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## An integrated agriculture-nutrition package to improve diets through community-based childcare centers in Malawi: The Nutrition Embedded Evaluation Program Impact Evaluation (NEEP-IE) study

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The Nutrition Embedded Evaluation Program Impact Evaluation (NEEP-IE) study is a cluster randomized controlled trial designed to evaluate the impact of a childcare center-based integrated nutrition and agriculture intervention on the diets, nutrition and development of young children in Malawi. The intervention includes activities to improve nutritious food production and training/ behavior change communication to improve food intake, care and hygiene practices. Sixty community-based childcare centres (CBCCs) in rural communities around Zomba district, Malawi, were randomised to either 1) a control group of communities with Save the Children supported CBCCs and parenting education; or 2) an intervention group where additional nutrition and agricultural support activities were provided to help communities provide nutritious meals in the preschools all year round. Primary outcomes at child level include dietary intake of children aged 3-6 years old at baseline (measured through 24-hour recall), whilst secondary outcomes include child development (Malawi Development Assessment Tool (MDAT) and nutritional status (anthropometric measurements). At the household level, primary outcomes included smallholder farmer production output and crop-mix (recall of last production season). Intermediate outcomes along theorized agriculture and nutrition pathways were measured. During this trial, we followed a mixed methods approach combining child-, household-, CBCC- and market-level surveys and assessments with in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with project stakeholders. The integrated agriculture and nutrition intervention improved dietary intake and dietary diversity for children. Positive effects were also observed for household production diversity. These effects were driven by increased consumption and production of nutritious foods.

### Biography

Aisha Twalibu is a Research Coordinator for Nutrition Embedding Evaluation Project (NEEP) at Save the Children, Malawi. She has a background in Statistics, Demography and Development studies with a postgraduate diploma in Development Studies and a Bachelor of Science degree from Chancellor College, University of Malawi. Aisha has been working in global health, education and development initiatives including child nutrition, early childhood development (ECD), food security and livelihoods and sexual and reproductive health and rights for youth. Before joining Save the Children in 2015, she was a Global Health Corps Fellow in Malawi. Currently she is studying for an MSc in Global Health Implementation with College of Medicine-University of Malawi.

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