Malawi has chance to step up sustainable development efforts in next decade

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**‘Malawi has chance to step up sustainable development efforts in next decade’**

The United Nations Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, has said the next decade presents an opportunity for Malawi and the world to step up efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Speaking on 25th October at a reception organised to commemorate October 24th UN Day, Torres said doing things differently can accelerate SDGs achievement in Malawi.

"We gave ourselves until 2030 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)," she said. "There are 10 years to go. The UN is calling this a decade of action for delivering the SDGs. Together with the government, parliament, civil society, international community, private sector and local communities, we need to work on opportunities to fast-track implementation of the SDG agenda in Malawi."

Torres said doing things differently to combat climate change, end violence against women and girls, and change behaviours that cost lives, can enhance Malawi’s drive towards inclusive and sustainable development.

"We need to stop violence against women and girls. Men and boys should be involved in this behavioural change because one cannot do it alone. The entire society needs to behave in a different pattern in relation to issues such as HIV and AIDS and sexual reproductive health," she said.

Torres said Malawi’s participation in the Voluntary National Review of the SDGs at the High-Level Political Forum in New York next year, is an opportunity for the country to feed into the decade of action conversation and showcase how the country is engaging different stakeholders to accelerate the SDG agenda. She said, next year, Malawi can also advance constructive engagement on human rights through the country’s appearance for the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights in Geneva, which will assess the country’s performance in realising human rights for its people.

Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Bright Msaka, who was the Guest of Honour at the reception, said Malawi has contributed to and benefited from the ideas and ideals of the UN over the years.

"Issues of peace and security, development and climate change are all part of the issues that we are dealing with within the UN family," said Msaka. "In everything that the UN stands for, Malawi is participating and benefitting in those areas."

He said the country is improving access to quality education and addressing climate change through initiatives like reforestation and afforestation programmes.

"In terms of clean energy, we have about six or seven projects for solar energy that aim to distribute power even to rural areas so that as many people as possible begin to reduce their dependence on the forest. We are also looking at protecting river sources and river banks to avoid siltation," he said.

Msaka said government is also promoting youth access to education, women empowerment and economic growth.

In the lead up to the UN Day reception, the UN implemented a series of activities under the theme *Youth for Environment*, including SDGs Awareness Youth Tour (led by ArtGlo), greening the Lake of Stars festival, youth action for peace market cleaning exercise, conversation with the media on how to accelerate youth SDG action and open UN houses, which culminated into the UN Day reception and Youth Concert.
UN Day commemoration in pictures

UN Women Representative Clara Anyangwe (L), IOM Head of Mission Mpho Nkomo (C) and UNHCR Representative Monique Ekoko answering questions on Violence against Women and Girls at Sapitwa Camp.

UNICEF Representative Rudolf Schwenk (1L), WHO Representative Nonhlanhla Rose Dlamini (2L) and UNAIDS Country Director a.i., Nuha Ceesay (1R) answering questions from Youth Ambassador Linly Dumuka at Bwaila Camp.

UN Women Representative Clara Anyangwe (L), IOM Head of Mission Mpho Nkomo (C) and UNHCR Representative Monique Ekoko answering questions on Violence against Women and Girls at Sapitwa Camp.

WFP Country Representative Benoit Thiry (R), UNDP Resident Representative Shigeki Komatsubara (2R) and FAO Representative Zhijun Chen (3R) answering questions from Youth Ambassador Joy Munthali at Nyika Camp.

The youth team in a photo with UN Resident Coordinator, UN Women Representative and UNFPA Representative at the end of the UN Day Reception.
UN Day commemoration in pictures

Youth Climate Action for Peace: A group of youth cleaned up Area 3 Market in Lilongwe during International Day of Peace commemoration on 1st October 2019.

ArtGlo Youth Squad conducted an SDG Awareness Youth Tour from Zomba through Blantyre and Lilongwe to Nkhata Bay, engaging with fellow youth ion SDGs in September.

Youth took part in Climate Action photo competition at the Lake of Stars festival in Nkhata Bay. The UN organised the competition.

Youth from Mkwichi Secondary School in Lilongwe visited UNICEF offices on 24th October as part of UN Open House activities for UN Day Commemoration.

UN Resident Coordinator Maria Jose Torres and WFP Representative Benoit Thiry holding one of the reusable water bottles provided at the Lake of Stars festival in front of climate smart bins.

Lazarus Chigwandali performing at the Lake of Stars in Nkhata Bay.

