Multi sectoral approach, key to improving access and quality of education for girls in Malawi.

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Police to enhance security during elections....Page 17
Five main political parties represented by 19 political leaders in Malawi participated in the first-ever SDG Question Time debates from 25th February to 3rd March 2019 at Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN) in Lilongwe.

Senior party members articulated how they intend to accelerate achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the country should they win May 21 Tripartite Elections this year. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Malawi Congress Party (MCP), United Transformation Movement (UTM), United Democratic Front (UDF) and People’s Party (PP) are the political parties that participated in the debates.

The United Nations Communications Group partnered with Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS) and Nation Publications Limited (NPL) to organise and conduct the debates. Development Partners contributing to UNDP’s Elections Basket Fund, namely the European Union, USAID, UK Aid, Royal Norwegian Embassy and Irish Aid also contributed to the debates.

The debates focused in four themes considered critical for the achievement of the SDG agenda: Climate Change and Agriculture (25th February), Education (27th February), Human Rights/ Leave No One Behind (1st March) and Health (3 March).

The debates aimed to facilitate an interactive discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Malawi, providing a platform for issues-based and focused conversations among political parties and with Malawian citizens.

The debates were broadcast live, with some 100 people in attendance in the auditorium. Among people attending in each debate were students, interested citizens, UN Heads and Heads of Mission accredited to Malawi. Panellists were senior members of the referenced political parties. They answered questions, in both English and Chichewa languages, put to them by debate moderators, audience members in the debate hall and Malawians following the debates on radio, television and Facebook.

“Malawi, together with 192 other countries, committed to achieving the SDGs by 2030,” said UN Resident Coordinator Maria Jose Torres. “It was therefore crucial for Malawians to understand how key political parties plan to advance the achievement of the SDGs in the country. We are delighted to note that the debates focused on issues that are critical for Malawi’s development and that the discussions were informative.”

The SDG Question Time debates were broadcast live on Zodiak radio and television, Zodiak Facebook live, Nation Publications Facebook live, and about 10 community radio stations across Malawi, in addition to summaries being published in The Nation and FUKO newspapers.

The coverage of the debates was nationwide at a peak audience time (18:00-20:00 PM local time) and the community radios further disseminated the discussions in some case with over 10 million target audience. The
debates were also widely covered by *The Nation*.

In the first debate on climate change and agriculture, the panellists tackled issues such as how Malawi can break the cycle of climate change effects like floods and droughts, solutions to recurrent food insecurity, and ways of diversifying the country’s agricultural sector.

The second debate on education tackled issues such as how Malawi can improve the quality of primary education for all children, expansion of access to quality secondary education for all young people, how to address gender-based violence and sexual abuse that limit girls’ access to education, and strategies for improving skills development through vocational education.

In the third debate on human rights and leaving no one behind, the panellists discussed issues such as inclusivity in Malawian society, expansion of political participation to women, youth and persons with disabilities, peaceful elections, strengthening rule of law, rights of prisoners, conduct of police officers, the fight against corruption, rights of persons with albinism, rights of sexual minorities and media freedom.

In the last debate on health, the panellists debated on how Malawi can improve on delivery of primary health care services in rural areas, health sector financing in line with regional and global commitments, strategies for addressing shortage of health personnel and drugs, implementation of the country’s alcohol policy, expanding access to safe abortion, maternal health and provision of health insurance.

You can watch the debates on the following links:

1. **SDG Question Time debate on Health:**
   
   Full debate – [https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/466266334202016/?t=0](https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/466266334202016/?t=0)

2. **SDG Question Time debate on Education:**
   
   Full debate – [https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/818478638490642/?t=1](https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/818478638490642/?t=1)

3. **SDG Question Time debate on Climate Change and Agriculture:**
   
   
   Part 2 – [https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/239632436990096/?t=0](https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/239632436990096/?t=0)

4. **SDG Question Time debate on human rights and leaving no one behind:**
   
   Part 1 – [https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/1187818728060150/?t=0](https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/1187818728060150/?t=0)
   
   Part 2 – [https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/619844851771104/?t=0](https://web.facebook.com/zbsnews/videos/619844851771104/?t=0)
The United Nations and Malawi Government on 4th February signed three Joint Annual Work Plans containing activities that will contribute towards achievement of national development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Malawi in 2019.

