



## Assessing and Addressing Clients' Needs in Malawi



Photo credit: Clinton Sears/FHI 360

A LIFT II data collector walks a client through the diagnostic tool outside of Kalembo Health Centre. In total, the tool was administered with 312 clients across the three health facilities

**The Livelihoods and Food Security Technical Assistance II (LIFT II)** project was launched in 2013 by USAID as a follow on to the LIFT project (2009-2013). LIFT II's primary goal is to build the continuum of care for people living with HIV and other vulnerable households by increasing their access to high quality, context appropriate, market-led economic strengthening, livelihoods and food security opportunities to improve their economic resilience and lead to better health. LIFT II is implemented by three core partners—[FHI 360](#), [CARE](#) and [World Vision](#).

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Of Malawi's 15.8 million people, approximately 53 percent live below the national poverty line and nearly 11 percent are living with HIV and AIDS. In Malawi and other countries, FHI 360's Livelihoods and Food Security Technical Assistance II (LIFT II) project is improving the ability of at-risk households — particularly those affected by HIV and AIDS — to access adequate and appropriate food and services that benefit the entire household. LIFT focuses on building referral networks that link clients in nutrition or care and treatment services to community-based economic strengthening opportunities. The result is a more holistic approach to helping those who are most vulnerable.

In many countries, a complex web of local, national and international partners offers a dizzying array of services. So developing a process for strategically and systematically linking people to multiple services in different sectors is not without challenges. Among these is the ability to determine exactly which services would most benefit individual clients and what organizations or programs are best suited to provide them.

To address this issue, LIFT II created a diagnostic tool in Balaka, Malawi that providers can use to screen clients, determine which services available in the area may be most appropriate for them, and make appropriate referrals. As part of the development process, LIFT II compared two existing poverty assessment tools and three existing food security tools. A team of six trained data collectors administered the tools to 312 clients in three health facilities in the district. Clients' answers were compared across the tools to determine the value and accuracy of the data generated. Then, LIFT II staff interviewed the data collectors to learn about their experience using the tools and their ability to make referrals.

The best, most complementary poverty assessment and food security tools were merged to create one seamless diagnostic tool. With a series of short, easily understood questions, the diagnostic tool will help providers assess clients' level of vulnerability. For example, do clients need direct offers of



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LIFT II's M&E Specialist, Clinton Sears, with the full team of data collectors in Balaka, Malawi.

food or cash just to meet their basic needs? Or, perhaps their clients are poor but relatively stable and need help developing job skills or finding employment to reach and maintain a healthy standard of living. Maybe they have some economic stability but need legal advice or training in financial literacy to protect the assets they do have and build a financial safety net. The ability for providers to collect information about such closely linked areas of need—poverty and food security—with one easy-to-use tool will improve the usefulness of their referrals and, ultimately, the well-being of their clients.