



Njira Project

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Project Quarterly Report

(January – March 2015)



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACPC	Area Civil Protection Committees
ADC	Area Development Committees
ARCII	Addressing Root Causes II
ATA	Associate Technical Advisor
BLM	Banja La Mtsogolo
CAHW	Community Animal Health Workers
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CIP	International Potato Center
CMAM	Community Management of Acute Malnutrition
COP	Chief of Party
DEC	District Executive Committees
DEHO	District Environmental Health Office
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EA	Enumeration Areas
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FISH	Fisheries Integration of Society and Habitats
FO	Farmers Organisation
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
HAS	Health Surveillance Assistant
IAAIB	India-Africa Agriculture Innovation Bridge
INVC	Integrating Nutrition in Value Chains
IYCF	Infant and Young Child Feeding
LUANAR	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
NFI	Non-Food Items
Q2	Quarter 2
RMNCH	Reproductive Maternal Nutrition and Child Health
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
TA	Traditional Authorities
TNS	TechnoServe
TOC	Theory of Change
TOT	Training of Trainers
TSU	Technical Support Unit
VCPC	Village Civil Protection Committees
VDC	Village Development Committees
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
WE	Women Empowered
WFP	World Food Programme
YFHS	Youth Friendly Health Services

1.0 Executive Summary

This is the 2nd Quarterly Report (Q2) for the USAID funded Njira Project, covering the period from January 1, 2015 – March 31, 2015. During Q2, Njira continued to focus on start-up activities, which included the formation of the Njira Project Management body, a Njira consortium start-up planning workshop; the development of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan; ongoing staff recruitment; development of community mobilization and beneficiary registration strategies; organizing of coordination meetings with other USG and non-USG organizations; and planning for USAID’s Mega Project Launch.

To prepare its team for the launch of programmatic activities, Njira organized several orientation and training activities, which were designed to help Njira technical staff familiarize themselves with organizational procedures and philosophies, as well as Njira’s theory of change (TOC) and the diverse platforms, technologies, strategies and tools that will be used to realize project objectives.

In line with USAID/Malawi’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and specifically the 3-C approach (Co-location where sensible; Coordination; and Collaboration), Njira participated in a number of collaboration and partnership meetings this quarter with other projects working in the Balaka and Machinga Districts. The meetings were used as a platform to begin discussions around how best to leverage resources in the district to achieve lasting impact.

To ensure close collaboration with the government, Njira also engaged local government line ministries’ staff in the development and alignment of Njira’s Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) with District Development plans. The DIP was submitted to USAID, along with the current reiteration of Njira’s M&E Plan, in March 2015.

The details of these activities are described in the report, which has been organized according to the three “Purposes,” or primary objectives, of the Njira project.

2.0 Start-up Activities

Njira activities in Q2 largely focused on preparing the foundations of the grant, such as the development of the monitoring and evaluation plan; participation in start-up workshops to develop the detailed implementation plan; ongoing recruitment, on-boarding and training of staff; partner agreements; coordination meetings; District government engagement; baseline planning; development of program systems and procedures; establishment of offices; identification of warehouses and preparation of commodity plans; development of the community mobilisation and registration strategies and mobile technology based beneficiary tracking and commodity management system); and planning for the Mega Launch. Key start-up activities are outlined below:

Njira Program Advisory Body

The Country Representatives of Project Concern International (PCI), Emmanuel International (EI) and Agrigane, met together with the Njira Chief of Party (COP) to discuss the role of the Njira Program Advisory Body in the leadership of the grant, and received an update on the status of project activities and upcoming events. The purpose of this Advisory Body is to collectively look at the “big picture” or, the general status of the project. As described in PCI’s Technical Narrative, it is “to meet bi-annually and focus on program strategy and impact, to ensure accountability, and establish program cohesion and accountability among consortium members” (Project Concern International, 2014).

Staff Recruitment and On-boarding

Njira staff recruitment and on-boarding continued throughout Q2.

At the national level, PCI successfully recruited the Njira Commodity Manager, who will start in early April 2015, prior to the planned TOPS Commodity Management Workshop. PCI also relocated its Regional Commodity Manager from Bangladesh to Malawi in order to provide technical assistance and monitoring of Njira commodity management. Recruitment of a Knowledge Management and Learning Advisor and a Behaviour Change Communication Specialist were concluded, and the two individuals recruited will join the team in Q3.

