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Spotlight pilot phase improves access to justice for violence survivors

Acess to justice for victims of gender-based violence in two of the six districts targeted by the Spotlight Initiative in Malawi is improving following implementation of the pilot phase of the initiative in the districts.

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

The pilot phase of the initiative was implemented in Mzimba and Ntchisi between December 2018 and February this year, during which many victims of gender-based violence (GBV) accessed justice.

Mzimba District Gender Officer, Japhet Chirwa, said the start of the Spotlight Initiative in the district has seen authorities handling about 70 gender-based violence cases in three months, out of which over 50 were completed. In three of the completed cases, perpetrators received court punishment, while in six other cases, girls who were married off were withdrawn from early marriages and brought back to school.

“One of the cases that went to court is about a 53-year-old man who defiled a 14-year-old and mentally challenged girl,” said Chirwa. “Survivors of the violence are able to access services because they now have information and support. The support includes transportation, food and medical services in the process of accessing justice.”

He said case reporting and referral have improved because communities are now more aware of their rights, laws that protect them, and available gender-based violence and sexual reproductive health (SRH) services, including those provided at community victim support units (CVSUs). CVSUs are one stop-centres that offer the much-needed assistance to adult and child victims of crimes, especially GBV and child abuse, exploitation and neglect. In the two districts, the Spotlight Initiative has renovated infrastructure and strengthened service delivery at some CVSUs.

Ntchisi District Commissioner, Peter Jimusole, said the renovation of Thondo Community Victim Support Unit in the district has also resulted in increased reporting of GBV cases and access to services and support.

With Spotlight support, Traditional Authority (TA) Thondo also said his subordinate chiefs and community groups have teamed up to eliminate violence against women and girls in his area.

“We are working together to scrutinize all our traditional practices and abolish the negative ones,” said TA Thondo. “I have told my subjects that I will not hesitate to dethrone any chief who encourages harmful cultural practices in my area.”

Director of Gender Affairs Department in the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Mercy Safalawo, said Malawi Government is committed to ensuring that violence against women and girls is eliminated.

“One of the obstacles to ending violence against women and girls is negative mindsets about rights of women and girls,” said Safalawo. “We will ensure that people understand that men and women are equal and that violence against women is unacceptable.”

UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, said the programme will continue forging and strengthening partnerships with all key stakeholders and communities to ensure women and girls enjoy their rights and live better lives.

“Ending violence against women requires a change in people’s attitudes,” said Torres. “To achieve this change, we cannot just engage girls and women alone. Boys and men also need to take part in having and encouraging positive attitudes towards women and girls.”

Team Leader for Social Sectors and Infrastructure at the Delegation of the European Union, Virginie Laffleur-Tighe, said gender equality cannot be achieved without addressing gender-based violence.

“IF we don’t attack gender-based violence, we will never manage to pull out of poverty,” said Laffleur-Tighe. “As long as women are not fully empowered to live their full potential, develop themselves and have their rights respected, there can’t be any development.”

She said the EU was pleased to see that the Spotlight Initiative is enabling people to openly describe practices that they do not want to continue.
Spotlight pilot phase improves access to justice for violence victims

Continued from page 2

not want in their communities as well as point at mechanisms that enable gender-based violence and traditions that are harmful to women and girls.

“When people are able to talk about this problem, this is when we can start finding solutions and ways of addressing the issues without destroying culture, without diminishing the role and importance of men, and without transforming this into a conflict that does not exist.”

About the Spotlight Initiative in Malawi

Malawi is among 13 countries globally and eight countries in Africa selected to receive part of the global grant of €500 million from the EU to implement the Spotlight Initiative. Apart from Mzimba and Ntchisi, the Spotlight Initiative will also be implemented in Malawi’s Nkhata Bay, Dowa, Machinga and Nsanje districts in phases. The first phase is for two years and a funding of €20 million has been granted.

In addition to enabling a holistic approach to end violence against women and girls, the Spotlight Initiative will promote Agenda 2030’s guiding principle of “leaving no one behind” and build on the momentum of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) efforts especially Goal 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment. Critically, the initiative also includes a comprehensive prevention strategy that addresses structural issues and linkages to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and HIV and AIDS.

As a flagship programme under UN Reform, which promotes coherence of the UN System, the Spotlight Initiative Malawi Country Programme will see four UN agencies, UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP, working together towards a common goal, in partnership with the Government, the EU and Civil Society Organisations.

The programme is built around six inter-connected and mutually-reinforcing pillars focusing on laws and policies, institutions, prevention and social norms, services, data, and women’s rights movement – driving innovation and transformative programming to end violence.

By Phillip Pemba and Hanne Adriaensen | UNRCO
he Spotlight Initiative, a new programme aimed at ending violence against women and girls, has partnered with a network of journalists to leverage their influence in stamping out gender-based violence in Malawi.

