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Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme

Smallholder Farmer Support and Market Access Programme Unit Lilongwe/Malawi

TERMS OF REFERENCE

ABOUT WFP

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is a highly prestigious, reputable and the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters, and the impact of climate change.

We are currently seeking for a Junior Professional Officer to fill the position of **Smallholder Farmer Support and Market Access Coordinator** with our Programme Unit based in Lilongwe/Malawi.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Malawi is a small, landlocked country in Southern Africa, ranking **169th out of 191** countries on the 2021 Human Development Index. With most livelihoods dependent on agriculture, Malawians are highly vulnerable to the effects of **climate-related shocks** and **stresses**. Most rural families experience poverty, with those headed by women suffering the most. Climate-induced shocks, the lingering effects of COVID-19, the impact of the conflict in Ukraine, rapidly rising inflation and an overall difficult economic landscape will further threaten food and nutrition security for the foreseeable future. Food and fuel prices have been on the rise, reaching record highs for the post-harvest period and eroding the limited purchasing power of Malawi's poor and ultra-poor households, who already survive on **less than US\$165** per person, per year.

Malawi's challenges are also compounded by high HIV prevalence (**at 8.9 percent**), low primary school completion (**51 percent**) and stunting – a sign of chronic undernutrition (**35 percent for children under 5**). WFP continues to strengthen its integrated approach, addressing issues related to **food systems** and increasing the focus on **innovation, resilience programming** and **climate change adaptation**. Our work improves livelihoods for smallholder farmers and other vulnerable populations, with an emphasis on women and youth.

WFP continues to partner with the Government, other UN agencies, NGOs, civil society and the private sector, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, with a particular emphasis on reaching Zero Hunger (SDG 2), and aligning with Government strategies, particularly its Vision 2063.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Title of Post:** Smallholder Farmer Support and Market Access Coordinator
- **Grade:** P2
- **Supervisor:** Head of School Meals and Nutrition
- **Unit:** Programme unit
- **Division/Country Office:** Malawi
- **Duty Station:** Lilongwe, Malawi
- **Duration of assignment:** Two years

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Smallholder Farmer Support and Market Access Coordinator plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of homegrown school feeding programs by linking local farmers with school meal initiatives, fostering community engagement, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. This role contributes to improving food security, nutrition, and economic opportunities for smallholder farmers and their communities. Under the direct supervision of Head of unit, the JPO will have the following responsibilities:

- Support the coordination, design, and implementation of the smallholder agricultural support integration to the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, ensuring that WFP-wide programme policies are translated into the Malawi contexts, implementation modalities and operations.
- **Smallholder Farmer Engagement:** Ensure transparent and robust local level and government led Identification and recruitment of local smallholder farmers' cooperatives interested in participating in the homegrown school feeding initiative.
- Support district and community level provision of training and capacity-building support to School Feeding contracted farmers' cooperatives in sustainable farming practices, crop selection, and post-harvest handling.
- **Agricultural Production Planning:** Collaborate with district agricultural officers and agricultural extension workers to review crop production plans that align with the nutritional needs of school meals.
- Engage district agricultural officers and agricultural extension workers in the promotion of diversification of crops to ensure year-round supply and dietary variety in school meals menus.
- **Quality Assurance:** In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, review and enforce quality standards for agricultural produce to meet food safety and nutrition requirements for the diversified school menus.
- Support the district agricultural officers and agricultural extension workers to monitor and advise farmers on pest and disease management.
- **Market Access and Linkages:** Work with district council to ensure transparent facilitation of access to markets for smallholder farmers by establishing connections with local schools implementing the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme.
- Support transparent functioning of district level price setting committees which ensures fair pricing and contracting of farmers' cooperatives by the schools.
- Supply Chain Management: Support training of farmers' cooperatives to ensure a smooth flow of high-quality produce from farms to supported schools.
- Monitor inventory levels and ensure timely deliveries to meet school meal schedules.
- **Data Collection and Reporting:** Support regular and ad-hoc reporting on the activities related to the farmers' cooperatives in the homegrown school feeding program.