For the project implementation offices in Machinga and Balaka, all Sector Coordinators and Field Facilitators were successfully recruited for both districts and have started their work, with the exception of the Disaster Risk Management, Gender, and Village Savings and Loans (VSL) Coordinators for Balaka, who will be joining the team in Q3. Five RMNCH/Nutrition Facilitators joined the team in Q2 in time for a critical training of trainers on PCI’s Care Group methodology, while the additional Field Facilitators will join the team in Q3. PCI also hired an Office Operations Manager for its office in Balaka.

The remaining Njira positions to be recruited in Q3 are the M&E Systems Specialist, ICT Coordinator, Warehouse Assistants, Food Monitors, Drivers, and M&E Data Entry Clerks.

With private funding, PCI recruited a Regional Associate Technical Advisor (ATA) for the Women Empowered (WE) Initiative, which is PCI’s VSL methodology that will be implemented in Njira. The ATA will provide technical support and direction for Njira’s

WE/VSL initiative. While the ATA position will eventually oversee PCI's WE activities regionally, she will dedicate nearly 100% level of effort for Njira through 2015.

As part of its staff on-boarding procedures, PCI's HR team provided an orientation on human resource and administrative policies for the newly hired staff throughout Q2. The orientation addressed HR benefits, policies, ethics and standards, and anti-fraud whistle-blowing policy. For the financial training, PCI's Director of Finance and Operations shared key USAID financial requirements and expectations to ensure that Njira maintains the highest financial standards. The same orientation was conducted several times throughout Q2 as new staff joined the team. EI oriented staff on HR and financial policies, as well as Njira's community mobilization strategy. All EI Coordinators and Facilitators have been hired.

Njira Sub-Grants

During Q2, PCI signed a sub-grant agreement with Emmanuel International (EI) which defines its role in the implementation of Njira in Machinga District. PCI also worked with Agricane and Sun Mountain International on finalizing their sub-grant agreements. Agricane has already recruited and seconded the Agriculture Advisor, who is providing strategic direction for Njira's Agriculture activities under Purpose 1, while Sun Mountain has identified its point person, who will join the Njira team in Q3.

Administrative Issues

In order to accommodate additional staff to support the Njira project, PCI relocated to a larger office in Blantyre during the month of January. PCI also opened and equipped an office in Zomba in January for its team of Technical Advisors, and equipped its Balaka office to accommodate its operational team. EI opened its operational office in Ntaja.

Start-Up Workshop

Njira organized a week long project Start-Up Workshop from January 23 - February 3, 2015 in Zomba. The workshop was facilitated by PCI's Senior Technical Specialists who designed the Njira project, and now support Njira from the Headquarter Technical Support Unit (TSU), namely the Senior Technical Advisor for Agribusiness and Microenterprise; Senior Technical Advisor for Reproductive Maternal Nutrition and Child Health (RMNCH); Senior Food & Nutrition Security Technical Advisor; and Director of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Risk Management. The event was attended by PCI Malawi's Senior Management and Technical team, EI's Senior Management team and several Sector Coordinators, as well as Agricane's Technical Advisor.

The workshop provided a comprehensive orientation on Njira's TOC, management and partnership structure, planned activities and their respective methodologies, implementation platforms, and the innovative approaches to be used in Njira. The event permitted a "hand-over" from the original project design team to the senior members of the implementation team, and contributed effectively to achieving a shared understanding and vision required to develop the project's detailed implementation plan (DIP). The implementation plans for each of Njira's three purposes were developed, presented to district line ministries to ensure alignment with their priorities and local strategies, and then submitted to USAID in March 2015.

Project Mobilization and Registration

Njira established a Mobilization and Registration Taskforce comprised of both local staff and senior technical staff from PCI's HQ. The taskforce developed Njira's Mobilization Strategy, which was then shared with project staff. Based on this strategy, the Njira team has begun to sensitize local government structures at the area (Traditional Authorities) and community (village) levels in both districts.

The taskforce is also developing a registration strategy where key registration processes will be documented. Registration will utilize mobile technology and the software platform, G-Path, which was developed by PCI's Regional Commodity Manager, now based in Malawi. The registration process and the formation of Care Groups is expected to start in May 2015 and continue through August 2015.

Njira will begin household and beneficiary registration before actual implementation of project activities. Registration will be ongoing and activity-based, with the initial registration effort focusing around Purpose 2 activities (Care Groups and food rations for pregnant and lactating mothers and children under two, and household rations for the same households), which involves the targeting of approximately 40,000 households.

Preparation for USAID Mega-Launch

The Njira project is part of the group of USAID-funded economic growth projects that will be formally launched by the U.S. Government during the Mega Launch scheduled for May 6, 2015. Njira was nominated as Mega Launch Coordinator and is taking the lead in organising resources, the program, and updating USAID on all ground preparatory activities. In Q2, the Njira team completed site surveying, mapping, and identification of suppliers for tents, fencing, and organisation of edutainment among other preparatory activities.

