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USAID/MALAWI MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING SUPPORT (MELS) PROJECT

Verification Report for the FTF Agricultural Diversification Project

AID-OAA-I-15-00022 / AID-612-TO-17-00001

Submitted: January 7, 2022

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ACRONYMS

AgDiv	Agricultural Diversification
AEDC	Agriculture Extension Development Coordinators
AEDO	Agriculture Extension Development Officers
DAES	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
FTF	Feed the Future
EPA	Extension Planning Area
ENV	Environment
GCC	Global Climate Change
GPS	Global Positioning System
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity
LQAS	Lot Quality Assurance Sampling
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MELS	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Support
SEG	Sustainable Economic Growth
UP	United Purpose
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VS&L	Village Savings and Loans

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides results from a verification activity conducted by the Malawi Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Support (MELS) project of output and nonfarm outcome indicator results reported by the Malawi Agricultural Diversification (AgDiv) project for FY2021. The exercise covered AgDiv activities from October 2020 to September 2021. The team verified a total of twelve (12) indicators and approved/accepted all of them.

The MELS team verified and accepted the following indicators:

1. Value of agriculture-related financing accessed as a result of USG assistance.
2. Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving agriculture-related credit as a result of USG assistance.
3. Value of new USG commitments and private sector investment leveraged by the USG to support food security and nutrition.
4. Value of annual sales of farms and firms receiving USG assistance.
5. Number of firms receiving USG-funded technical assistance for improving business performance.
6. Number of farmers in the target value chains receiving the contractor's assistance in production, access to finance, or access to markets.
7. Number of farmers and others who have received USG-supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training.
8. Number of people supported by the USG to adapt to the effects of climate change.
9. Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that received training on safe food processing for the targeted value chains.
10. Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment).
11. Number of beneficiaries receiving socio-economic empowerment training.
12. Number of integration interventions completed in collaboration with USAID/Malawi partners or development partners.

It should be noted that one of the indicators changed in 2021 compared to the previous verification periods. Detailed explanation on this change is provided in the main body of the report.

- Current indicator definition: Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that received training on safe food processing for the targeted value chains.
- Previous indicator definition: Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that practice safe food processing for the targeted value chains.

Overall, AgDiv has substantially improved data quality during the past two years. The quality of data remained high in FY21 and the MELS team did not have any major difficulties with the verification process. Partner record keeping has improved and almost all data were digitized and available in an electronic database. MELS commends AgDiv and encourages them to continue this practice and to provide additional partner training along with internal DQAs.

Efforts to obtain and secure proper documentation for sensitive data, such as loans, investments and sales, should be continued. Often, the only source of verification for the sensitive data was email communication. AgDiv should find ways of securing necessary documents for such data. If copies of official records are not available (even under confidentiality agreements), it could be formal letters from recipients summarizing received technical and financial assistance.

Throughout the process, the AgDiv team was cooperative and transparent and provided the MELS team with all necessary assistance.

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Support (MELS) activity is to implement performance evaluations and assessment services under the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDIQ). MELS provides support to the Feed the Future (FTF) and Environment (Global Climate Change (GCC) and biodiversity) activities that are managed by USAID/Malawi's Sustainable Economic Growth (SEG) Office. The MELS activity aims to achieve the following four primary objectives:

Objective 1: performance evaluations of FTF and environment (ENV) activities and of the sustainable livelihoods project designed and implemented;

Objective 2: assessments of FTF Malawi Ag Diversification (AgDiv) activity performance designed and implemented;

Objective 3: studies and analyses on selected topical issues developed and conducted; and

Objective 4: local capacity to undertake evaluations and assessments strengthened.

The activity outlined in this report falls under Objective 2, providing verification of AgDiv reported indicators. These are all output indicators reported by AgDiv along with the outcome indicators that are non-farm level indicators. What follows below is a report on each indicator that illustrates the results reported by AgDiv and the comparative findings from the MELS team's verification of the indicator. The report is organized by indicator and includes a discussion of any issues or challenges related to the indicator. The MELS team also provides an assessment on whether or not the indicator values reported by AgDiv are acceptable. This is the fifth year of reporting for AgDiv; the verification is for data submitted in 2021. After the indicator discussion, the report finishes with conclusions and recommendations.