Chief Secretary to the Government of Malawi, Lloyd Muhara, and the UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, signed the three Joint Annual Work Plans, which were also co-signed by the relevant Heads of UN Agencies, bringing into action the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2019 to 2023 signed in September 2018.

Torres said the activities in the work plans are around the three pillars of the UNDAF: Peace, Inclusion and Effective Institutions; Human Capital and Population Management; and Inclusive and Resilient Growth, saying UN Agencies will collaborate with government and other national institutions in implementing them.

She said, for the first time in Malawi, all UN agencies have brought together their work under the three work plans, embracing the UN Reform which calls for better coordination and coherence of UN work.

“In the past, each UN agency used to sign separate work plans with different government entities. But now that has changed,” said Torres. “The fact that every pillar of the UNDAF is founded on Malawi Government’s priorities in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III also means implementation of the work plans will result in achievement of MGDS III aspirations of improving the lives of Malawians.”

She said apart from enhancing coordination and coherence in the work of the UN in Malawi, the work plans will also increase transparency and openness, and avoid duplication and overlaps in UN work.

Muhara described the work plans as an output of the high-level consultative meeting and joint effort between Malawi Government and the UN in 2018.

“It is pleasing to note that these work plans are premised on the three pillars of the UNDAF, which are well aligned with our development objectives in the MGDS III,” said Muhara. “The government has also localised the SDGs into the national development strategy. The implementation of these work plans will therefore significantly contribute to the achievement of development aspirations of Malawians.”

He said the work plans are the first of the series of Joint Annual Work Plans which the UN and Malawi Government will be signing over the 2019-2023 UNDAF period as the modality of implementing the UNDAF on a yearly basis.

“Let me commend the UN for the UNDAF, which has brought together all the UN agencies in Malawi to deliver as one. The framework has truly been a real partnership and has helped coordinate and harmonise implementation of our development programme,” said Muhara.

At the UNDAF Joint Annual Work Plans signing ceremony, an SDG Movie, featuring some Malawians who have worked towards achieving the SDGs, was also launched.

UN Communications Group (UNCG) Chairperson and UNHCR Representative in Malawi, Monique Ekoko, said the local SDG Champions featured in the movie demonstrate that achieving SDGs is possible in Malawi.

“The SDG Movie is about Malawians who are doing something to improve their lives and communities,” said Ekoko. “The SDG Movie also puts a human face to the work that we will be doing under the UNDAF Joint Annual Work Plans and shows us that our united efforts can produce major results.”

By Chris Kaudzu | UNRCO
Malawi Parliament and United Nations have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at enhancing the former’s legislative, oversight and representative functions. The MoU also seeks to promote good governance and accountability on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Speaker of Parliament Richard Msowoya and UN Resident Coordinator Maria Jose Torres signed the MoU at Parliament Building in Lilongwe on 19th February 2019. The MoU brings together the entire UN System in Malawi to deal with Parliament in a coordinated and coherent manner.

Msowoya said the MoU will help make Parliament more responsive to the needs of Malawians as it will address challenges the institution used to face from disjointed UN agency interventions such as duplication of efforts, concentration of resources in few areas, dealing with different planning and reporting formats, and difficulties in monitoring and evaluation of interventions.

“The signing of this MoU marks a significant shift in the way we operate as Parliament of Malawi,” said Msowoya. “I am extremely happy to note that the arrangement within the MoU is putting much emphasis on joint planning, well-coordinated implementation as well as harmonised reporting.”

He said the MoU is in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness which seeks to ensure increased contribution of development assistance in meeting national development priorities.

Torres said the MoU is in line with the ongoing UN Reform aimed at improving UN operations and repositioning its development system to be fit for purpose in the Agenda 2030 era.

“Achieving the transformative 2030 Agenda requires concerted efforts and Parliament is not left out,” said Torres. “Parliaments have a critical roles to play in the implementation of the SDGs. Parliaments are uniquely positioned to act as an interface between the people and State institutions, amplifying the voice of Malawians to promote and adopt people-centred policies and legislation and therefore ensuring that no one is left behind.”

Some of the areas of cooperation in the MoU are: legislation, governance, girls and women empowerment, and food security, agriculture and climate change.
The United Nations Under-Secretary-General and High-Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Ms. Fekitamoeloa ‘Utoikamanu, visited Malawi from 6th to 9th February 2019 to launch the Malawi investment study on sustainable energy access. The study aims to identify sustainable energy investment opportunities in Malawi and its preliminary results will be presented in an international meeting in China later in March this year to seek viable financing opportunities.