The grouping, called Spotlight Media Network, formed by over 50 journalists covering all six districts where the Spotlight Initiative will be implemented in Malawi, aims to promote localised information dissemination, programming, and audience engagement on gender-based violence issues in the districts.

To ensure adequate capacity for effective media reporting on gender-based violence issues, the United Nations is providing capacity building support to members of the network in their efforts to raise awareness that violence against women and girls is unacceptable in society.

Addressing the network’s members at a media training in July, UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, said the media, particularly community radio stations, have significant power to bring transformative change in their communities so that women and girls do not suffer violence.

“Strong communications and advocacy at the local level is central to addressing violence against women and girls,” said Torres. “The media is key to both highlight the Spotlight interventions and change attitudes, practices and behaviors that drive violence against women and girls.”

She said the media partnership will ensure Spotlight communication is grounded in the local contexts where the programme will be implemented and not just at national level. She said this is key to understanding and changing attitudes, and advancing gender equality.

Said Torres: “Community-based journalists know the right language in which to communicate and engage with their audience, and how to approach sensitive issues related to violence against women and girls in their respective communities.

“We are therefore interested to see how the local media will be getting to people’s hearts and minds for them to understand that violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today that must end.”

Spotlight Media Network Chairperson, Alex Banda, said their team will ensure issues and cases of violence against women and girls are brought into the spotlight in their communities so that they are addressed.

“Through our journalism, we hope to bring transformative change in the lives of women and girls in Malawi,” said Banda. “As journalists, we are keen to champion efforts to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment.”

He said the network will utilise various media tools and approaches to ensure cases of gender-based violence are exposed and followed up for authorities’ actions, and that media reporting on the issues respects human rights principles, including protection of survivors of the violence.

The Spotlight Media Network was formed in December 2018 and largely includes journalists from community radio stations covering the six Spotlight districts of Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Dowa, Ntchisi, Machinga and Nsanje.

Malawi Government is embarking on the Spotlight Initiative in partnership with the United Nations, European Union, civil society and local communities in the six districts. The Spotlight objective is to eliminate violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices. The programme is built around six inter-connected and mutually-reinforcing pillars focusing on laws and policies, institutions, prevention and social norms, services, data, and women’s rights movement – driving innovation and transformative programming to end violence.
A report on traditional practices in Malawi has recommended strict implementation of the Marriage and Family Relations Act if the country is to win the fight against child marriage.

The Malawi Traditional Practices Survey Report, launched by Malawi Government and UN in July in Lilongwe, has also recommended increasing awareness among communities about the negative consequences of child marriage, development of by-laws and promotion of contraceptives as effective ways of reducing child marriage.

"Child marriage is a violation of children’s rights," reads the report in part. "In the current study, 42 percent of the female respondents reported being married before the age of 18. Most of the child marriages affect girls."

The report blames family members, poverty, mistreatment of children and unplanned pregnancies as key drivers of child marriage.

UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, said the report fills the gap on data about the prevalence of harmful practices and specifically harmful sexual initiation rites in Malawi.

“We also had no robust evidence on linkages between child marriage, pregnancy and sexual violence, or on the decision makers and driving forces behind these practices,” said Torres. “Child marriage compromises the development of girls and often results in early pregnancy and social isolation, leaving them poorly educated and reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty.”

She said the report was timely as Malawi Government, UN, European Union and civil society are embarking on a new multi-year programme, called the Spotlight Initiative, which aims to eliminate violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices.

“If we are to successfully tackle these issues and measure impact, through initiatives such as Spotlight, it is imperative that we have reliable and credible evidence," said Torres.

Director of Child Development Affairs in the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, McKnight Kalanda, said government also needs evidence of what is happening in communities to inform its policies and programmes.

“We cannot do business as usual. We need current and reliable data to address the underlying drivers of harmful practices. As we implement the Spotlight Initiative, this knowledge will be crucial to develop effective policies and interventions, and promote good cultural norms," said Kalanda.

Spotlight Initiative is built around six inter-connected and mutually-reinforcing pillars focusing on laws and policies, institutions, prevention and social norms, services, data, and women’s rights movement, driving innovation and transformative programming to end violence against women and girls.

According to the report, more girls participate in initiation rituals than boys, and more girls in the Southern region participate in initiation ceremonies at 65 percent than their counterparts in the Central and Northern regions at 19 percent and 18 percent, respectively.

“While there are boys and girls who voluntarily enroll for initiation rituals, the majority are influenced by their family members, village elders and village chiefs on the pretext of following traditions. While culture is a crucial part for identity of a society, it should not hinder progress, development and prosperity,” reads the report.

The survey, which mainly focused on child marriage and sexual initiation rituals, was jointly undertaken by the University of Zurich, UNICEF, the National Statistical Office (NSO) and the University of Malawi in 2018.
UN Women supported women’s political participation during the general tripartite elections that were held in Malawi on May 21, 2019. Following the elections, for the first time in Malawi’s history, a female Speaker of Parliament was elected. At the local level, six female mayors and chairpersons in 33 councils were elected, including the first female mayor of the capital Lilongwe.

