

A growing generation

A healthy start in life to prevent stunting is key to achieve zero hunger in Malawi

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Pitros Chikweza is watering his backyard garden, a small piece of land for him but a significant asset for his family. “Since I have received vegetable seeds and training to start my garden, my family is finally doing well. I am selling my products in the market, and I use some income to buy soap, chickens and new clothes for my children,” he says, while looking over his growing tomatoes.

Just before lunchtime, someone knocks on the door. Pitro’s wife, Gezina, opens it and greets Estelle Kachigunda, who belongs to the community care group of their village. Today she has come to chat about hand washing. “Thanks to Estelle and the care groups, I have learned many things about hygiene. They also taught me how to prepare nutritious porridge for my baby. Now, everyday we eat more diversified food and my children are healthier than ever,” Gezina says.

As they gather for lunch, Pitros, Gezina and their four children are all smiles. “Look at my plate; I have beans, sweet potato leaves, tomatoes and *Nsima*. It is all coming from my garden, and it is delicious,” Pitros says while sharing a plate with his wife. “My youngest child Albert is eating a special porridge that I have prepared for him. I can see that he is growing healthy, he is very active!” Gezina says while trying to feed him.

In Malawi, more than a third of children under the age of five are too small for their age—a condition called stunting, which is caused by chronic malnutrition. If children miss out on crucial vitamins and minerals in



Pitros Chikweza watering his garden



Gezina and her youngest in her kitchen

the first few years of life, it can affect long-term development and growth. It is a vicious cycle, but by

investing in child nutrition early in life, as Pitros and Gezina do, the cycle can be broken.

WFP, with financial support from the Government of Ireland and United Kingdom, is supporting the Government

of Malawi to address chronic malnutrition through a large-scale, community based intervention. Key interventions include adequate child feeding support, social, behavioural change communication, water and sanitation, household farming and livestock rearing.

When children miss out on the opportunity to simply grow healthy, this perpetuates intergenerational cycles of poverty, at great cost for Malawi. Smart investments and partnerships can reverse this trend and contribute to building healthy communities.

Gezina and Pitros’ children are tomorrow’s citizens, tomorrow’s consumers, thinkers and innovators who will fuel the economy in the future. A healthy start in life is the best way to see a growing generation achieving zero hunger in Malawi.

Despite considerable progress in reducing acute malnutrition in recent years, stunting remains very high at 37.1 percent. Childhood malnutrition in Malawi is perpetuated through the impacts of recurrent climatic shocks. Without access to adequate food and nutrition in times of shock, children under five are at high risk of acute malnutrition, which can result in irreversible setbacks to their development for the rest of their lives.

Thanks to the support of Development Partners (the Government of Ireland and United Kingdom), the World Food Programme is working with the Government of Malawi to develop an full package of interventions to tackle the root causes of malnutrition and undernutrition and promote healthy diets.