The USG was accompanied in her visit by the Malawi Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Perks Ligoya. Malawi is currently the chair of the Least Developed Countries in New York for the next 3 years. According to the Ambassador, it represents an opportunity to seek ways to accelerate the SDG’s agenda achievement for Malawi.

During the visit, ‘Utoikamanu also met with the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Goodall Gondwe, and Principal Secretary of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ben Botolo, on the study, which will be conducted by the Rocky Mountain Institute.

Gondwe said the study is timely as Malawi continues to have limited electricity generation capacity.

“This study will help identify the best sources of energy, ways to increase investments in the energy sector and how to increase access to energy to communities across the country to add to the current small population of Malawians who access electricity,” said the Minister.

‘Utoikamanu said Malawi has potential to increase its energy sector and consequently improve development outcomes in many other sectors through increased access to energy.

“Every Malawian deserves full access to energy, to an adequate and reliable level of power that allows a home to affordably operate, for children to study, food to be kept from perishing, enough for a dignified and healthy life,” said ‘Utoikamanu. “Malawi has an abundance of resources with which a sustainable energy sector could thrive. This study is intended to highlight the areas for investment in order to ultimately achieve energy access for all and leave no one behind as we strive to meet Sustainable Energy Goal 7.”

UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, said the study builds on ongoing support that the UN is already providing to Malawi to improve the country’s electricity generation capacity and ensure no one is left behind on access to renewable and affordable energy.

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“We believe the energy situation is putting a break on the sustainable development of Malawi,” said Torres. “The study will speak about the options which Malawi has and how to get investors to develop those options to promote access to energy for Malawians. What we can also expect is to learn from the best practices around the region on how to tap on the best technology and access to financing for sustainable energy.”

The launch of the study, jointly organised by the Government of Malawi’s Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS), with support from UNDP Malawi, included discussions on the study’s focus, implementation plan and its impact, involving officials from the Malawi Government, financial institutions, academia, private sector, development partners and the energy sector.

During the discussion, Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining Chief Director for Energy, Chimwemwe Banda, said increasing access to renewable energy is one way of improving energy access in Malawi.

“The Government of Malawi is very pleased to partner with the United Nations on this timely study. Access to modern energy is an important issue for all Malawians and investment in the modern energy sector is key for the country’s future development,” said Banda.

Currently, only 11 percent of Malawi’s population has access to electricity, 46 percent in urban areas and in rural areas this figure is at 2 percent. At present, just 7 percent of the total energy consumed in Malawi is renewable energy.

Women’s economic empowerment is key to the acceleration of the SDG agenda in Malawi

Aside from the launch of the study, ‘Utoikamanu visited m-Hub, an innovative business incubation centre in Lilongwe, where she interacted with women entrepreneurs on challenges and opportunities they face in their businesses.

Accompanied by the Germany Ambassador, Jürgen Borsch, ‘Utoikamanu also visited beneficiaries from a GIZ Clean Cookstove Initiative in Nathonje in the district to appreciate how the project is transforming the lives of people who make the cookstoves.

One of the beneficiaries from the project said the cookstoves have not only improved the environment but his income as well, saying he used to sell charcoal for a living, but his family now depends on the cookstoves business since the initiative started.

In concluding her mission to Malawi, the USG visited Thanthwe Farms, a subsidiary of Thanthwe Enterprises, where the farm’s owner, Ngabaghila Chatata, showed how combining livestock production and horticulture has turned into a thriving venture.

Chatata said her enterprise currently supplies vegetables and livestock products to supermarkets, hotels and individual homes in Lilongwe, adding the farm also provides training to farmers from the surrounding communities.

By Chris Kaudzu | UNRCO
An immediate food crisis has been averted, but the root causes of food insecurity and other humanitarian needs must be addressed.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock on 2nd March completed a two-day visit to Malawi, during which he met Government leaders and development partners and visited Salima district to hear the stories of Malawians struggling through the current lean season.

“I have been delighted to visit Malawi for the first time since I joined the UN, and I am extremely grateful to President Mutharika and senior members of the government for their warm welcome. We have had constructive and substantive discussions especially on food security, which remains a major preoccupation for many Malawians, and on a variety of other issues. I have also been pleased to see impressive work by aid organizations who have acted quickly to help beat back rising hunger in the period between harvests,” said Mr. Lowcock.