3.0 Engagement and Coordination with Local Government

District Level

In February 2015, PCI organized meetings with the District Executive Committees (DEC) in Balaka and Machinga Districts. The aim of these DEC meetings was to introduce the Njira Project to the District Assemblies and to receive approval to implement the project in each district. The Njira Project was approved in both districts for implementation with full district support.

Following the meetings with the DECs, Njira organized several meetings with district technical teams in Machinga and Balaka to present Njira's DIP and to solicit feedback on the proposed activities and implementation approach. The purpose of these meetings was to continue coordinating closely with each district and to help develop strong interest and support for Njira, while beginning to create a sense of ownership at the technical level of the district governments.

The Njira team received positive input from the district technical teams on the DIP during meetings which were conducted in March 2015 in both Machinga and Balaka districts. The meetings pooled together 230 (153 male, 77 female) Technical District Government staff from the Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation & Water Development, Health Office, Disaster Risk

Management, Gender Child Welfare and Women Development, among others. Key issues that came from the district technical teams regarding the DIP included a request for training support to district government structures, such as the Area Development Committees (ADCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs), in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) topics covered under Purpose 3. This also included a request for training on the newly approved National DRM Policy to sensitize key government staff. Requests were made to realign some activities and timeframes with District Development Plans where possible, which the Njira team committed to do. There was interest shown in the Njira concept of Ubwino Centers, and additional information on the specific purpose and role of these centers was provided. Support was requested in helping to restructure the Area Civil Protection Committees (ACPCs) and Village Civil Protection Committees (VCPCs) operating in each district, including the creation of By-laws, Operational Plans and DRM Contingency Plans. Again, the Njira team was able to confirm its ability and willingness to collaborate at this level and provide the requested support.



Figure 1: Health Technical DIP meeting in Balaka

The district teams informed the Njira team that it should add World Breast Feeding Week (the first week of August) as part of its promotion of the SUN initiative. Regarding Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) training, priority should be given to nurses and clinicians, rather than Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs), who have already received

CMAM training. Districts were informed of Njira's upcoming facility assessments and the government asked Njira to organize a meeting afterward to look more closely at specific targets and training requirements for year one. Njira was asked to define which type of equipment they will provide, which will be done in Q3, in collaboration with its partner, Project CURE.

Overall, the 6 DIP meetings (3 in each district, each focused around one of the Project's three Purposes) offered a unique opportunity to learn about other organizations operating in each district, including various initiatives and service providers. For example, in Balaka, an organization called Options is working on Quality Service Support Provision, which Njira's community-based P2 activities will complement. The Balaka District Health Office is promoting Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) and Open Defecation Free (ODF) graduation and verification processes, which are important government interventions that Njira activities will strengthen and complement.

Area Development Committees (ADC)

Each District Commissioner's office provided formal introductory letters to the Njira team, indicating their support of the project, which were then presented to each of the Traditional Authorities (TAs) where Njira will operate. The letters requested full community support for Njira activities and to develop a strong sense of community ownership of the project. By the end of Q2, following the presentation of the District Commissioner letters, Njira (ADC

meetings in the following TAs: Nyambi, Nkoola, Kapoloma, Ngokwe, Chikweo and Sub-TA Chinguza (part of TA Kawinga).

The ADC meetings offered an opportunity for the Njira team to clarify project contributions and activities at the level of project implementation, as well as the plans that the Njira team has for community collaboration and leadership. The Njira Coordinators briefed ADC members on project activities, including the cross-cutting themes of gender, environment and governance. Meetings also focused on identifying existing resources, both human and material, that Njira could leverage. The importance of joint monitoring (community members and Njira team) of all activities was discussed, along with the mechanism for doing this.

Table 1: Q2 Meeting Schedule

Activity	Date	District	TA	Number participants		
				Total	Male	Female
ADC Meetings	23-03-15	Machinga	Nyambi	36	29	7
	24-03-15	Machinga	Kapoloma	36	26	10
	24-03-15	Machinga	Nkoola	41	31	10
	26-03-15	Machinga	Kawinga (Mchinguza)	37	26	11
	25-03-15	Machinga	Chikweo	43	32	11
	25-03-15	Machinga	Ngokwe	42	31	11
Total				235	175	60

4.0 Performance Updates by Purpose

During Q2, Njira continued with its capacity building activities; coordination meetings; and district level entry activities. The key activities are highlighted below by Njira “Purpose”, as well as by key cross-cutting issue.