New parliamentarians are entering the parliament chamber, the heart of the legislative branch of government, to attend an orientation on their work in Parliament. Out of the 192 legislatures enthusiastically viewing the chamber, 45 are female MPs.

The newly elected 45 women out of 192 MPs translates to a 23.3% female representation in 2019. This is a steady rise compared to the 2014 elections results, where women comprised 16.7% of winning candidates. In a country where women’s representation and participation in political and leadership positions is still relatively low, this is a step in the right direction. Notably, 66 women have also made it into Local Councils, representing 14.5% compared to 12% in 2014.

During the orientation, some of the women legislators reflected on challenges that stand in the way of women participating in politics. A female parliamentarian from Mchinji says that socially driven perceptions have discouraged women from political participation. These challenges include the belief that women are not capable leaders, the persistent violence towards women, and the lack of a women friendly electoral system.

Under the Malawi Electoral Cycle Support (MECS) basket fund and in collaboration with partners, UN Women supported activities aimed at empowering women to run for political office and participate in the electoral process.

Throughout the elections cycle, awareness campaigns were held to increase civic understanding on women’s political participation. Communities throughout the country were mobilised to support female candidates through community radio programs.

In addition, female candidates were provided with capacity support, such as nomination fees refunds. UN Women also supported prevention and response to Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE) through the Gender Elections Engagement Room (GEER), which was hosted by the Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) in collaboration with Malawi Police Service. GEER played a big role in creating a safe political space. Notably, a suspect who had beaten and undressed a female party supporter in early 2019 was arrested and prosecuted.

Excitement ripples through the chamber as the women parliamentarians begin mingling. The three women legislators from Nsanje district in southern region, which has produced 3 female parliamentarians out of 5 constituencies, talk about the Nsanje port. Across the room, the youngest parliamentarian in the cohort, a 23-year-old woman from Machinga exchanges contacts with a long serving female legislature.

By Faith Mvula | UN Women
In preparation of the upcoming 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Malawi Government presented its report of progress towards gender equality to UN Women Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, Dr. Izeduwa Derex-Briggs, on June 26.

The Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare presented the report to Derex-Briggs at a ceremony in Lilongwe. The UN Women Regional Director visited Malawi from 25th to 26th June this year to appreciate the country’s strides in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Speaking at the presentation, Derex-Briggs said the UN will continue to support the Malawi Government to promote gender equality both globally and regionally. While applauding recent progress in Malawi, she challenged national authorities to assess whether implemented strategies were addressing the root causes of the problem, adding that women are still not living up to their full potential.

Deputy Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Hon. Grace Kwelepeta, said the Malawi Government is committed to ending gender-based violence (GBV) and ensuring gender equality. She added that there will be a special focus on quality education for girls to expedite progress.

During the report presentation, the Gender Ministry provided an overview of Malawi’s commitment to the Beijing Declaration and discussed achievements concerning gender equality since the last report was presented in 2015. It also highlighted progress through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and a notable strengthening of the legal and policy framework to accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender equality perspective.

One of the major achievements in Malawi has been the alignment of the previously conflicting definitions of a child in the Malawi Constitution with the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, which resulted in the subsequent development of a National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages (2018-2023).

In addition, the Gender Ministry also presented Malawi’s progress on women’s economic empowerment, ending violence against women and girls (VAWG), and political participation of women. Despite positive strides, the government noted that ongoing challenges include negative social norms, discriminatory practices, economic inequality, inconsistent political action, and limited responsive planning and budgeting.

The UN Resident Coordinator, represented by UN Women, reiterated the continuous support by the UN system in supporting the Malawi Government in its efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
From learning on the floor to having a desk

Mulanje district is known for its amazing landscape with stretched-out tea estates and the highest mountain in Malawi. Yohanne Kajawo, 17, is lucky to see the views of mountain waterfalls from his village and the vibrant green of the tea plantations every day. Less than a kilometer from his home lies Ngangala Primary School. Here you can witness another sea of green, as hundreds of children are dressed in their bright green uniforms.

Yohanne is in standard 8, having spent most of his primary education at Ngangala. Following the death of his parents, he went to live with his older brother and wife, who became his guardians. “I come from a family of 6 children. My mom passed away when I was very young and my father died in 2017. I was so hurt when they died, but I would still go to school, even though I was struggling. I hardly had soap to wash my school uniform, and I would do piece work to buy stationary and notebooks for school. I would get about 500 kwacha per week,” Yohanne explains.

His older brother, 23 year-old Mazunzo, has tried several jobs to make ends meet. On top of supporting Yohanne, he has to take care of his wife and 5-year old child. Being the sole breadwinner in the family, he also has the responsibility of looking out for his wife’s family. “I used to work as a labourer at Lujeri Tea Estate. The money I made helped but it wasn’t enough. I recently started my own tea nursery, hoping to sell the tea I will get good money from it,” Mazunzo says. “With the way my family is set up, and my mother in law is very old, it is very difficult for me to take care of everyone. I even struggle to pay for Yohanne’s exam fees.”

