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Seasonal Migration Feasibility Analysis:  
Malawi and Zambia, 2014

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## Executive Summary

This report evaluates the appropriateness and scalability of a migration intervention<sup>1</sup> to assist with seasonal consumption smoothing in Malawi and Zambia. Field research conducted from July to September 2014 suggests that a seasonal migration intervention to alleviate hunger would be most appropriate in rural Zambia, with out-migration from fishing villages and in-migration to commercial farms as particularly viable options. Rural-rural migration may prove both economically and politically more viable than a rural-urban migration scale-up, since urban unemployment is high in both countries and government officials have issued national “back to the land” rallying cries. In order for spatial arbitrage to be most effective in local contexts, any migration-related intervention should include certain elements not present in the Bangladesh iteration: namely, job placement services and an HIV awareness program. Cost of transport is very high in East Africa when compared to South Asia, and the resulting increase in per capita intervention costs may also impact scalability.

## Field Methodology

### Summary of Interviews

Extensive field research was conducted in Malawi and Zambia over the course of six weeks. The four targeted interviewee groups were: (1) Rural Laborers (2) Rural Employers (3) Urban Laborers, and (4) Urban Employers. The Rural and Urban Laborer categories include both current workers and job-seekers. 191 interviews were conducted. Table 1 summarizes the type in each region:

**Table 1: Total Interviews Completed**

	Central Malawi	South Malawi	East Zambia	Central Zambia	Copper Belt Zambia	
Rural	16	14	15	13	13	
Urban	26	25	29	38	2	Grand Total
Total	42	39	44	51	15	191

### Geographic Scope

Malawi and Zambia were selected as targets for the study due to the presence of seasonal hunger. In both countries, a large percentage of the population lives in rural areas (83% in Malawi and 61% in Zambia), contributing to the rural-urban productivity gap. Potential migration destinations targeted for interviews included cities, towns, peri-urban trade centers, and rural employers such as commercial farms or well-to-do villages. Origin villages were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) Prevalence and severity of seasonal hunger; (2) Located at least one or two hours driving from the nearest potential migration centers (otherwise respondents would be unlikely to need transportation assistance); and (3) Located not more than five hours driving from potential migration centers (otherwise the intervention would be too costly).

Map 1 indicates all of the urban potential destinations researched, which also served as hubs for visiting surrounding rural areas.

<sup>1</sup> See Bryan, Cowdhury and Mobarak, *Seasonal Migration and Risk Aversion*, 2011.

**Map 1: Urban Areas Visited during Field Research (red star indicates place visited)**



Map source: Google Maps.

### Interview Methodology

In each area of fieldwork, interviews were conducted with the assistance of a local interpreter fluent in both English and local dialect(s). Letters of introduction and verbal consent scripts were used, in accordance with IRB standards. All participation in interviews was voluntary. Field interviews with rural respondents, urban unskilled laborers, and job-seekers were anonymous, whereas identities of substantive experts interviewed in major city offices were recorded and cited with permission. In village settings, introductions were made to the village headman before proceeding with interviews. Interviews were conducted largely in individual settings for privacy and veracity purposes, but some focus groups were conducted in public areas where multiple respondents would gather. Most interviews were audio-recorded when respondents were comfortable with it, and all were transcribed. Interview durations were between 20 minutes and 1.5 hours.

### Highlights of Field Research

#### Malawi

##### Country Summary

While food security is widespread and severe in many parts of the country, providing ample potential origins, employment destinations that could absorb excess supply in wage labor were very limited. Many people in Malawi already migrate to Malawi's three major cities (Lilongwe, Blantyre, and Mzuzu)<sup>2</sup> of their own accord by selling assets or borrowing funds from relatives. However, field research

<sup>2</sup> According to the National Statistical Office's Migration Analytical Report (Volume 3 of the 2008 Population and Housing Census), the top 3 destinations from the 2008 Census are: Lilongwe City (275,882 net migrants), Blantyre

results suggested that very few are successful in finding jobs due to high rates of urban unemployment and little labor-intensive industry in town. Most of the rural-urban migrants interviewed had returned home to their village after failing to find work, while many of those who stayed in the village said they would be unwilling to move to the cities due to lack of work. Migrants and workers already in the cities described for the most part very sparse daily piecework labor (known as *ganyu* in Chichewa) and underemployment, with large stretches of time without income.