Torres (L), UNFPA Representative Young Hong and other UN Country Team members engaged the media on youth action for environment on 11 October.
Youth from Chigoneka Secondary School in Lilongwe visited IOM offices on 18th October as part of UN Open House activities for UN Day Commemoration.

Youth from Chigoneka Secondary School also visited UNHCR offices on 18th October to learn more about UN operations in supporting sustainable development in Malawi.

Youth from Chigoneka Secondary School also visited WFP offices on 18th October to appreciate how UN is supporting improvement of food security and nutrition in Malawi.

Some of the youth who visited UNFPA, FAO, UN Women, UNESCO and UNAIDS offices in Lilongwe as part of UN Open House activities for UN Day Commemoration.

Youth from Chigoneka Secondary School in Lilongwe visited IOM offices on 18th October 2019 as part of UN Open House activities for UN Day Commemoration.

4 Photos Above: Youth Action Concert was held on 26th October to celebrate 55th anniversary of the UN in Malawi and UNFPA’s 50th birthday.
The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and senior Malawi Government officials on 29th October held a Joint Strategy Meeting (JSM) in Lilongwe to collectively assess progress during the first six months of implementation of the new Cooperation Framework for Malawi.

They assessed the three pillars of the framework; namely (i) peace, inclusion and effective institutions, (ii) population management and inclusive human development; and (iii) inclusive and resilient growth, in line with Malawi’s development priorities to identify key achievements across the pillars and discuss challenges that require joint attention from senior leadership.

The JSM is a bi-annual high-level forum between the Government of Malawi and the UN in Malawi, which provides oversight and strategic direction to the implementation of the Cooperation Framework with respect to Malawi’s development framework. Jointly chaired by the Chief Secretary and the UN Resident Coordinator, the JSM brings together senior Government officials and UN Heads of Agencies. The JSM also serves as a platform to discuss current and upcoming issues affecting the sustainable development context and the Government-UN partnership.

Therefore, the meeting presented an opportunity to discuss the review of Malawi’s long-term development plan (Vision 2020), which expires next year, and the development of a successor vision, among others.

In her remarks, UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, stressed the importance of the JSM to the UN System in reviewing its achievements together with the Government of Malawi and discuss how to strengthen SDG partnerships.

“Malawi has 10 years to accelerate the achievement of the SDG agenda,” said Torres. “We have plenty that we can do together, but we also need to be very strategic to work on interventions that can push Malawi forward. The JSM is about a great team being transparent so that we can, as partners, engage on the work that we are doing for Malawi and assess whether we are going in the right direction.”

In his remarks, Chief Secretary to the Government of Malawi, Lloyd Muhara, noted that Malawi Government and the UN jointly lead the implementation, coordination, monitoring and reporting of the work under the UN cooperation framework in line with Malawi’s national development priorities.

“The 2030 Agenda commits stakeholders at all levels to work together to promote sustained and inclusive development as well as environment protection”, said Muhara. “The Government realises that a strong institutional capacity is key to successful implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.”

“This is why the Government established the National Planning Commission (NPC), which has mandate from an Act of Parliament to coordinate and oversee the implementation of Malawi’s medium- and long-term development strategies.”

He said the envisioning process for the successor to the Vision 2030 has already started and will gather pace once the review of the current vision has been completed.

“The development of the successor vision will be highly consultative to ensure that the aspirations of all Malawians are taken on board,” said Muhara.

He also said Government has embarked on a process of revamping and strengthening sector working groups (SWGs) to improve coordination of service delivery.

In addition, the JSM also looked into Malawi’s SDGs progress reporting and the country’s appearance for the Voluntary National Review of the SDGs at the 2020 High-Level Political Forum in New York next year. It also discussed progress on implementation of the UN Reform and operationalization of the SDG Acceleration Fund for Malawi.

Government, through the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, indicated that Malawi is also on track to achieve 59 targets and 80 indicators, particularly those relating to SDGs on zero hunger, good health and quality education. However, slow progress was registered on SDGs 1, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 11.

Some of the key challenges affecting SDG implementation include: data quality and availability, high population growth rate, inadequate financing, energy and water supply challenges, and weak coordination among SDG implementing partners.

By RCO / Phillip Pemba
Lack of skills to handle and store harvested crops is one of the biggest challenges Malawian smallholder farmers face. A third of their hard-earned yields is lost to rodents, weevils and rotting barely a few months after harvesting. Imagine what one farmer could do if all that food was not wasted — and now imagine what this would mean if this happened with millions of food-insecure farmers.