Despite these obstacles, Yohanne is a bright student. He is performing so well that teachers pass by Yohanne’s home to tell Mazunzo how smart his younger brother is. The first time Yohanne wrote his standard 8 primary school leaving certificate exams, he came in number 8 of the whole of Mulanje district. Unfortunately, he wasn’t selected for a secondary school, so Mazunzo advised him to repeat standard 8 to stand a better chance of being selected.

Yohanne’s decision to repeat standard 8 provided him with a chance to witness the massive change that was about to happen at the school. In November 2018, MSNBC’s Lawrence O’Donnell visited the school to deliver 165 desks as part of the KIND Fund partnership with UNICEF.

Prior to the visit, the school only had 72 desks for more than 2,000 students. Children were forced to learn while sitting on the floor and, for those without classrooms, on rocks outside. Some students also had lessons in a nearby church because there weren’t enough classrooms at the school. This poor learning environment, in addition to poverty and long walking distances to school, contributed to a high dropout rate.

On the day of Lawrence’s visit in 2018, children at Ngangala Primary School stood in symmetrical lines, as they watched the delivery trucks enter the school ground. The mood was jovial as students and community members sang songs and cheered. Yohanne speaks good English and was chosen to be interviewed by Lawrence, which he described as “unforgettable”.

Since receiving desks, learning has improved greatly at the school. Children no longer struggle when writing exams. “Previously writing exams was hard, children would carry chairs from their own homes to use when writing exams at school. It was chaotic. Now life is easier – we write exams on our desks in class,” Yohanne describes. “The people in our village couldn’t stop talking about the new desks. Some said they would transfer children back to the school after they had left because of the desks.”

When Yohanne told the good news to Mazunzo, he was pleased. “I was so surprised when I heard about the desks. We were happy because our children would no longer come home with dirty uniforms. A lot of parents struggle with money for soap to wash the uniforms,” Mazunzo illustrates. “I really want Yohanne to have a bright future. I encourage him to work hard, especially because I never got the chance to finish school and you never know what can happen tomorrow. If he works hard in school, he has a better chance of a bright future”.

Yohanne has gotten further in school than any of the other children in his family. This motivates him to continue working hard. He wants to be a senior teacher when he grows up and, with his excellent grades, he is well on the way to achieving his dreams.

UNICEF, with support from the KIND Fund, has supported dozens of primary schools in Malawi with desks. MSNBC’s Lawrence O’Donnell created the ground-breaking KIND Fund with UNICEF in 2011 to support education in Malawi. Since then, the program has provided more than 209,000 desks to over 900,000 learners across Malawi, contributing to 10% of the desks in the country.

“Most children in Malawi go to school without desks or chairs, making it extremely hard to concentrate on daily lessons and be motivated to learn. UNICEF is committed to ensuring that children have everything they need to succeed in education, including child friendly learning environments,” UNICEF Chief of Education Kimanzi Muthengi says. “Every desk delivered is one step closer to providing quality primary education for children across the country.”

By Lulutani Tembo | UNICEF
Remote school gets access to safe water

M phunzi Primary School is situated in Mphunzi village in a remote part of Dedza. In the rainy season, the school is surrounded by green hills with breathtaking scenery. Despite the beautiful backdrop, the school’s isolation left it without access to clean water for years. Luckily, that has changed recently and Malawi is one step closer again to reaching Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on universal access to safe water and sanitation for the 2030 Agenda.

Chata Joisty, a 15 year-old student at Mphunzi Primary School, recalls life at school before having access to safe water: "We would walk 30 minutes from the school during break time to get water when we were thirsty. By the time we would come back to class, we would’ve have missed out on a few lessons and it had a negative effect on our school performance. Our toilets were also unhygienic because we never had water to clean them." Dressed in his blue and yellow uniform shirt, Chata explains how there is also a lack of easy access to safe water at home, as it takes a 40-minute walk to fetch water from a well.

The same well would be used by students at the school but Chata’s headteacher, Mr. Kapetuka, explains that this water would sometimes make children sick: "Children would skip class because of water-related illnesses. They would walk for 1.5 to 2km to access water at the well and compete with the community when they get there. Sometimes there would be congestion and the water would get finished. We would ask learners to bring water from their homes in bottles to help clean the toilets. Life was tough."

Another challenge was food preparation for the school feeding programme, as the school did not have safe water to cook food. The volunteer cooks were forced to draw water from unprotected wells and they did not always have chlorine to treat the water.

The turnaround for Mphunzi came when UNICEF constructed a solar powered reticulated water system at the school as part of the Living Schools Project. The solar water system has a tap stand that is close to all the classrooms, so students now have easy access to a safe water supply.

