

PROGRAM SNAP SHOT

WELLNESS AND AGRICULTURE FOR LIFE ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM IN MALAWI

CRS' Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement (WALA) program is helping reduce food insecurity in almost 215,000 chronically food insecure households in Southern Malawi. WALA is a 5 year (2009-2014), \$80 million integrated food security program funded by USAID's Food for Peace and managed by a consortium of nine NGOs, led by CRS Malawi.

PROGRAM GOALS

CRS aims to reduce food insecurity in Southern Malawi by:

- 1) **Strengthening Resilience** through building the capacity of 273 targeted communities to effectively prepare for and cope with shocks and hazards affecting food security;
- 2) **Building Livelihoods** by increasing the earning potential of 147,500 smallholder farming households; and
- 3) **Improving Nutrition and Health** by improving Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) practices of mothers and other child caregivers in 170,724 vulnerable households.
- 4) **Care groups:** The program is working with more than 160,000 households in care groups, which use peer education to promote maternal and child health and nutrition, sanitation and hygiene practices. These households have improved their ability to use available foods to provide a nutritious diet for their families.
- 5) **Village Savings and Loans:** VSL groups are helping community members build savings. These groups are community managed and allow members to borrow money from a common fund. Over 100,000 households are involved in these community managed groups and more than 64 percent have borrowed money from these funds for productive purposes.

THE WALA APPROACH

The project is achieving its goals through the following activities:

- 1) **Irrigation:** Constructing small-scale irrigation structures to promote sustainable agricultural practices. Currently, 5,241 farmers are harvesting from irrigation sites using locally found materials and local skills and expertise.
- 2) **Improved Agronomic Practices:** WALA has found that training farmers on crop production techniques and linking them to commercial markets can lead to increased crop yields and incomes. For example, farmers with crops under conservation agriculture performed better than those not under the technologies, with most of these farmers realizing an additional 4-15 bags of maize (200 to 750 kg).
- 3) **Agriculture and Natural Resources Management:** WALA is giving farmers necessary resources so they are better able to respond to disasters, adapt to climate change, improve their household health and nutrition, and increase their incomes through agriculture and natural resources management. Currently, 193 communities now have a disaster early warning and response system in place.

WALA is increasing household resilience to the 2012 drought

WALA has helped increase the food security of households, in some cases up to 12 months, through improving drought resistance farming practices, natural resource management, nutrition practices and access to savings and loans.

Households participating in the project have increased adoption of drought resilient farming practices and improved asset management through savings and loans, while households in non-project areas are resorting to negative coping strategies in the face of the drought.