Purpose1: Increased Income

Progress Against Targets

Progress against P1 targets will be reported in the Q3 report.

Capacity Building

No formal training was received in relation to Purpose 1 this quarter but, individual mentoring took place between PCI’s Senior Technical Advisor for Agribusiness and Microenterprise and, the P1 team.

Inter-Organizational Coordination

Integrating Nutrition in Value Chains (INVC)

Njira invited representatives from DAI’s INVC project to its office in Balaka on January 23, 2015. The main objective of the meeting was to introduce the two teams and share information on each other’s projects to better understand potential areas for collaboration,

especially in the areas of VSL and Care Groups. The teams developed an understanding on how the projects are structured on the ground and their programmatic and geographic areas of focus. Njira proposed conducting a mapping exercise to provide even more detailed information about each other's projects, as well as other actors currently operating in the same program areas. While discussions continue between various staff members on both projects regarding collaboration, Njira will finalize its mapping exercise and share information collected early in Q3.

Pact

Informal discussions were initiated with the COP of Fisheries Integration of Society and Habitats (FISH) regarding the co-location of the two projects and the geographic and programmatic overlap to better understand how to leverage each project's resources and complement each other's work. FISH will participate in the Njira mapping exercise next quarter, which will be followed by more formal discussions between the two teams.

TechnoServe

TechnoServe (TNS) has been awarded a USAID grant to implement the India-Africa Agriculture Innovation Bridge (IAAIB) project in Malawi from September 2014 to December 2016. TNS and PCI developed an MOU to identify needs that can be addressed through innovations from India. During a partnership meeting held in Njira's Zomba office in January, several challenges in the agriculture sector that might benefit from specific Indian technologies were identified, including those dealing with kitchen gardens, rain water harvesting, irrigation, and biodegradable solid waste management. TNS sent the request to colleagues in India, and Njira expects to get a response in Q3 regarding potential technologies that could be promoted under Njira.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Njira's COP met with Florence Rolle and George Phiri of FAO to learn more about their work in Malawi, available resources, and their work in Conservation Agriculture (CA). FAO is currently providing support to the CA Task Force set up under the Department of Land Management but has been disappointed with progress made to date. A specific discussion ensued about a critical support role that Njira could play, working together with the Task Force to organize a national conference on CA for the main purpose of facilitating the process of getting a national policy on conservation agriculture in place.

FAO's various initiatives in Malawi was shared, including a discussion about a youth focused Farmer Field School program that Njira would like to support. FAO also committed to share existing agriculture training modules and materials. A follow-up visit in Q3 is planned to discuss all of these issues and areas for collaboration in more detail.

World Food Programme (WFP)

Njira's COP also managed to meet with WFP's Resilience Programme Officer, Daniel Longhurst, to discuss how WFP and Njira are both using food resources to improve social protection and reduce household vulnerability in the districts of Machinga and Balaka. WFP is also piloting several innovative approaches to improving disaster risk management capacity in local government structures, and Njira will collaborate closely with WFP to better understand how their work might be used in support of Njira's Purpose 3 strategy.

International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)

Njira met with CIAT in February 2015 for an initial partnership discussion, followed by an operational meeting in Balaka in March 2015. Njira wishes to incorporate heat-tolerant bean varieties which have been bio-fortified with iron and zinc, which will help address these critical micronutrient deficiencies that affect the health of pregnant women and the first 1,000 days of infants. The first area of collaboration regarding this climate-smart agricultural strategy will be the establishment of several sites suitable for multiplying seed, given that CIAT currently has limited supplies of this bean in Malawi. Njira's Purpose 1 team has a total of about 35 hectares of group managed irrigated land that can be used for multiplying these fortified beans in Balaka and Machinga. Seed would be further distributed to other farmers under Njira's Conservation Agriculture initiative. CIAT committed to providing technical support in the establishment of sites for seed multiplication.

International Potato Center (CIP)

Similar to the relationship with CIAT, PCI is coordinating closely with CIP regarding the drought-resistant varieties of orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP), bio-fortified with high levels of Vitamin A, which is another major micronutrient deficiency prevalent in Malawi. This coordination has resulted in the establishment of numerous mother-plots in the areas covered by PCI's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)-funded Addressing Root Causes II (ARC II) project, and discussions with the Njira team will result in the scale-up of this important collaboration. In response to the floods in January 2015, CIP donated OFSP for 2,000 flood-affected households, and the Njira and ARC II teams worked together to set up the mother plots.