Mr. Kapetuka said that, thanks to improved hygiene practices, they now have cleaner classrooms, toilets, and cooking materials, as well as better handwashing facilities. Even better, the water availability is attracting teachers to stay at the school. "For the teachers, it is a great relief. Some teachers were close to leaving our school because of the scarcity of water, and now they’ve been encouraged to stay," Mr. Kapetuka reveals. "We have also decided to establish a vegetable garden at the school to help with feeding students. We’re also attracting new learners to the school with the availability of water. Every term we have had an increase in class size. The children are so excited."

The UNICEF Living Schools project aims to increase access to quality basic education for Malawian children through expanded infrastructure. In addition, it hopes to improve access to quality education with resilient teachers, students and communities. This can contribute to retention and completion of primary school education within a safe, healthy and engaging environment.

“The provision of safe water in schools is critical in promoting quality education. Safe water allows children to learn in a clean environment and reduces the spread of diseases that may affect attendance at school,” says Kimanzi Muthengi, UNICEF Malawi Chief of Basic Education and Adolescents. "The water is also key in the greening of the Living Schools, when children begin planting trees, grass, flowers and fruits."

In the midst of other problems that the school still faces, Chata is simply happy that his school has water. "Now the water tap is a minute away from class. My peers are happy, and I am happy. We’re able to wash our hands after using the toilet, and we no longer skip class sessions because of the long wait for water," he recounts cheerfully. Despite ongoing challenges, Chata is a bright student who regularly finishes in the top 3 of his class. His favourite subjects are English and maths. “My parents are very proud of me because of how well I’m doing in my studies. When I pass my exams, they give me money to buy shoes, clothes and notebooks. They encourage me to always stay focused,” he says.

By Lulutani Tembo | UNICEF

TEVET policy review report for Malawi developed

T he United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has developed a TEVET policy review report for the Malawi Government.

The development of the review document followed a request from the Malawi government through the Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation.

The Skills and Technical Education Programme (STEP) Team Leader Arthur Shears says the document will inform the review of TEVETA Act and TEVET policy in Malawi.

Some of the of the issues covered in the policy review are mismatch between skills demand and supply, employability of TEVET graduates, existing systems to reduce the mismatch between skills demand and supply, and labour force outcomes in Malawi.

Others are: access to and equity in primary and secondary education, TEVET providers, TEVET in agriculture, access capacity, equity in TEVET, quality assurance of TEVET in Malawi, registration and accreditation of training providers, inclusiveness of the TEVET system, investment in training providers, new training programmes and curricula.

This comes at a time when stakeholders in TEVET indicated that one of the challenges in the sector is a mismatch between skills demand and supply.

The Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation recently told stakeholders that it has embarked on an exercise to overhaul Malawi’s TEVET system to enable it to meet industry demands.

The Director of Technical and Vocational Training in the Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation, Aubrey Matemba, says there is need to produce graduates that respond to the demands of the labour market.

He also noted that a drafting committee of various Government representatives has been established to work on revisions to the TEVETA Act and TEVET Policy using the TEVET Policy Review as a key reference.

The revised drafts will be shared with stakeholders for their comment before finalization, and Team Leader Shears noted STEP has funds available to support these consultations. STEP is an initiative funded by the European Union (EU) and partially implemented by UNESCO.

By Theresa Kasaswela | UNESCO
UNHCR sponsored a friendly, international Judo tournament under Judo for Peace, which was held in Lusaka on 21 July. Malawi’s Dzaleka Refugee Camp Judo Club competed against their counterparts from Meheba Refugee Settlement in Zambia.

The Dzaleka Judo Club visited Zambia led by the Judo Association of Malawi General Secretary Osbourne Banda, while the Meheba Club was under the Judo Association of Zambia led by its president Alfred Foloko. According to the two Judo association officials, the friendly tournament in Lusaka was a good bonding exercise and preparation for the two teams with the qualifications for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games in mind.

"Judo has no religion, no race, but is there to promote friendship between the two countries. I would like to thank UNHCR for enabling the Malawi team to travel to Zambia and Judo Association of Zambia for hosting us," said Banda.

Dzaleka Youth Congress Director and Project Manager for Judo for Peace, Allain Bitijura, said he was grateful to UNHCR, the Government of Malawi and Judo Association of Malawi for collaborating so well to make their travel to Zambia possible. Bitijura added that judo was fast growing as a sport in the camp.

"We have now enrolled 300 people including women although we still need more women to come and take up Judo as a sport,” he said.

Dzaleka team’s participation in Zambia follows an amendment regarding the participation of refugees and younger migrants by the International Judo Federation (IJF) that is now allowing refugees to compete internationally under their host country flag.

Dzaleka Judo Team also won several medals at the 6th Japanese Ambassador’s Judo Championships which took place on Saturday, 13th July 2019 in Lilongwe. The Championship is organized annually by the Embassy of Japan, in collaboration with the Judo Association of Malawi. In total, the Dzaleka Judo team won 12 medals—7 bronze, 2 silver and 3 gold.