The Humanitarian Chief called for action to address the underlying causes of food insecurity in the country now that a combination of timely humanitarian assistance and above-average rainfall this year resulted in the improvement of the food situation.

“With an immediate food crisis averted, it is tempting to relax our efforts. But action is required to tackle the root causes of chronic food insecurity in Malawi,” said Mr. Lowcock. “Diversifying the agricultural economy, adopting more market friendly policies, building resilience to deal with the reality of a changing climate and recurrent droughts, and strengthening further the social protection system are real priorities”, he added.

“We also need to continue to deliver humanitarian assistance based on need for the remainder of the current lean season to give the most vulnerable people the best chance to recover.”

After projections at the end of last year showed that 3.3 million people would be severely food insecure in Malawi between January and March, Mr. Lowcock earlier released US$10 million from the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

Mr. Lowcock visited Salima to see first-hand the positive impact cash assistance and water, sanitation and health services financed from the CERF is having. With these funds, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the UN Population Fund will be able to help over 683,000 people in nine districts over six months.

“CERF resources are especially prioritizing women and girls, who we know are especially vulnerable during periods of food insecurity. I met women who had been unable to put food on the table for their children but can now send them to school to learn with full stomachs, thanks to this assistance,” said Mr. Lowcock.

In addition to Government-provided maize, aid agencies have distributed cash in the hardest-hit districts, and supported treatment of severe acute malnutrition especially among children.

The most recent projections suggest that food production in 2019 will be better than last year. But Malawi faces a lean season every year, usually running from October to April, with millions of people across the country at risk of heightened food insecurity.

“The Government and development partners must do all they can now to ensure that each predictable lean season involves less suffering than the last,” said Mr. Lowcock. “That is key to the difficult but obtainable goal of ending recurring need in Malawi.”

Mr. Lowcock’s visit to Malawi follows a three-day mission to Zimbabwe where he saw first-hand the humanitarian effects of drought and economic shocks.
Norwegian Ambassador to Malawi Steinar Hagen visited Nthulu Primary School in Dedza on 19 February to appreciate the impact of the Joint Programme on Girls’ Education (JPGE), which the UN is jointly implementing with Malawi Government using funding from Norway.

The girls’ education programme which has just completed its first phase with positive results was implemented in 169 schools since 2014 in Salima, Dedza and Mangochi districts. The ambassador said he was delighted with the improvements the programme has made in the education sector in Malawi.

Accompanied by the Principal Secretary of Education, Justin Saidi, the ambassador went through pavilions that showcased components of the programme.

In his remarks, Hagen said the programme has seen improvements in services provided to the students, hence the increase in enrolment in the schools.

“Quality education remains a priority for the Norwegian government and we aim to improve the quality of education services in the country. The key challenge to achieve development in Malawi is to improve the situation for girls and enhance their chances in life through education,” said Hagen.

He said the Norwegian government has pledged to continue supporting the JPGE programme with an additional K2 billion for its second phase.

UN Resident Coordinator Maria Jose Torres said the programme highlights the ‘delivering as one’ approach in the UN as it brings together several agencies with different expertise to improve the lives of girls in Malawi.

“Girls in Malawi are exposed to a range of intersecting disadvantages because of their age, gender, income, marital status, geographical location and other factors. Strengthening and expanding joint programmes such as the JPGE, based on multi sectoral approaches, is therefore key to improving access and quality of education for girls in Malawi,” said Torres.

She said the programme addresses goals in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III) and Sustainable Development Goals on poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and reducing inequalities (SDG 10).

Secretary for Education Justin Saidi also said the JPGE programme has a multisectoral approach, covering education, security, health and nutrition sectors. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture are the government departments that are providing support to the programme.

“The programme has achieved a lot since its inception in 2014. The programme has covered over 210,000 learners in three districts and this has helped in the reduction of school dropout rate, increased enrolment and improved attendance,” said Saidi.

He said the government has put in place several policies to support girls to stay in school and improve their access to quality education and health services.

The aim of the programme is to improve access and quality of education of girls in Malawi. WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA support its implementation.

By Chris Kaudzu | UNRCS
Female teacher in Malawi juggles between breastfeeding and classes.

“My first two children were born when I had all the time on me. Now, I’m a teacher and to breastfeed my last one, I must run all the time,” says Rhoda Chimphoyo, a teacher at Mawiri Primary School in Central Malawi.