### Geographic Scope

Research was conducted in both northern Malawi (Lilongwe capitol and Mchinji Town as potential destinations, and villages within Mchinji District as potential rural origins) and southern Malawi (Blantyre city and Zomba town as potential destinations, and villages within Zomba District and Mulanje District as potential rural origins). Rural areas along Lake Malawi and southern regions close to the Shire River were not targeted for the study, because fishing bolsters food security in those areas and land nearby is relatively fertile.

### Seasonal Food Insecurity

Recent studies by the World Food Programme's Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC)<sup>3</sup> and the Food Early Warning System (FEWS)<sup>4</sup> indicate 2013-14 food insecurity in 21 districts, including Zomba, Blantyre Rural, and Mchinji. The most recent MVAC report estimates that 1,461,940 people (9.5% of the national population) will fail to meet their annual food requirement this year.<sup>5</sup> Different parts of the country fall vulnerable annually to food insecurity because of erratic rainfall (flood or drought), crop disease, high input prices, and lack of alternative employment. Additionally, high population growth rates combined with polygamy practices and small overall land supply has created population pressure on farms and extraneous labor supply. Many rural interviewees reported eating one meal per day during the hunger season.

### Existing Programs

A wide variety of international NGOs and government actors are running programs to combat seasonal hunger. Four of the major country-wide programs are summarized below. For comparative budget analyses, please see Appendix.

1. The Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) implemented by the Malawian Government is the most widespread and politically popular social safety net program in the country. Through FISP, the government distributes vouchers for fertilizer to about 1.5 million farmers throughout the country. Its success in actually helping the poor may be questionable. Fieldwork revealed that FISP vouchers can be distributed to as few as 10% of village populations, and that often the vouchers are shared among the entire village population. While the proper allocation according to extension workers is

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City (193,751 net migrants), and Mzuzu City (52,239 net migrants). The districts surrounding those towns experienced the greatest out-migration.

<sup>3</sup> Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC). (2013). *National Food Security Forecast*. Retrieved from <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp258725.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Family Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). (2014). *Malawi Food Security Outlook*. Retrieved from <http://www.fews.net/content-authoring/malawi/food-security-outlook/thu-2014-07-31-wed-2014-12-31-0>.

<sup>5</sup> MVAC, p. 2.

four bags of fertilizer per acre of land, interviewed farmers ultimately received as much as two bags and as little as one bucket of fertilizer for their whole plot.<sup>6</sup>

2. The World Food Program has feeding initiatives providing nutributter to 10,622 beneficiaries in 21 districts, and providing treatment of acute malnutrition to children and pregnant or lactating mothers in over 480 health centers.<sup>7</sup> In total, the WFP plans to give out food to 2,066,194 beneficiaries and cash to 125,054 beneficiaries in 2013-14.<sup>8</sup>
3. USAID's operations in Malawi run both food aid and humanitarian efforts (in conjunction with WFP), and a Maternal/Child Health and Nutrition program with 230,000 beneficiaries. Their programs for farmers include micro-irrigation, microfinance, livestock opportunities, and agribusiness.<sup>9</sup>
4. The Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI)'s Tree of Hope project targets 28,000 Malawian farmers to reduce deforestation and provide income-generating orchards. CHAI has also just completed feasibility analysis to launch a for-profit nutritional supplement for young children.<sup>10</sup>

### Potential Employment Destinations

A wide variety of destination employment opportunities were explored during research. These included rural farm piecework on smallholder or commercial farms, and urban work in a large number of unskilled jobs with no major educational or other qualification barriers.<sup>11</sup> The largest form of rural employment is *ganyu*, or casual piecework labor on non-commercial farms within or close to the village. Generally, urban and commercial farming jobs are divided into two categories: piecework (*ganyu*) and permanent salaried workers. Pieceworkers are generally paid by day, and permanent workers by month. In fact, many *ganyu* laborers interviewed said that the reason they did not want to find formal employment was that they could not survive a whole month's wait without being paid daily wages. Though within formal companies permanent workers are sometimes skilled and paid more than daily laborers, as a whole the average salaries of interviewed piecework and permanent workers were about the same at USD \$44-46/month (or USD \$1.50/day). This is because some piecework employment is effectively small entrepreneurship, and self-employed businesses may be more lucrative even if the work is not salaried.