Japanese Ambassador to Malawi, H.E. Ms. Kae Yanagisawa, presided over the Championships together with Malawi’s Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, Mr. Francis Phiso M.P., and UNHCR Representative, Ms. Monique Ekoko.

One of the judokas from Dzaleka who won a gold medal during the championships was 13-year-old Francine Lotanga. She said she was very excited to win a medal during the championships.

“Since I joined Judo in June 2018, it has always been my desire to compete and do well at both national and international level,” Lotanga, a Congolese refugee, said. “I am very excited that one of my dreams has just been fulfilled today”, she added.

The Sports Minister thanked the Japanese Embassy for bringing together judokas from across the country, including Dzaleka, in an attempt to promote peaceful co-existence. UNHCR Representative, Monique Ekoko, commended the Japanese Embassy and the Judo Association of Malawi for including refugees from Dzaleka into their programmes and activities, while the Japanese Ambassador said judo is not just a martial art but also a sport for peace. She explains that its underlying philosophy is mutual prosperity between oneself and others.

“Judo contributes not only to physical strength but also to self-discipline and to respect for one’s opponent. With these values, judo contributes to peace in the communities and even leads to global peace,” Ambassador Yanagisawa said.

The Judo Association of Malawi, which is an affiliate of the International Judo Federation (IJF) in liaison with UNHCR and support from Japanese Embassy, launched a comprehensive Judo for Peace program in Dzaleka Refugee Camp in January 2018.

By Rumbani Msiska | UNHCR
June was a celebratory month at Mzuzu, Lisasadzi and Thuchila Residential Training Centres (RTCs) with 197 extension workers and lead farmers graduating from season-long Farmer Field School (FFS) Master Trainers’ courses.

The graduates are now FFS master trainers (MTs) and community based facilitators (CBFs), respectively, having completed training under the European Union (EU) funded KULIMA project, Revitalizing Agriculture Clusters and Ulimi wa M’ndandanda through Farmer Field Schools. The project is enhancing institutionalization and quality assurance of FFS and strengthening capacity development on the FFS methodology within the framework of the District Agricultural Extension Services System (DAESS) in the country.

Speaking at the Lisasadzi RTC graduation function on behalf of the Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, Director of Fisheries, Dr. Friday Njaya explained that: “The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development strongly believes that Farmer Field School is one of the most relevant methodologies in addressing critical challenges in the agricultural economy.”

At Thuchila RTC, Dr. Jerome Chim’gonda-Nkhoma, Director of Agricultural Extension Services, talked about the link between FFS and food security, “I want to let you know that there are several methodologies that the Ministry uses to reach out to many farmers. One of them is the Farmer Field School. The Farmer Field School approach is used for capacity building and empowering farmers to increase household food and nutritional security, increased incomes and resilience to climate change.”

Expressing elation and gratitude, newly graduated Master Trainer Lead farmers, extension workers graduate from FFS Master Trainers’ course at Thuchila RTC, Blessings Kidnie Malimba, said: “I thank the EU for starting this KULIMA programme which has opened our eyes to new skills that will change the districts of Mulanje, Chiradzulu, and Thyolo districts when it comes to food, nutrition and income security”.

Since the tailored training courses kicked off in January 2018, 185 (30% female) extension workers and 196 (31% female) CBFs have completed courses at the three RTCs. The Revitalizing Agriculture Clusters and Ulimi wa M’ndandanda through Farmer Field Schools project is implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Government of Malawi’s Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development.

KULIMA programme hands over bicycles to Community-Based Facilitators

Community-Based Facilitators (CBFs) trained on the Farmer Field School Masters Trainers course under the KULIMA programme have received bicycles to facilitate mobility as they support farmers within their respective communities.

During a symbolic handover ceremony on June 14, Dr. Jerome Chim’gonda-Nkhoma, Director of Agricultural Extension Services at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, advised beneficiaries to use the bicycles wisely so that they help advance agricultural productivity, thereby assist households to become food secure. The handover ceremony marked the start of distribution of the bicycles to the 10 KULIMA districts. So far, 1729 bicycles have been distributed to CBFs.

The president of the graduating class of Master Trainers in Thuchila residential training centre thanked the European Union, the Government of Malawi and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), saying that the bicycles would be a great help to CBFs, who have to cover long distances to support farmers. He referred to the usefulness of the motorbikes that were given to extension workers earlier this year in January.

The bicycles come as part of the project Revitalizing Agriculture Clusters and Ulimi wa M’ndandanda through Farmer Field Schools, which is funded by the European Union under their flagship, the KULIMA programme.

Lead farmers, extension workers graduate from FFS Master Trainers’ course
Tisange Mushroom Association is leading several oyster mushroom businesses in local communities of Northern Malawi. The group consists of twenty members; 15 women and 7 men. These cooperatives are community initiatives that are meant to foster partnerships and maximize production and marketing. The mushrooms are harvested and processed into three products: dried, powdered and fresh mushrooms.

