**Notes from the Warm Heart of Africa**

“The World Cup will help unify people, if there is one thing in this planet that has the power to bind people, it is soccer.”
— Nelson Mandela

**Malawi Private Sector Assisting Government**

**Spotlight/Farewell**

Alisa Cameron, Health, Population and Nutrition Team Leader (HPN).

Alisa, better known as “Aly” by most of her colleagues, has recently left Malawi after four years at the Mission. We caught up during her last days at post for a brief chat.

**Tell us about yourself?** I have been with USAID for over six years and about another 10 in development work both in the US and internationally. Much of my passion goes for my work, I truly believe in the good of what we do at USAID and in the health sector here. There is no other field I could imagine following other than health and development. I do admit to the occasional daydream of chucking the crazy workload and doing nothing but know I would miss the work and come running back.

**On May 28**, USAID, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Standard Bank launched a joint initiative on capacity building for local assemblies in Malawi. This initiative aims to support the Government of Malawi in promoting effective and efficient fiscal management of development resources, especially those channeled through local assemblies for implementation at the community level.

A group of eight technical assistants made up mostly of chartered accountants will assist the staff from district assemblies in strengthening financial management systems in their communities. The initiative covers eight district assemblies for a period of nine months, including, Mzuzu City, Lilongwe, Karonga, Mwanza, Ntchisi, Mangochi, Phalombe and Nsanje districts.

Approximately 85% of Malawians live in rural areas and are dependent on the functionality of public systems at the local level in order to access basic health, education and economic services.

Strengthening these structures could dramatically improve service delivery and have substantial impact on people’s lives. Moreover, progress in improving financial management at local levels has the strong potential to boost donor confidence in channeling resources through local governance structures.

This is not the first time USAID Malawi has assisted in setting up private-public partnerships. To date, USAID/Malawi has harnessed over 30 public-private alliances. These partnerships have facilitated access to broader financing options, assisted in skill and knowledge development, improved agricultural productivity, strengthened health care...

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**Important Dates**

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**Farewell & Welcome Back**

USAID/Malawi wishes farewell to Marisa Parente, Financial Management Officer, who will be leaving USAID/Malawi to take up a similar position at USAID/Mozambique. The Mission will miss your leadership and hard work.

USAID/Malawi also welcomes back Melanie Luick-Martins, Health, Population and Nutrition Officer, who was away on maternity leave. Congratulations to you and your family for the birth of a healthy baby boy!

USAID/Malawi website: [www.usaid.gov/mw](http://www.usaid.gov/mw)
As we travel on a road outside the city of Lilongwe filled with cyclists, farmers, women with babies on their backs, and occasional goats trying to cross the road, we come across one of the oldest educational institutions in Malawi, Bunda College of Agriculture.

Both the road and the college were constructed with USAID funding. USAID’s support to Malawi in the agriculture sector began in the 1960’s with, among other investments, the establishment of Bunda College and the Polytechnic in Blantyre, two of the five constituent colleges of the University of Malawi.

Since the College’s initial intake of 35 students in 1966 followed by the official opening on November 26, 1967 by Malawi’s first President Dr. Ngwazi Kamuzu Banda, the institution has undergone various renovations and upgrades with assistance from several development partners.

Over the years, the college has received assistance from the Malawi, British, Japanese and Norwegian Governments, the European Union and various United Nations agencies; especially in areas of research, capacity building and infrastructural developments.

The first Principal for Bunda College was an American professor by the name of Theodore Pinney, who served at Bunda College from 1966 to 1972.

Bunda College continues to play a central role in Malawi’s agro-based economy. Bunda College is the lead institution in Malawi, providing relevant learning and teaching resources needed for the country’s development.

Currently, Bunda College offers 5 PhD programs, 14 Masters programs and a wide range of undergraduate programs under the Departments of Agriculture, Environmental Sciences and Developmental studies. Bunda College plays a key role in developing new agricultural technologies appropriate for local farmers, produces agricultural professionals for the public and private sector and assists the Ministry of Agriculture at the practical and policy level.

The US Government continues to collaborate with Bunda College on various educational exchange programs, including the Fulbright Fellowship. These programs have been effective in capacity building, promoting mutual understanding and cultural diversity.

USAID remains a strong partner with Bunda College and Malawi’s agricultural sector. USAID’s agricultural programs aim to increase the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector as the basis for broad-based economic growth and food security.

Bunda College plays a central role in Malawi's agro-based economy. Bunda College continues to play a central role in Malawi's agro-based economy.

A total of five million books will be made available to nearly three million primary school students.

These supplementary reading materials could accelerate literacy acquisition, and ultimately make teaching and learning more interesting.

Speaking at the workshop, Ramsey Sosola, Education Program Specialist, USAID/Malawi encouraged the participants to write stories which are relevant for learners. “You are now in a better position to contribute to the Ministry of Education priorities, you are now authors! And you are authors of materials for learners that will instill the culture of reading in Malawi,” he said. “Your stories represent your experiences, as teachers you have a challenge, you must go back to the classrooms and teach the students to write their stories,” added Sosola.

The Read Malawi “Werenga” project kicked-off with a three-day training for teachers and educators at Lilongwe Teachers College on May 26. The three-day workshop allowed 40 teachers and educators to brainstorm suitable topics to expand learners’ knowledge and imagination. Through the training the participants learned various techniques and writing skills.

Read Malawi is a USAID-funded education initiative implemented by the University of Texas, San Antonio (UTSA) in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Malawi Institute of Education.

After achieving significant success with a similar project in South Africa, the Read Malawi program will create 120 book titles for distribution in over 1000 public schools in Malawi.
found comfort and encouragement from the HPN Team. This has been one of the best experiences I have had and am honored to be a part of this team and this Mission.