One of the biggest challenges for breastfeeding mothers is how to combine work and caring for their babies. However, Rhoda, manages both juggling between her job and the need to breastfeed her three-month baby, Praise.

“My little niece comes to my class to alert me if the baby needs breastfeeding. Since my house is very close to the school, when my learners are busy writing their exercises, I have a space of time to quickly breastfeed the baby and come back to class,” says Rhoda.

Breastfeeding provides all children, boys and girls in Malawi and elsewhere, the healthiest start. From the first hour of a baby’s life through age two or longer, breastfeeding protects against illness and death.

Among its myriad benefits, breastfeeding prevents malnutrition, decreases the risk of childhood diseases, supports healthy brain development and is associated with better school performance, longer school attendance and higher earnings as an adult.

“I am lucky to have the support of my headteacher and fellow teachers. They help with the children when I sneak out to check on the baby,” adds Rhoda “I’m exclusively breastfeeding Praise and she’s growing very healthy,” she concludes.

Balancing work and family is an important priority for Rhoda and millions of breastfeeding mothers across the world. Being able to breastfeed during work hours helps her to give her best efforts to her learners and the best food to her baby at the same time.

To address child malnutrition, WFP Malawi has been promoting exclusive breastfeeding, infant and young child feeding and care practices across the country.

In Ntchisi district, where Rhonda lives, only 15 percent of under-2 children had adequate dietary diversity. As of 2018, this has increased to 50 percent.

As children and teachers are going back to class this month, Rhoda’s story is a great opportunity to give a tribute to all female teachers and working women, because we all have a role to play to protect, promote and support working women to
Malawi’s banana industry has all but died out over the last two decades due to the scourge of the banana bunchy top disease. Caused by banana bunchy top virus (BBTV), this disease, found in many of the country’s production sites, has caused low production and has in most cases stopped production of banana altogether. The losses on both the nutrition and commercial fronts have been huge, affecting households and businesses alike.

There is a light at the end of the tunnel, however, as recent developments under the ‘Revitalizing Agriculture Clusters and Ulimi Wa M’ndandanda through Farmer Field Schools’ project show promising results for reviving the banana industry.

The FAO supported project, which is implementing Master Trainers’ courses on Farmer Field School targeting agriculture extension workers and community based facilitators, has incorporated practical modules on good husbandry practices, management of common banana diseases, including BBTV and pests, variety performance and adaptation. In this endeavour, FAO is collaborating with the Department of Agricultural Research Services through Lunyangwa Agriculture Research Station.

While practiced initially at residential training centres, several banana vegetative material propagation orchards and FFS study plots have been established within community settings where among the ongoing activities, is the multiplication of clean planting material and hands-on practical skills on various production and disease management practices.

This progress, though in its initial stages, has brought confidence to extension staff who have seen the wipeout of banana in their districts of operation. Where previously, banana-growing was the mainstay for farmers and other players along the value chain in districts such as Thyolo, and Mulanje, BBTV brought a shift to their livelihood.

“Farmers in Mulanje and Thyolo had been highly dependent on banana to support their needs, whether income, and household items and we also had transport business that relied on the banana industry, ferrying bananas from Mulanje to other parts of the country.

All these have been affected due to the lack of bananas because of this disease. Yet with the training that we have had we have managed establish banana orchards and none have been affected by BBTV,” Felix Chikudza, extension worker and Master Trainer on FFS says.

The current KULIMA strategy is anchored under the Department of Agriculture Research Services (DARS) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development. The department contributes to large-scale multiplication of clean planting materials using the tissue culture technology.

“We have been working as government to revive the banana industry using our laboratories through the Department of Agricultural Research Services, and we saw it fit to have this alternative strategy,” Hastings Phewa, Programme Manager for Mzuzu Agriculture Development Division, Ministry of Agriculture, said during a media interview.

“With the assistance from FAO through the KULIMA project, we have established nurseries with varieties of banana from various parts of the country, for multiplication of clean planting material. In less than a year, the bananas are ready,” he continued, explaining how clean planting material from community FFS study plots established through the project are now instrumental in re-establishing farmers’ orchards in various districts.