Below is a table of employment opportunities and their approximate monthly wages, converted into U.S. dollars. Where piecework daily rates applied, estimates of monthly wages were calculated using the frequency with which *ganyu* workers reported finding daily work. It should also be noted that the Malawian government raised the minimum wage to about \$38/month in 2014.<sup>12</sup> However, many

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<sup>6</sup> The Malawi Government's Farm Input Loan Program (FILP) has been discontinued, and the lack of capital to middle-income households is likely to further depress piecework labor opportunities for poor farmers (FEWS NET, p.2).

<sup>7</sup> Southern Africa Regional Food Security Update: MALAWI. January 2014. Accessed via <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp263571.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Budget Revision 16. Accessed via [http://one.wfp.org/operations/current\\_operations/BR/105860\\_1307.pdf](http://one.wfp.org/operations/current_operations/BR/105860_1307.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Edgar, J., Office Chief, USAID Malawi. (2014, August 1). Personal interview.

<sup>10</sup> Han, T., Nutrition Initiative Associate, CHAI. (2014, July 30). Personal Interview.

<sup>11</sup> For all of the jobs listed, the only qualification is a National Registration Certificate (legal identification).

<sup>12</sup> The Nation, *Malawi minimum wage up 74%*, Feb. 25, 2014. Accessed via <http://mwnation.com/malawi-minimum-wage-74/>.

employers do not abide by minimum wage legal standards, particularly for daily work, and the new law does not seem to have drastically affected the equilibrium wage in most industries.

**Table 2: Malawi Job and Salary Summary**

Job	Piecework/Permanent	Approximate Wage
Messenger	Permanent	\$15/mo
Tobacco company worker	Permanent	\$21.25/mo
Laundry woman	Permanent	\$22.50/mo
Tomato seller	Piecework	\$22.50/mo
Village Farm Hire	Piecework	\$25/mo
Drink vendor	Piecework	\$25/mo
Flour factory truck loaders	Piecework	\$27/mo
Tea pickers	Piecework	\$28/mo
Housekeeping	Permanent	\$31.25/mo
Construction company worker	Permanent	\$32.5/mo
Gardener	Permanent	\$35/mo
Guard / Security	Permanent	\$35/mo
Trench diggers	Piecework	\$37.5/mo
Coffee harvesters	Piecework	\$37.5/mo
Commercial Farm Hire	Piecework	\$45/mo
Meat seller	Piecework	\$50/mo
Flour factory workers	Permanent	\$57.5/mo
Minibus driver	Permanent	\$62.5/mo
Vegetable seller	Piecework	\$75/mo
Taxi driver	Permanent	\$125/mo
Bike repairman	Piecework	\$125/mo

The main conclusion from fieldwork across Malawi is that **there are insufficient potential migration destinations to absorb excess labor from rural areas**. The district labor offices in Lilongwe, Zomba, and Blantyre all had crowds of hundreds of people vying for 2-5 job placements per day, making the hiring rate close to 1%. This low level of job search success spanned not only formal sector permanent jobs, but also *ganyu* hiring that occurred informally around urban and peri-urban centers. Anecdotally, most job seekers said they had been waiting 2 to 12 months to find work, using own-farm gardening and *ganyu* labor a couple times a week to supplement incomes.

Another major employment concern was the high barriers to entry into most work places. Many unskilled jobs such as household help (including housekeepers, cooks, laundry, garden boys, and security guards) and taxi/minibus drivers or conductors explicitly stated the need for trust and connections to obtain employment, since employers are effectively exposing valuables such as house and vehicle to their employees. Even for many formal sector jobs in factories or plants, both current employees and job-seekers cited nepotism and corruption as major issues. Because of the oversupply of urban labor, getting a coveted spot often requires influence from a relative within or a well-placed bribe to hiring officials. Other barriers to entry were formally institutionalized in some way. For example, all

the road construction companies interviewed in Malawi said they could only hire from lists provided by chieftains of villages along the road, sometimes as compensation for displacement. Any job seekers not on those lists were turned away from employment. Even *ganyu* truck offloaders waiting for work on the side of the road had barriers to entry – many had formed their own unions, complete with chairman, treasurer, and dues, in order to territorialize casual employment opportunities and prevent strangers from competing for new truck work.

