and gender, stationed within the communities. These Government Officers seamlessly integrated their supervisory roles into their daily responsibilities, complementing their existing scope of work. This approach ensured that beneficiaries were actively engaged in receiving and disseminating essential nutrition information. Furthermore, by entrusting supervisory roles within the care groups to government officials stationed at the community level, the project was hailed as fostering a sense of ownership and integration of nutrition activities into their day-to-day responsibilities.

73. This grassroots ownership was further reinforced as Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee and Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee members incorporated nutrition activities into their respective job descriptions, demonstrating a commitment to sustained engagement with nutrition initiatives beyond the project's lifespan. However, the project was heavily dependent on funding from FAO and UNICEF for coordination and supervisory activities, as well as on modules and starter packs at the community level. This brought some concerns across all implementing structures as the government's ability to fund these activities was questionable. In addition, volunteers required significant incentives to remain motivated, and instances of dropouts from voluntary work were cited as individuals prioritized paid employment opportunities instead.
74. The introduction of VSLA groups as part of the care group model was considered by informants as a strategic economic empowerment component. By promoting financial independence and resilience at the household level, these VSLA groups contribute to the long-term sustainability of household outreach and food security efforts initiated by the project. Through these VSLAs, communities will be in a better position to access markets locally.
75. Through comprehensive training projects, capacity gaps were addressed and, as a result, both communities and government personnel were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to sustain the project's gains through seed multiplication initiatives. Assessment of the direct outcomes of these trainings showed that communities started to adopt and will continue to produce and consume biofortified crops that were promoted by the project. The proactive approach not only ensured continuity but also empowered communities to take ownership of their food security and nutrition outcomes.

3.4.2 Degree of visibility of the Afikepo project

76. The project employed a multifaceted approach to enhance visibility across national, district and community levels. During the inaugural year, media coverage through print, online, radio and television platforms captured the project launch. Additionally, thematic roll-up banners, factsheets and flyers were produced and disseminated at various promotional events, workshops and meetings to further amplify project awareness. Project visibility materials were crafted and showcased at prominent events such as the United Nations (UN) Day and the European Union Day.
77. The project bolstered visibility by handing over eight branded Afikepo vehicles to the Government of Malawi. The Afikepo project also contributed to academic discourse with the publication of three scientific papers focusing on various aspects of nutrition and food consumption in rural Malawi.
78. The Afikepo project brought about some notable changes at national, district and community levels through the efforts that were put in the visibility aspect. At the national level, visibility brought a notable amount of buy-in from stakeholders and implementing partners as evident from the support that was provided at national level events that were conducted. Interaction with the district level government officials indicated that the vehicles that were procured and branded by the project eased movement of staff and delivery of extension services in the districts. These vehicles were durable and they will continue to operate within these districts to enhance nutrition activities that were introduced by the Afikepo project.

3.5 Cross-cutting issues

EQ 5: To what extent has the Afiikepo project incorporated gender and social inclusion considerations, and environment and social safeguards in design and implementation?

3.5.1 Gender and social inclusion

Finding 11. The project design effectively integrated gender considerations, aligning with the FAO Policy on Gender Equality. However, certain aspects of the design led to a disproportionate emphasis on empowering women, potentially marginalizing men's involvement.

79. The Afiikepo project at design adhered to the global FAO Policy on Gender Equality (2020). As such, the project design had a focus on gender equality and/or women's empowerment with the project classified as G2b.⁶ Gender equality was a key strategy in building community ownership. The project had been designed to adopt (at least in theory) the household methodologies for gender and social inclusion with the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) being written into the actual programming and the Socioeconomic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) as a part of the monitoring and evaluation.
80. The overall objective of the above incorporated methodologies was to ensure empowerment of women and young adolescent girls in ten Afiikepo districts as a key factor in enhancing their nutritional status and that of their children and to support them in addressing their needs. Targeting pregnant and lactating women, children and adolescents, however, resulted in the adopted community structure, the care group model, being composed mostly of women. All key informants at both district and national level blamed this on the way the care group structure was formulated at community level. The care group model is developed from clustering household beneficiaries, and from them, selecting a lead mother. Cluster leaders are in turn clustered together for the selection of a care group leader. The promoter is often selected based on a community record of previous voluntary work, their interest and knowledge in health and nutrition. Hence oftentimes, gender only varies at the promoter level. As such, by design, the project had a significantly high number of women participating in the care groups.
81. A key activity that had been suggested for strengthening gender equality in the project document had been Activity 1.1.3a: Each Community Outreach Group representative will be trained on the GALS methodology. Though it appeared in annual work plans, the activity was not reported as done in any of the five annual reports the Evaluation Team had access to. The Evaluation Team could not establish the reason for this.
82. The M&E system of the project was good, tracking gender through disaggregated data for training and project participants through the project activities. knowledge, attitude and practices surveys had also collected disaggregated data and through open ended questions for their qualitative study was able to pick pertinent gender issues which informed programming. For example, the KAP survey 2020 highlighted the low involvement of men in the project with the KAP 2021 specifying how male involvement "was limited to provision of food either through sourcing money to buy food or growing of crops and rearing of livestock". The baseline and endline evaluation surveys include an abridged version of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). It was abridged because it did not include the gender parity index (GPI) as it had not interviewed men; an important omission that resulted in the project being somewhat gender accommodating and not responsive or transformative enough.

⁶ G2b programmes according to FAO classification meant the programme addresses gender equality and/or women's empowerment as its main focus.

83. According to the abridged Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index⁷ at endline, women empowerment had improved from 79 percent at baseline to 84.8 percent at endline. The survey further identified 58.8 percent of women as empowered, according to the sub-indicator, the five domains of empowerment (decisions about agricultural production; access to and decision-making power about productive resources; control of use of income; leadership in the community; and time allocation). This was an improvement from the baseline estimate of 47.2 percent. This was corroborated through beneficiary focus group discussions, with most women attesting to having more autonomy at household level and contributing to joint decision-making in agriculture and household income. Women were targeted for training in VSLAs and were the primary recipients of project supplies, including seeds and livestock.
84. As mentioned above, men were not actively targeted by the Afikepo project. The design automatically favoured a more female dominated participation, thus men participated less in care groups. According to one national key informant, the words "care groups", "mother groups", are associated with women, while the cooking demonstrations were considered gender roles also associated with females. According to focus group discussions with care group volunteers and promoters, communities would therefore sometimes consider it "odd" for a man to be a member of the community outreach structure, with lots of women interviewed attesting to men being ridiculed if there were members of the care group and thus eventually leaving. In other communities, it was reported that men left voluntary work in the Afikepo project for income generating work in fishery and seasonal labour. In the second year of implementation (2018–2019), only 18 percent of care cluster leaders were men. The KAP survey of 2020 also flagged how important engaging men was when women had mentioned their barriers to financial institutions as being fear of spouses and men feeling that they cannot mix with women.
85. As such, the project identified exemplary men within communities to train as male champions. Hence, they spoke during the project's open days, cooking demonstration, radio projects of the need for male involvement in the household. In year three, 95 men had been trained as male champions, 340 men in year 4 reaching a 64 percent target. Despite these commendable efforts to involve men, there was still limited engagement of men in care group activities in the fifth year of programming and to some extent compromised water and sanitation activities as "men are key in assisting with construction of toilets" as most care group volunteers had mentioned during focus group discussions.
86. The gender mainstreaming efforts of the project targeted adolescent girls as much as they did women. As such, participation of adolescents in the project was closely monitored, with activities tailored for them mirroring those of care groups through adolescent groups/clubs. The adolescent clubs were reported vibrant by most focus group discussions participants with care groups and Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee members.

3.5.2 Environmental safeguards

Finding 12. The Afikepo project was an environmentally low risk project that incorporated land resources management and climate-smart agriculture practices in its programming.

87. The design and implementation of the project took various aspects of environmental safeguarding into consideration to minimize depletion of forest cover. The Module 5 "Climate Smart Agriculture and Natural Resource Management" of the nutrition-sensitive agriculture in

⁷ The project adopted the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). The indicator is a multidimensional index and measures the empowerment, agency, and inclusion of women in the agriculture sector and comprises two sub-indexes, i.e. i) the Five Domains of Empowerment (5DE); and ii) the gender-parity index (GPI).

Malawi training manual for front line workers emphasizes both theoretical and practical teaching methods in the integration of climate change adaptation measures. The module also incorporates various components related to combating climate change and environmental degradation, such as intercropping, crop diversification, integrated soil management practices and the use of energy saving stoves. Additionally, the natural resources management session includes practical session on the construction of an energy saving stove.

