

Jackson Kimu is 49 years old and was trained by WALA as an ACA in 2010. He is now an ASP in Machinga District, supporting 136 farmers. Jackson makes around \$25 USD per month for the services he provides to the farmer network. The money he has made has helped him to increase his farming area, from 1 to 4 acres, and to diversify his production and sales.

He supports the farmer cluster by:

- Identifying markets for their crops
- Selling bulked agriculture inputs like fertilizers and agrochemicals
- Linking farmers with access to loans from financial institutions to support agriculture inputs
- Marketing farmer crops to different buyers



Jackson with cluster farmers.
Photo by Meg Langley for CRS.

“I enjoy my work as an ASP because I can see changes in the livelihoods of people in my community. Those that did not have suitable houses are now building solid homes with iron sheets. Those that did not have food are becoming food secure.”

WALA ASPS

Since 2010, WALA has worked with its technical partner ACDI/VOCA to organize more than **26,000 farmers—68 percent female**—into 253 marketing clusters for collective selling of cash crops. WALA held marketing fairs to bring smallholder farmers and potential buyers together. These efforts resulted in sales of more than **\$1 million** of pigeon peas, chilies, cassava and more. Buyers included regional buyers, national buyers and international buyers such as the World Food Program.

During this design phase of the ASP pilot, WALA has trained **137 ACAs as ASPs**, who live and work in their communities and receive fees for their services. The ASPs have assisted with the supply of farm inputs, market studies, developing trading relationships with buyers and organizing buyer days along with general advice on farming practices.

SUSTAINABILITY

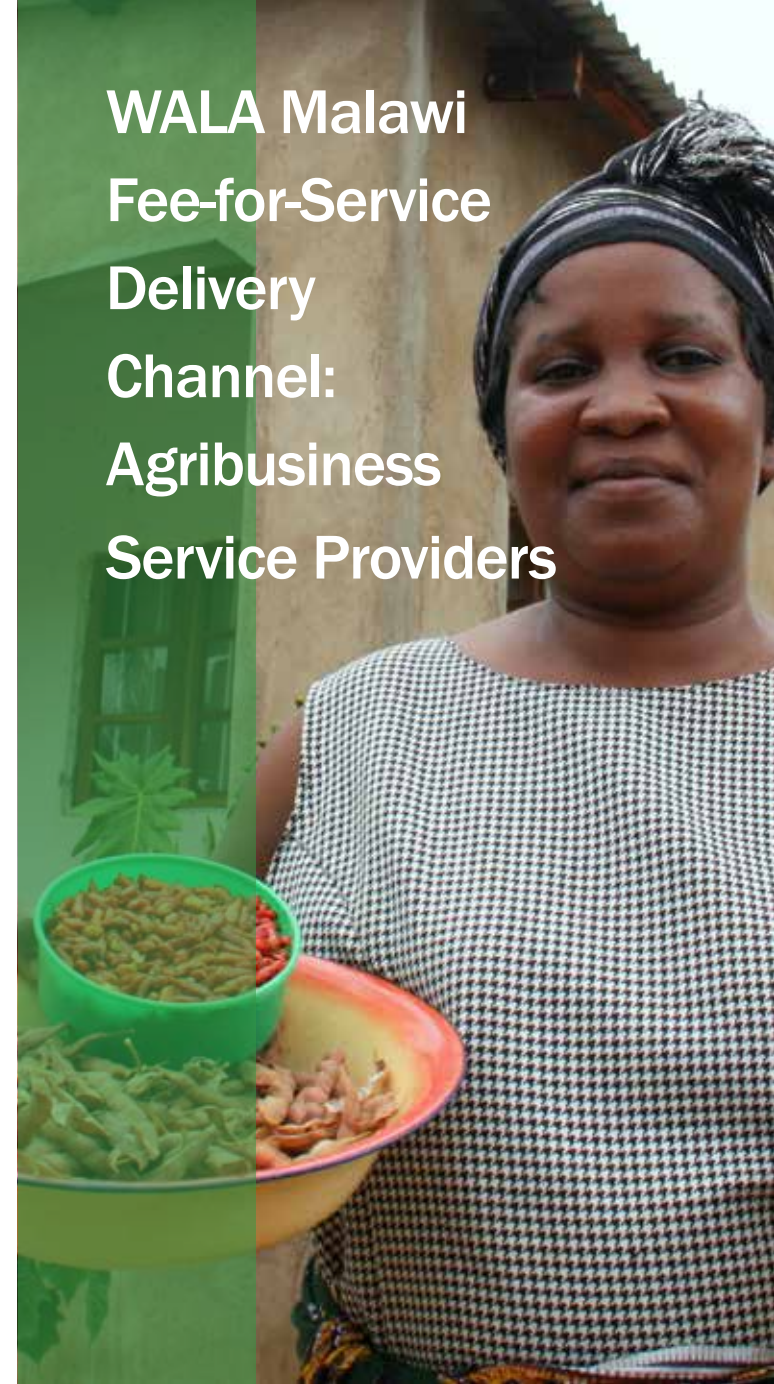
As part of the sustainability strategy, WALA assisted the ASPs to become **self-sustaining** business advisors. The ASPs will sustain their services by providing **embedded services**, packaged within their extension support to farmers. This includes a commission on input sales and commissions on collective marketing deals which the farmer group pays as well as marketed services to private sector companies for which the ASPs provide product information, training and direct sales at village level.