“Now, I farm for business not just to feed my family.”

For members of the Gwiritse Cooperative in Lilongwe district, Malawi, post-harvest losses are now history. Timothy Katumbu, 60, and his wife Alice, from Mchoka village, used to keep their produce in a locally-made granary and would lose part of that to rodents. He also struggled to find buyers for his produce, as the quality was damaged by poor storage conditions. Following the construction of a warehouse in his area, he has had a safe place to store his crops since 2016.

“Before joining the cooperative, I was losing at least 10 percent of my produce as I was using ineffective methods. Through the cooperative, I have learned improved technologies and practices that have helped reduce the grain loss and now I make more profits,” says Timothy.

“I’ve also learnt to keep records which helps me understand better how much profit I make, record my expenses and plan better for the next season. Now, I farm for business not just to feed my family.”
“Since I joined the cooperative, I’ve seen the power of numbers.” Rufina Deodatu, 44, from Khalachulu village joined the Gwiritse Cooperative in 2016 and started storing her produce in the warehouse in 2017. Unlike in the past, through the cooperative she now has access to loans. She also receives vital market information which helps her fetch better prices.

“Previously I was selling my produce to vendors who always dictated the prices. Being an individual seller, I had no power to negotiate better prices. Since I joined the cooperative, I’ve seen the power of numbers: we can negotiate better prices with traders — if one declines, we move to the next till we get right prices for our produce,” says Rufina.

With funding from Flanders International Cooperation Agency, WFP has trained 61,000 members of farmer organizations, 49 percent of whom were women, in post-harvest seed handling, seed grading, seed storage, bagging, warehouse management and financial management.

Through this project, which started in 2011, participating farmers learned new skills and were advised on how to access markets. As a result, farmers like members of the Gwiritse Cooperative in Lilongwe have managed to leap out of poverty and hunger and are now equipped to be competitive players on the markets.

“Before, I would struggle to buy even soap, sugar, cooking oil and other food needs. Now I can afford these. I can comfortably pay school fees for my four children,” Rufina adds.

By Francis Thawani / WFP
In line with the World Food Day theme, "Our actions are our future. Healthy diets for a #Zero Hunger world," FAO Malawi showcased interventions that are aiming at mainstreaming nutrition for improved and healthy diets.

Featuring activities that are being implemented in collaboration with the Government of Malawi under the European Union-funded KULIMA and Afikepo programmes, beneficiaries articulated how they are acquiring skills and knowledge in production, processing and utilization through community outreach approaches including care groups and farmer field schools (FFS).

“We are now able to tend to our crops better and conduct studies, such as those on fall armyworm management, as a means of improving practices for food security. Also, through participation in care groups, community members have learnt different recipes and preparation of nutritious meals for different age groups, to ensure that households not only produce but also consume the right mix of foods,” said Jane Kambanga, an FFS Community Based Facilitator and Care Promoter.

The Government of Malawi during this event, made a call for a change in the way that food is produced, supplied and consumed as a means of achieving healthy diets for all. For a Malawi, where 90 percent of the population relies on maize as a staple food this call reminded all stakeholders, at the event and beyond, to ensure diversified and nutritious diets as they work towards the sustainable development goal (SDG) 2 of Zero Hunger.

Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Kondwani Nankhumwa, said that in addition to producing high-yielding staple crops, a diverse variety of foods is crucial for providing healthy diets and safeguarding the environment.

Furthermore, he emphasized efforts that the government is making for increased diversification saying: “Government is also promoting food diversification through development of policies, strategies and legal frameworks that favour intensified legume, horticulture, livestock and fish production in partnership with different stakeholders.”

On his part, the FAO Representative reaffirmed FAO’s commitment to supporting government efforts towards increased food security and the quest for healthy diets saying: “FAO also recognizes the national efforts in promoting sustainable and nutrition-sensitive food security, and has joined hands with government departments, development partners, academic institutes, NGOs and local communities, in promoting policy innovation, technical advance, institutional strengthening, and capacity development. The joint implementation of the EU funded Afikepo and KULIMA projects demonstrates examples.”

Aside from exhibitions from agriculture value chain stakeholders, commemoration activities included a field visit to a dairy bulking group, an irrigation scheme where farmers are using new technology to improve productivity, a peach orchard that provides nutrition and income for the owners, and to a household involved in keeping dairy cows. There was also an exhibition with stakeholder pavilions displaying activities under the broad themes of production, processing and utilization.
UN Women launched a Standard Bank Group funded project, known as “Contributing to the Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa Through Climate Smart Agriculture” on 22 October 2019 in Nsalu, Lilongwe West.