- **Community Engagement:** Foster community support and involvement in the program by conducting awareness campaigns and involving local stakeholders.
- **Budget Management:** Work with district agricultural officer to ensure efficient management of the budget allocated for farmer support activities, ensuring efficient utilization of resources.
- Monitor and oversee operational research and evidence building on issues relevant to the integration of HGSP and small holder farmers' initiatives to support advocacy and resource mobilisation for WFP Malawi, and to strengthen programme/proposals formulation and mobilisation of funding.
- Support technical discussions and partnerships with academia and research centres to support studies and research of relevance.
- Support and coordinate the preparation of accurate and timely reporting to enable informed decision making and consistency of information presented to stakeholders.
- Ensure gender perspectives are incorporated in all areas of this work to ensure meaningful participation of women and men and the empowerment of women and youth and other marginalized groups.
- Support the identification, development, and management of potential partnerships, including in the private sector, for promoting sustainable food systems.
- Support the Malawi Country office in its engagement with other UN agencies, in particular the RBA, private sector, research centres and relevant actors to establish partnerships and collaboration.
- Guide and supervise more junior staff, acting as a point of referral and supporting them with analysis and queries.
- Other accountabilities, as required.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Overall, the role of a Smallholder Farmer Support and Market Access Coordinator is instrumental in achieving the program's objectives, which include improving food security, nutrition, and economic opportunities for smallholder farmers while ensuring that school children receive nutritious meals. These outcomes contribute to the overall development and well-being of the community.

- **Government and Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - Strengthened partnerships with government agencies and other stakeholders involved in agriculture and nutrition.
 - Increased support and recognition of the program's importance.
 - Efficient management of the budget allocated for farmer support activities.
 - A successful model that can be scaled up to reach more schools and communities.
 - The potential for replication in other regions or districts through government support.
- **Increased Farmers cooperatives Participation and Market Access**
 - More smallholder farmers engaged in the Home-Grown School Feeding program.
 - Expanded acreage under cultivation as farmers see the benefits of participating.
 - Establishing sustainable market linkages for smallholder farmers.
 - Strengthened connections with local institutions and food processors.
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- **Improved Agricultural Practices and Diversified Crop Production:**
 - Adoption of sustainable and modern farming practices.
 - Enhanced crop yields and quality due to training and support.
 - A wider variety of crops grown to meet nutritional requirements.
 - Reduced dependence on a single crop, enhancing food security.
- **Empowerment and enhanced income of Smallholder Farmers:**
 - Increased income for participating farmers through fair pricing and market access.
 - Improved livelihoods for farming households.
 - Increased confidence and capacity among smallholder farmers.
 - Opportunities for farmers to take a more active role in decision-making.
 - Increased community awareness and support for the school feeding program.

- Stronger ties between schools and local communities.
- Food Security and Nutrition:
 - Enhanced access to diverse and nutritious food for school children.
 - Reducing the vulnerability of smallholder farmers and communities.
 - Improved food security within the community.
 - Reliable and timely delivery of fresh produce to schools.
 - Improved nutritional quality of school meals.
- Data-Driven Decision-Making:
 - Accurate data collection and reporting on program performance.
 - Informed decision-making for program improvements.
- Compliance with Quality Standards:
 - Adherence to food safety and quality standards in agricultural production.
 - Safe and nutritious meals for school children.

ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

- Advanced university degree in Agriculture, Economics, Rural Development, Agronomy, Engineering, Environmental Science, or other field relevant to international development assistance, or First University degree with additional years of related work experience.
- Minimum of two years relevant working experience in smallholder agricultural support, resilience-related project development and/or implementation.
- Fluency in English
- Proficiency in Windows MS Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook)
- Behavioural competencies: leads by example with integrity, drives results and delivers on commitments, fosters inclusive and collaborative teamwork, applies strategic thinking, builds, and maintains sustainable partnerships.

DESIRABLE REQUIREMENTS

- Exposure to the international arena either by direct work for an international institution/ organization or by interacting with international stakeholders.
- Intermediate level of one, or more, of the following official languages: French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Portuguese
- WFP's international professionals are required to serve in different locations around the world during their career (including in hardship duty stations); willingness to be mobile would maximise opportunities for long-term retention into the Organization

SUPERVISION

The JPO will work under the overall supervision/guidance of the Head of School Meals and Nutrition Unit, and report directly to the Team Leader for SAMS.

TRAINING COMPONENTS

At the end of the assignment, the JPO will have obtained:

- An in-depth understanding of WFP's programmatic approaches to food value chains, food systems, agricultural market access and/or rural development issues.
- Good general understanding of WFP's overall operations and activities globally, and experience with the policy environment of the largest humanitarian agency in the UN system.
- A network of institutional contacts with other UN agencies, NGOs, private sector, and research institutions in climate/disaster risk management

- Expertise in designing and implementing smallholder agricultural support, resilience-related climate, and disaster risk reduction projects.
- Expertise in the development of guidance and training materials in relation to climate action and disaster risk reduction

LEARNING ELEMENTS

At the end of the two-year assignment, the JPO should have obtained:

- Very good knowledge of theoretical understanding of food value chains, food systems, agricultural market access and/or rural development issues.
- Good skills on smallholder agricultural support, resilience-related project development and/or implementation.
- Familiarity with analysis and interpretation of complex quantitative and qualitative data, preparation of reports and drawing of conclusions and recommendations.
- Good general understanding of WFP's overall operations and activities in the region of assignment.

Saving Lives
Changing Lives