88. Discussions with care groups and promoters highlighted that Afikepo built community capacity through training on climate-smart practices like conservation agriculture and agroforestry through the demonstration plots, setting up of community-based tree nurseries and introducing the communities to energy saving technologies. Seedlings of fruit nurseries and agroforestry trees were also provided to strengthen the practice of conserving the environment in communities by reducing land degradation and combating climate change effects. The Evaluation Team took the liberty to observe energy saving stoves that had been constructed in sampled communities in Thyolo and Salima district, which also had evidence of use.

3.6 Lessons learned

EQ 6: What are the key lessons generated by Afikepo project?

Lesson 1. Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee and the Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee ensuring the sustainability of care groups beyond project support is crucial for sustaining behavioural change initiatives. While initial support is beneficial, over-reliance on external inputs hinders sustainability. Community contributions and institutionalization are key for sustainability of interventions. Establishing a strong resource base and advocating for stakeholder buy-in are essential steps in promoting lasting impact.

Lesson 2. The comprehensive implementation of a contextualized care groups model and Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture curriculum, while maintaining checks and balances on quality, has proven to be instrumental in facilitating the adoption of improved dietary practices and interventions within the project. Interviews conducted at various levels – national, regional, district and community – highlighted the rigorous training and practical sessions led by qualified experts to ensure the quality of message delivery on nutrition practices and nutrition data collection. Reporting has significantly aided improvement of nutrition status and practices, as target groups actively engage in identifying problems and solutions while actively participating in project activities.

Lesson 3. In a project with significant resource allocation and multiple stakeholders involved at various levels, time efficiency is critical for procurement and logistical arrangements to ensure smooth implementation. Delays in procurement and delivery of agricultural inputs and cooking demonstration’s items/equipment, often stemming from FAO processes, can significantly impact the effectiveness of projects like Afikepo. Mismatched input delivery with seasonal calendars has prompted some care groups to purchase their own inputs to maintain continuity in running field plots for seed multiplication, integrated homestead farming and small livestock pass on activities. These challenges underscore the importance of timely procurement and logistics management to avoid missing crucial agroecological stages and compromising the overall objectives of the care group approach.

Lesson 4. Effective coordination is essential for achieving holistic results in project implementation. Both vertical and horizontal coordination have proven to be instrumental in efficiently executing activities and achieving results. For example, the revamping of the nutrition coordinating structures at district and community levels underscores the importance of coordination. Successful collaboration among implementing partners, government agencies, and local communities and structures is crucial for the

success of community-based projects. This brings a sense of ownership by the government and communities benefiting from the donor funding in such projects.

Lesson 5. To successfully implement projects such as Afikepo, clear operating modalities within and between components must be achieved. Teamwork and proper coordination between members, local leaders and Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee were core to the success of the project. Achievement of clear operating modalities is also crucial as it holds implementing partners accountable of who is responsible to provide specific trainings, backstopping visits and other materials essential for the project's success.

Lesson 6. Systematic documentation and dissemination of research findings from the KAP surveys with implementing partners at all levels of project implementation is essential for successful project implementation. Rigorous data collection, recording and analysis by FAO, UNICEF and DNHA ensured accuracy and reliability of the trends that were observed in nutrition indicators throughout the project implementation period. Presenting results to care group members and stakeholders fosters understanding and engagement. Continuous monitoring through annual KAP surveys, baseline and mid-term evaluations allows for tracking project performance. Moreover, publishing annual stories of best practices and sharing them with key stakeholders, including through community radios, enhances knowledge dissemination and adoption.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

Relevance

Conclusion 1. The Afikepo project demonstrates a strong alignment with Malawi's national priorities on food and nutrition security, agriculture development and resilience building, effectively integrating these objectives into community-level interventions to address critical challenges faced by rural communities.

Conclusion 2. Afikepo project has made significant strides in meeting beneficiary needs but did not adequately address cultural sensitivities to community engagement. This compromised the productivity and acceptability of project agriculture supplies in some geographies which affected project sustainability and efficiency.

Effectiveness

Conclusion 3. The Afikepo project promoted knowledge of animal source foods and facilitated increased livestock ownership and biofortified crop production. Challenges remain in achieving increased livestock ownership and optimal consumption of animal source foods. These challenges include variations in animal source food consumption across regions; issues with livestock procurement processes, limited extension services for livestock management, and limited veterinary services all contributing to significant mortality rates; and obstacles to practicing integrated homestead farming such as environmental disasters and logistical barriers. Lack of attention to veterinary care was also a factor that led to poor performance of livestock and it was noted across all the implementing districts.

Conclusion 4. The Afikepo project has effectively built capacity at both the grassroots and household levels, evidenced by high success rates in training field-level workers and community-based facilitators as well as in implementing Village Savings Loans initiatives. These efforts have led to increased community involvement in project activities, particularly in diversified food production, business development and financial security. However, challenges persist in training cluster leaders and care group leaders, indicating a need for continued focus on developing leadership capacity at the community level to ensure the sustainability of project interventions.

Conclusion 5. The Afikepo project has demonstrated strong community engagement and effectiveness in disseminating knowledge, as evidenced by the high success rates in training field-level workers, community-based facilitators, and care group leaders in appropriate technologies for food utilization, processing and hygiene. However, while significant progress has been made in increasing accessibility to handwashing facilities and improved sanitation services, there remains a need to further promote consistent handwashing practices and address barriers such as limited access to soap and durable sanitation facilities, especially in households facing financial constraints.

Efficiency

Conclusion 6. Stakeholders appreciated the quality of project inputs and good linkages with KULIMA on the ground. Delays and inefficiencies in project implementation were encountered due to various factors such as restructuring to align with existing policies, challenges in funding disbursement and management, and procurement inefficiencies. While efforts were made to improve processes, including the implementation of Letters of Agreement with district councils to enhance fund disbursement, there were still issues such as inadequate needs assessment leading to financial inefficiencies. Limited synergies between the KULIMA and Afikepo projects also contributed to the double dipping of resources by key community stakeholders, also leading to inefficient resource use.

Sustainability

Conclusion 7. The Afikepo project's prospects of sustainability lies in the strong alignment with government policies and structures, fostering community and government ownership of nutrition

initiatives. Capacity building efforts, such as training and economic empowerment through VSLA groups, enhance sustainability. However, challenges include ensuring sustained funding, volunteer motivation and timely incentives for care groups.

Cross-cutting issues

Conclusion 8. The Afikepo project demonstrates a strong commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment through its alignment with existing policies and the integration of gender-sensitive methodologies. While the project succeeded in empowering women, evidenced by improved autonomy and decision-making, there were significant gaps in engaging men effectively. The care group model, inherently favouring female participation, led to limited involvement of men, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to engage them. Efforts to train male champions and involve men in project activities were made but faced challenges in achieving significant participation. Afikepo incorporated land resources management and climate-smart agriculture practices in its design and implementation.

Conclusion 9. The Afikepo project promoted climate-smart agriculture and natural resources management. Knowledge and skills were inbuilt in the accompanying Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture manual with stakeholders attesting to the skills they had attained through the project. This included energy saving stoves that were in use in sampled communities qualifying the projects as being environmentally friendly.

4.2 Recommendations

89. At the time of this evaluation, there was no indication from the European Union or stakeholders of a follow-up project for Afikepo. Although there is no Afikepo 2 follow up, additional information from the European Union revealed that there is the nutrition programme under the greening and growing initiative in the ten Afikepo districts, but also of reduced funding magnitude which should provide the sustainability pathway for the Afikepo interventions. Additionally, it is recommended that the Afikepo interventions be integrated within government structures, with oversight and technical support from FAO. Consultations with District Nutrition Coordinating Committees indicated a likelihood of continued Afikepo interventions within district structures, albeit with some financial and technical constraints.
90. To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of these interventions, future project designs should focus on integrating and linking existing Afikepo components with government structures. This includes completing pending elements such as project-based incentives and the rollout of the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture manual. Additionally, it is essential to support districts in incorporating key activities into district implementation plans and area development plans, ensuring they are adequately resourced for effective implementation.
91. To address financial and technical constraints, FAO and UNICEF should advocate for greater funding and pursue partnerships with the private sector. This collaborative approach can enhance the sustainability of nutrition interventions within district structures. Furthermore, a smooth transition should be facilitated by extending FAO and UNICEF's engagement to ensure the integration of key activities and support into district plans, negotiating a gradual exit to maintain project momentum.
92. Building on this rationale, the Evaluation Team suggests the following recommendations and actions:

Recommendation 1. Future project designs should develop an exit strategy with a clear and sustainable funding strategy to support post-project Afikepo interventions. They should prioritize continuous

dialogue with stakeholders at all levels to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of project interventions and enhance gender-sensitive interventions that actively engage men in project activities.