2. LIST OF VERIFIED INDICATORS

The MELS team verified twelve (12) indicators reported and provided by AgDiv in 2021:

1. 1.1-2 Value of agriculture-related financing accessed as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-27).
2. 1.1-3 Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving agriculture-related credit as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-3).
3. 1.2-2 Value of new USG commitments and private sector investment leveraged by the USG to support food security and nutrition (EG 3.1-14).
4. 1.3-2 Value of annual sales of farms and firms receiving USG assistance (EG 3.2-26).
5. 1.3-4 Number of firms receiving USG-funded technical assistance for improving business performance (EG 5.2-1).
6. 1.4-1 Number of farmers in the target value chains receiving the contractor's assistance in production, access to finance, or access to markets (EG-Custom-33).
7. 1.4-6 Number of farmers and others who have received USG-supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training (EG 3.2-1).
8. 2.1-1 Number of people supported by the USG to adapt to the effects of climate change (EG 11.5).
9. 3.1-1 Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that received training on safe food processing for the targeted value chains (EG-Custom-23).
10. 4.1-1 Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment) (GNDR-2).
11. 4.1-2 Number of beneficiaries receiving socio-economic empowerment training (EG-Custom-32).
12. 5.1-1 Number of integration interventions completed in collaboration with USAID/Malawi partners or development partners (EG-Custom-31).

3. OVERALL METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

Amid COVID-19, the MELS team has successfully completed the verification activity of AgDiv output and nonfarm outcome indicators. Similar to the previous years, the team applied a mixed methods approach that included a review of project related documents and interviews with randomly selected stakeholders and participants. The approach was enhanced with COVID related measures such as social distancing, wearing masks, and conducting interviews over the phone to mitigate risks related to the pandemic.

Methodology

The MELS team applied a three-stage approach in its data quality verification activity. During the first stage the team looked at reported data and checked calculations to make sure there were no arithmetic errors. During the second stage the team looked for the existence of source documents for the target output indicators, such as sign-up sheets, and letters from supported organizations and partners. The result was basically a binomial response with the answer being either “yes” (source documents exist) or “no” (they do not exist). However, if source documents did not exist, it did not necessarily mean that the listed individual or the organization was not actually a participant/beneficiary of the AgDiv project. During the third stage the team spot checked a small sample of participants to confirm their involvement in AgDiv activities.

Figure 1: Verification of source documents at AgDiv office.



The MELS team adapted techniques from the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling (LQAS) methods to work with this verification process. Given the imprecise nature of the data gathering in rural agricultural environments in Malawi and the need to borrow ideas from the LQAS literature, we looked at the measurement of confidence, which in most surveys was 95 percent. Various sources (listed below) tested LQAS for small sample sizes (i.e., N = 19) and found it to be a useful tool for estimating binomial classification based on a binary indicator between acceptable and unacceptable. With a 95 percent confidence interval and a small sample size of 19 it was determined that 4 or more participants not receiving a service was deemed unacceptable (so acceptable is slightly over 84 percent, or at least 15 that received a service). If we use 84 percent for our verification, then we can say that the data is acceptable if the source documents exist for 84 percent or more of the data¹.

Table 1: Sample of AgDiv Participants for Spot Checks

Indicators	Sample for Spot Checks
1.1-2 Value of agriculture-related financing accessed as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-27).	19 MSMEs
1.1-3 Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving agriculture-related credit as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-3).	19 MSMEs
1.2-2 Value of new USG commitments and private sector investment leveraged by the USG to support food security and nutrition (EG 3.1-14).	No spot checks
1.3-2 Value of annual sales of farms and firms receiving USG assistance (EG 3.2-26).	25 Firms
1.3-4 Number of firms receiving USG-funded technical assistance for improving business performance (EG 5.2-1).	19 Firms
1.4-1 Number of farmers in the target value chains receiving the contractor's assistance in production, access to finance, or access to markets (EG-Custom-33).	20 Participants
1.4-6 Number of farmers and others who have received USG-supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training (EG 3.2-1).	19 Producers
2.1-1 Number of people supported by the USG to adapt to the effects of climate change (EG 11.5).	30 Participants
3.1-1 Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that received training on safe food processing for the targeted value chains (EG-Custom-23).	19 Care Groups
4.1-1 Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment) (GNDR-2).	No spot checks
4.1-2 Number of beneficiaries receiving socio-economic empowerment training (EG-Custom-32).	19 Participants

¹ Using LQAS for Baseline Surveys and Regular Monitoring, Manual, 2002; and Review of Health and Agriculture Project Monitoring Tools for Title II Funded PVOs, Prepared for Food Aid Management by Thomas P. Davis Jr., MPH & Julie Mobley, MSPH, 2001.