However, their produce has a limited reach in the local communities, as they lack the knowledge, capacity and skills to produce hygienic and nutritious mushroom products on a larger scale. Production on a larger scale will improve the volume and quality of locally produced mushrooms for export and will empower small-scale businesswomen financially.

In addition, it will reduce vulnerabilities for female-headed households, as well as provide jobs for the unemployed women and youth in their communities.

To strengthen the viability, visibility and branding of small-scale, women-led businesses, UN Women, in collaboration with the local NGO mHub, conducted a series of entrepreneurial trainings through business boot-camps in targeted districts throughout Malawi.

The trainings equipped different cooperatives with skills to maneuver their business environment and build sustainable business models. The boot-camp sessions provided practical tools and models for marketing analysis, branding, and financial management.

Joyce Mtawali, female chairperson of Tisange Mushroom Association, was one of the targeted beneficiaries of the boot camp.

“I have learnt a lot through the entrepreneurship training such as visibility and how to do swot analysis. I did my swot analysis and discovered that there are opportunities in working with youth to grow the business. Youth helped us set up Facebook and WhatsApp and now people can hear and know what I am doing by using social media. So far, there is now a young lady developing our website to go global,” Mtawali said.

By attending the entrepreneurship trainings, Joyce learnt a few tricks that helped navigate her company’s reach from individual to corporate supermarket chain stores.

The association opened a Facebook page (“Tisange Mushrooms”) which attracted new customers in urban Lilongwe and expanded their reach by 6%. By creating a bigger customer base, they are now able to ship their produce to urban locations such as Lilongwe.

In addition to branding support, Joyce used her acquired skills to make an impressive pitch to a panel of clients, which included Shoprite, a large African chain of supermarkets. The panel was so impressed by the group’s product that they formed a partnership to supply Shoprite in Mzuzu.

So far, the group’s profits have increased by 40% since acquiring sales through partnerships. Due to the increase in demand and production of mushroom products, there has been a 4.5% increase in the Tisange staff.

UN Women is working with partners to improve household income of women entrepreneurs in six districts through the Youth and Women Economic Empowerment Programme.
Famously known as the ‘Lake of Stars’, Lake Malawi is one of Malawi’s greatest treasures and a source of pride to all. A rich fresh water lake with pristine sandy beaches, Lake Malawi is a major source of food, tourism, and other economic activities. It is also the main source of livelihood to the fishers living along its shores.

Along the shores of the lake in the Salima District, the Lifuwu community is one of the fishing communities in the area. Fishing is in their blood with the skill being passed on from one generation to the other. As the sun begins to set for the evening, the shores of Lifuwu are bustling with life. Smaller dugout canoes, together with fishing gear, are being loaded in bigger boats. Fishermen are preparing to sail out into the deeper parts of the lake, where they will spend the night, casting their nets for the next big catch.

Unfortunately, the effects of climate change and extreme weather events are affecting many countries across the world, with Malawi amongst the most vulnerable places suffering its adverse effects.

With less and less fish in the lake, the fishers have become even more desperate and are now venturing into deeper waters in search of more fish. They are putting their lives at risk with periodic heavy wind storms claiming many lives and continuing to be one of the greatest threats for fishing communities in the country.

37-year-old Fanny Shaibu is a key member, and one of the few women, of the Lifuwa fishing community and part of the ‘Beach Village Committee’, a community-based structure that links the fishers to the wider local governance system. One of the Beach Village Committee’s roles is to disseminate climate and weather-related information to the fishers, aimed at protecting their lives from the heavy winds and storm. However, the current weather information and forecasts that Fanny and her fellow members of the committee have to carry to her community of fishers has had several challenges.

“Even though we get weather forecast from the radio and government workers which we then take to the fishers, that information is not specific enough and does not contain all the information that the fishers look for. We live in a very big area and the forecast is too general and does not specify which areas will be affected by heavy winds, the actual times and how strong the winds are. This makes it difficult for the fishers to rely on this information and not go into the waters since this is their only source of income”, said Fanny.

Boston Chuma, chairperson for the Lifuwu Beach Village Committee, explains the challenges with climate information meant for the fishers in the area. “We need more information on the weather, that helps guide the
Continued from page 13

Protecting fishing communities in Malawi from the effects of climate change

fishers on when and where to safely go into the waters to avoid loss of lives. We have lost a few of our brothers over the past years because they did not have the required information”, he said.

Responding to this need to improve climate information and early warning systems to help protect vulnerable communities like Lifuwu, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) partnered with the government of Malawi, through the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA), to implement a project that is co-funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), a global fund created to support efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenges of climate change. The project ‘Scaling up the Use of Modernized Climate Information and Early Warning systems (M-CLIMES)’ is a six-year initiative aimed at helping to safeguard people’s livelihoods and protect them from extreme weather and other changes in climate.