- i. Suggested action 1.1: Ensure that follow-up interventions are culturally appropriate and meet the specific needs of each community. This includes assessing cultural sensitivities and preferences to avoid potential resistance to project initiatives, such as the distribution of certain livestock like rabbits in culturally sensitive areas. *Recommendation to the FAO project management team (Conclusion 2)*
- ii. Suggested action 1.2: Strengthen implementation of targeted strategies for engaging men effectively in project activities while continuing efforts to empower women, thereby ensuring comprehensive gender equality and sustainable project outcomes. *Recommendation to the FAO, UNICEF and DNHA project management teams (Conclusion 8)*
- iii. Suggested action 1.3: Ensure the long-term sustainability of the Afikepo project address funding challenges by diversifying the sources of funds. Motivation of community-based volunteers with incentives and tools for their daily work should be emphasized. This could be achieved by exploring multiple sources of funding, including private sector partnerships. *Recommendation to the FAO and UNICEF project management teams and the Government of Malawi (Conclusion 7)*

Recommendation 2. Develop and implement targeted interventions addressing challenges in achieving optimal consumption and sustainability of animal source foods, livestock ownership and biofortified crop production, while prioritizing community education and empowerment for long-term sustainability and resilience.

- i. Suggested action 2.1: Consider region-specific strategies to improve access and consumption of animal source foods including livestock procurement processes, and obstacles to practicing integrated homestead farming. *Recommendation to the FAO project management team and the Government of Malawi (Conclusion 3)*
- ii. Suggested action 2.2: Consider supporting veterinary coverage and climate and feed adequacy before introducing new livestock, to mitigate mortality rates. *Recommendation to the FAO project management team and the Government of Malawi (Conclusion 3)*
- iii. Suggested action 2.3: Strengthen complementarities and synergies between future agriculture and nutrition projects by i) encouraging integrated planning and coordination through regular joint meetings; ii) developing a unified monitoring and evaluation framework for both agricultural productivity and nutritional outcomes; and iii) create platforms for knowledge sharing between projects.

Recommendation 3. Given the incomplete training of cluster leaders and care group leaders due to the large numbers of people to be trained against the number of scheduled trainings, prioritize and expedite the training process for key community stakeholders.

- i. Suggested action 3.1: Design proactive trainings for cluster leaders and care group leaders to ensure they effectively lead and sustain project interventions. *Recommendation to the FAO and UNICEF project management teams and the Government of Malawi (Conclusions 4)*

Recommendation 4. Enhance community-led hygiene initiatives to promote consistent handwashing practices and improve access to affordable soap and durable sanitation facilities, prioritizing vulnerable households and leveraging existing community structures.

- i. Suggested action 4.1: Upscale and strengthen economic empowerment initiatives, such as VSLA groups, to empower households to invest in hygiene and sanitation infrastructure. *Recommendation to the FAO and UNICEF project management teams (Conclusion 5)*

Recommendation 5. Optimize project management and implementation practices by strengthening coordination mechanisms with stakeholders and improving efficiency of FAO procurement processes and funding disbursement.

- i. Suggested action 5.1: Conduct a comprehensive review of FAO procurement procedures to identify bottlenecks and streamline processes, strengthen monitoring and oversight mechanisms to track funding disbursement and utilization at the district level and provide support and technical assistance to district councils to improve financial reporting and compliance with funding regulations. *Recommendation to the FAO management (Conclusion 13)*

Bibliography

References

- AllAfrica.** 2016. *Malawi: Care Group Model an Avenue for Fostering Nutrition Interventions – Mnenula.* <https://allafrica.com/stories/201607110970.html>
- Concern Worldwide.** 2017. *Feeding toolkit operations research in Malawi.* <https://www.concern.net/knowledge-hub/feeding-toolkit-operations-research-malawi>
- Delegation of the European Union in Malawi.** 2021. *Mid-Term Review of the AFIKEPO Nutrition and Kutukula Ulimi M'Malawi (KULIMA) projects in Malawi Specific Contract N°300005947 FWC (SIEA) 2018 – Lot 1 Final Report July 2021.* Lilongwe.
- FAO.** 2014. *Nutrition-sensitive agriculture. Second International Conference on Nutrition 19-21 November 2014.* Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b00ca7f7-8b8b-47ed-b376-6ee586b6eb02/content>
- FAO.** 2019. *Project evaluation manual for decentralized offices.* Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca4942en/ca4942en.pdf>
- FAO.** 2020. *FAO Policy on Gender Equality.* Rome. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a75d575e-9f7e-45ad-afd9-a2cbfda37ad7/content>
- FAO.** 2021. *Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices annual survey report.* Rome.
- FAO.** 2022. *Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices annual survey report.* Rome.
- Government of Malawi.** 2017. *Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III (2017-2022).* Lilongwe, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. <https://malawi.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Malawi-Growth-and-Development-Strategy-MGDS-III-2017-2022%20%28low%20res%29.pdf>
- ILRI.** 2021. *Brief Focus: Nutrient-rich beans for improved nutrition, incomes, and soil fertility.* Nairobi. <https://www.ilri.org/news/brief-focus-nutrient-rich-beans-improved-nutrition-incomes-and-soil-fertility>
- UNEG.** 2023. *2005 Norms for Evaluation in the UN System (updated 2016 Norms and Standards are available).* New York, United States of America. <https://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>
- UNICEF.** 2024. *Afikepo Endline Survey.* Paris. https://fliphtml5.com/pqhnt/wjyx/AFIKEPO_ENDLINE_REPORT/150/
- USAID.** 2019. *Tiwalere II Project Cooperative Agreement No: AID 612-A-16-00003. Midterm Evaluation Report December 2019.* Washington, DC. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XVCQ.pdf
- WFP.** 2014. *Launch Of Innovative Project To Prevent Stunting Among Children.* Rome. <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/launch-innovative-project-prevent-stunting-among-children>

Additional resources

- Department of Disaster Management Affairs.** 2018. *National Resilience Strategy (2018–2030) Breaking the Cycle of Food Insecurity in Malawi.* Lilongwe.
- EU.** 2021. *Mid-term review of the Afikepo Nutrition And Kutukula Ulimi M'malawi (Kulima) projects in Malawi, Specific Contract N°300005947 Fwc (SIEA) 2018 – Lot 1, Final Report, July 2021.* Brussels.
- FAO.** 2023. *Afikepo project endline evaluation report.* Rome.

FAO. 2022. *Donor report: Afiikepo Nutrition project In Malawi Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Component*. Rome.

Government of Malawi. 2011. *Nutrition Education and Communication Strategy (NECS) 2011-2016*. Lilongwe, Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS.

Government of Malawi. 2015. *National Gender Policy*. Lilongwe, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare.

Government of Malawi. 2015. *National Gender Policy*. 2nd Edition, Lilongwe, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. <https://cepa.rmpportal.net/Library/government-publications/National%20Gender%20Policy%202015.pdf>

Government of Malawi. 2016. *National Agriculture Policy (2017–2022)*. Lilongwe, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development. https://www.canr.msu.edu/fsp/countries/malawi/malawi_national_agriculture_policy_25.11.16.pdf

Government of Malawi. 2017. *The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III- Building a Productive, Competitive and Resilient Nation*. Lilongwe.