Other P1 Activities

Livestock

Njira's Livestock Advisor identified a poultry model for household food security and income generation, and a draft model will be circulated and operationalized in Q3. Training modules for staff and farmers have been identified in the area of pigeon/squab production, indigenous chicken production and goat production, community animal health and production program, and "Animal Welfare" for staff and Community Animal Health Workers. Njira will adapt these training materials to reflect key programming objectives and the local context.

Agribusiness

Njira's Agribusiness Advisor conducted a meeting with a prominent agro-input dealer, Farmers Organisation (FO), in Blantyre in March 2015. Currently, FO is working with DAI's INVC project, NASFAM, Farmers Union of Malawi, and RUMARK on legume value chain promotion in Balaka and Machinga districts. FO has a specialized range of products in small packs for smallholder farmers in Malawi. For example, they provide a "Nyonga" pack for cotton producers that has proved to be very effective in increasing yields per hectare. These are made available to smallholder farmer through demonstrations, trainings, agricultural shows and field days. Before beginning a crop protection demonstration, farmers are first trained and linked to an existing agro-input dealer within their reach. FO committed to providing Njira with a list of trained agro-input dealers in Balaka and Machinga districts, and ongoing discussions are planned for Q3 to discuss other areas for collaboration between Njira

and FO in both targeted districts. FO is also conducting demonstrations on crop protection with the objective of increasing yield per unit area through the use of inoculants. In this regard, PCI has initiated discussions about inoculants with the BASF Corporation, which has committed to providing a donation of inoculants to Njira.

WE /VSL

Njira intends to use PCI's WE initiative, which is PCI's savings-led microfinance program that focuses on social and economic advancements, especially for women. The WE model combines the economic empowerment aspects of VSL groups, but adds critical components of social empowerment. During group meetings, VSL members discuss and address important social issues facing their families and their communities through individual and group action planning. In addition, rotational leadership and training in democratic group principles ensure that each participant has an equal opportunity to speak and lead the group. During Q2, Njira has been revising WE field manuals and training materials that will be used during the roll-out of WE initiative in Balaka and Machinga. The WE Advisor also participated in a data quality assessment exercise of WE/VSL groups operating under PCI's ARC II project in order to assess strengths and weaknesses of group performance and reporting in order to inform the development of training curriculum for Njira communities.

Purpose 2: Improved Health and Nutrition

Progress Against Targets

Progress against P2 targets will be reported in the Q3 report.

Capacity Building

Care Group Model Training

Led by PCI's Care Group Specialist and Njira's RMNCH and Nutrition Advisors, a Care Group training was held in Zomba from March 30 – April 2, 2015.

This was a training of trainers (ToT) primarily for Njira Health and Nutrition Coordinators and Facilitators, designed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills needed to establish, implement and monitor the Care Group model. Key topics covered during the training included: 1) Understanding the Care Group Structure; 2) How to Form Care Groups; 3) How to Conduct Care Group Sessions Using Modules; 4) Content of the Modules; 5) Data Collection Tools; and 6) Reporting.



Figure 2: Care Group training in session

A total of 34 participants (18 male, 16 female) attended the training, which included a representative from DAI's INVC project, two government officers from the Ministry of Agriculture, and two officers from the Ministry of Health. All Njira Technical Advisors attended the first day of training to ensure an understanding of how the Care Group model works as part of a dynamic team.



Figure 3: Role play by Care Group training participants

During the training, participants developed generic work-plans for the various cadres in the Care Group model; identified areas on which Father Care Groups could focus; and ways of motivating Care Group volunteers. These ideas will be incorporated into the Njira implementation strategy.

IYCF Research Dissemination Seminar

Njira participated in the Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) research dissemination meeting on the “Impact of Food Security Interventions and Nutrition Education” and “Factors that Influenced Adoption of Improved Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices” in Lilongwe on February 18, 2015. The research was conducted jointly by the Malawi Government, the FAO, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), and Justus Liebig Universitat (JLU) from Germany.

Inter-Organizational Coordination

UNICEF

Njira’s Nutrition Advisor met with UNICEF’s nutrition department on March 26, 2015. The meeting was aimed to develop a better understanding of the existing curriculum for Care Groups developed under the *Scaling Up Nutrition* (SUN) interventions. The Njira project is in the process of developing its Care Group curriculum and must ensure that its training materials are in line with those developed and approved by the Government of Malawi. It was also discovered that a new module was being developed for WASH, which Njira will use. Subsequent to this meeting, Njira coordinated with Concern Universal, which is the lead organization for SUN Care Group activities in Balaka district.

