Program Overview

The Wellness and Agriculture for life Advancement (WALA) program is a Title II USAID Food For Peace funded five-year $80.7 million integrated food security program. The program started in July 2009 and will end in June 2014. This initiative aims to reduce food insecurity of 215,000 vulnerable households in 39 traditional authorities in eight most food insecure districts in Southern Malawi. WALA target districts are Balaka, Chikhwawa, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mulanje, Nsanje, Thyolo and Zomba. Catholic Relief Services (CRS), an independent consortium management and technical coordination hub with eight private voluntary organizations, is the grant holder for the WALA program.

Technical Areas

WALA promotes the use of maternal child health and nutrition behavior change strategies, food-based nutritional interventions and capacity building to prevent malnutrition and childhood illnesses. WALA is implementing these interventions using the care group model. This design brings together community members that are trained in breast feeding and basic health skills before they are sent to their communities to become caregivers. The program employs livelihood activities that improve agriculture production and marketing, and access to productive capital.

The program also builds community resiliency through strengthening capacities for preparedness and mitigation of natural disasters, good governance and sustainable environmental protection.

Program Impact

The target areas have improved nutrition and health status of children and mothers resulting from behavior change interventions. Agricultural productivity through use of improved farming technologies such as conservation agriculture and irrigation has also improved food security of target districts.

WALA brings increased household income from agricultural produce resulting from strengthened agribusiness groups, market linkages and access to market information. There is also increased access to productive capital from informal micro finance village savings and loans and better prepared communities responding to disasters and reduced associated risks.