



***NUTRITION ACTIVITIES IN MALAWI  
THROUGH THE EC/FAO FOOD SECURITY  
INFORMATION FOR ACTION PROGRAMME:  
2005-2008***

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The EC-FAO Food Security Information for Action Programme is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
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**Background:**

The project on adaptation and use of simple tools to assess and monitor household food security and dietary diversity was carried out in Malawi with funding by the EC/FAO Programme on Food Security Information for Action (FSIA) with technical assistance from the FAO Representation of Malawi and the FAO Division of Nutrition and Consumer Protection, Nutrition Requirements and Assessment group (AGNA). Institutional support was provided by the Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS, Office of the President and Cabinet, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. The tools promoted by the EC/FAO Programme include the Dietary Diversity tool (both household and individual) and the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS). AGNA has maintained an open line of communication with Dr Mary Shawa, Permanent Secretary, Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS, who has guided many of the EC/FAO nutrition activities in the interest of strengthening the collection and use of nutrition information to supplement malnutrition data routinely collected by the national surveillance system.

In July 2006, Dr Beatrice Mtimuni and Mr. Numeri Geresomo of the Department of Home Economics and Human Nutrition, Bunda College carried out a field adaptation and pre-testing of the tools in Mangochi and Mwanza Districts as part of the EC/FAO activity. In November 2006, stakeholder consultations were held to describe the tools and seek interest in their integration into ongoing food and nutrition security information systems.

See: Report of the Adaptation and Pre-Testing of Household Food Insecurity Tools in Mangochi and Mwanza, Malawi

[http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/malawi\\_pretest\\_2006%20.pdf](http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/malawi_pretest_2006%20.pdf)

In March, 2007, Dr. Mtimuni, Mr. Hannock Kumwenda of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Mr. McCallum Sibande of Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS, Office of the President and Cabinet, and Ms. Veronica Kamvazina of Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security attended an international workshop in Nairobi on the tools, during which time a plan was made for further steps towards their use in Malawi.

See: Workshop Report - Simple Tools for Measuring Household Access to Food and Dietary Diversity

[http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/nut\\_report.pdf](http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/nut_report.pdf)

Following the Nairobi workshop, a meeting was held in Malawi, chaired by Dr. Mary Shawa, to chart future activities concerning the tools. She assigned a core team to draft a proposal for extended field testing of the tools in selected sites. The purpose of the

field trials would be to finalize adaptation and translation of the tools and to assess the feasibility and usefulness of merging them into already existing national information systems. Training and capacity development needs would also be identified for national upscaling of use of the tools. The core team was composed of the four participants to the Nairobi workshop who represent Bunda College, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, and the Dept. of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS as well as Mr. Numeri Geresomo, also of Bunda College, who coordinated this phase of the activity. As a result of the consultations carried out by Mr Geresomo, the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS was chosen to be the secretariat to follow implementation of these activities and to facilitate integration of the tools into the monitoring and evaluation system of the Food Security and Nutrition policies.

See: Report on Consultations with Stakeholders on the use of Food Insecurity Access and Dietary Diversity Score Tools

[http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/malawi\\_consult.pdf](http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/malawi_consult.pdf)

As a first step, the decision was taken by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) of the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, the Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS and UNICEF to include the Household Dietary Diversity tool and the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale in the MVAC nutrition survey of November, 2007, funded by UNICEF. The EC/FAO nutrition project funded the additional costs for adapting and translating the tools into one of the local languages where the survey was to take place, and for training the enumerators in the administration of the tools.

See: Integrating Nutrition Tools (HFIAS and HDD) into existing M&E Systems in Malawi

[http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/malawi\\_proposal.pdf](http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/malawi_proposal.pdf)

AGNA sent Dr Terri Ballard to work together with Bunda College on the data analysis of the MVAC survey, with focus on analyzing data from the tools as primary indicators of nutrition and food security status, and investigating associations with other indicators derived from the standard questionnaire. The survey report includes findings from the two tools and acknowledges the financial and technical support provided by AGNA through the EC/FAO FSIA Programme.

See: Report on a Follow-Up Nutrition Survey for Malawi Vulnerability Assessment (November 2007)

[http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/mvac\\_survey.pdf](http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/mvac_survey.pdf)

Based on the added value that the tools furnished to the nutrition survey in November 2007, The Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS, UNICEF and the MVAC have chosen to integrate the Household Dietary Diversity tool and the HFIAS into the standard questionnaire for subsequent bi-annual UNICEF/MVAC nutrition surveys.

For nutrition surveys whose objective it is to estimate prevalence of underweight and stunting among children under five years, the precise age of children is a crucial piece of information. In many countries young children do not have a record of date of birth and a calendar of local events is used to determine children's month and year of birth. The Food Security Analysis Unit in Somalia and Department of Nutrition and HIV/AIDS, UNICEF , and Bunda college in Malawi verified the need for guidelines to help train field workers to improve age estimation techniques. In Malawi, AGNA collaborated with IFAD and Bunda College to refine and test age estimation guidelines. The guidelines show how to develop a detailed calendar of events to accurately determine the month and year of birth of young children and how to train field workers in the use of the calendar. The guidelines can be found at: <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/aj984e/aj984e00.pdf>

Through its contacts with the major nutrition and food security stakeholders in Malawi, AGNA was asked in 2006 by the EC delegation Food Security Officer to review the methodological guidelines of the Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Surveillance System (IFSNSS) that was being implemented at the time by Action Against Hunger (AAH). Observations were made by AGNA and provided to the EC and AAH. In 2007, Dr Shawa requested a consultancy from FAO for an in-depth review of the methodological aspects of the IFSNSS, to complement an EC consultancy reviewing the overall operation of the current surveillance system. Through the EC/FAO Food Security Information for Action Programme, Dr Charles Teller of the Population Reference Bureau was contracted by AGNA to travel to Malawi in June 2008 in order to carry out a review of the food security and nutrition surveillance system with emphasis on its usefulness to monitor the National Nutrition Policy.

See Dr. Teller's report: *Data Quality and Information Use of the Malawi Integrated Nutrition and Food Security Surveillance System: Developing the System's Capacity and Importance for Nutrition Planning, Intervention, Monitoring and Evaluation*  
<http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/teller.pdf>

Both reviews of the IFSNSS have provided necessary input for decision-making by the Government on how to improve the system in the future.

The EC/FAO programme also funded a mission to Malawi in July 2008 by Ms Janice Meerman, AGNA volunteer and a graduate student in public health nutrition and public policy, to develop a case study on the Malawi National Nutrition Policy as a model of multi-sectoral policy development. The case study was included in Ms Meerman's report: *Making Nutrition A National Priority : Review Of Policy Processes In Developing Countries And A Case-Study Of Malawi.*

See Ms. Meermans report: *Making Nutrition A National Priority*

<http://www.foodsec.org/tr/nut/meerman.pdf>

Building on the work carried out by AGNA under the EC/FAO FSIA Programme, future collaboration with the Government of Malawi may be requested to assist in outlining a plan for developing the capacity of community level agents in agriculture, health and nutrition, to collect and utilize data using sound yet simple tools that combine growth monitoring, community nutrition monitoring and nutritional surveillance. A consultancy funded by the FAO Technical Cooperation Department is currently reviewing the capacity development needs for nutrition training at all levels in Malawi, including the use of nutrition information for action.