Indicators	Sample for Spot Checks
5.1-1 Number of integration interventions completed in collaboration with USAID/Malawi partners or development partners in accordance with the criteria identified in Section C5.5 (EG-Custom-31).	No spot checks
Total Sample:	170

Figure 2: Spot Checks in the Field by the MELS Team



Main limitations

The assessment's main limitations included the possibility of social desirability bias and recall bias.

- *Social desirability bias*: This type of response bias exists when key informants answer questions in a way that they feel will be viewed positively and may make the project look more favorable to the evaluation team. Therefore, the informants who cooperated extensively with the project may overstate the positive effects of the interventions and understate its negative effects.
- *Recall bias*: Some respondents may not clearly remember all activities.

The assessment team mitigated the bias through the professional preparation of the team. The team members asked the same question from different angles, and reformulated it when necessary. More importantly, the interviewers built a rapport with respondents to make them more open and honest in their responses. The MELS field team involved in the verification activity had a lot of relevant experience in similar activities in Malawi during the past several years, and conducted all previous AgDiv verification activities.

COVID-19 mitigation

In assuring safety of the MELS team and respondents in the field, IBTCI followed all recommendations provided by CDC Malawi and CDC United States during all stages of the verification process, including, but not limited to, the following actions:

- Avoiding close contacts/social distancing;
- Washing hands often with soap and water;
- Using alcohol-based hand sanitizers; and
- Covering mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.

The risk management plan included:

1. Constant risk analysis: a constant analysis of COVID-related risks in Malawi was performed by IBTCI. Bi-weekly meetings were conducted to discuss recent developments and additional measures that could be undertaken, if necessary. IBTCI constantly monitored recommendations provided by CDC offices of Malawi and the United States to take necessary and timely measures.
2. Increasing awareness of the team members about COVID-related risks and mitigation measures through specialized training and provision of guidelines/instructions.
3. Providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to all team members (masks, gloves, sanitizers, and soap).
4. Regular monitoring of the team members' health. All team members with suspicious symptoms would be isolated and not allowed to continue the verification activity.

We believe that measures described above, which were in line with CDC recommendations and local Malawi regulations, ensured safety of the team. IBTCI successfully applied all listed COVID-related measures, and it proved to be an effective way of protecting the team: no COVID cases were reported either among the team members or stakeholders.

4. AgDiv VERIFICATION RESULTS

1) 1.1-2 Value of agriculture-related financing accessed as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-27)

Reported	Verified
USD 3,031,352	USD 3,031,352 (100%)
<i>Reporting: Pyxus, CoFi, WOLREC, and Limbe Leaf.</i>	

Comments:

AgDiv calculated this indicator from data reported by the following local partners: Pyxus, CoFi, WOLREC, and Limbe Leaf. The MELS team verified this value both in the AgDiv electronic database and looking through the source documents – delivery notes. Additionally, 19 participants were randomly sampled for spot checks from provided lists. All selected participants confirmed the values of the agriculture-related financing they had received.

Overall, all reported financing data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Value:		3,031,352	3,031,352
Recipient Sex	Male recipients:	1,740,027	1,740,027
	Female recipients:	1,291,325	1,291,325
	Disaggregates not available:	-	-
Recipient Type	Producers:	3,031,352	3,031,352
Duration	New:	3,031,352	3,031,352
	Continuing:	-	-

2) 1.1-3 Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving agriculture related credit as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-3).

Reported	Verified
25,481	25,481 (100%)
<i>Reporting: Pyxus, CoFi, WOLREC, and Limbe Leaf.</i>	

Comments:

Similar to the indicator 1.1-2 above, the MELS team checked AgDiv’s digital dataset and the source documents (delivery notes). Four partners reported on the number of MSMEs and farmers who received agriculture-related financing: Pyxus, CoFi, WOLREC, and Limbe Leaf. The verification team randomly selected 19 credit recipients for spot checks. All confirmed that they received the financing: either seed loans (nine entrepreneurs), or cash injections (10 entrepreneurs).

The verification team further probed the MSMEs on how they actually spent received loans, and on what particular purposes. An overwhelming majority of the interviewees (13 out of 19 participants) spent it on crop farming, four entrepreneurs used it as working capital for income generating activities in their small businesses, one MSME spent it on livestock farming, and one participant to solve general household-related issues.

Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		25,481	25,481
Owner/producer Sex	Male:	12,057	12,057
	Female:	13,424	13,424
MSME Size	Micro:	25,481	25,481
Duration	New:	25,481	25,481
	Continuing:	-	-

3) 1.2-2 Value of new USG commitments and private sector investment leveraged by the USG to support food security and nutrition (EG 3.1-14).

