

BY MOSES CHITSULO

Usaid launches \$3million agriculture PPP initiative

IN its mission to support Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in agriculture, the United States Agency for International Development (Usaid) has launched a three-year \$3 million Feed the Future partnership with two local companies and a bank in a deal that will see 30,000 smallholder farmers benefitting.

Usaid working with Partnering for Innovation is supporting the development of PPPs to support smallholder farmers in Malawi through expanding market access, providing improved inputs and offering technical training in select value chains and Feed the Future targeted districts.

The launched deal is between Usaid and Rab Processors, Universal Industries Limited and Opportunity Bank-Malawi (OBM).

Speaking during the launch in Blantyre yesterday, the United States Ambassador to Malawi Virginia Palmer said if the country is to spur economic growth, there is a need to utilise smallholder farmers.

"This project extends the reach of the United States government and the private sector to smallholder farmers in Malawi. Smallholder farmers as we all know are the majority of Malawi population. So, in order to achieve real economic growth, we need real development of that smallholder sector," Palmer said.

She also said the three identified companies participated in a competitive process and their proposals were the best but was quick to say the US government is still looking for companies



PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT—Palmer (centre) stressing a point at the briefing—Picture by Moses Chitsulo

and people with good ideas for potential partnerships.

Rab Group of Companies Deputy Managing Director Ahmed Sunka said the company will largely use the youth when implementing its activities to ensure sustainability of the project.

Universal Industries Limited Chairman and Managing Director Divyakant Amin said the country can develop if individuals become innovative and add value to the produce for both exports and local

market purposes.

OBM Chief Agriculture Officer Sakina Mandanda said the partnership will help the bank in providing financial services to smallholder farmers in hard to reach areas.

Among others, the mission's partnership with Rab Processors will benefit 15,000 smallholder farmers in Mchinji, Dedza and Kasungu through increased access to warehouse storage for reduced post-harvest losses of staple grains and participation in a

warehouse receipt programme.

OBM will provide loans and savings products to 5,000 smallholder farmers engaged in groundnut, soyabean and orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) production.

Universal Industries Limited will strengthen the orange-fleshed sweet potato value chains in Blantyre, Chiradzulo, Chikwawa, Nsanje and Mulanje by developing a variety of products utilising OFSP puree of flour and operationalising an OFSP plant.