After years of relying on imported bananas from neighbouring

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I am impressed by the knowledge and skills that you have shown me today. You are doing a lot, which will help to improve agricultural production when you return to your communities. Know this: “the whole country is looking at you. I say this because this programme is about uplifting farming for not only you, but also for the entire nation.” These were the words of the EU Ambassador to Malawi, Sandra Paesan. Ambassador Paesan said these words when she made a brief stop-over at Mzuzu Residential Training Centre (RTC) on 19 February 2019, where she appreciated progress on the KULIMA project “Revitalizing Agricultural Clusters and Ulimi wa M’ndandanda through Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in Malawi.”

This KULIMA project, through its master trainers’ course on farmer field schools (FFS), provides season long training to extension workers and lead farmers by building skills and capabilities that will allow for enhanced agricultural production. The 5 years project targets at least 600 extension workers and 8000 community-based facilitators with training on FFS. These extension workers and community-based facilitators will in turn train and mentor at least 400,000 farm families in 10 districts across the country, on various sustainable production practices within a nutrition sensitive agriculture and climate change adaptation lens, to enhance their logical decision making processes and improve their livelihoods.

Key highlights of the Ambassador’s field visit included viewing of plots where studies on management of fall armyworm, horticultural crops, banana production and mushroom farming are being conducted.

The Ambassador also took time to plant a banana sucker of her own and to harvest the first batch of bananas from a banana study plot, which was established in December 2017 at the RTC. The banana harvest marked a significant development from the project.

With Malawi’s bananas all but wiped out by the Banana Bunchy Top Disease, the harvest which comes a year after establishment of the orchard, shows that there is great potential for reviving banana production in Malawi, following good banana management practices such as those taught under the Master Trainers’ course.

The Master Trainers course on FFS is being implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with the Government of Malawi and Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research (CGIAR) centres through Gelesschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), with trainings hosted by the respective Agriculture Development Divisions of Blantyre, Kasungu and Mzuzu.

Reviving Malawi’s Banana Industry through Farmer Field Schools

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Tanzania and Mozambique, the recent harvest of bananas, which the EU Ambassador to Malawi, Sandra Paesen, officially initiated, was of great significance. The harvesting of the healthy bunches within 11 months after the project established its first banana orchard shows what can be achieved in the 5 years of the KULIMA project period.

“It is encouraging to see so much banana after less than a year”, the Ambassador said during a recent visit to Mzuzu Residential Training Centre, where she was able to initiate the first banana harvest. “This shows the potential of what can be achieved in the next few years if we continue with the good practices that are being taught under this programme,” she emphasized.

KULIMA is a 5-year programme that is funded by the European Union and FAO is implementing the component ‘Revitalizing Agriculture Clusters and Ulimi Wa M’ndandanda through Farmer Field Schools’ in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development.
It’s a cool and cloudy January day at Namitete Technical College where three young women are sitting on the floor of the large college assembly hall discussing the orientation programme they have just taken part in.

“It was really useful, it helped us to understand about the college and the other courses on offer,” shares Immaculate Kalichero, a 27-year-old trainee. Her new friend, 25 year old Deria Kantayeni adds, “It taught us about how we should interact with each other and respect each other.”

They all feel inspired and excited to start their courses, 22-year-old Aisha Ayami sums up their feelings, “I thought TEVET was a last option, compared to university, but since I’ve come here I now view it as my first option.”

This motivation amongst the women is one of the outcomes the orientation programme aimed to achieve. The new orientation programme has been rolled out to 45 Technical Entrepreneurial Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) colleges and training centres throughout Malawi, together with an orientation toolkit for every new trainee.

Jean Munro, UNESCO Gender and Education Specialist, explained further: “We conducted a gender and inclusion study, which revealed a high drop out rate for women studying at TEVET colleges. A range of factors were identified as barriers to women completing their courses, including gender based violence (GBV), pregnancy, a lack of motivation due to limited understanding of the career options available to TEVET graduates, and limited family and community support for women to pursue careers that are traditionally seen as male.

“Our research revealed a lack of clear and consistent rules prohibiting GBV in the institutions and very limited comprehensive sexuality education and access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. We also found that very few of the institutions were running a comprehensive orientation programme for new trainees.

“This resulted in many trainees starting their courses not understanding the TEVET system, their course, how they would be assessed, or what was expected of them both academically and in terms of their behaviour. The orientation programme and toolkits were designed to address these barriers, and most importantly, to motivate them to complete their course.”