Outside of USAID what do you like doing? I love to read, always have and always will! I have to force myself sometimes to put the book down and get moving. I also enjoy lunch with friends, volleyball and whiffleball, lazing around the pool, and going to museums. I used to love to cook but now I love having a housekeeper. Did I mention reading?

My heart though, really belongs to my husband BJ and son, Zane. They are my joy and the best thing I have ever been a part of. So they are the top of my list, always, and my best thing ever.

During her farewell party here is what some of Aly’s colleagues had to say...

USAID/Malawi wishes you and your family all the best Aly!

Malawian Journalists Discuss the Effects of Population Growth on Development

On April 28, USAID/Malawi with USAID funded Bridge project in collaboration with the Population Reference Bureau, held a three-day workshop for Malawian journalists on family planning, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and population growth. The discussions were a continuation of a series conducted by Family Planning Consultant Pushpa Jamison.

The aim of the training series is to familiarize the participants with the country’s reproductive health challenges and how they hinder the country’s development. Through the training, the journalists had a chance to hear first hand information from experts regarding family planning and reproductive health. One health official, Fatima Zulu of the Malawi College of Medicine- Johns Hopkins Research Project spoke frankly about some of the challenges health workers and Malawian’s have in discussing and dealing with sexual reproductive health issues. Ms. Zulu also encouraged the journalists to dig deep and discuss the “real issues” that impact reproductive health.

The three-day training exposed the participants to local initiatives in Malawi on family planning, treatment choices for HIV positive women, female condom use and the role of Community Based Distribution Agents in delivering family planning services.

Pushpa Jamison, facilitator for the workshop told the participants that “The training is expected to raise awareness and encourage you to report accurately on these issues; you are the voice between the providers and the beneficiaries.”

During the discussions, USAID/Malawi Mission Director Curt Reintsma pointed out the importance of reporting professionally on issues dealing with development. “As journalists you have an important role, you influence public opinion.” Reintsma also took the opportunity to point out that “the population growth rate is 2.8 percent per year, and if this trend continues, Malawi’s population will triple by 2040.

Studies have shown that advances in the promotion of family planning contribute to the overall health, economic growth and social development of any nation, especially developing countries. Currently there is an unmet need for family planning services in Malawi. As more and more families learn about the benefits of family planning, they are able to plan for their future and put less strain on the country’s resources.
progress towards country ownership and ability to implement an effective PEPFAR response within the bounds of available resources. The award was presented by Ambassador Eric Goosby, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator during the 2010 PEPFAR annual meeting held in Arusha, Tanzania from May 19-21. Congratulations to the Malawi PEPFAR team once again for their teamwork, vision and leadership they have demonstrated over the last several years leading to this award.

Recognizing the global HIV/AIDS pandemic as one of the greatest health challenges of our time, PEPFAR was launched in 2003 — the largest international public health initiative aimed at a single disease that any nation has ever undertaken. In the first five years of the program, PEPFAR focused on establishing and scaling up prevention, care and treatment programs.

For more information on PEPFAR please visit www.pepfar.gov

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One group making a difference is the Chitsanzo CBCC in Dedza District. The Chitsanzo CBCC members soon realized that the local porridge was not sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of the students from the surrounding communities and approached the USAID-funded Land O’Lakes program for assistance.

Since 2009, Land O’Lakes, through the Malawi Dairy Development Alliance (MDDA), has been working with its milk bulking group members to facilitate milk donations to local CBCCs. The milk is added to porridge to provide the children with the vital nutrients necessary for their overall nutritional health.

The 261 members of Chitsanzo milk bulking group donate six liters of milk to prepare the daily porridge for the children. According to Sybwick Themuka, the CBCC chairman, the donated milk has had a significant impact in terms of the palatability of the porridge and improved nutrition. “Since we started adding milk to the porridge, the children even enjoy it without sugar now; nutritionally there is also a change. We weigh the children, if a child is weighing in low we deliver milk at home as well. The milk supplement has also had a tremendous effect for children living with HIV,” he added.

One HIV positive nine-year old girl currently on antiretroviral treatment has also benefited greatly from milk added to the Likuni Phala servings. Her care giver, Rose Wachepa, happily states “Before being given the milk, the medicine didn’t do much, now she has become stronger.” Felias Tifere, one of the farmers contributing 20 liters a day to the bulking group added “The orphans need a lot of support, and giving them milk is one thing we can do.”

Currently, Land O’Lakes is supporting over 20 milk bulking groups comprised of 2130 farmers. To date, over 4,100 liters of milk has been donated by farmers supporting over 1,244 children.

The devastating effects of HIV/AIDS in Malawi are evident by the staggering number of children orphaned or made vulnerable (OVC) as a result of the epidemic. There are over one million orphans in Malawi, and nearly half are the direct result of AIDS. More than 100,000 are currently living with HIV/AIDS themselves.

Many of these children are cared for through local community based childcare centers (CBCCs). These centers provide the most vulnerable children with basic schooling, healthcare, psychological support and a daily nutritious porridge meal called “Likuni Phala.”

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Beneficiaries of the milk donated by Chitsanzo Milk Bulking Group. — Photo by Susan Lynn

Milk Donations Supporting Orphans and Vulnerable Children

On May 21, the Malawi U.S. President’s Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) team received the “Spirit of PEPFAR” award in recognition of their strong interagency and donor coordination.

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Note from the editor: If you have exciting and relevant information, please share it with Ulemu Malindi, Development Outreach and Communications Specialist, for possible addition to the newsletter. Please send to umalindi@usaid.gov