Reported	Verified
USD 1,979,323	USD 1,979,323 (100%)
<i>Reporting: Pyxus, FES, WOTA, and Netafim.</i>	

Comments:

AgDiv calculated this number from data reported by Pyxus Agricultural Limited, Farmers Engineering Services (FES), WOTA, and Netafim. The four partners reported investments leveraged to support food security and nutrition: Pyxus reported investments into agricultural inputs in Lilongwe; FES, WOTA, and Netafim – investments into irrigation equipment in Blantyre and Lilongwe. The MELS team verified this number from the AgDiv electronic database and available source documents. Also, the evaluation team went through email exchanges between AgDiv and its partners that included relevant information. Due to the confidential nature of the data, no spot checks were done on this indicator.² The total value of investment was fully confirmed.

Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		1,979,323	1,979,323
Duration	New:	1,979,323	1,979,323
	Continuing:	-	-

² According to AgDiv, its partners were reluctant to provide official financial documents that could prove investments made in their enterprises. Under a confidentiality condition, they did share the total amounts invested via email, but without any formal documents to back it up.

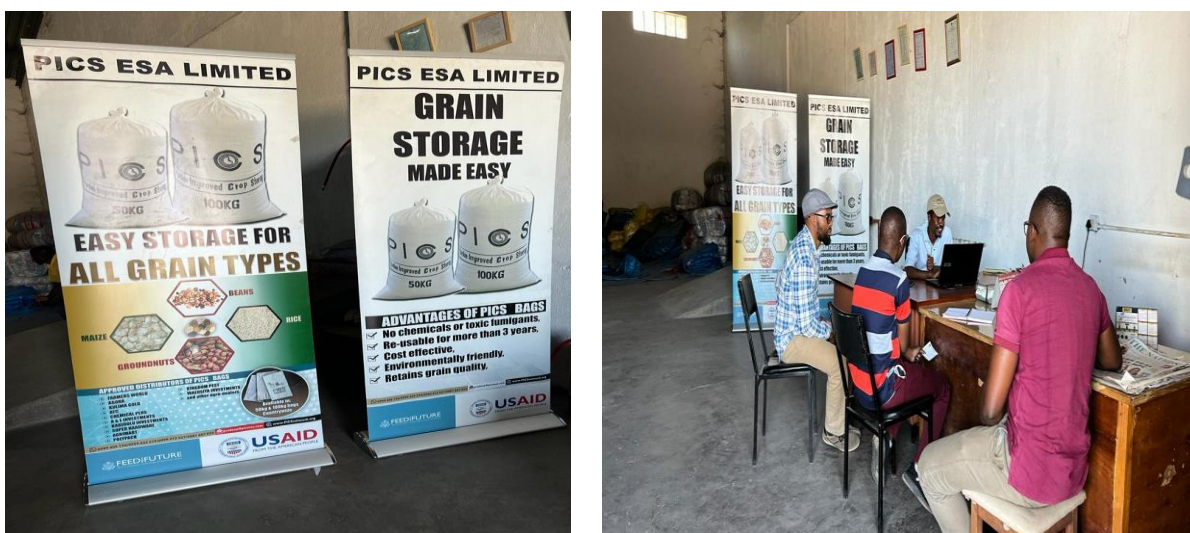
4) 1.3-2 Value of annual sales of farms and firms receiving USG assistance (EG 3.2-26).

Reported	Verified
USD 26,860,073	USD 26,860,073 (100%)
Reporting: PICS Global ESA, Mandolo Plus, WOTA, Netafim, FES, Good Nature, and AgDiv.	

Comments:

AgDiv reported annual sales values provided by the following local partners: PICS Global ESA, Mandolo Plus, WOTA, Netafim, Farm Engineering Services (FES), Good Nature, and AgDiv Office from Lilongwe. The MELS team verified reported values from the AgDiv electronic database and randomly sampled three local partners (WOTA, PICS Global, and FES) and 25 participants for spot checks. WOTA reported sales of drip kits, flexi pumps, and other irrigation equipment and accessories worth USD 136,570.35 (equivalent of MWK 109,256,283.40). PICS Global reported sales of PICS bags, inoculant, and soy products worth USD 1,107,167.94 (equivalent of MWK 885,734,392). PICS Global’s sales were consistent with the sales reported last year. It used mass advertising to boost sales and it worked well despite an overall recession in the local market caused by COVID. FES reported sales of drip kits (1000 M2 model) worth USD 50,713.44 (equivalent of MWK 40,570,754.00). The MELS team received access to all sales data in the spot-checked organizations, and there were no issues with its verification. The sales values provided by the partners and participants matched numbers reported by AgDiv.