Government of Malawi. 2018. *National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy 2018–2022*. Lilongwe, Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS. https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/sites/default/filesstore/MWI_2018_National-Multi-Sector-Nutrition-Policy.pdf

Government of Malawi. 2018. *National Multi-Sector Nutrition Strategic Plan 2018–2022*. Lilongwe, Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS. <https://www.fantaproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/Malawi-National-Nutrition-Strategic%20Plan-2018-2022.pdf>

Government of Malawi. 2018. *National Resilience Strategy (2018 – 2030)*. Lilongwe, Department of Disaster Management Affairs. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/mlw190927.pdf>

Ministry of Health and Population. 2018. *National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy 2018–2022*. Lilongwe. <https://www.fantaproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/Malawi-National-Multi-Sector-Nutrition-Policy-2018-2022.pdf>

National Statistics Office. 2021. *Malawi Poverty Report 2020*. Zomba, Malawi. https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3818/download/51154&ved=2ahUKEwiCj_v3iu-IAxXvxQIHHQv6NWcQFnoECBMQAQ&usq=AOvVaw1sPINQaNp0x20WIJmKgJ8h

Appendix 1. People interviewed

Last name	First name	Institution/agency	Role	Gender
Blantyre Agricultural Development Division				
Kaponya	Innocent	FAO	Regional Manager	M
Katuli	Precious	Blantyre ADD	Agricultural Communications Officer	M
Kumwenda	Getrude	Blantyre ADD	CAEO	F
Kumwenda	Frank	Blantyre ADD	Principal Nutrition Officer/KULIMA Desk Officer	M
Mtogolo	Mathero	Blantyre ADD	Principal Nutrition Officer	M
Mulanje District				
Bisani	Janet	Tapatsidwa and Takonzeka care groups	Promoter	F
Chindebvu	Burton	Changata Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	AEDC- Chairperson	M
Chunda	Chiwe	FAO	M&E	M
Galeta	Jonathan	Changata Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Senior health surveillance assistant, Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee member	M
Gama	Yamikani	Thabwa- EPA	Agriculture Extension and Development Officer	M
Harry	Enelesi	T/A Naseta care groups	Promoter	F
Jana	Linesi	T/A Naseta care groups	Promoter	F
Kafuwa	Mphantso	Thyolo-DAO	Chief Agriculture Officer	M
Kamwiri	Phales	T/A Naseta care groups	Care group Promoter	
Kaombeza	Andy	Mkalozwa Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Senior health surveillance assistant, Chairperson Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	M
Kawonga	Kenny	TO-Health- District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	NC	M
Kongwani		Mulanje-DAO	EMO/KULIMA Desk Officer	M
Lingison	Luka	DSP	Chairperson	M
Makina	Agness	T/A Naseta care groups	Promoter	F
Mangazi	Funny	T/A Naseta care groups	Promoter	F
Mkwayila	Frank	DAECC/Once acre fund	Chairperson/District Manager	M
Mpomba	Olive	T/A Naseta care groups	Promoter	F
Mwambakulu	Misheck	FAO	District Manager	M
Namoni	Falesi	Naseta care groups	T/A Naseta care groups	F
Nedson	Jesica	T/A Naseta care groups	Promoter	F
Nguluwe	Violet	Thabwa EPA- Thunguzi Section	Agricultural Extension and Development Officer	F
Phiri	Loveness	Chankhunda Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	SHA -Chairperson	F
Phwitiko	Lucious	Mkuweruza Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Health surveillance assistant - Chairperson	M
Saindi	Fyson	Tigwirizane community-based FFS	Chairman for community-based FFS	M

Last name	First name	Institution/agency	Role	Gender
Santhe	William	Changata Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Primary education adviser - Member	M
Simola	Laston	T/A Naseta care groups	Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee member (assistant environmental health officer)	
Sizasi	Lasani	Changatai Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Senior health surveillance assistant- Member	M
Supedi	Mercy	Chankhunda Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Agriculture extension development officer - Member	F
Thyolo District				
Timbuka	Moses	FAO	District Nutritionist/Office Manager	M
Zimba	Patrick	Changat ANVV	Senior health surveillance assistant, Chairperson Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	M
Zomba	Marium	T/A Naseta care groups	Promoter	F
Salima District				
Chapola	Stonard	Kambarame Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee-Chairperson	Agriculture Extension Development Officer	M
Chavula	Innocent	NGORA (District Nutrition Coordinating Committee/DAECC)	DSCO	M
Chipazi	Steve	Kambarame Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee-Secretary	Child Protection Officer	M
Gandigandi	Osward	Agriculture (DAECC/District Nutrition Coordinating Committee)	DO Afikepo	M
Jaward	Hassan	Health (District Nutrition Coordinating Committee)	Nutritionist	M
Kachapira	Sophie	Mbalami Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Health surveillance assistant	F
Kalulu	Lusayo	Agriculture (DAECC)	ABO	F
Kaunda	Austin	Agriculture (DAECC)	EMO/D.O	M
Kipomdula	Jayaka	Agriculture (DAECC)	PAO-Crops	M
Liwonde	Oliver	Irrigation (DAECC)	AI	M
M'thombaso	Evidence	NAO (District Nutrition Coordinating Committee)	Nutritionist	M
Majamanda	John	Kambarame Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Health surveillance assistant	M
Maunde	Andrew	FAO	Nutrition Officer	M
Mkandawire	Fostina	Information (District Nutrition Coordinating Committee)	DIO	F
Mlambira	Owen	Forestry (DAECC)	ADFO	M
Mtema	Nathan	Community Development (District Nutrition Coordinating Committee)	ACDO	M
Nyembe	Memory	FAO	District Coordinator	F
Phiri	Boston	Malendo Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Livestock Officer	M

Last name	First name	Institution/agency	Role	Gender
Segula	Beatrice	Agriculture (DAECC)	Planning Officer	F
Soko	Anthony	FAO	M&E Assistant	M
Thozza	Henry	SAGNET (DEACC)	PO	M
Zatha	Laurent	Agriculture (District Nutrition Coordinating Committee)	Nutritionist	M
Mzimba District				
Banda	Julius	Agriculture	PAO	M
Lungu	Glory	Kauzanga care group	Lead mother	F
Magombo	Maria	Chankhomi care group	Lead Mother	F
Mphamba	Rosaline	MDC	NO	F
Mphande	Edwin	Mathandani section-Nthuthumuka care group	Male Champion	M
Ngwira	Tendai	Chankomi care group	Cluster Leader	M
Nyirenda	Opani	CHANCO	District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	M
Nyirenda	Lizzie		District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	F
Nyirenda	Elizabeth	Mathandani section-Nthuthumuka care group	Member	F
Nkhatabay District				
Bulirani	Margaret	NB Council	PNHAO	F
Hauli	Malani	Agriculture	FNO	M
Mwale	Matilda	Ripple Africa	Coordinator	F
Nyirenda	Charity	LISAP	PM	M
Kasungu District				
Banda	Gabriel	T/A Njombwa ASP	Chairman	M
Banda	Vincent	Kaluluma EPA- ASP	Vice chairperson	M
Banda	Jaquiline	Kaluluma EPA- Mtendere care group	Care group leader	F
Beni	Aness	Kasungu District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Nutritionist Health	
Charles	Chagoma Gondwe	Kayuni care group	Cluster leader	M
Chingoli	Ben	Kasungu District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	FNO	
Chunga	Robert	Kaluluma EPA- Mtendere care group	Care group Leader	M
Fukurani	Jenifer	Mbapechi care group	Cluster Leader	F
Gondwe	Emery	Kasungu District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	NHNO	
Kamanga	Davie	T/A Njombwa ASP	Member	M
Kaonga	Geofrey	Temwanani care group	Cluster leader	
Kayuni	Monica	Atutere care group	Cluster leader	F
Manyanje	Gladys	Kasungu District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	PHNAO	
Mapala	Jimmy	Kaluluma EPA- ASP	Secretary	M
Mbeye	Underson	Kaluluma EPA- Mtendere care group	Promoter	M
Mlenga	Haswell	Kasungu District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Nutritionist FAO	

Last name	First name	Institution/agency	Role	Gender
Msuku	Alinafe	Kaluluma EPA- Mtendere care group	Cluster Leader	F
Mulinde	Hastings	Kasungu District Nutrition Coordinating Committee	EMO	
Mwalwanda	Hamily	Temwanani care group	Cluster leader	M
Phiri	Andreya	Kaluluma EPA- Mtendere care group	Cluster leader	M
Simfukwe	Moreen	Temwanani care group	Cluster leader	F
Zimba	Joseph	CRS- Kasungu district office	Project Officer	M
Zimba	Moses	Kaluluma EPA- Mtendere care group	Cluster leader	M
Karonga District				
Gwinda	Billy	Lupembe EPA Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Primary School Teacher	M
Kimanira	Micheal	Kulipula Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Veterinary Officer	M
Mwagomba	Mpambo	Lupembe Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Health surveillance assistant, Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee member	M
Mwagomba	Luke	Kulipula Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Health surveillance assistant	M
Mwamlima	Gilbert	Kulipula Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Vice chair- AEDC	M
Mwangonde	Joseph	Kulipula Village Nutrition Coordinating Committee	Health surveillance assistant	M
Sichali	Kamfosi	Lupembe Area Nutrition Coordinating Committee	AEDC	M