Rural-rural migration seemed somewhat more viable than rural-urban migration, but still did not present a strong opportunity. Farming in Malawi is highly undiversified, with the entire country growing on one seasonal cycle in all of its major crops (maize, tobacco, cotton, tea, and groundnuts). The vast majority of Malawi’s farmers are smallholders, with subsistence farming employing the majority of the country. Widespread seasonal hunger strikes annually in different geographic locales depending on weather. Commercial farming is limited, but seems to present the most relatively promising employment source. Each commercial farm hires hundreds of casual laborers during the hungry season for planting and weeding. For example, Exagris Ltd., a UK holding company, owns 14 large farms across Malawi, each with a minimum of 700 acres. While such farms routinely turn away many people, the rate of hiring observed anecdotally in interviews (roughly 60% of job-seekers) was far and away the highest observed in the field.

#### Distance and costs of travel

In the majority of research destinations, “micro-migration” was the most common form of migration, in which most farmers transported themselves to destinations close enough to reach on foot. Some walked for up to 4 hours each way daily and returned back to their home villages to avoid incurring expensive transport and lodging costs. For the few who undertook long-distance migration, most took mini-busses. Costs of fuel and transport in Malawi are relatively high due to lack of economies of scale and transport monopolies on rural roads.<sup>13</sup> On average, rural interviewees reported a cost of **1,947 Malawi Kwacha, or \$4.88 USD**, to get to the nearest major employment destination outside their own village. On the whole, the average cost of transport per kilometer was about **23.3 Malawi Kwacha, or \$0.06 USD**. In addition, average reported rents in the city were **6,250 Malawi Kwacha, or \$15.63 USD per month**.

#### Potential Unintended Consequences

Any potential program addressing seasonal hunger through migration should consciously assess and mitigate the following potential risks:

1. Oversupply of labor in urban areas. The 2010 Household Survey shows that Malawi’s urban unemployment rate is 4.1%, compared to its rural unemployment rate of 2.7%.<sup>14</sup> In addition, there has been a drastic rise in urban crime rates over the past ten years due to increased urbanization and persistent unemployment, particularly among young people.
2. The contraction and spread of HIV/AIDS is of particular concern across East Africa, as migration (whether permanent or temporary) and remaining cultural norms of polygamy often result in higher

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<sup>13</sup> Lall, Somik et al. *Explaining High Transport Costs in Malawi*, November 2009. Accessed via <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/1813-9450-5133>.

<sup>14</sup> National Statistics Office of Malawi, Census 2008, Economic Activity Report.



rates of sexually transmitted diseases once one member of the family leaves. HIV rates are twice as high in Malawi's urban areas as in rural areas (17.4% versus 8.9%).<sup>15</sup>

3. Land ownership is traditional and largely controlled by allocation through district chieftains. If the head of household were to migrate away, there is some risk that their original land could be reallocated to other members of the clan or family. This risk may be exacerbated by polygamous practices (and hence additional claims to the land) as well as overpopulation. However, fieldwork suggests that the risk is mitigated if the migrant's family continues to work the land productively, as is often the case.

### Potential Alternatives

As part of the research mandate, potential alternatives to a migration intervention were explored using participatory community needs assessment tools during the interview process. The following alternative solutions came through extensive conversations with and suggestions by rural villagers, job-seekers, and local experts.

1. By far the most oft-requested intervention in Malawi was fertilizer provision. The Malawian Government's politically popular FISP program has proven overwhelmingly deficient in practice. Without vouchers, rising global fertilizer costs have made it near-impossible to afford. One 50 kilogram bag costs 15,000 Malawian Kwacha (approximately \$37.5 USD). Extension workers recommend four bags of fertilizer per acre of land – equivalent to five months' salary for a smallholder farmer. Rather than being given food or cash, farmers state that more comprehensive input programs would help them invest in their future yields and assist them with seasonal hunger in future years. However, due to the extremely high costs of fertilizer, such subsidies seem infeasible given the government's existing budget.
2. Commercial farming seems to be the most promising employment opportunity in a country with highly underdeveloped industry and a dominant agricultural sector. With the discontinuation of the Federal Input Loan Program (FILP), commercial farms do not have ready access to finance and cannot take risks on new agricultural technologies such as improved seed varieties, fertilizer, and machinery. FILP was previously most utilized by medium- to high-income households, which are the main employers of the rural poor. Buttressing these households' productivity and output, through either improved farming or new agribusinesses, could result in trickle-down effects throughout rural Malawi.
3. Direct cash transfers could be another potential solution, particularly given the inefficiencies of government input subsidy programs. Taking into consideration corruption potential and costs of transport and monitoring, FISP is currently the most expensive per capita intervention we have come across (see Appendix for cost comparisons). In addition, we have seen that it is very difficult to target and monitor who is receiving subsidies. With the recent successes of GiveDirectly<sup>16</sup>, money can be put into the hands of the poor and used for both food and inputs, depending on current consumption needs that recipients may know best.