Banja La Mtsogolo (BLM)

Njira’s Nutrition Advisor and PCI Country Director met with the Director of BLM, an organization which has an extensive network of community agents that improves access to contraceptives and HIV testing and counselling in rural areas. Once Njira Care Groups and WE groups are formed, BLM agents will be invited to promote their services with no additional cost to the Njira team. These are critical services that are not included in the Njira design, but this simple linkage of services will be beneficial to Njira beneficiaries, particularly for the youth, who often do not feel comfortable seeking services in the existing health network.

Other P2 Activities

All activities have been covered above.

Purpose 3: Improved Capacity to Prepare for, Manage, and Respond to Shocks

Progress Against Targets

Progress against P3 targets will be reported in the Q3 report.

Capacity Building

PCI staff attended the Malawi Government DRM Policy Launch in Mangochi in April, presided over by the Minister of Information & Culture, and set up a pavilion to showcase its armyworm early warning system. The launch of the Policy will enhance coordination of DRM activities and provide policy direction to DRM players

Inter-Organizational Coordination

PCI continued discussions with CADECOM, a local partner in the Njira consortium engaged to develop DRM training materials, and to conduct a ToT for project staff in DRM.

During the district level meetings, stakeholders were introduced to key Njira DRM activities in the DIP and had a chance to discuss and harmonize specifically with the district in mind. The district technical teams provided input on the Njira DIP and endorsed it for roll out. Njira also collaborated with the PCI ARC II project, which is conducting similar DRM activities in Machinga and Balaka in response to the flooding that occurred in specific areas of each district. See more information regarding this collaboration below. During these collaborations, Njira developed a strong coordination platform from which to implement its DRM activities.

Other P3 Activities

Disaster response activities

Njira joined PCI's ARC II project team to assess and respond to the flooding that occurred in January 2015. Njira's WASH Specialist and Agricultural Advisor provided guidance on intervention design to address the most critical needs of the communities. In conjunction with the distribution of OFDA-donated Non-Food Items (NFI), the Njira WASH specialist provided an orientation to VCPCs on the following: (1) Personal Hygiene; (2) Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene; (3) Water Hygiene; and (4) Food Hygiene. The training equipped the VCPC members with basic WASH information so that they can relay similar information to flood-affected households. The District Environmental Health Office (DEHO) for Balaka and Machinga assigned officers from the Environmental Health Department to assist in the delivery of the sanitation and hygiene component. The Njira agricultural advisor assisted in the assessment of soil conditions, selection of seeds and vines, and development of planting strategies.

PCI and EI submitted a concept note to the USAID Food for Peace Office in February 2015 for additional resources to address the projected food insecurity issues in the Njira project area, and continue to await a response.

Satellite Imagery

PCI worked with SpaceUnited to acquire a donation of satellite imagery from DigitalGlobe Inc. (www.digitalglobe.com) for Njira. This will include approximately 2,000 square kilometers of satellite imagery and up to 12 individual satellite images, which Njira hopes to use in watershed management planning in conjunction with the Ministry of Forestry.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Monitoring and Evaluation

In January 2015, the Njira team refined its TOC, Log Frame and IPTT, which were submitted to USAID at the end of January 2015. Feedback on the TOC, Log Frame and IPTT was provided by USAID in February 2015, prior to the February follow-up M&E Workshop conducted by TOPS, which was designed to introduce the team to the other required components of its M&E Plan. In this workshop, additional deadlines were established for submission of a new set of deliverables, including a further revised TOC, Log Frame and IPTT, as well as the development of Njira's complete M&E Plan and DIP. New components of the M&E Plan introduced during this workshop included the Annual Monitoring Plan, Data Quality Assurance and Safety Plan, Data Dissemination and Use Plan, M&E Staffing Plan, Capacity Development Strategy, and an Evaluation Plan. The workshop was held at the Malawi Sun-Hotel in Blantyre and was attended by Ubale and Njira project staff. From Njira, the PCI Africa Region Associate M&E Technical Advisor, COP, DCOP, Technical Advisors, and key project staff attended. The Njira M&E Plan was submitted to USAID in March 2015.

Based on this start-up workshop, Njira organised a general orientation for the newly hired Technical Advisors in January to provide an overview of Njira's TOC, various platforms, activities, partners, innovations and technologies. The Advisors then replicated this orientation for project Coordinators and Facilitators hired in February and March 2015.