Figure 3: Visit to the PICS Global Office in Blantyre for Spot Checks.



5) 1.3-4 Number of firms receiving USG-funded technical assistance for improving business performance (EG 5.2-1).

Reported	Verified
18,174	18,174 (100%)
<i>Reporting: WOLREC, and CoFi.</i>	

Comments:

AgDiv reported that 18,174 firms received technical assistance for improving business performance over the past year. The MELS team verified all of them through an electronic database provided by AgDiv. Assisted firms included only informal businesses/entrepreneurs in 2021. The following partners provided data for this indicator in 2021: WOLREC and CoFi.

Additionally, the MELS team randomly selected 19 entrepreneurs to conduct spot checks. All randomly selected firms confirmed that they received technical assistance from AgDiv and its partners to improve their business performance, participated in training, and received or procured agricultural inputs and equipment from AgDiv partners. All sampled enterprises also received financial assistance through the AgDiv project (cash loans) ranging from MWK40,000 to MWK140,000. An average cash loan value was MWK93,684.

The verification team asked MSMEs whether the provided cash loans contributed to improved performance of their businesses. The majority of the interviewed participants said “Yes” (16 MSMEs); three entrepreneurs said “No”.

Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		18,174	18,174
Type of firm	Formal:	-	-
	Informal:	18,174	18,174
Duration	New:	18,174	18,174
	Continuing:	-	-

6) 1.4-1 Number of farmers in the target value chains receiving the contractor's assistance in production, access to finance, or access to markets (EG-Custom-33).

Reported	Verified
124,393	124,393 (100%)
<i>Reporting: DAES, United Purpose, CoFi, Pyxus, Limbe Leaf, and WOLREC.</i>	

Comments:

AgDiv calculated this indicator from the values reported by the following local partners: DAES, United Purpose, CoFi, Pyxus, Limbe Leaf, and WOLREC. These farmers were

involved in activities related to improved production and access to finance. The MELS team verified this number going through the AgDiv electronic database and by checking source documents. Additionally, the verification team randomly selected 20 farmers to conduct spot checks to confirm their participation in relevant activities: ten (10) farmers received assistance with agricultural production through distribution and application of inoculant, and ten (10) other farmers received assistance with access to finance (cash loans). All spot-checked farmers were happy with the assistance provided to them and indicated that it helped them to increase yield, generate additional income, and/or improve overall household food security compared to the previous years when such assistance was not provided. All sampled farmers were available for the spot checks, and all of them confirmed their participation. Hence, the number of participants has been verified.

Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		124,393	124,393
Sex	Male:	49,733	49,733
	Female:	74,660	74,660
Duration	New:	98,645	98,645
	Continuing:	25,748	25,748
Type of assistance	In production:	100,057	100,057
	In access to finance:	19,554	19,554
	In access to markets:	4,782	4,782
Crop	Soy:	-	-
	Groundnuts:	-	-
	OFSP:	-	-
	Unknown/ multiple value chains	124,393	124,393

FIELD HIGHLIGHTS

INOCULANT BOOSTS INCOMES

For a long time, farming has been seen as an enterprise of the poor, and that there is nothing good that could come out of that. To remove that myth, AgDiv, a USAID-funded project, delivers interventions and technologies that promote agribusiness and improve farmers' incomes. These interventions, that included application of inoculant in soy production, are bearing fruits now. Kondwani Simoko, a farmer from Chadza GVH, TA Mazengela, Chitekwere EPA in Lilongwe, is all smiles this year when his yield and income from soy production have more than tripled. He told the evaluation team that he has realized that farming could, indeed, be profitable. *"I have been a farmer for a long time, and I have been cultivating soybeans on my 5 acres of land, and I collected on average 50 bags of soy per season. Last year, AgDiv introduced me to inoculant. First, I was hesitant to use it, but then decided to give it a try. I have never regretted about it. I harvested 180 bags of soy after I applied inoculant. I kept 5 bags as seeds and sold the rest (175 bags) making a revenue worth MWK1,580,000."* The verification team could see how happy the farmer was. Indeed, inoculant helps to boost incomes of soybean producers.

7) 1.4-6 Number of farmers and others who have received USG-supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training (EG 3.2-1).