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Cover photo: Agribusiness Service Provider.
Photo by Debbie DeVoe for CRS.

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WALA Malawi Fee-for-Service Delivery Channel: Agribusiness Service Providers



Catholic Relief Services' 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 implemented by a consortium of nine agencies, led by CRS Malawi.

BACKGROUND

WALA's agribusiness operations have helped farmers become more integrated into the market system. WALA has helped farmers transition their approach **from growing food for the family to market led farming to earn cash**. This shift has included fundamental behavioral changes.

The WALA agribusiness activity assisted farmers to form clubs of 15-20 farmers, which combined to form clusters of 75-125 farmers. The cluster is the basic unit for implementing **collective marketing**. The clusters were supported by trainee Agribusiness Community Agents (ACAs), drawn from cluster membership and trained by CRS/WALA. The ACAs provided management and technical support to the clusters and also market linkage advice.

To encourage sustainable support when the program ended, WALA piloted an initiative to transform the ACAs into income-earning Agribusiness Service Providers (ASPs) who earn fees from the service they provide.

ROLE OF THE AGRIBUSINESS SERVICE PROVIDER

- Establish and mentor linkages between farmers and other market intermediaries.
- Increase the earning potential of farmers by encouraging improved production techniques and promoting specific recommended crops with **strong market demand**, as identified through value chain analysis.
- Train farmers on commercial farming ("Farming as a Business"), to provide a better understanding of **business principles** that will help them shift from subsistence farming to market led farming.
- Help farmers get the best prices for their output by bulking produce with other small farmers to access better prices based on economies of scale (collective marketing) rather than selling small quantities as individuals.
- Encourage farmers to reduce costs by purchasing inputs collectively.
- Provide guidance on farm activity choices that take advantage of **market opportunities**.

"We were really struggling because we could not sell our produce for cash. When WALA came, we learned how to diversify and grow cash crops."

- Tazona Nsungeni, ASP from Nsungeni village and president of an ASP Network

TRAINING

ASPs were selected from the community where the group was located. The group was informed of qualities of a good ASP and they selected several candidates for nomination in consultation with WALA.

ASPs were trained on agribusiness topics including farming as a business, collective marketing, group management, and improved agronomic practices. The ASPs then trained the marketing group members and provided technical support on implementation of market linkage concepts promoted by WALA.

WALA developed the ASPs' skills to identify viable market opportunities. Having identified **products and services that they could offer for a fee**, WALA trained the ASPs in technical and business skills to manage their enterprise. In cases where specialized training was required, WALA linked them to specific institutions or companies.

"A high percentage of ASPs will sustain because they have been trained to create demand. Even after WALA people will not be left in the cold, the ASP will keep the spirit of WALA alive in the community."

- Symon Maseko, Deputy Program Manager Emmanuel International