Gender

Njira organized meetings with different stakeholders to ensure learning and programmatic synergy across programs from a gendered perspective. On March 13, 2015, Njira attended the dissemination meeting on gender and behavior change, which was organized by Care International in Lilongwe. During the meeting, Care International disseminated their gender methodology of progress markers and outcome mapping that they use to measure behavior change in gender issues. Njira also had an interface meeting with the Women's Legal and Resource Centre on issues of gender integration and programming. Njira, with support from USAID, continues discussions with CRS' Ubale Project on conducting a joint Gender Analysis. It is anticipated that the joint Gender Analysis will begin in May 2015.

Njira's Gender Advisor attended a gender and sexuality training organized by the U.S. Embassy in Lilongwe on February 5, 2015. The meeting was aimed at discussing the new agenda for Malawi on issues of gender and sexuality. A total of 25 different International NGOs attended the meeting.

PCI's Senior Technical Advisor for Gender based in the U.S. worked with the Njira Gender Advisor to conduct a gender orientation for Njira Technical Advisors in Zomba on March 9, 2015. The orientation was aimed at sensitizing the team on how a gender perspective will orient Njira project activities.

5.0 ICT Strategy

PCI is committed to the identification, development, adoption and scale-up of innovative mobile phone technologies that will add significant value to the management and implementation of Njira. Under the proposed ICT strategy, the program will deploy an innovative information management tool called Global Pathways, or G-Path, which will use the Microsoft Azure cloud management portal to manage and host the database for its clients through various devices like mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and desktops.

The Regional Commodity and IS Manager recently relocated to Malawi and has been engaged in designing and developing the G-Path system during Q2 in consultation with the M&E and program teams. The primary functions of the system have been developed, including the forms that will be used to capture basic entries and support different program elements like beneficiary registration, involvement in programmatic interventions, and food distribution records, as well as warehouse accounting records. G-Path will operate under both offline and online network circumstances; therefore, users will be able to capture data from remote locations where there is limited or no mobile network connectivity, and can later synchronize records when the device appears online.

The registration of the system platform at Microsoft Azure Cloud has already been completed, along with the implementation of the database and the virtual machine at the registered cloud portal. Several forms are already developed, integrated and deployed live through the website named gpath.azurewebsites.net. The integration and enhancement of its functionalities are still in progress.

G-Path will capture Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates as required by the project by using GPS devices, tablets and/or smartphones. It aims to integrate Geographical Information system (GIS) tools so that the project's performance can be made visible to the program managers from where they can monitor progresses and make the outputs helpful for further decision making.

PCI is in the process of hiring the individual who will manage the G-Path system in country, in coordination with the M&E Manager, Technical Advisors, and Commodity Manager. S/he will ensure that front line staff have the training and support they need to fully utilize the system in their work and will monitor data quality on a day-to-day basis with support from the M&E team Knowledge Management and Learning Advisor to facilitate data driven decision-making as required.

6.0 Commodity Management

PCI submitted its first Call Forward for its FY15 commodity distribution to Njira's AOR on February 25th. The Call Forward was for a total of 1,530 MT (860 MT of pinto beans, 320 MT of corn soya blend, and 350 MT fortified refined vegetable oil). It is anticipated that the shipment will arrive in the ports of Beira or Nacala in Mozambique by August 2015. According to the commodity management plan, distribution will take place between November 2015 and March 2016, which is considered a "lean period" or time of greatest food insecurity in Malawi. Njira's initial household and beneficiary registration activity, planned for May 2015, will help identify those households qualifying for food rations.

PCI secured a 500 MT² warehouse in Balaka, and is in the process of identifying its principal warehouse in Blantyre. During the proposal development phase, discussions were held with the landlord of the warehouse utilized by CRS due to the desirability of securing the Njira warehouse in the same compound, but the landlord has wavered on his decision about renting the warehouse. PCI is presently searching for alternatives and anticipates finalizing the search early in Q3.

7.0 Policy and Operational Issues

The Malawi Government approved its DRR Policy during Q2. This was significant, given that Njira's DRM implementation strategy was designed in close alignment with the draft policy. Now that it has been approved, the policy gives Njira both a policy and legal platform for aligning program activities and support with government systems.

During Q2, the Malawi currency (Kwacha) has continued to appreciate against the US dollar, however its effects were not visible to the project because significant resources have not yet been required in support of project activities.