Reported	Verified
147,818	147,818 (100%)
<i>Reporting: DAESS, United Purpose, WOLREC, CoFi, Pyxus, and Limbe Leaf.</i>	

Comments:

AgDiv calculated this indicator from data reported by the following local partners: DAESS, United Purpose, WOLREC, CoFi, Pyxus, and Limbe Leaf. The MELS team verified this number from the AgDiv electronic database and available source documents, such as signup sheets. Additionally, the verification team randomly selected 19 participants to conduct spot checks to confirm their participation in AgDiv training. All sampled participants were available for the spot checks; all of them confirmed that they participated in the training.

Participants randomly selected for this verification confirmed that they received training from the Agriculture Extension Development Coordinators (AEDCs) and Agriculture Extension Development Officers (AEDOs). Interviewed farmers confirmed that they took part in training on agriculture productivity and food security including post-harvest handling and storage. The training covered proper application of inoculant and utilization of PICS bags. Most

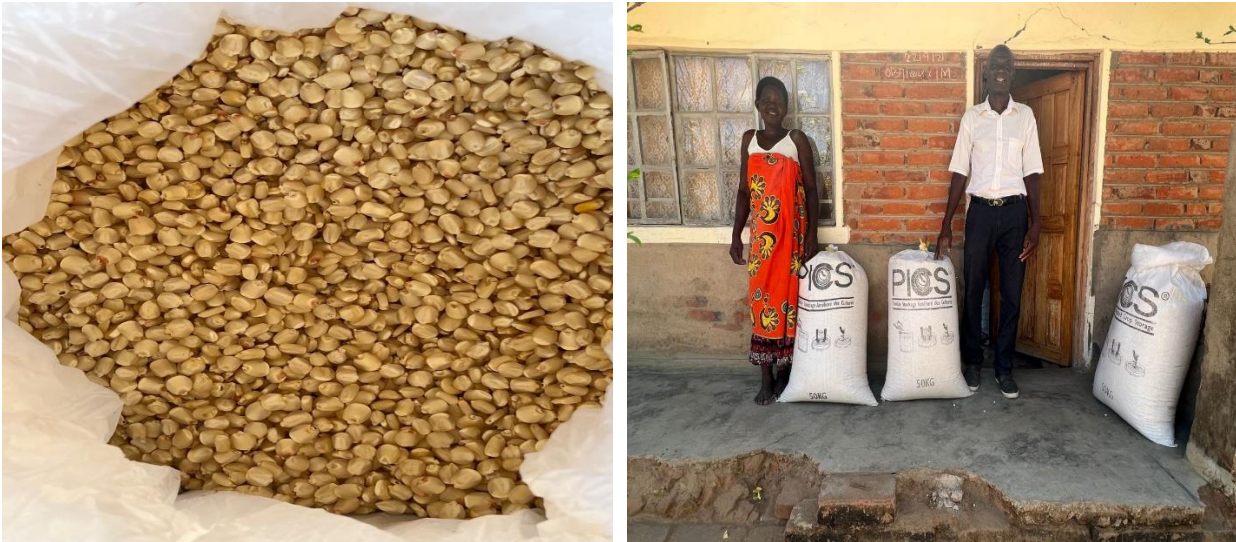
participants received inoculant and one or two PICS bags per farmer (depending on the training location). The participants, especially those who used PICS bags for storage of maize, noted that the bags reduced their post-harvest/storage losses. There were many farmers who used PICS bags for storage of maize. Additionally, many farmers kept seeds for

FIELD HIGHLIGHTS
<p align="center">PICS BAGS PREVENT FARMERS FROM USING HARMFUL PRESERVATION CHEMICALS</p> <p align="center">***</p> <p>PICS bags have come into play as one of the cost-effective methods of storing grains that could help to retain the grains' high quality in a long term. In addition, PICS bags are playing an important role in adapting to the effects of climate change, since the use of PICS bags by farmers prevents them from using such chemicals as Actelic to preserve their grains. This produces a large positive long-term environmental impact. Steven Mvula, a farmer from Chiphamba GVH, TA Namkumba in Mangochi, is one of the farmers the MELS team visited for an interview. He uses PICS bags for storing all his grains. He is a Chairperson of the Agriculture Area Stakeholder Panel (ASP) within M'bwadzulu EPA. He stated that when he was introduced to PICS bags this year, he received five bags. And when he heard of the advantages of using PICS bags, he went further and bought 10 more PICS bags. When he practically saw how the quality of his maize was preserved in the PICS bags, he vowed never to use the Actelic chemical again, which he said was detrimental to the health of human beings when consumed. He said he was forced to use the Actelic chemical because he had no other alternatives for preserving his grains. Introduction of the PICS bags creates conditions for not using harmful chemicals in the future anymore.</p>

various crops in the PICS bags and claimed that it helped them to preserve seeds in good condition till the next season.