Appendix 2. Evaluation matrix

Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
1. Relevance: To what extent are the Afiikepo project objectives relevant to the needs and priorities of the targeted population and stakeholders?					
1.1 To what extent was the Afiikepo project aligned to national priorities as outlined in policies and plans?					
1.1.1 Alignment of Afiikepo objectives ⁸ and activities to national policies, strategies and plans	Extent to which the results and proposed activities outlined in the project contribute to regional and national priorities as expressed in policies, strategies and plans.	Evidence of matching between Afiikepo results, activities and regional and national priorities and objectives, as outlined in national government policies, plans and strategies. Level of consultation, participation and ownership of government stakeholders in project design.	Reports: Afiikepo design documents Budget allocations and Budget Revisions 2021 Mid Term Report 1 000 Special Days National Nutrition Education and Communication (NECS) 2012–17, National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan 2007–2012. KIIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project staff, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO District Officers • Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer (PNHO) • Department of Agriculture Extension Services (food and nutrition Officer) • Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) 	Review of policy and documents Semi-structured interviews	Content analysis (documents, interview notes) Triangulation across data collection methods and sources
1.2 To what extent was the Afiikepo project relevant to the needs of beneficiaries?					
1.2.1. Relevance of Afiikepo to the needs of beneficiaries	Extent to which the project activities were relevant to their needs.	Perception of stakeholders on relevance of Afiikepo to the needs of beneficiaries. Perceptions of beneficiaries on the relevance of the project activities to their needs.	Reports: Afiikepo design documents, District Development Plans, 2021 Mid-term Report, Malawi MDG Endline Survey 2014, Malawi Demographic Health	Document review Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions (FGDs)	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection

⁸ 1) To increase and diversify dietary intake of safe and nutritious foods to achieve optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts. 2) To strengthen multisectoral governance of nutrition contributing both to national and district development planning and monitoring as well as informing national level policies.

Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
			<p>Survey 2015/16, Malawi Micronutrient Survey (MNS) 2015–16 Second Integrated Household Survey 2004–2005</p> <p>KIIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO District Officers • Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer • Department of Agriculture Extension Services (food and nutrition Officer) • Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) <p>Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level • Care groups 		methods and sources
1.3 To what extent did the project design and FAO's project management contribute to effective implementation?					
Degree of learning and FAO and partners' technical assistance	Extent to which previous learnings have been reflected in the design of the intervention. Extent to which FAO technical assistance facilitated greater or hindered project effectiveness.	Evidence that design and implementation was informed by previous learnings especially from the mid-term review (MTR) recommendations. Perceptions of stakeholders on the effect of FAO technical assistance on project effectiveness.	<p>Reports: Afiikepo design documents, District Development Plans, 2021 Mid-term Report</p> <p>KIIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO District Officers • Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer • Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) 	Review of project documents Semi-structured interviews	Content analysis (documents, interview notes) Triangulation across data collection methods and sources

Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) 		
2 Effectiveness: To what extent were the expected Afikepo project results achieved?					
2.1 To what extent did Afikepo activities and outputs contribute to the expected outcomes?					
2.1.1. Degree of Implementation of planned activities	Extent to which the project implemented the activities.	Analysis of any differences between planned and implemented activities.	Reports Project progress reports Annual Reports (year 1-year 4) Project Workplans KII <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project staff, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level Care groups 	Document review Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources
2.1.2 Achievement of project planned outputs and contributions to outcomes and factors influencing results	Extent to which the project has achieved its planned outputs and contributed to outcomes.	Analysis of any difference between planned and effectively achieved outputs per each indicator in the logframe. Evidence of progress towards outcome level achievements per each indicator in the logframe. List of factors affecting results and why. Perception of stakeholders, on the quality of outputs and outcomes. How has the project contributed to change? What are the most important improvements mentioned?	Reports Project progress reports Annual Reports (year 1-year 4) Project Workplans KII <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer 	Document review Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources

Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level Care groups 		
4. Sustainability: Will the results achieved continue beyond the life of the Afiikepo project?					
4.1 To what extent are the achievements(outputs and outcomes) of Afiikepo likely to be sustainable?					
4.1.1. National, district and community ownership, to Afiikepo results	Extent to which systems have been put in place to build on project's achievements.	<p>Existence of an exit plan.</p> <p>Evidence of changes and gaps in government/national capacities, systems and resource allocations.</p> <p>Perception of ownership within government, communities and individual FAO farmers, and supported activities.</p> <p>Evidence and incentives for partners to continue playing their role.</p>	Reports: Afiikepo design documents Budget allocations and Budget Revisions 2021 Mid-term Report KIIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUNAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level Care groups 	Document review Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources
4.2 To what extent have project efforts promoted visibility and added value to the project beneficiaries?					
4.2.1 Degree of visibility of the Afiikepo project	Extent to which Afiikepo has created greater visibility about	Perception of the added value of Afiikepo at various levels (national, district, community).	Reports Project progress reports Annual Reports (year 1-tear 4)	Semi-structured interviews	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis

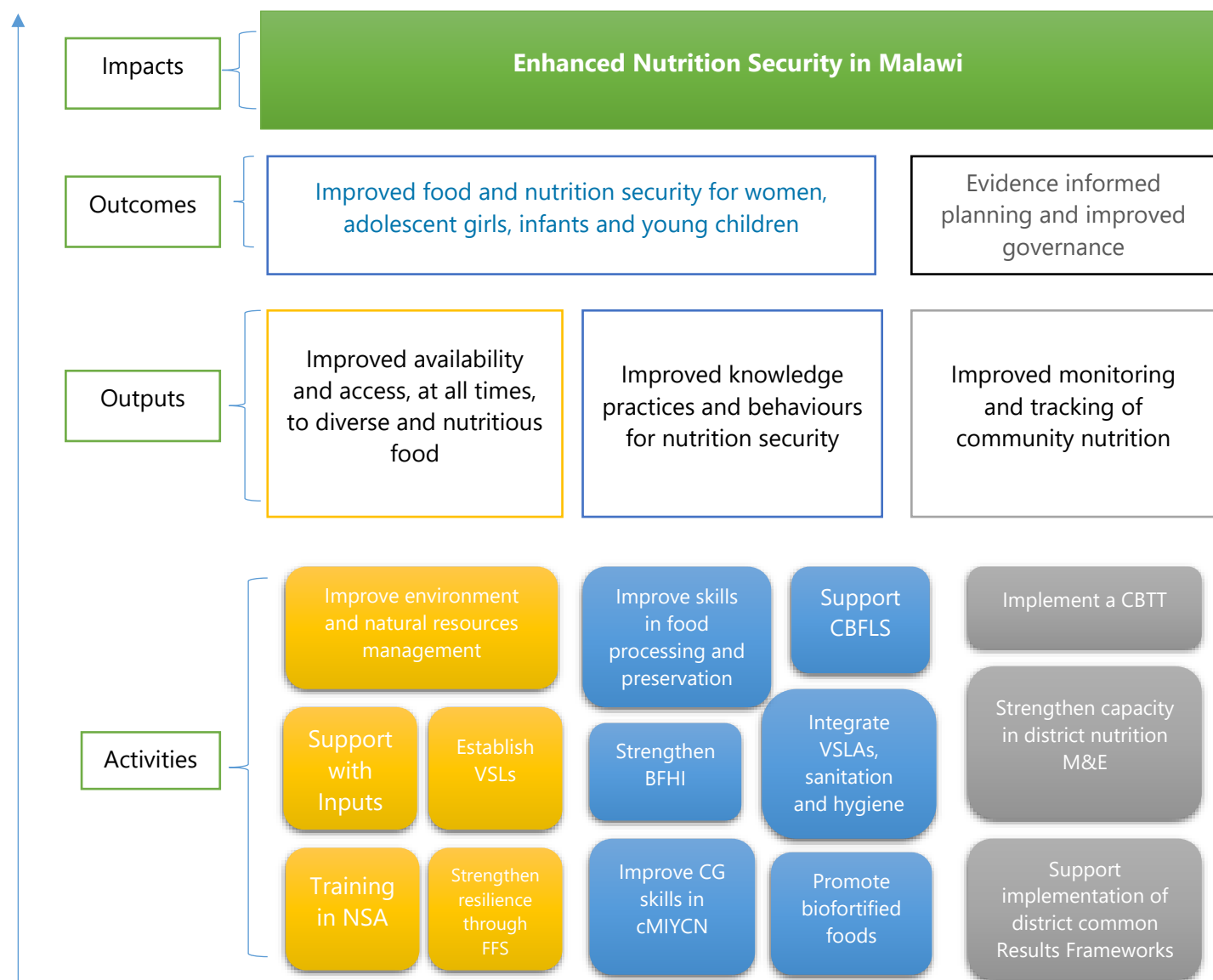
Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
	Farmer Field School (FFS) approach.	Level of engagement of farmers in the Afikepo activities. Level of uptake of Afikepo activities at national and district level (government, partners)?	Project Workplans KII <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level Care groups 	Focus group discussions	
3. Efficiency: How efficient was FAO at delivering the Afikepo project in terms of expenditure and timeliness?					
3.1 To what extent were Afikepo activities implemented in terms of timeliness and cost-effectiveness?					
3.1.1 Adherence to time frame	Extent to which Afikepo activities have been delivered as in the annual plans.	Evidence that activity and output delivery met the Afikepo annual plan time frame. Evidence of budget/funds delivered as planned. Evidence that beneficiaries received timely and regular support. Evidence that adjustments in timeframes were duly justified and in accordance with changes in context.	Reports: Afikepo design documents Budget allocations and Budget Revisions 2021 Mid-term Report KIIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u>	Document review Semi-structured interviews Focus group discussions	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources

Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level Care groups 		
3.2 To what extent were FAO's activities cost-efficient in delivery of Afiikepo activities?					
3.2.1 Cost-efficiency of Afiikepo implementation	Extent to which Afiikepo has been able to maximize benefits with strategies, synergies between the two projects, and partnerships to manage cost.	<p>Comparison of expenditure and cost. Evidence of complementarities and collaboration with line Ministries and other partners / other European Union funded projects, etc.).</p> <p>Perception of stakeholders on Afiikepo cost-efficiency and FAO support to ensuring good use of public resources.</p>	<p>Reports: Afiikepo design documents Budget allocations and Budget Revisions 2021 Mid-term Report Extensions Services Strategy</p> <p>KIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) 	Document review Semi-structured interviews	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources
5. What are the key lessons generated by Afiikepo project?					
5.1. Documentation and sharing of lessons	Extent to which Afiikepo has documented knowledge, promoted structured lesson learning, sharing between project partners and interested groups.	Existence and quality of a documentation and communication plan. Stakeholder perceptions on lessons generated by the Afiikepo project.	<p>Reports: Afiikepo design documents Budget allocations and Budget Revisions 2021 Mid-term Report</p> <p>KIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) 	Document review Semi-structured interviews	Content analysis Qualitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources

Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) 		
6. Cross-cutting issues: To what extent has the Afikepo project incorporated gender and social inclusion considerations, and environment and social safeguards in design and implementation?					
6.1 Gender equality, youth and vulnerable groups	Extent to which Afikepo design was informed by gender and social inclusion considerations. Extent to which project outcomes and activities prioritized gender equality, women's empowerment and gender transformation.	Evidence that Afikepo design was based on a deliberate gender analysis and identified the main challenges and opportunities. Evidence that Afikepo interventions sought to contribute to positive changes in gender roles and power relations, was inclusive of youth and other vulnerable groups. Perceptions and views of stakeholders of Afikepo approach to gender and women's empowerment.	Reports: Afikepo design documents Budget allocations and Budget Revisions 2021 Mid-term Report FAO, UNICEF, Country Office Gender action plan KIIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR <u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAO District Officers Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level Care groups 	Document review Structured interviews Focus group discussions	Content analysis Quantitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources
6.2 Environment and social safeguards	Extent to which potential effects on environment and considerations of climate have been taken in account in the project design and implementation.	Degree of integration of environment, climate and potential effects on environment in the project design. Level of integration of environment and climate in project activity programming and implementation. Stakeholder's perception of positive and negative effects of the project implementation on environment.	Reports: Afikepo design documents Budget allocations and Budget Revisions 2021 Mid-term Report FAO, UNICEF & GIZ CO Gender action plan KIIs: <u>NATIONAL LEVEL</u> FAO project personnel, UNICEF, project personnel, LUANAR	Document review Structured interviews Focus group discussions	Content analysis Quantitative data analysis Triangulation across data collection methods and sources

Dimensions of analysis	Lines of inquiry	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis
			<u>DISTRICT LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAO District Officers • Principal Nutrition and HIV Officer • Department of Agriculture Extension Services (Food and Nutrition Officer) • Ministry of Local Government (District Commissioner/District Planning Director) Focus groups <u>COMMUNITY LEVEL</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees at Traditional Authority Level • Care groups 		

Appendix 3. Afikepo theory of change



CG: care group
 CBFLS: community-based feeding and learning sessions
 cMIYCN: community maternal, infant and young child nutrition
 BFHI: Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative
 CBTT: community bases tracking tool
 FFS: Farmer Field Schools
 NSA: Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture
 VSLAs: Village Savings and Loans Associations

Appendix 4. Afikepo Results Framework

Performance indicator				Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
Goal: To enhance nutrition security in Malawi									
Impact	1	Imp.1	Percentage of children less than 5 years of age who are stunted disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 30.9% G: 26.0% A: 28.4%	25.0%	Baseline Survey, Endline Survey, Demographic Health Surveys (DHS) and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)	Baseline: 2017–18 DHS/MICS: 2015/16 and 2020/21 Endline: 2022	No major and consecutive disasters and shocks that would undermine expected results at district level. In addition, it's assumed that other components which contributed to reduction in stunting such as WASH will be implemented by other partners. Minimum conditions for safety of agriculture and health personnel at district level supporting message dissemination – COVID-19. Willingness of the community to observe district health officer guidance for COVID-19 prevention and management.
	2.1	Imp.2	Percentage of women of reproductive age (15–49 yrs.) who are thin based on body mass index (BMI<18.5)	None	4.1%	<3%			
	2.10	Imp.3	Percentage of children less than 5 years of age who are underweight disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 9.0% G: 8.3% A: 8.7%	<5%			
	2.11	Imp.4	Percentage of live births that weigh less than 2 500 grams disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 16.8% G: 18.2% A: 17.5%	<15%			
Strategic Objective 1: Increase and diversify dietary intake of safe and nutritious foods to achieve optimal nutrition for women of childbearing age, adolescent girls, infants and young children in the targeted districts									
Outcome	1.1	SO1.1	Percentage of Infants and young children (0– < 24 months) who were put to the breast within one hour of birth disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 87.3% G: 87.6% A: 87.4%	>90%	Baseline Survey, End Line Survey and knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP)	Annual	No major and consecutive disasters and shocks that would undermine expected results at district level. In addition, it's assumed that other components which contributed to reduction in stunting such as WASH will be implemented by other partners. Minimum conditions for safety of agriculture and health personnel at district level
	1.2	SO1.2	Percentage of infant (0 – < 6 months) who are fed exclusively with breast milk by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 61.6% G: 60.2% A: 60.8%	80%			

Appendix 4. Afikepo Results Framework

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
1.33	SO1.3	Percentage of women of reproductive age (15–49 yrs.) meeting the minimum dietary diversity (MDD-W)	None	30.4%	46%			supporting message dissemination – COVID-19. Willingness of the community to observe district health officer guidance for COVID-19 prevention and management.
1.3	SO1.4	Percentage of infants and young children (6 – < 24 Months) meeting the minimum dietary diversity disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 31.1% G: 29.0% A: 30.0%	42%			
1.33	SO1.5	Percentage of adolescent girls (15–19 yrs.) meeting the minimum dietary diversity (MDD-W)	None	32.2%	48%			
1.35	SO1.6	Percentage of women of reproductive age (15–49 yrs.) consuming animal source foods	None	47.5%	59%			
1.36	SO1.7	Percentage of infants and young children (6 – < 24 months) consuming animal source foods disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 26.0% G: 26.5% A: 26.2%	42%			
1.4	SO1.8	Percentage of infants and young children (6 – < 24 months) who receive the minimum acceptable diet disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 15.7% G: 14.0% A: 14.8%	30%			
1.4.5	SO1.9	Percentage of infants and young children (6 – < 24 Months) meeting the minimum meal frequency disaggregated by sex	Sex: Male and Female	B: 43.8% G: 44.7% A: 44.3%	60%			

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
1.4.6	SO1.10	Percentage of infants and young children (6 – < 24 months) consuming biofortified foods (maize, iron fortified bean, orange fleshed sweet potatoes) promoted by the project	Sex: Male and Female	2.7%	20%			
1.4.7	SO1.11	Percentage of households consuming biofortified foods (maize, iron fortified bean, orange fleshed sweet potatoes) promoted by the project	None	13.1%	25%			
1.4.8	SO1.12	Percentage of adolescent girls (15–19 yrs.) consuming animal source foods	None	51.1%	63%			
1.5.1	SO1.13	Percentage of households practicing integrated homestead farming - 1. Small livestock's; 2. Veg growing; 3. Fish farming; 4. Crop production (at least 3)	None	9.3%	21%			
1.5.2	SO1.14	Proportion of households producing biofortified crops (maize, iron fortified bean, orange fleshed sweet potatoes)	None	10.2%	22%			
1.5.3	SO1.15	Percentage of households that own a	None	40.0%	50%			