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<sup>15</sup> National Statistics Office of Malawi, Household Survey, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> IPA is also conducting cash loans in Chipata, Zambia to combat seasonal hunger. Results are forthcoming.

## Zambia

### Country Summary

Zambia's population stands at 14 million compared to Malawi's 16 million, but Zambia has roughly six times as much land at its disposal. However, much of Zambia's land resources remain untapped due to lack of access to finance, traditional land ownership, and difficulty obtaining deeds as collateral for farmer loans. Copper mining is the largest Zambian industry, with an existing Copper Belt active since the early 1900s and a "new Copper Belt" currently expanding into the northwest region of the country. Areas in this copper region do not experience as much food insecurity on the whole, but do have strong employment opportunities in the mines. One particularly vulnerable population in Zambia is the fishing villages, which have been devastated by climate change, overfishing, and a government-enforced fishing ban that occurs exactly during the hunger season, sending many Zambian fishing families into hunger during those crucial months. A migration intervention for fishing areas would be particularly needed and welcomed both by beneficiaries and the Zambian government as part of a policy scheme to curb widespread overfishing and illegal fishing practices.

### Geographic Scope

Research was conducted in the Eastern Province (Chipata town and surrounding rural areas);<sup>17</sup> Central Zambia (Lusaka and surrounding rural areas, including the Kafue River and sugar cane farms around Mazabuka); and the Copper Belt in the northern-central and northwest of the country. In addition, much information was gleaned through interviews about Luapula Province, a traditional fishing district in the far north of the country that had the highest number of rural out-migrants in the 2010 census, a total of 76,927 people.<sup>18</sup>

### Seasonal Food Insecurity

While Zambia produces a surplus of maize in an average year and does not routinely experience acute food insecurity nationwide, undernourishment and stunting are still widely prevalent in the country and rural seasonality is compounded by rainy-season health problems.<sup>19</sup> Due to the government purchasing of maize for the Food Reserve Agency, average price levels are artificially raised by about 20%, affecting some of the poorest households who cannot grow enough maize and therefore must purchase for consumption.<sup>20</sup> Most rural interviewees reported eating two meals per day during the hunger season.

Due to Zambia's abundant natural water resources, fishing has been a livelihood for many – particularly along the Luapula, Kafue, and Zambezi Rivers. Many fishing areas have seen severe problems with overfishing and violation of fishing bans, which occur annually from December to February in the middle of the maize hunger season. During these critical months, fishermen cannot earn income through sales, yet do not have their own land to grow crops. Seasonal hunger among this population is therefore severe during the ban and exacerbated by high maize prices.

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<sup>17</sup> The Eastern Province was the site of Kelsey Jack's study in affiliation with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), using maize and cash loans to increase on-farm labor. Final results of this study are still forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> Zambia 2010 Census of Population and Housing, *Migration and Urbanisation Analytical Report*, December 2013.

<sup>19</sup> FEWS.net, Zambia Food Security Brief 2014, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2

## Existing Programs

A wide variety of international NGOs and government actors are running programs to combat seasonal hunger. Four of the major country-wide programs are summarized below. For comparative budget analyses, please see Appendix.

1. The Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) is also implemented by the Zambian Government. While the designated allocation is four bags of fertilizer per acre of land, interviewed farmers often received half of this amount. FISP recipients must be part of farmers' cooperatives, which some smallholders never join.
2. The Zambian Government has implemented the Rural Finance Programme (RFP) from 2011-2013, which seeks to promote financial inclusion for the rural poor through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). These groups are trained on fund management, saving, and borrowing, with the majority of members being women. A recent evaluation conducted by the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) reported that VSLA participants were 23% more likely to report a boost in income than the control group.<sup>21</sup>
3. The WFP is currently implementing three programs to address food security in Zambia: (1) school meals, (2) food baskets for vulnerable populations, and (3) disaster risk and response, including a national nutrition surveillance system. Its programs are all concentrated in the southern and eastern borders of the country.<sup>22</sup>
4. USAID focuses on private sector development of agriculture in Zambia through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Compact. It also works with Feed the Future to combat malnourishment through improved agricultural inputs and conservation farming. This program is also focused in the Eastern Province.<sup>23</sup>

## Potential Employment Destinations

Rural *ganyu* labor was much more abundant in Zambia than in Malawi, as there are a larger number and scale of commercial farms. Some small-scale entrepreneurs, like those making woven furniture or reed mats, were doing extremely well and spoke of the potential to train and hire more employees to expand their business. The average monthly incomes of all interviewed workers was \$191.18 USD – more than 4 times that of Malawi data points.

In 2012, the Zambian government raised the country-wide minimum wage to 700 Zambian Kwacha per month, or about \$116 USD. Similar to the Malawian context, many employers do not abide by the minimum wage laws. However, unlike in Malawi, the minimum wage hike was significant enough to distort the equilibrium wage. Some projects with foreign donors or set labor requirements (such as road construction at Mota-Engil, funded by Eurobank) had contract stipulations that allowed them to retain the same number of workers and adjust wages upwards accordingly. However, many other employer respondents, particularly foreign entities who insisted they were under more government

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<sup>21</sup> The ZIPAR Quarterly, Issue 1, April 2014. *Bridging the financial gap for the poor, Evidence from the Rural Finance Programme analysis*, p.10.

<sup>22</sup> WFP, *Country Programme Zambia, 2011-2015*. Published 12/30/2010.

<sup>23</sup> USAID Zambia website, retrieved via <http://www.usaid.gov/zambia/agriculture-and-food-security>.

scrutiny, reported cutting their labor forces in response to the new legislation in 2012. Thus, likely employment destinations for rural migrants will still be predominantly in the informal sectors.

The following chart outlines sample occupations and salaries for Zambian workers:

**Table 3: Zambia Job and Salary Summary**

Job	Piecework/Permanent	Approximate Wage
Maid (private home)	Permanent	\$22.5/mo
Village Farm Hire	Piecework	\$49.17/mo
Commercial farm hire	Piecework	\$50/mo
Market truck loaders	Piecework	\$50/mo
Reed mat seller	Piecework	\$520.83/mo
Gravel Crusher	Piecework	\$54/mo
Carpenter	Piecework	\$58.33/mo
Broom salesmen	Piecework	\$66.67/mo
Guesthouse cleaner/receptionist	Permanent	\$75/mo
Sugar cane harvesting	Piecework	\$75/mo
Potato washing factory workers	Permanent	\$100/mo
Brick/block makers	Piecework	\$100/mo
Cotton Ginner	Permanent	\$116.67/mo
Construction road worker	Permanent	\$116.67/mo
Laundry detergent factory workers	Permanent	\$120/mo
Bike repairman	Piecework	\$133.33/mo
Wholesale Store Worker	Permanent	\$150/mo
Security guard	Permanent	\$150/mo
Fisherman	Piecework	\$166.67/mo
Wicker furniture weaver	Piecework	\$173.33/mo
Wicker furniture owner	Piecework	\$1666.67/mo

The main conclusion from fieldwork across Zambia was that **potential employment destinations are difficult to find but do exist, with the most promising area being rural-rural migration onto commercial farms.** The anecdotal hiring rates in urban centers like Lusaka and Chipata Town hovered around 15-20%. Though many still described the same difficulties in finding work and severe urban underemployment, responses were still much more promising than in Malawi. Importantly, however, several commercial farmers interviewed across Zambia had huge hiring potential and desire to expand their businesses. One commercial farm across the tarmac from M'dyangombe, one of the poorest villages we visited, hires 25 local *ganyu* workers per season but only cultivates a quarter of his 180 acres. His farm lay in a government-sponsored farm block with several other large farms of the same size, many of which were lying idle due to lack of capital. The Shanta sugar cane farm close to the fishing villages of Namucheche along the Kafue River hired up to 90 employees during the rainy season, but was waiting on a government clearance permit to start cultivating 8,318 hectares of land instead of only 200. The employment potential in this sector could be enormous.

One other discovery about the Zambian context is that well-off villages can be located right next to very poor ones. There is a natural spatial arbitrage that occurs when villages less than 10 km away have vastly different wealth statuses, with those in the poorer village seeking *ganyu* farm labor from the better-off village's farmers. In fact, spatial arbitrage appears to functionally occur between nearby places, with micro-differences in weather, land, family inheritances, and farming practices accounting for drastically different outcomes among neighboring plots. There was field evidence of common micro-migration in the form of daily commutes on foot to *ganyu* were already occurring, avoiding the need to incur hefty transportation and accommodation costs.

Major new copper mines such as Kalumbila in the northwest are capable of absorbing a large amount of excess labor through not only the mine but also secondary industries in town. A representative from the mine stated that employment peaked at 4,000 during the construction phase, and would go down to about 1,500 contractors during the mine's operational period, but with 12,000 additional estimated employees in secondary industries around the mine. However, this opportunity must be balanced with the reality that a copper mine's lifespan is only 17-25 years. Currently, many of the "old Copper Belt" miners from Kitwe, Ndola, and other similar towns are moving to the "new Copper Belt" of the northwest after becoming unemployed. In addition, only 30% of the mine's hires are unskilled. The rest are engineers or need experience in refinement and other technical skills, and thus are likely to be hired from the old Copper Belt. Finally, the priority hiring radius for the mine is 30 km, with first priority being the 600 households that were displaced from the mine site itself. Therefore, other migrants from further away will likely not qualify for jobs in the mines themselves.

Focusing a migration intervention on urban destinations is likely to be both economically and politically difficult. The urban unemployment rate in Zambia is 18% compared with the rural unemployment rate of 3%.<sup>24</sup> While 97% of rural areas are engaged in informal employment (farming), 71% of urban areas are also engaged in informal employment (such as many of the jobs enumerated in this report). Fieldwork revealed that many people still struggle to find work in Lusaka and Chipata Town. They also cannot sustain the inevitably long periods of searching while also shouldering high urban living costs. Politically, the Zambian government has issued rallying cries to go "back to the land" and develop rural areas in order to stymie the growing problem of urbanization, unemployment, and crime.

One critical migration beneficiary group is the fishermen across the country, from Luapula District in the north to the Kafue River close to Lusaka. The government is heavily committed to diversifying employment for these men and women during the fish ban, yet has struggled to achieve success. One program to send Luapula fishermen into cassava farming was not very effective. Instead, huge numbers of fishermen simply moved south to the Zambezi and other rivers to continue their livelihoods in a profession that has become attached to their cultural identities. Overfishing and illegal fishing continue to remain a huge issue, with respondents in Namucheche Fishing Village citing that over half of their village has been arrested for 3-6 months for trying to export and sell fish during the ban. Fishermen themselves are already migratory due to changing river profiles, and far more are willing to leave their land for elsewhere than most farmers. Hence, a targeted migration intervention for fishermen to go to nearby employment destinations, including commercial farms, would be likely to gain traction and approval in the local context.

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<sup>24</sup> Zambia Central Statistics Office, Labor Force Survey Report 2008.

## Distance and costs of travel

As in Malawi, Zambian migrants ordinarily transported themselves to employment destinations on foot or minibus. Bicycles were used on some occasions, but were owned by the vast minority of most rural villagers. Bicycle costs in Zambia were often over \$100 USD, even for a used model, which was financially unsustainable. Most interviewees who owned bicycles found or bought them a long while back, before they became so expensive.

Transportation costs in Zambia are some of the highest in the world. Rural fares are expensive because private bus companies run monopoly routes to rural areas, which in Zambia are extremely spread out and do not present sufficient economies of scale. Additionally, fares to and within urban areas, particularly Lusaka, are exorbitant for rural dwellers. The bus fare to GDP per capita ratio in Lusaka is 0.5, which is over ten times the ratio for Mumbai.<sup>25</sup> On average, rural interviewees reported a cost of **42 Zambian Kwacha, or \$7 USD**, to get to the nearest major employment destination outside their own village. The average cost of transport per kilometer was **1.23 Kwacha, or \$0.20USD**. In addition, average reported rents in the city were **325 Zambian Kwacha, or \$54.17 USD per month**. Hence, both transport and lodging are real barriers to migration. Providing them as part of a seasonality intervention could be effective, but will also likely be much more costly than in South Asian contexts.

## Potential Unintended Consequences

Any potential program addressing seasonal hunger through migration should consciously assess and mitigate the following potential risks:

1. HIV/AIDS: The contraction and spread of HIV/AIDS is of particular concern across East Africa, as migration (whether permanent or temporary) and remaining cultural norms of polygamy often result in higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases once one member of the family leaves. HIV rates are twice as high in Zambia's urban areas than in rural areas (20% versus 10%).<sup>26</sup>
2. Jealousy and witchcraft: Multiple interviewees in Zambia told stories of jealousy, manipulation and witchcraft in rural areas, by which those who secure permanent jobs or manage to raise their economic status are persecuted by fellow villagers and even family members. The Lunda tribe in particular, who populate the northwest, believe in voodoo, vindication and sometimes violent acts that are attributed to witchcraft but in fact motivated by jealousy. These cultural norms could result in unintended backlash to migrants, or discourage migration and job-seeking altogether in favor of a modest rural life that does not attract negative peer attention.

## Potential Alternatives

As part of the research mandate, potential alternatives to a migration intervention were explored using participatory community needs assessment tools during the interview process. The following alternative solutions came through extensive conversations with and suggestions by rural villagers, job-seekers, and local experts.

1. Access to finance for commercial farms could unlock huge employment potential given Zambia's enormous swathes of underutilized and fallow land. Even commercial land, however, is often

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<sup>25</sup> ZIPAR, *Trip Modeling and Cost Analysis for Public Road Transport System for the City of Lusaka*, Working Paper No. 16, December 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Zambia Central Statistics Office, Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 2007.

traditionally-owned and lacks land deeds. Overcoming this bottleneck by providing legal aid or lobbying programs to expedite land ownership and personal property rights for commercial farmers could fast-track their access to capital.

2. Fish farms are an extremely promising alternative to commercial fishing, particularly in face of the environmental and political woes of Zambian fishermen. The US Peace Corps and WorldVision have both developed aquaculture programs in Zambia to facilitate sustainable fish ponds that will contribute to both nutrition and income outcomes, but so far villager follow-through has been difficult. The aquaculture program has huge potential to help with seasonal hunger among the most vulnerable, and thus diagnosing behavioral and other barriers to uptake is an important area for future research.
3. Agrobusiness, agroprocessing and biofuel is another untapped opportunity in Zambia. As a huge producer of maize and other agricultural goods, rarely does Zambia transform these goods into their secondary or tertiary forms for use or export. Corn husks can be used for biofuel, and vegetables can be processed and packaged for sale on both local and international markets. Developing these businesses would provide excellent employment opportunities within the Zambian sector that has the most cultural and professional familiarity for its people.

## Concluding Recommendations

1. Among the two countries of research, a migration intervention would be **best focused on Zambia**, rather than Malawi. Zambia's employment opportunities far surpass those of its eastern neighbor.
2. Within Zambia itself, a migration intervention could **successfully target rural-rural migration** by identifying or expanding employment opportunities on commercial farms. As the Minister of Agriculture put it, Zambia has "well over 30 million ha of land that is begging to be utilized,"<sup>2728</sup> and "returning to the land" and away from crowding urban areas is practically a political manifesto in the country.
3. **Zambian fishermen present a unique beneficiary group that is particularly vulnerable to seasonal hunger.** They are also a group for whom it would be economically, politically and environmentally beneficial to migrate during the hunger/fish ban season.
4. A successful seasonal migration intervention in East Africa must include significantly more parallel facets in order to be successful and responsible. Namely, migration in the East African context demands **help with job placement, increased costs (and time allotted) for transport and lodging, and special attention to HIV/STD prevention.**

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<sup>27</sup> IPS News and Reuters by Palmer (2010: 5). Accessed via [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp\\_site/storage/fckeditor/file/246\\_PetersThreats%20to%20customary%20tenure%20Sept%202012\(1\).pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp_site/storage/fckeditor/file/246_PetersThreats%20to%20customary%20tenure%20Sept%202012(1).pdf).

5. Alternative interventions may be more appropriate in the regional context, and can be explored for further research. These include but are not limited to **fertilizer programs, access to capital for commercial farms, unconditional cash transfers, fish farming and agroprocessing.**

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# Appendix

## Cost Comparisons of Seasonality Interventions