All spot-checked farmers were happy with provided training and inputs and said that they managed to apply new knowledge obtained during the training in practice: seven farmers stored maize in PICS bags, three farmers stored soya in PICS bags, and nine farmers applied inoculant on soya fields.

Figure 4: Farmers using PICS bags for preservation of maize and other crops.



Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		147,818	147,818
Sex	Male:	59,659	59,659
	Female:	88,159	88,159
Duration	New:	121,261	121,261
	Continuing:	26,557	26,557
Type of individual	Producers/farmers:	147,784	147,784
	Civil Society Organizations (NGO, CBO, FBO, research etc.)	34	34

8) 2.1-1 Number of people supported by the USG to adapt to the effects of climate change (EG 11.5).

Reported	Verified
144,945	144,945 (100%)
<i>Reporting: WOLREC, United Purpose, Pyxus, CoFi, CQC, District Forestry Office, and DAESS.</i>	

Comments:

AgDiv calculated this indicator from data reported by the following local partners: WOLREC, United Purpose, Pyxus, CoFi, CQC, District Forestry Office, and DAESS. Climate mitigation activities included in this indicator were bamboo cultivation, utilization of drip irrigation kits, improved storage technologies, improved cook stoves, utilization of inoculant, and improved varieties of crops. The MELS team verified this indicator from the AgDiv electronic database and available source documents and sampled 30 participants for spot checks. All sampled participants confirmed their involvement in relevant AgDiv activities and expressed their satisfaction with the provided assistance. The only complaint the verification team received was a small number of bamboo seeds provided to each participant – as reported by the farmers, most of them received only one bamboo seed, which, they believed, was not sufficient.

Figure 4 below illustrates the rocket cookstove promoted by AgDiv to minimize usage of excessing firewood for food preparation in local communities.

Figure 5: Improved Cookstove (Rocket Stove) Promoted by AgDiv.



Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		144,945	144,945
Sex:	Male:	62,805	62,805
	Female:	82,140	82,140
Duration:	New:	135,517	135,517
	Continuing:	9,428	9,428
Promoted technologies:	Improved Storage:	67,413	67,413
	Drip Irrigation:	2,946	2,946
	Diversification/Varieties:	19,320	19,320
	Bamboo/agroforestry/resilience:	31,341	31,341
	Improved Cookstoves:	5,880	5,880
	Inoculant:	18,045	18,045

9) **3.1-1 Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that received training on safe food processing for the targeted value chains (EG-Custom-23).**

Reported	Verified
1,826	1,826 (100%)
<i>Reporting: CoFi, Catholic Health Commission, TAKAFUL, CYECE, Norwegian Church Aid, Saver of the Heart, and WOLREC.</i>	

Comments:

During the previous verification periods (2017-2020) the indicator 3.1-1 looked at agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that practiced safe food processing. Although the MELS team confirmed that all reported organizations participated in safe food processing training, the team was not able to find sufficient evidence that the participants applied safe food processing in practice. The MELS team recommended AgDiv either to define safe food processing requirements clearly to ensure that this indicator is properly tracked, and all necessary data is accumulated for verification, or to change this indicator from the number of MSMEs that practice safe food processing to the number of MSMEs that receive training on safety food processing to reflect actual activities completed by AgDiv. In the latter case, the indicator would be more an output rather than outcome indicator. AgDiv has changed the indicator as follows:

- **Current indicator definition:** 3.1-1 Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that **received training on safe food processing** for the targeted value chains.
- **Previous indicator definition:** 3.1-1 Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that **practice safe food processing** for the targeted value chains.

AgDiv reported that 1,826 supported organizations received training on safe food processing. All of them were listed in the electronic database provided by AgDiv. The

following partners provided these data: CoFi, Catholic Health Commission, TAKAFUL, CYECE, Norwegian Church Aid, Saver of the Heart, and WOLREC.

The team randomly selected 19 Care Groups that received soy kits and were reported to receive safe food processing training. All sampled participants confirmed that they participated in the training organized by AgDiv and its partners. The training included safety measures that agro-processing firms should apply in practice including washing hands before and after using soy kits/soy cows, cleaning all utensils regularly, wearing protective gear (gloves, head caps) and some other general cleanliness principles.

Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		1,826	1,826
Duration:	New:	1,826	1,826
	Continuing:	-	-
Duration:	Agro-processors:	-	-
	Cooperatives:	-	-
	Care Groups:	1,826	1,826
Commodity:	Soy:	1,826	1,826

10) 4.1-1 Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment) (GNDR-2).