The project will seek to close the gender gap in agricultural productivity and empowering women farmers through strengthening women’s productivity and access to markets. The project is expected to reach over 50,000 women in Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and South Africa over three years. Standard Bank has committed around $3 million for the project with Malawi receiving MK340 million ($450,000).

Through the initiative, 10,000 women farmers in Lilongwe Rural, Mchinji and North Mzimba will be provided with entrepreneurial and financial capacities, affordable technology and value addition and information and communications technology (ICT) to participate in the groundnut value chain.

The project was conceived following a qualitative study investigating factors that drive the gender gap in 2017. The study showed that due to some cultural norms, traditional practices as well as policy and technical barriers, women are far behind men in terms of women participation in production of crops of high value, access and control for land by women, access and utilization of improved seeds, access to extension and markets among others. It was also concluded that closing that gap between men and women would contribute positively to the social economic situation of the country.

During the launch at Gwiritse Cooperative in Nsalu, The Chief Director of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Dr Yanira Ntupanyama said this timely initiative will transform lives of women farmers, especially with women being more likely than men to be affected by climate change. She commended the commercial bank for empowering women farmers.

Standard Bank Chief Executive Officer, William Le Roux said “no farming activity in this country can be successfully undertaken without our women. We are happy to know that by using the climate smart approach to farming, a sustainable way has been found to increase productivity and incomes while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, global warming and attendant climate change.”

The UN Women Representative, Clara Anyangwe said “The impact of Climate Change was equally identified as one of the key factors driving the gender gap between men and women.” She therefore noted the “significance of inclusive programming and implementation of development projects without leaving women behind.”

Anyangwe thanked Standard Bank who is a corporate champion for the HeForShe campaign and this on its own speaks volumes about the passion and commitment that the Bank has on issues of empowering women economically, socially and politically.”

By Faith Mvula / UN Women

“1. Climate Change
2. Economic Empowerment
3. Women Farmers
4. Agricultural Productivity
5. Development Projects
6. Climate Smart Agriculture
7. Malawi
8. Nigeria
9. Uganda
10. South Africa
11. Entrepreneurial Capacities
12. Financial Capacities
13. Affordable Technology
14. Value Addition
15. Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
16. Groundnut Value Chain
17. Gender Gap
18. Cultural Norms
19. Traditional Practices
20. Policy and Technical Barriers
21. Women Participation in Agriculture
22. Access and Control for Land
23. Improved Seeds
24. Extension Services
25. Markets
26. Climate Change
27. Sustainability
28. Greenhouse Gas Emissions
29. Global Warming
30. Attendant Climate Change
31. Economic Empowerment
32. Social Empowerment
33. Political Empowerment
34. HeForShe Campaign
35. Standard Bank
36. Malawi
37. Nigeria
38. Uganda
39. South Africa
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67. HeForShe Campaign
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95. Global Warming
96. Attendant Climate Change
97. Economic Empowerment
98. Social Empowerment
99. Political Empowerment
100. HeForShe Campaign
101. Standard Bank
Gilia Hara stands at the UN stall enthusiastically explaining the process of making cooking oil from sunflowers as two women farmers from Kasungu fervently write down instructions. Hara is a 48-year-old farmer from Mpherembe, Mzimba in northern Malawi. She has come to the Malawi Agriculture Trade Fair with nine women members from her cooperative, Zuwe Agro-processors. “I came here to share experiences in transforming the sunflower to other products like oil, cake and soya into soya coffee, but I will leave with more practical knowledge on how to sell our products.”

Hara is one of the farmers who attended the National Agriculture Trade Fair which is organised annually by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development in partnership with Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI). The purpose of the fair is to provide a platform for different agricultural value chain players to share information, to create linkages, to access emerging technologies and to explore business opportunities.

Two United Nations Malawi agencies, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (UN Women) supported the participation of farmers at the 2019 National Agriculture Fair as one UN. The UN set up a pavilion as a platform for farmers from rural settings, especially women farmers and selected farmer organizations to interact with various stakeholders ranging from agro-based traders to the general public.

The fair, which is being held under the theme: ‘Agricultural Commercialisation: Basis for Agri-based Industrialisation’ was officially opened by the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Honourable Kondwani Nankhumwa on Wednesday 25th September 2019. Speaking during the official opening Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Honourable Kondwani Nankhumwa remarked that the agriculture fair is meant to support agricultural development in the country. “Agriculture is important for food, nutrition, and income security in this country. Besides food security, the agriculture accounts for nearly 30 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP), contributes to about 80 percent of the total export earnings and employs over 64 percent of the country’s workforce. The National Agriculture Fair is a platform for farmers, cooperatives and Agro-based dealers to interact and learn from each other,” the Minister said.

He urged stakeholders in the agriculture sector to increase their performance as the Government of Malawi is fully committed to improving the agriculture sector’s performance to graduate from primary industry.
The Spotlight Initiative recently conducted an orientation meeting for District Commissioners from the six implementing districts of Malawi. Speaking when she graced the occasion, the Director of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare Mercy Safalao said the success of the Initiative lies in strong coordination between the UN, Government, CSOs and community actors.

The Spotlight Initiative is a new global programme focused on eliminating violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices. In Malawi, the partnership involves the Government of Malawi, United Nations, European Union (EU), civil society organizations and local communities. EU is funding the programme.

Said Safalao: “The DCs are key to success of the Initiative. The President of Malawi Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika was invited to address the global event on the Spotlight Initiative alongside the UNGA in New York. Thus, we need to commit ourselves to ensure that the Initiative works.”

She said the high-level commitment shown to the Spotlight Initiative should be reason enough for all stakeholders to keep the momentum.

Safalao appealed for stronger collaboration between the Spotlight Initiative District Coordinators, and all government structures at the district level.

“We all need to work together if we are to register remarkable milestones in our quest to eliminate violence against women and girls. We cannot afford to work in silos,” said Safalao.

UN Women Representative, Clara Anyangwe, said the UN was committed to continue supporting the Government of Malawi and other stakeholders to ensure a strong culture of breaking the silence around sexual gender based violence at all levels of society, ensure that the potential of every woman, girl and child is fully realised, and that no one is left behind.

Anyangwe said it was encouraging to note that the districts were already involved in the Spotlight Initiative through the orientations of the District Executive Committees and Full District Councils, which were held earlier in the year.

She also acknowledged the support the Spotlight Initiative got from Mzimba and Ntchisi districts to implement quick win activities.

“Congratulations to the DCs and their teams for the successful results that have been registered in the quick win interventions, for instance, improved infrastructure for delivery of protection services,” said Anyangwe.

Anyangwe said the need for strengthened collaboration in the implementation of Spotlight activities is crucial.

“This is not only a women’s issue; it affects all of us. If the dignity and well-being of half of humanity is at risk, peace, security and sustainable development will remain out of reach. I want to urge us all to continue being united and to deliver results through an inclusive process, involving all stakeholders at all stages, from planning sessions to implementation, monitoring and reporting of results,” she said.

Speaking on behalf of the District Commissioners, DC for Nkhatabay Rodney Simwaka thanked the UN for organising the meeting with local government authorities. Simwaka said the DCs will support the Initiative throughout the implementation period and are looking forward to making lasting changes in the lives of women and girls as far as SGBV is concerned.

In Malawi, the Spotlight Initiative is being implemented in Mzimba, Nkhatabay, Ntchisi, Dowa, Machinga and Nsanje.

By Nomsa Taulo / UNRCO
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with financial support from the European Union (EU) is supporting the Malawi Government to develop a National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

A National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is an instrument used for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved (source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

As part of the process, representatives from the education sector across the country participated in a workshop from October 1st to 3rd in Lilongwe. The development process is being championed by the Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services under the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST).

The NQF for Malawi will align with the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework. Thus, it will enable Malawians to have their education qualifications easily recognized across the region; both by companies and educational institutions.

In addition, the NQF will allow an easier transition between different education systems and levels within Malawi. For example, the NQF will provide formal recognition of TEVET certificates, and will make it easier for a TEVET graduate to enter into the university system and vice-versa.

Overall, the NQF aims to improve access and inclusion in education and training and improve education and training links with industry. The development of an NQF will help reform the education sector to become more coherent, uniform and transparent.

According to MoEST Inspector of Schools and Colleges in the Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), Jennings Matalabanda Kayira, experts were developing the level descriptors (guidelines) for various sections of the education sector.

He said the level descriptors are for the Higher Education, General Education (standard one to A Levels) and TEVET.

“The development workshop held in Lilongwe had three objectives; the first was to inform the participants about their membership in the Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs), the second was to orient them about their new roles, and the third was to start developing the level descriptors of the NQF”, Kayira stated.

He added, “As we are in the process of developing the National Qualifications Framework, there are structures that have been put in place. At the moment, two structures have been approved, these are, the NQF Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs).”

The NQF Steering Committee will be the policy making body and its main role is to give direction on the development and implementation of the NQF while the TAGs will be advising on the technical areas.

Kayira said that five TAGs have been constituted and these are: TEVET, general education, higher education, qualifications and quality assurance, and coordinating committee.

Some of the organizations that participated in the three-day workshop are: Catholic University of Malawi, University of Malawi, Malawi Institute of Education, Institute for Chartered Accountants in Malawi, Christian Health Association of Malawi, Malawi National Examinations Board, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Employers Consultative Association of Malawi, TEVETA. Others include the Malawi Accountants Board, Independent Schools Association of Malawi, Mzuzu University, representatives of early childhood development, primary education, and secondary education. Additional bodies participating included Department of Human Resources in the Office of the President and Cabinet, the Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation, private and public technical colleges and the National Council for Higher Education.

The initiative is supported through the Skills and Technical Education Programme, an initiative funded by the European Union and partially implemented by UNESCO.

By Theresa Kasawala / UNESCO
On 10 October 2019, UNESCO officially launched a new phase of the Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3) Programme in Malawi in partnership with the Ministry of Science, Education and Technology and the Norwegian Embassy in Lilongwe.

The event attended by UNESCO’s Regional Director for Southern Africa, Prof. Hubert Gijzen, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Dr. William Susuwele Banda, the Norwegian Ambassador to Malawi, Steinar Egil Hagen, and the UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres Macho. Representatives from civil society organisations and the media were present along with students, teachers and parents at the Mphungu Primary School in Lilongwe.

The funding provided by the Norwegian government complements existing activities funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SDA), and will allow to attain full-scale implementation of Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) supported by inter-sectoral partners and UNESCO Malawi.

The Norwegian Ambassador, Steinar Egil Hagen stated “we are today at the starting point of an important partnership, with our friends in the Malawi government, and with the UN-family and working on an important topic, comprehensive sexuality education”.

The aims of the O3 programme in the ESA region are to secure and sustain strong political commitment and support for adolescents’ and young people’s access to comprehensive sexuality education; to support the delivery of accurate, rights-based and good quality CSE programmes; to ensure safe, healthy and inclusive school and community environments; and strengthen the knowledge and evidence base on CSE and gender based violence.

Since the commencement of the O3 programme in Malawi, the government has been an instrumental partner in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights to its population. Despite these notable measures, over 70% of new HIV infections are among young women (15-19 years). Pregnancy and childbirth complications continue to be the leading cause of death among young women in Malawi.
Mangochi district in southern Malawi is well renowned for being a popular tourist destination. However, the district has its problems too, as it has one of the highest primary school dropout rates in the country.

Girls are at a particularly high risk of dropping out because of hunger, crowded classrooms, and child marriages. An estimated 6 out of every 10 girls in the district are married by the age of 18. In addition, 4 out of 10 girls become pregnant as teenagers.

Hajira, a standard 8 learner at Nakawale Primary School in Mangochi district, became pregnant in 2016 at the age of 16. Sadly, she lost the baby barely three days after she gave birth. “Members of mother group visited me and helped me reflect on my future,” says Hajira Mlenga, who is now 19 years old. She was re-admitted to the same school in January 2018.

“Mother group revived my dream of becoming a teacher, and I returned to school,” she says. “I realize that without education, I will not become someone. So, I work hard every day to realize my dream.”

Harmful cultural practices, including child marriages, have denied many girls in Malawi their right to education and the opportunity to reach their full potential. To address this, WFP teamed up with the Government of Norway, UNICEF and UNFPA to help girls learn and thrive.

To ensure girls remain in school and complete their education, the UN Joint Programme on Girls Education (JPGE), with funding from the Government of Norway, is helping to improve access to and quality of education for girls and boys in 169 primary schools in the districts of Dedza, Mangochi, and Salima. In Mangochi, JPGE is implemented in 77 schools.

Since the JPGE programme was introduced at Nakawale Primary School, 16-year-old Latifa Thauzeni, a standard 5 learner, says her academic performance has improved. Through the JPGE programme, daily home-grown school meals are provided to learners. WFP does this by providing funds to schools so they can buy locally-produced fresh food from farmers.

Additionally, parents then volunteer to cook healthy meals every morning before the children start their classes. This also has the added advantage of providing WFP-supported farmers with a reliable market for their produce. “The food helps because I don’t feel hungry and I can concentrate in class. This has improved my school performance,” says Latifa.

Three UN agencies, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP, with funds from the Norwegian Government, are working together on this programme to address the various factors that place girls at risk of dropping out of school. Since the programme started in 2013, 55 girls and 17 boys have been rescued from forced child marriages through community-based gender-based violence prevention structures.

In addition, girls’ enrolment in supported schools has grown by 36%, while average attendance has increased from 64% to 93%. Home-grown school meals are provided to more than 169,000 students.

Studies have shown that for each additional year of schooling, a girl in a low-income country like Malawi can increase her future income by 10 to 20%. Investing in the education of adolescent girls can help reduce poverty, slow down population growth, and empower women to participate more in the economy and political decision-making. Through improving access to quality education, JPGE is helping girls in Malawi to develop the necessary foundations to create positive change in their society.

By Francis Thawani | WFP
In Malawi, 20.1% of the population cannot afford to meet basic needs and are classified as ultra-poor (IHS4). The Government of Malawi’s Social Cash Transfer Programme, which was introduced in 2006, supports the poorest families in all 28 districts. Families receive a monthly allowance of an average $7, with an additional amount given to families with children who are in school.

Within the SCTP, the Dutch Government supports the Linkages and Referrals component in 8 districts to bring essential services closer to SCTP beneficiaries. Extension workers have been trained to link beneficiaries to appropriate services such as health, education and agriculture.

Rosena Chakwathu is a health surveillance assistant (HAS) at Nsanje District Hospital in southern Malawi. She provides health services to under-five children in villages around the hospital. Rosena has worked in Nsanje for 27 years. She has been trained to support the delivery of development programmes, including the SCTP. Rosena believes that one of the biggest challenges in the district is children dropping out of school.

She assists in selecting the deserving families to be registered in the SCTP. Rosena explains that a lot of people are poor, but some are poorer than others. “You can see that a family is very poor by just looking at their house and whether they have a radio or livestock. The poorest families will only eat once a day and they can’t afford school supplies to keep their children in school,” says Rosena.

7-year-old Mphika Fackson is a quiet child who hardly ever smiles, even when found playing with his friends. Mphika has two younger brothers; 4-year-old Thita and 2-month-old Gamphi. Their mother has been unwell lately and often sits at home while her husband goes off to look for work, mostly farming or working on construction sites.

Like 280,486 other families in Malawi, Mphika’s family is being supported to meet their daily needs. They receive about $12 every month under Government of Malawi’s Social Cash Transfer Programme with UNICEF support.

When Mphika started primary school four months ago, he had no school uniform. His mother says some of the children at his school used to laugh at him. His clothes are worn and made him feel out of place at school, where hundreds of other children wore the blue and white uniform.

On a routine follow up with the family, Rosena Chakwathu, discovered that Mphika was missing school a lot. His mother said it was because he did not have a school uniform. Rosena took up the matter with Mphika’s school who linked him to a local organization which mobilizes funds for uniforms for children who cannot afford it. Mphika now has a school uniform thanks to this referral.

“Poor people are often excluded from critical information and services in the community. The combination of cash and the linkages to essential services like education, which the Dutch Government supports in Malawi, is more effective in achieving the desired impacts of the cash transfer programme,” says UNICEF Malawi Chief of Social Policy Beatrice Targa.

A 2018 World Bank study in Kenya found that receiving school uniforms reduced absenteeism by 37 percent. In Mlangala village, Mulanje, 12-year-old Mary Masubi’s situation is no different. She lives with her grandmother Merida Dinala who has been a cash transfer beneficiary for four years. Mary grew out of her old uniform a year ago and this affected her attendance at school. “Most of my clothes are not good enough to wear to school,” says Mary.

The SCTP case manager in Mlangala village referred Mary’s case to a local organization and she has now received a school uniform, a torch and notebooks. Mary is happy with this new package “The new uniform fits me perfectly and I use the torch to study at night. I want to be a teacher and teach other children what I am learning now,” she says.

Doreen Chirambo, Social Services Support officer in Mulanje says there is high demand for education services among SCTP beneficiaries in the district. The most commonly referred education services include school uniforms and bursaries.
The new United States of America (USA) Ambassador to Malawi, Robert Scott on Wednesday 9 October visited Dzaleka Refugee Camp which is managed by the Government of Malawi and supported by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

During the visit, Scott was accompanied by Under Secretary in the Ministry of Homeland Security Ms. Irene Nyang’wa, UNHCR Representative, Ms. Monique Ekoko, WFP Country Representative, Mr. Benoit Thiry and USAID Deputy Mission Director Ms. Catie Lott.

While in Dzaleka camp, Ambassador Scott met with the camp leadership and toured various components of the camp including the food distribution center, primary school, livelihood center, and health center.

The USA through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides funding to help the World Food Programme (WFP) procure and distribute food commodities such as maize, beans, vegetable oil and corn-soy blend to refugee families in Malawi.

This assistance contributes to sustaining food and nutrition security for the refugees. USAID’s support to Dzaleka refugee camp is an example of how the America government partners with the Government of Malawi and UN agencies to address Malawi’s complex food security challenges.

After touring the camp Ambassador Scott had this to say: “The United States is concerned with the welfare of refugee communities and coordinates closely with countries that host refugees. I congratulate the Government of Malawi, the UN Refugee Agency and WFP for being very active on their work to support the refugees and asylum seekers in Dzaleka Refugee Camp.”

In September, USAID contributed 230 metric tons (MT) of Corn Soy-Blend Plus (CSB+) valued at $335,000 USD to support nutrition programs in Malawi. WFP will use 120 MTs of this CSB+ contribution in Dzaleka Refugee Camp (targeting pregnant and lactating women and children under two-years-old).

Since 2013, the America government has contributed approximately $6 million USD to WFP to provide food assistance for refugees in Malawi. The USA’s support for food assistance in Dzaleka is closely aligned with the Government of Malawi’s strategies and priorities for supporting the welfare of refugees and host communities.

Dzaleka refugee camp was initially established in 1994 to host 10,000 refugees and asylum seekers but now hosts some 43,414 individuals mainly from Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Rwanda. As a result of this congestion, the existing facilities are currently over-stretched and the limited space restricts the possibility of further expanding the existing schools.

Due to insufficient funding, refugees and asylum seekers in Dzaleka camp have since May this year been receiving half of their food rations. In August 2019, WFP issued a press statement on the worsening food situation for over 43,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Dzaleka camp. WFP urgently requires US$1.7 million to resume full rations between August and December 2019.

Up to 90 percent of refugees rely on food assistance, as a result of the reservations made by the Government of Malawi in which they cannot seek employment or conduct businesses outside of the camp.

The food situation has also been triggered by flow of refugees into Malawi for over two decades following political instability and social unrest in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other parts of the Great Lakes Region.
Staff from UN agencies in Malawi participated in the 12th UN Africa Games which took place in Lusaka, Zambia, from 10th to 12th October 2019. The UN Africa Games are held every year to promote good health and wellbeing among UN staff while also fostering unity.

In her opening speech, the UN Resident coordinator in Zambia Dr. Coumba Mar Gadio congratulated participants for taking part in the UN games which she said are an effective way to fight non-communicable diseases and contribute to achievement of SDG 3 on good health and wellbeing.

Countries competed in netball, volleyball, football, basketball as well as individual sports such as squash and athletics. Malawi joined UN colleagues from 14 other African countries; Mozambique, Angola, Nigeria, South Sudan, Namibia, Lesotho, Kenya, South Africa, Eswatini, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia and South Sudan.

Zambia’s Minister of Youth, Sport and Child Development, Emmanuel Mulenga, hailed the good partnership between the UN Zambia and the Government.

It was the first time for Malawi to participate in the tournament. The Malawi team registered for netball, volleyball, badminton and athletics. UN Malawi partnered with other countries to form teams in other disciplines; with Kenya for golf, Mozambique for basketball, Angola and Mozambique for football, with Botswana for badminton doubles, and with South Africa for the relay race.

UN Malawi team won gold medals for netball, golf, badminton mixed doubles and women doubles as well as silver in the 400 metre race, volleyball, badminton men’s and women’s singles. The team also won a bronze medal for basketball.

The three-day event offered opportunities for UN staff from different countries to interact. Participants were also treated to a cultural evening where countries showcased something from home by performing traditional songs and dances.

“We went to Zambia for sports, but in doing that we met and interacted with colleagues from many other countries and appreciated the idea of working as one. The UN Games are a powerful networking and sharing platform for UN staff from different countries but also internally, within countries,” said Laurent Jere, a participant from UNICEF Malawi.

The 21-member UN Malawi team comprised staff from FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP and RCO. The next UN All Africa Games will be help in Kenya in 2020.