8.0 Baseline Assessments

a. Baseline Study

Njira attended the USAID Baseline Survey Workshop from February 18-20, 2015 at Ryalls Hotel in Blantyre. The Workshop, supported by USAID and organized by ICF International, was to provide information to Njira and UBALE on the research methodology and field management protocol to be used during the Baseline Survey. Additionally, the project specific indicators that were to be included into the Survey were discussed and refined. Njira committed to providing support needed during the survey in Balaka and Machinga. Njira has since obtained Letters of Support from the two Districts, allowing ICF to conduct the Survey in the sampled Enumeration Areas (EAs). The baseline study is expected to take place from June to July 2015.

b. Gender Assessment

Njira intends to conduct a detailed and comprehensive gender analysis that will inform staff as to how best to tailor program activities towards gender inclusivity. The assessment is planned to be conducted jointly with CRS' UBALE project. The goal of this Gender Analysis is to provide a deeper understanding of current intersections between gender and food security at the community and household levels in *Njira* target areas, as well as the overall gender context within which the program will be operating. Njira has coordinated several preparatory meetings with the UBALE project team in February and March 2015 to map the way forward for the joint gender analysis. An MoU is being drafted for this collaboration on gender analysis. The Gender Analysis is expected to commence in May 2015.

9.0 Challenges During Q2

Commodity Management		
<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Status</i>
Availability of warehouse space in Blantyre to accommodate 1500 MT of food commodities	The original plan for a warehouse in Blantyre changed due to decisions by the landlord. Other warehouses identified have not been adequately secure or are overly priced. We continue to search within and outside of Blantyre.	We expect to reach a conclusion in April-May.
Administrative		
<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Status</i>
Nothing to Report		
Programmatic		
<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Status</i>
Slow start due to intensity of start-up training workshops.	We are moving ahead as quickly as possible between workshops, and hope to speed up implementation in Q3	Project is still on track
Unable to meet with Director-level staff at Ministries until we meet with Ministers	Njira is focusing on District Executive Committees and District-level line Ministry staff	
Other		
<i>Challenge</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Status</i>
Floods which affected most of the targeted communities	Submitted proposal to USAID and OFDA for recovery projects.	Received funding from OFDA. No response from USAID.

10.0 Plans for Q3

Njira anticipates a busy Q3. With most staffing requirements fulfilled and the majority of start-up workshops completed, Njira can begin to concentrate on actual program implementation. Specifically, Njira anticipates being engaged in the following activities in Q3:

Community entrée and other start-up activities

- Continue community sensitization and mobilization activities targeting the ADCs in Balaka and begin with the VDCs and community meetings in both Machinga and Balaka districts.
- Begin the registration process, with a vision of registering all food beneficiaries by August 2015 in preparation for ration distributions later this year.
- Lead preparations for the USAID mega project launch to be conducted in Machinga on 6th May 2015 to be presided by America High Commissioner and two Government Cabinet Ministers (Agriculture & Natural Resources). The preparations include linking with various institutions on key deliverables pertaining to the launch. Njira will participate in the launch and present key project innovations to be implemented by the project.
- Conduct a mapping exercise, together with district personnel, of all organizations operating in each district and their main activities.
- Lead value chain analysis of several sectors, including poultry, goat and pigeon, in which Njira will be working.

Purpose 1

- Map and analyze existing VSL groups in order to understand distribution of groups and level of maturity/strength. This activity will result in a strategic and comprehensive training program targeting both new and existing groups.
- Conduct ToTs for staff and partners related to WE/VSL, Conservation Agriculture, Agribusiness, and Livestock; and develop relevant training materials for rolling out those trainings.
- Hold follow-up meetings with FAO, WFP, CIP and other strategic organizations to explore potential partnership relationships.
- Establish seed multiplication plots with CIAT for their iron and zinc bio-fortified common bean, and later distribute the seed to Njira organized farmer producer groups.
- Identify irrigation schemes and conduct initial mobilization and formation of Irrigation Committees.

Purpose 2

- Develop Care Group training modules and materials, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF.
- Mobilize community members to form Care Groups and begin trainings together with HSAs.

- Form and train Father Care Groups and Youth Groups.

Purpose 3

- Map existing local government DRM structures (District Disaster Risk Management Committee, Area Disaster Risk Management Committee, and the Village Disaster Risk Management Committee) to better understand capacity and level of assistance required.
- Through CADECOM, provide ToT to staff in DRM, in line with the new National Policy on DRM; develop relevant training modules and materials.
- Provide training and technical assistance in DRM to DDRMCs, ADRMCs and VDRMCs.

Other Activities

- Revise key project M&E documents, such as the revised TOC, Log frame, IPTT and the first draft of the M&E Plan, based on feedback expected from USAID.
- Finalize development of G-Path, Njira's beneficiary registration and commodity management software.
- Prepare for and begin a joint gender analysis, together with CRS/UBALE.
- Conduct gender training for project staff targeting project coordinators, field facilitators and health promoters.
- Conduct a capacity assessment of community based organizations and subsequent recruitment of several required to provide focused technical support.