The weeklong orientation programme aims to motivate trainees and give them all the information they need to do well at their TEVET College or training centre. It covers information about the TEVET system, examinations, apprenticeships, and career opportunities for graduates, as well as sessions on conduct, the prevention of sexual violence and how to promote equality amongst students. Experts are also invited to the colleges to run a session on comprehensive sexuality education.

Of significant importance are the interactive sessions that enable trainees to fully understand the content of newly established staff codes of conduct and trainee codes of conduct. These fun and interactive sessions encourage the trainees to engage in topics that are often see as dull, such as the code of conduct, or taboo, such as sexual violence. During some sessions trainees form mixed sex groups to debate cartoon depictions of sexual violence and the concept of consent in negotiating sexual relations.

Lafiq Kachuma, a carpentry and joinery trainee at Namitete College, did not shy away from the subject, “This is the first time we have discussed sexual violence. It’s not embarrassing; it’s educative and interesting. It was very useful,” he said.

His friend, Darkhn F Hauya, a bricklaying trainee, agreed the sessions were important, “We learnt a lot of things about behaviour, to respect girls and boys and prevent sexual violence.” All trainees receive an orientation toolkit, which contains an orientation manual, a code of conduct, and a set of pamphlets.

A code of conduct document has also been produced for TEVET instructors and administration staff. The codes of conduct give a detailed guide to trainees and staff on the positive values and behaviours expected of them, as well as clearly and explicitly explaining prohibited misconduct, including sexual violence. A series of colourful posters and pamphlets have been produced using visual cartoons, graphics and local languages to

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communicate the information from the codes of conduct and orientation manual in a clear and easy to understand format.

Some colleges that have run their orientation programme and have reported early positive impact, including improved attitude and behaviour amongst the trainees and a reduced amount of trainees dropping out of the college in the first weeks verses previous years. Edson Kaudu, acting principal at Mbandira Community Technical College in Nkhotakota, explained the impact at his college, “The orientation was very good, beyond my expectations and the trainees’ expectations. It has been very motivational for the trainees. In previous years we had a lot of trainees leaving in the first few days but this year we had our highest intake of trainees ever. We are now receiving a lot of phone calls from people wanting to join the courses as they have heard recommendations from their friends at the college.” Mr Kaudu was particularly enthusiastic about the role model session in the orientation programme, aimed at inspiring the new trainees, “We invited a female plumbing graduate to come and give a practical demonstration on making pipe threads to the whole 2019 intake. She showed them that being a woman is not a challenge in doing vocational work.”

The orientation programme and toolkits were provided under the European Union (EU) funded Skills and Technical Education Programme (STEP) in partnership with the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) and the Ministry of Labour, Youth, Sports and Manpower Development. Programme Manager for Education at the EU delegation to Malawi Lena Veierskov said, “The EU is committed to strengthening the TEVET sector in Malawi. Vocational training equips people with life-long skills they can use to learn a living. Women should not be excluded from becoming skilled professionals due to safety fears and misplaced stereotypes. This training and is one of many initiatives the EU funded STEP programme is implementing to promote equitable and gender balance access to TEVET in Malawi”

STEP trained 261 newly qualified TEVET instructors and principals in the codes of conduct and how to run the orientation programme over December and early January and distributed over 8,000 orientation toolkits to 45 different TEVET training institutions and 5 trade test centres throughout Malawi in January.

The orientation programme guide and toolkits can be downloaded from the STEP website:
https://www.stepmw.com/resources/orientation-toolkit/
The Editors forum in Malawi were engaged in a dialogue session with UNFPA Malawi country team on the prevailing challenges that could slow down progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs by 2030.

Speaking during the first media engagement after the start of the implementation of the 8th country programme, UNFPA Representative, Won Young Hong challenged the media to continue highlighting specific population and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right issues in Malawi.

"As you can all see that from the 2018 preliminary Census results, 51% of Malawi’s population is less than 18 years but this group of young people continue to face a wide range of problems including high HIV infection rate, teenage pregnancies, school dropouts and child marriages among others" she said – "It is therefore necessary that we identify feasible means that will address these challenges". She further explained that UNFPA is committed to ensuring that there is zero unmet need, gender based violence and preventable maternal deaths.

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The Chairperson of the Editors Forum in Malawi, Clifton Kawanga, acknowledged the efforts made by UNFPA to engage the editors due to their role in the newsroom.