Appendix 4. Afikepo Results Framework

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions	
		large/small livestock (cow, sheep, or goat) and/or at least 5 chicken							
1.6.4.1	SO1.16	Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (% of women achieving empowerment)	None	47.2%	>60%				
Output 1.1: Improved availability and accessibility of affordable, adequate, diversified and nutritious foods for all seasons for the target group									
Output	1.1.1.1	OUT1.1	Number of frontline workers (agriculture extension development officer, agriculture veterinary officers, senior health surveillance assistants, assistant environmental health officers, community development assistants, primary education advisers, child protection workers, health surveillance assistant) trained through Afikepo in production of various diversified foods, business development and natural resource management	Sex: Male and Female	0	1 500	Project Monitoring Reports	Semi-annually	Minimum conditions for safety of agriculture and health personnel at district level supporting message dissemination – COVID-19. Willingness of the community to observe district health officer guidance for COVID-19 prevention and management.
	1.1.1.2	OUT1.2	Number of community-based farmers (care group promoters and lead farmers) trained through Afikepo in production of various	Sex: Male and Female	0	3 375			

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
		diversified foods, business development and natural resources management						
1.1.1.3	OUT1.3	Number of cluster leads trained through Afikepo in production of various diversified foods, business development and natural resources management	Sex: Male and Female	0	67 500			
1.1.2.1	OUT1.4	Number of households benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	None	0	675 000			
1.1.2.2	OUT1.5	Number of under-5s (by sex) benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	Sex: Male and Female	0	430 650			
1.1.2.3	OUT1.6	Number of women of childbearing age benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	None	0	721 710			
1.1.2.4	OUT1.7	Number of adolescent girls benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	None	0	392 040			
1.1.3	OUT1.8	Number of Village Savings Loans Associations (VSLAs)	None	0	1 000			Minimum conditions for safety of agriculture and health personnel at district level supporting message dissemination – COVID-19. Willingness of the community to observe district health officer guidance for COVID-19 prevention and management.

Appendix 4. Afikepo Results Framework

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions	
		developed through Afikepo support							
Output 1.2: Increased utilization of adequate, diversified, safe and nutritious foods of the Malawi six food groups for the target groups taking account of seasonality, cultural acceptability and preferences									
Output	1.2.1.1	OUT2.1	Number of frontline workers (agriculture extension development officers, agriculture veterinary officers, senior health surveillance assistants, assistant environmental health officers, community development assistants, primary education advisers, child protection workers, health surveillance assistants) trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	Sex: Male and Female	0	3 000	Project Monitoring Reports	Semi-annually	The Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS (DNHA) maintains full coordination of the mandate it had while under the Office of the President and Cabinet despite the move to Ministry of Health. Availability of information, education and communication (IEC) materials coupled with implementation of massive information dissemination campaigns. Minimum conditions for safety of agriculture and health personnel at district level supporting message dissemination – COVID-19. Willingness of the community to observe district health officer guidance for COVID-19 prevention and management.
	1.2.1.2	OUT2.2	Number of community-based farmers (care group promoters and lead farmers) trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	Sex: Male and Female	0	4 200			

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
1.2.1.3	OUT2.3	Number of cluster leads trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	Sex: Male and Female	0	67 500			
1.2.2.1	OUT2.4	Number of different key maternal, infant and young child nutrition messages disseminated	None	0	5			
1.2.2.2	OUT2.5	Number of different key hygiene and sanitation messages disseminated	None	0	6			
1.2.3.1	OUT2.6	Percentage of primary caregivers washing hands (with soap) at the four recommended critical times including COVID-19 related activities	None	25.1%	45.0%	Baseline Survey, End Line Survey and KAP	Annually	
1.2.3.2	OUT2.7	Percentage of households using improved sanitation services	None	61.6%	70.0%			
1.2.3.3	OUT2.8	Percentage of households having hand washing places, with water and soap or other cleansing agent including COVID-19 related activities	None	22.6%	31%			
1.2.3.6	OUT2.9	Number of households reached on COVID-19 through messaging on	None	0	470 000	Project Monitoring Reports		

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
		prevention and access to services						
1.2.3.7	OUT2.10	Percentage of respondents reached with accessible information who know what to do in case they demonstrate symptoms of the disease	None	0	70%			
1.2.3.8	OUT2.11	Percentage of respondents reached with accessible information who recall at least 3 preventive practices	None	0	70%			
1.2.3.9	OUT2.12	Number of children 6–59 months screened for acute malnutrition in the emergency context (cholera, TC Freddy, dry spell, etc.)	Sex: Male and Female	0	170 000			
1.2.3.10	OUT2.13	Number of primary caregivers of children 0–23 months receiving IYCF counselling in the emergency context (cholera, TC Freddy, dry spell, etc.)	Sex: Male and Female	0	60 000			
1.2.3.11	OUT2.14	Number of people accessing safe water couple through chlorination with hygiene messages	Sex: Male and Female	0	30 000			

Performance indicator				Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
Strategic Objective 2: To strengthen multisectoral governance of nutrition contributing both to national and district development planning and monitoring as well as informing national level policies.									
Outcome	3.1.1.1	SO2.1	Number of districts submitting data using the national nutrition information system on timely basis	None	0	10	Project Monitoring Reports	Annual	DNHA maintains full coordination of the mandate it had while under the Office of the President and Cabinet despite the move to Ministry of Health. Minimum conditions for safety of agriculture and health personnel at district level supporting message dissemination – COVID-19. Willingness of the community to observe district health officer guidance for COVID-19 prevention and management.
	3.1.1.1	SO2.2	Number of districts implementing community-based nutrition behaviour monitoring and tracking system	None	0	10			
	3.1.2.1	SO2.3	Number of districts conducting weekly surveillance on functionality of markets and food availability to anticipate risk of food and nutrition insecurity in Malawi amidst the COVID-19 emergency	None	0	10			
Output 2.1: An effective food and nutrition security information system established at national and district levels, which complements other existing information systems and contributes to development planning and monitoring mechanisms									
Output	3.2.1.1	OUT3.1	Number of districts conducting quarterly joint District Nutrition Coordinating Committees and District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinating CommitteeField Monitoring	None	0	10	Project Monitoring Reports	Semi-annually	DNHA maintains full coordination mandate it had while under the Office of the President and Cabinet despite the move to Ministry of Health.

Appendix 4. Afikepo Results Framework

Performance indicator			Data disaggregation	Baseline	Target (Dec. 2023)	Means of verification	Frequency	Assumptions
3.1.2.2	OUT3.2	Number of districts conducting routine data quality audits semi-annually	None	0	10			
3.1.2.3	OUT3.3	Percentage of care groups reporting data on timely basis	None	0	80%			
3.1.2.4	OUT3.4	Percentage of Area Nutrition Coordinating Committees with Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Action Plans	None	0	80%			

Appendix 5. Project progress at output level against agreed upon end-of-project targets

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification of	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
Output	Indicator		-2018	-2023	(Dec 2023)				
Output 1: Availability and accessibility to affordable, adequate, diversified and nutritious foods for all seasons improved for the target groups	Percentage of children less than 5 years of age who are stunted disaggregated by sex	Boys	30.9%	29.3%	25.0%	Partially achieved	Baseline Report Mid-term Evaluation Report Endline Report	Achieved 1.1% decrease in childhood stunting.	Pale green
		Girls	26.0%	25.3%	25.0%				
		All	28.4%	27.3%	25.0%				
	Percentage of women of reproductive age (15–49 yrs.) who are thin based on body mass index (BMI < 18.5)	None	4.1%	6.0%	3.0%	Not achieved		Not achieved as the percentage of women with BMI < 18.5 increased by 2.4%.	Red
	Percentage of children less than 5 years of age who are underweight disaggregated by sex	Boys	9.0%	11.9%	5.0%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification of	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
		Girls	8.3%	10.3%	5.0%				
		All	8.7%	11.1%	5.0%				
	Percentage of live births that weigh less than 2 500 grams disaggregated by sex	Boys	16.8%	10.1%	15.0%	Achieved		Achieved and the target was surpassed by 3.4%.	Green
		Girls	18.2%	13.1%	15.0%				
		All	17.5%	11.6%	15.0%				
	Percentage of infants and young children (0– < 24 months) age who were put to the breast within one hour of birth disaggregated by sex	Boys	87.3%	88.3%	90%	Partially achieved		Partially achieved as the percentage of children less than 24 months who were put to the breast within the first hour increased but failed to meet the target by 1.7%. The percentage of infants and young children who were exclusively	Pale green
		Girls	87.6%	88.4%	90%				
		All	87.4%	88.3%	90%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
	Percentage of infant (0– < 6 months) of age who are fed exclusively with breast milk by sex	Boys	61.60%	71.1%	80%			breastfed increased at endline but failed to meet the target with 7.7%. Percentage of women of reproductive age meeting MDD was partially achieved with a 12.9% increase.	
		Girls	60.20%	73.6%	80%			Percentage of children meeting MDD increased by 10.8%.	
		All	60.80%	72.3%	80%			Percentage of adolescent girls meeting MDD increased by 8.5%.	
Output 2: Increased utilization of adequate, diversified, safe and nutritious foods of the Malawi six	Percentage of women of reproductive age (15–49 yrs.) meeting the minimum dietary diversity (MDD-W)	None	30.4%	43.3%	46%			Percentage of women of reproductive age (15–49 yrs.)	