Reported	Verified
62%	62%

Comments:

AgDiv reported that 62 percent of its participants involved in activities aimed at increasing access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment) were females. Analysis of AgDiv data revealed that actual share of female participants was, indeed, 62 percent. No spot checks were required for this indicator.

Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

	Reported	Verified
Total Value:	62%	62%
Production:	-	-
Economic resources/Credit:	62%	62%
Assets:	-	-

11) 4.1-2 Number of beneficiaries receiving socio-economic empowerment training (EG-Custom-32).

Reported	Verified
27,258	27,258 (100%)
<i>Reporting: CoFi and WOLREC.</i>	

Comments:

According to the electronic database provided by AgDiv, 27,258 participants received socio-economic empowerment training over the past year. The following AgDiv partners reported data on this indicator: CoFi and WOLREC. The MELs team verified this number by going through the electronic database of AgDiv and checking source documents. Additionally, the verification team randomly selected 19 participants to conduct spot checks to confirm their participation in relevant activities. All selected participants confirmed their involvement in GAL training. Some of the topics covered during the training were Gender Empowerment, Joint Decision Making, and Self-Belief. All spot-checked participants indicated that they have since applied gained knowledge in practice.

Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		27,258	27,258
Sex:	Male:	7,212	7,212
	Female:	20,046	20,046
Duration:	New:	15,057	15,057
	Continuing:	12,201	12,201

12) 5.1-1 Number of integration interventions completed in collaboration with USAID/Malawi partners or development partners (EG-Custom-31).

Reported	Verified
11	11 (100%)

Comments:

AgDiv reported that 11 integration interventions were conducted over the past year: conferences, workshops, or training. No field days were reported during the past year. Verification of source documents confirmed it. No spot checks were required for this indicator. Overall, all reported data were verified and confirmed as follows:

		Reported	Verified
Total Number:		11	11
Type of intervention:	Conferences, Workshops, Training:	11	11
	Field Days:	-	-
Duration:	New:	11	11

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall results of the verification activity are summarized in the table below:

#	Indicator	Reported	Verified		Acceptable Yes/No
		n	n	% from reported	
1	1.1-2 Value of agriculture-related financing accessed as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-27).	USD 3,031,352	USD 3,031,352	100%	Yes
2	1.1-3 Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving agriculture related credit as a result of USG assistance (EG 3.2-3).	25,481	25,481	100%	Yes
3	1.2-2 Value of new USG commitments and private sector investment leveraged by the USG to support food security and nutrition (EG 3.1-14).	USD 1,979,323	USD 1,979,323	100%	Yes
4	1.3-2 Value of annual sales of farms and firms receiving USG assistance (EG 3.2-26).	USD 26,860,073	USD 26,860,073	100%	Yes
5	1.3-4 Number of firms receiving USG-funded technical assistance for improving business performance (EG 5.2-1).	18,174	18,174	100%	Yes
6	1.4-1 Number of farmers in the target value chains receiving the contractor's assistance in production, access to finance, or access to markets (EG-Custom-33).	124,393	124,393	100%	Yes
7	1.4-6 Number of farmers and others who have received USG supported short-term agricultural sector productivity or food security training (EG 3.2-1).	147,818	147,818	100%	Yes
8	2.1-1 Number of people supported by the USG to adapt to the effects of climate change (EG 11.5).	144,945	144,945	100%	Yes
9	3.1-1 Number of agro-processors, cooperatives, care groups, and farmers' associations that received training on safe food processing for the targeted value chains (EG-Custom-23).	1,826	1,826	100%	Yes
10	4.1-1 Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income, or employment) (GNDR-2).	62%	62%	100%	Yes
11	4.1-2 Number of beneficiaries receiving socio-economic empowerment training (EG-Custom-32).	27,258	27,258	100%	Yes
12	5.1-1 Number of integration interventions completed in collaboration with USAID/Malawi partners or development partners in accordance with the criteria identified in Section C5.5 (EG-Custom-31).	11	11	100%	Yes

The MELS team recommends that AgDiv:

- Continue improving record keeping and digitalization of data. Provide additional partner training and conduct internal DQAs.
- Make effort to obtain and secure proper documentation for sensitive data, such as loans, investments, and sales. Often, the only source of verification for the sensitive data was email communication. AgDiv should find ways of securing necessary documents for such data. If copies of official records are not available (even under confidentiality agreements), it could use formal letters from recipients summarizing received technical and financial assistance.