He further assured UNFPA that frequent interactions with them will obviously result in improving their understanding on issues that relate to sexual and reproductive health. "Often times, we lack credible sources of information to base our reporting on and as such, we always look for alternative sources that sometimes provide incorrect information, we therefore take this opportunity as a significant step towards empowering us with correct data and facts and also a long-term partnership" he said.

During the session, the results of the 7th country programme were shared, challenges as well as the strategies of the new country programme. A lot of discussions were on male engagement, gender based violence, teenage pregnancies, maternal health and investment in youth.

This first media engagement session involved Blantyre based editors and it will continue with Lilongwe and finish off with Mzuzu based editors.

By Henry Chimbali | UNFPA
Ministry of Health and Population in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) completed the Joint External Evaluation whose purpose was to assess Malawi’s progress in the implementation of International Health Regulations (IHR) core capacities and capabilities relevant to the 19 technical areas.

The Guest of Honour for the closing ceremony at the assessment workshop that took place at Linde Motel, in Mponela, Dowa District was the Chief of Health Services, Dr Charles Mwansambo. Other dignitaries included; Acting WHO Representative Dr Fabian Ndenzako and Director of Preventive Health Services Dr Storn Kabuluzi. The main purpose for conducting JEE was to obtain the baseline data and generate a set of recommendations to support the efforts of improving national public health security.

The Acting WHO Representative, Dr Fabian Ndenzako expressed his gratitude during the closing ceremony that Malawi was now among the 39 countries to have conducted the Joint External Evaluation.


To make this assessment possible the World Health Organization provided financial resources and made available a multi-sectoral team of experts from WHO, FAO, OIE, CDC, US Department of Health and the Ministry of Health of Zimbabwe to provide technical support during the week long workshop.

The multi-sectoral team at country level, prior to the workshop conducted a self-assessment using the Joint External Evaluation tool. It was the results of this assessment that both multi-sectoral country team and the external multi-discipline team convened to determine the current strengths, areas of improvement and priority actions.

In a summary of the findings the multidiscipline team of experts commended the Malawi government for its achievements in a number of areas. Malawi now has a Public Health Institute of Malawi (PHIM) to provide leadership and coordination in public health activities, a veterinarian school has been set up, there is a strong childhood disease immunization programme, and in recent outbreaks, the country quickly and appropriately responded to them despite the limited resources at its disposal.

The JEE that has just been completed is a revelation of the IHR and health security shortfalls to enable the country to build momentum of the JEE process to develop a national action plan for public health security with the participation of the relevant sectors. It is envisaged that both domestic and international partners will provide technical and financial support to propel the implementation of the endorsed plan.
As one way of ensuring refugees and their host communities are self-reliant and have better livelihood opportunities, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through its partner the Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) launched an irrigation project called Tatolonga Solar Power Irrigation Project.

The project will assist about 50 Households from Dzaleka Refugee Camp (25HH) and the communities surrounding the camp (25HH) to engage in irrigation farming as one way of improving self-reliance and livelihoods for refugees and host communities. Refugees will be allowed to use the piece of land alongside host community members without paying any rentals. This was achieved through Pro-Livelihoods advocacy initiatives that engaged traditional chiefs, government officers (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Homeland Security, the District Executive Committee) including officials in the office of the district commissioner for Dowa district.

Below is a selection of pictures captured during the launch of the project which was presided over by Ms. Bernadett Macskasy UNHCR’s Programme Officer and Dzaleka Camp Manager Ms. Patricia Sinoya and other officials from CARD.

By Rumbani Msiska | UNHCR
Minister of Homeland Security Nicholas Dausi visited Dzaleka Refugee Camp which hosts over 38,000 refugees and asylum seekers mainly from the Great Lakes region, including Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi and other East and Horn of Africa countries. The Minister’s visit came at a time when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are calling for well-wishers to support the food assistance program, which is in critical need of US 2.8 million dollars in order to continue assisting refugees with food between April - December 2019. During the visit, the Minister was taken to many sites in the camp including the food distribution center, which is managed by Plan Malawi International and WFP. Below is a selection of pictures captured during the Minister’s visit, who was also accompanied by the Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Samuel Madula and other senior officials from the Ministry of Homeland Security. Also present were UNHCR’s Representative Mdm. Monique Ekoko and WFP’s Deputy Country Director Mr. Mietek Maj who explained to the Minister the

By Rumbani Msiska | UNHCR