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means of verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
food groups for the target groups taking into account seasonality, cultural acceptability and preferences.	Percentage of infants and young children (6– < 24 months) meeting the minimum dietary diversity disaggregated by sex	Boys	31.1%	41.0%	42%			consuming animal source foods slightly increased by 1.6%.	
		Girls	29.0%	40.5%	42%				
		All	30.0%	40.8%	42%				
	Percentage of adolescent girls (15–19 yrs.) meeting the minimum dietary diversity (MDD-W)	None	32.2%	40.7%	48%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
	Percentage of women of reproductive age (15–49 yrs.) consuming animal source foods	None	47.5%	49.1%	59%				
	Percentage of infants and young children (6– < 24 months) consuming animal source foods disaggregated by sex	Boys	26.6%	42.9%	42%	Achieved		Project target achieved and surpassed it by 1.6%.	Green
		Girls	26.5%	44.3%	42%				
		All	26.2%	43.6%	42%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
	Percentage of infants and young children (6– < 24 months) who receive the minimum acceptable diet disaggregated by sex	Boys	15.7%	28.1%	30%	Partially achieved		This was partially achieved as the percentage increased by 12.2%.	Pale green
		Girls	14.0%	27.0%	30%				
		All	14.8%	27.6%	30%	Partially achieved		The percentage of infants and young children meeting MMF increased by 14%.	Pale green
	Percentage of infants and young children (6– < 24 months) meeting the minimum meal frequency (MMF) disaggregated by sex	Boys	43.8%	59.6%	60%				
		Girls	44.7%	57.0%	60%				
		All	44.3%	58.3%	60%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
	Percentage of infants and young children (6– < 24 months) consuming biofortified foods (maize, iron fortified bean, orange fleshed sweet potatoes) promoted by the project	Boys	2.7%	21.0%	20%	Achieved		This was achieved as the percentage of infants and young children consuming biofortified foods increased by 16.4%.	Green
		Girls	2.7%	18.4%	20%	Partially achieved		This was partially achieved as the percentage of households consuming biofortified foods increased by 9.6%.	Pale green
		All	2.7%	19.7%	20%				
	Percentage of households consuming biofortified foods (maize, iron fortified bean, orange fleshed sweet potatoes) promoted by the project	None	13.1%	22.7%	25%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
	Percentage of adolescent girls (15–19 yrs.) consuming animal source foods	None	41.4%	41.6%	63%	Not achieved		Percentage of adolescent girls consuming animal source foods was not achieved with a 21.4% deficit.	Red
	Percentage of households practising integrated homestead farming - 1. Small livestock's; 2. Veg growing; 3. Fish farming; 4. Crop production (at least 3)	None	9.3%	16.2%	21%	Partially achieved		Partially achieved as the percentage of households practising integrated homestead farming (IHF) failed to meet the target by 4.8%. The proportion of households producing biofortified foods crops increased by 11%.	Pale green
	Proportion of households producing biofortified crops (maize, iron fortified bean, orange fleshed sweet potatoes)	None	10.2%	21.2%	22%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
	Percentage of households that own a large/small livestock (cow, sheep, or goat) and/or at least 5 chickens.	None	40.0%	57.1%	50%	Achieved		The percentage of households owning large/small livestock increased by 17.1% beating the target by 7.1%.	Green
Additional Indicators	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) (percentage of women achieving empowerment)	None	47.2%	58.8%	60.0%	Partially achieved		Women were empowered in agriculture extension with 1.2% below the target.	Pale green
	Percentage of primary caregivers washing hands (with soap) at the 4 recommended critical times including COVID-19 related activities	None	25.1%	44.0%	45.0%				

Appendix 5. Programme progress at output level against agreed upon end-of-programme targets

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means of verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
	Percentage of households using improved sanitation services	None	61.6%	60.1%	70.0%				
	Percentage of households having hand washing places, with water and soap or other cleansing agent including COVID-19 related activities	None	22.6%	27.1%	31%				

Results chain		Data disaggregation	Baseline	Endline	Target	Progress towards target	Means verification	Status as of December 2023	Flag as of December 2023
Output 3: An effective food and nutrition security information system established at national and district levels, which complements other existing information systems and contributes to development planning and monitoring mechanisms.	Development of an effective food and nutrition security information system established at national and district levels, which complements other existing information systems and contributes to development planning and monitoring mechanisms.	None			Information systems developed and shared with national, district and community level structures.	Achieved		Achieved as of December 2023 Nutrition Information Systems were set up and used.	Green

Appendix 6. Summary of Afikepo outcome and output indicators at endline

Output indicator	Sex aggregation	Baseline	Target	Endline
Number of frontline workers (agriculture extension development officer, agriculture veterinary officers, senior health surveillance assistants, assistant environmental health officers, community development assistants, primary education advisers, child protection workers, health surveillance assistant trained through Afikepo and graduated in production of various diversified foods, business development and natural resources management)	Sex: Male and Female	0	1 500	1 368
Number of community-based farmers (care group promoters and lead farmers) trained through Afikepo and graduated in production of various diversified foods, business development and natural resources management	Sex: Male and Female	0	3 375	3 194
Number of cluster leads trained through Afikepo and graduated in production of various diversified foods, business development and natural resources management	Sex: Male and Female	0	67 500	45 724
Number of care group leaders trained through Afikepo and graduated in production of various diversified foods, business development and natural resources management	Sex: Male and Female	0	6 750	4 506
Number of households trained through Afikepo and graduated in production of various diversified foods, business development and natural resources management	None	0	675 000	51 532
Number of households benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	None	0	675 000	667 800
Number of under-5s (by sex) benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	Sex: Male and Female	0	430 650	426 056
Number of women of childbearing ages benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	None	0	721 710	654 444
Number of adolescent girls benefiting from nutrition extension services supported by Afikepo	None	0	392 040	387 858
Number of people (households) reached on COVID-19 through messaging on prevention and access to services	None	0	470 000	No data
Number of respondents (households) reached with accessible information who know what to do in case they demonstrate symptoms of the disease	None	0	470 000	No data
Number of respondents (households) reached with accessible information who recall at least 3 preventive practices	None	0	470 000	No data

Key: Key: **Dark green** = Progress equal to or above indicator target; **Light green** = Progress above baseline but below indicator target; **Red** = Progress below baseline and below indicator target

Source: FAO. 2023. *Evaluation of the project "Afikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi (Pillars 1 and 4)"*. Project Results Framework 2023. Rome.

Output indicator	Sex aggregation	Baseline	Target	Endline
Number of frontline workers (agriculture extension development officer, agriculture veterinary officers, senior health surveillance assistants, assistant environmental health officers, community development assistants, primary education advisers, child protection workers, health surveillance assistants) trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	Sex: Male and Female	0	2 000	3 164
Number of community-based farmers (care group promoters and lead farmers) trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	Sex: Male and Female	0	3 375	4 506
Number of cluster leads trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	Sex: Male and Female	0	67 500	51 532
Number of care group leaders trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	Sex: Male and Female	0	6 750	4 813
Number of households trained in different appropriate technologies on diversified food utilization, processing and preparation, safety and hygiene	None	0	67 500	49 800
Number of different key maternal, infant and young child nutrition messages disseminated	None	0	5	5
Number of different key hygiene and sanitation messages disseminated	None	0	6	5

Key: Key: **Dark green** = Progress equal to or above indicator target; **Light green** = Progress above baseline but below indicator target; **Red** = Progress below baseline and below indicator target

Source: FAO. 2023. *Evaluation of the project "Afikepo Nutrition Programme in Malawi (Pillars 1 and 4)"*. Project Results Framework 2023. Rome.

Office of Evaluation
evaluation@fao.org
www.fao.org/evaluation

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy