

Welcome to the first issue of the IMCF project newsletter. We aim to produce a quarterly issue in order to provide you with an update on the progress of our project.

Background on the IMCF project

Improving the dietary intakes and nutritional status of infants and young children through improved food security and complementary feeding counselling (IMCF) is a three year research project funded by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection of Germany. The project was officially launched with a technical workshop held in March 2011. The IMCF project is lead by the Nutrition Education and Consumer Awareness Group of FAO in collaboration with the Institute of Nutritional Sciences, Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Germany, the University of Malawi, Bunda College and a soon to be selected University or research partner in Cambodia.



The objectives of the research project are to document 1) the effectiveness of Trials of Improved Practices (TIPS) formative research for generating sustainable feeding recommendations and recipes that result in better dietary intakes and nutritional status; 2) the extent to which locally available and affordable foods can meet the nutritional requirements of children aged 6-23 months; 3) the impact of combining behaviour change communication with crop and dietary diversification; and 4) the extent to which improved complementary feeding practices will be sustained over time and can be replicated and upscaled through local support mechanisms and 5) dissemination of lessons learned from the two case study countries.

The IMCF research is partnered with two FAO food and nutrition security programmes. The “Improving Food Security and Nutrition Policies and Programme Outreach” project covering Kasungu and Mzimba districts in Malawi and the “Improving Food Security and Market Linkages for Smallholders” covering Otdar Meanchey and Preah Vihear Provinces in Cambodia.

Highlights in Malawi	Highlights in Cambodia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The baseline data collection and analysis has been completed and the results from the baseline assessment should be available soon. • In addition to Judith Kuchenbecker, our PhD student in Malawi, two Master’s students from JLU Giessen and one from Bunda College have completed master’s level research studies. • The PhD candidate from University of Malawi, Bunda College has moved to the project site in Kasungu to begin her research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PhD candidate from JLU Giessen is being recruited. • Discussions are taking place with partners in Cambodia to identify a suitable partner research institution. • A workshop to officially launch collaboration between the IMCF project and the FAO “Improving Food Security and Market Linkages for Smallholders” project will take place in Cambodia in May.

MSc research results in Malawi

Expenditure patterns of farm households and willingness to pay for a nutritious children's diet: results from an experimental approach in Kasungu, Malawi

Malnutrition of children remains one of the biggest challenges in developing countries such as Malawi. Children aged 0-23 months are the most vulnerable group with a peak incidence of mortality and morbidity. Despite promotion of behavioural change, i.e. to encourage women and families to improve young children's diet, specific, local behavioural patterns, their rationale, and motivations for investing in improved child feeding are not yet fully understood. The major aim of this study was to find out about families' readiness to purchase a wider variety of nutritious food and investigate the determinants of investing in a more diverse diet. The study looked at family's willingness to pay for food diversity and examined expenditure patterns.

The study was carried out in September 2011, as an economic experiment in which a food market situation was simulated in three villages of Kasungu district.

Food items that were offered in the experimental market included foods which could potentially be incorporated in the diet of farm family households, as they were



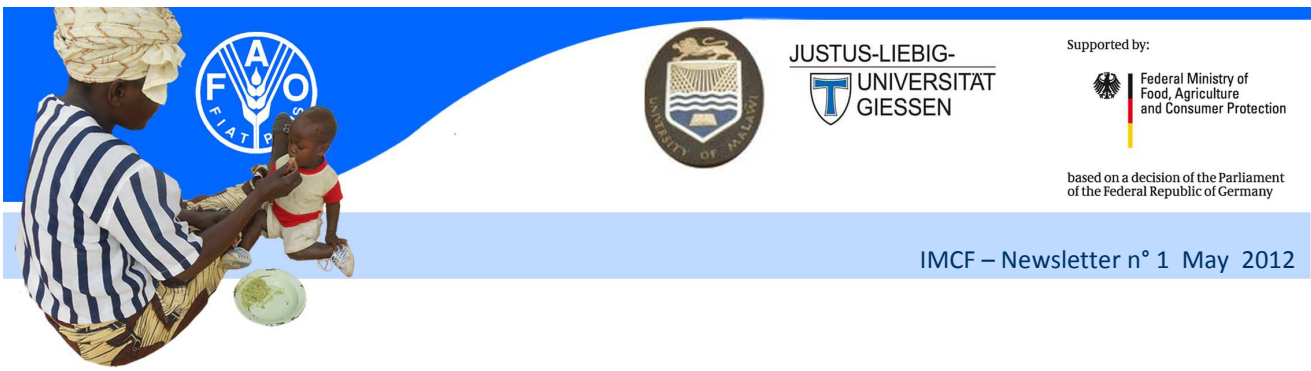
available on the local market in Kasungu at the time of the study. All participants (n=18) lived in farm households in a village close to Kasungu and were participating in a farmer field school program. Three groups of six people were formed from the participants of the farmer field schools. Each group was provided with a certain amount of play money equivalent to 2.50, 5.00 and 7.50 Euro, designed to simulate different income groups. The participants were sent shopping three times, while imagining different scenarios. The first scenario was set up as a control scenario. The second scenario concentrated on expenditure patterns that did not take into account small children's special dietary needs, and the third scenario focused on expenditure patterns that emphasized children's nutritional needs.

The results of the market experiment showed that households were willing to invest in dietary diversity, if income allows. Statistical analysis revealed that those given the most money to spend had a significantly higher dietary diversity compared to those given the least to spend. Apart from nutrition education approaches addressing dietary diversity and enrichment of diets, other resource constraints (time, cooking skills, food processing equipment) need to be taken into account.



In addition to improving the availability of nutritious, locally and culturally accepted foods, a holistic approach, including consideration of opportunity costs, especially measures which can minimize any additional workload of women are needed to support improving infant and young child feeding practices.

For more information on the MSc results please contact Antje Korn (antje.korn@gmx.de), Institute of Nutritional Sciences, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany



Welcome to Theresa Jeremias and Gabriella Phiri

Theresa Jeremias is a new Associate Professional Officer in the Nutrition Education Group of the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division at FAO HQ, Rome. Prior to joining FAO, she was enrolled in a Masters in Epidemiology (MSc) at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK. Before this, she studied Nutrition Sciences (German diploma) at the University of Hohenheim, Germany. To gather data for her diploma thesis and to gain field experience, she carried out a study assessing the nutritional status of Samoan primary schoolchildren. She is working with the IMCF project on the TIPS analysis and structure of the wider complementary feeding intervention in Malawi.



Gabriella Phiri, has joined IMCF as a new PhD student with the University of Malawi Bunda College. Her PhD thesis topic is titled “Effectiveness of complementary feeding message transfer for behavioral change in Kasungu and Mzimba districts”



Prior to being selected as a PhD candidate, Gabriella was a lecturer in Nutrition at the Natural Resources College. She received an MSc in Nutrition, Health and Environmental Sciences from Akershus Univeristy College, Norway, a BSc in Nutrition and Food Science and a Diploma in Agriculture from Univeristy of Malawi, Bunda College.

Gabriella has two sons, Zikomo who is 4 years and Zabwino who is 6 months.

FAO and JLU IMCF staff

Name	Title
Ellen Muehlhoff	Senior Nutrition Officer, FAO
Michael Krawinkel	Justus Liebig University, Giessen
Beatrice Mtimuni	University of Malawi, Bunda College of Agriculture
Irmgard Jordan	Research Assistant, Justus Liebig University, Giessen
Gina Kennedy	Nutrition Consultant, FAO
Judith Kuchenbecker	PhD Candidate, Justus Liebig University, Giessen
Antje Korn	MSc candidate, Justus Liebig University, Giessen
Leonie Huber	MSc candidate, Justus Liebig University, Giessen
Cacious Phiri	MSc candidate, University of Malawi, Bunda College of Agriculture



Participating in TIPS round one Evaluation workshop in Malawi (left to right) Rose Khan, FICA-II project nutritionist, Judith Kuchenbecker, PhD student, JLU Giessen, Charity Dirorimwe, FAO Nutrition Consultant, Solange Heise, FAO Nutrition Consultant, Theresa Jeremias, Associate Professional Officer, FAO, Ellen Muehlhoff, Senior Nutrition Officer, FAO