“The fishing communities along Lake Malawi are one of the main groups to benefit from the M-Climes Project, with support from the Green Climate Fund. This is one of several interventions where UNDP is working in partnership with the Malawi Government and alongside national and local structures to build the capacity of key actors for weather and climate observation, analysis, forecasting and dissemination of information and warnings to disaster-prone communities in the country. We are making use of strategic and innovative channels like weather and water monitoring technologies, mobile phones, ICT, radio and more importantly scaling up community-based groups to ensure that they provide reliable, timely and accessible data into the hands of people who are most vulnerable and affected by the extreme weather events”, said UNDP’s Portfolio Manager on Resilience and Sustainable Growth, Andrew Spezowka.

The M-Climes Project is one of several initiatives that UNDP is implementing to support the Malawi Government in developing long-term solutions in order to create greater resilience for communities at risk of disasters. The M-Climes Project is contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and is aligned with Malawi’s national development priorities.

The Director of Risk Reduction within the Department of Disaster Management Affairs, James Chiusiwa, explains that “Malawi now has the equipment and ability to scale up climate information and early warning systems to help save lives of the people affected by extreme weather. The equipment that we have invested in, through the M-Climes Project, has improved the accuracy of weather forecasts as compared to what was issued in the past. We are also modernising community-based warning systems to automated ones; which improves the timely accessibility of climate information to communities”.

It has been almost two years since the M-Climes project was officially launched in Malawi to change the course of climate information. Significant gains and achievements are already being felt in the targeted communities, as the project continues its journey to reach 1.6 million farming communities, 60,000 fishing communities and 115,000 flood prone communities in Malawi. The initiative is helping to reduce poverty and protect lives and livelihoods despite the threats posed by climate change and natural disasters.

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Despite achieving important progress in fighting HIV and AIDS, Malawi needs to seize available opportunities to reduce new infections and address the pandemic, including through implementation of the National HIV Prevention Strategy, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has said.

Speaking at the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial ceremony in Zomba on 21st July, UNAIDS Strategic Information Advisor, Masauso Nzima, said redoubling of efforts is needed to reduce new HIV infections in Malawi, currently standing at 36,000 every year.

"Malawi has made commendable progress in the fight against the HIV," said Nzima. "In particular, many people that are infected with HIV are now on treatment. However, there are a number of areas that require attention, including treatment for children, reduction of new HIV infections, particularly among adolescents and young people, and reduction of AIDS related deaths."

He also said stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV, and harmful gender norms are among factors that continue to frustrate the fight against HIV and AIDS in Malawi.

“We have several opportunities to make a difference. Malawi has revised the National HIV Prevention Strategy which must now be implemented. Malawi will, in a few months, be revising and developing new National Strategic Plans for both HIV and Tuberculosis. These too have to be funded and implemented.

“As UN, we stand ready to render and mobilize the much-required support to Malawi through the UN reform initiative, and other strategic partnerships and mechanisms,” said Nzima.

Chief of Health Services in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Charles Mwansambo, said Malawi Government will continue collaborating with development partners to scale up access to HIV prevention services for all people in Malawi.

He said the country needs to intensify HIV testing among people in high risk populations, who he said often include men, adolescents and young women.

“There is also need to link those who test negative to preventive services so that they remain HIV negative,” said Mwansambo. “The progress we have made will not be sustained if we continue to have new HIV infections.”

He said government is promoting abstinence, faithfulness between partners, use of condoms, voluntary male medical circumcision, elimination of gender-based violence, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission as some of the strategies for lowering new HIV infections.

This year’s International AIDS Candlelight Memorial ceremony was held under the theme: Intensifying the fight for Health and Rights. The memorial, coordinated by the Global Network of People living with HIV, is a grassroots mobilization campaign for HIV awareness in the world.

At the memorial ceremony, several stakeholders contributing to the HIV and AIDS national response in Malawi, including the UN, exhibited their interventions.

By Phillip Pemba | UNRCO
Newly appointed United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, Shigeki Komatsubara, has implored the private sector to find ways of recovering economic challenges. He said this at the launch of the Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund (MICF) Agribusiness Window Challenge on Tuesday, 16th July in Blantyre.

He said that the public and private sectors have different roles to play in a thriving economy.

“UNDP would like to bridge the gap between the government and the private sector,” he added.

Komatsubara explained that UNDP would like to learn from the private sector and translate their ideas into practice, as well as engage with the government on how to create a better environment for the private sector through the Agribusiness Window Challenge.

On his part, MICF Director, Buddhika Samarasinghe, said it is essential for businesses to pitch ideas that incorporate the poor or smallholder producers into value chains in order to benefit from the Agribusiness Window Challenge.

“We are looking at environmentally sustainable solutions and ways in which productivity can be improved,” he explained.

Samarasinghe mentioned mechanisation and renewable energy as examples to advance the agriculture sector in Malawi and argued for a move from donor-driven to private sector-driven solutions.

Domasi Likuni Phala Production Manager, MacMillan Libwera, said the Agribusiness Window Challenge would go a long way in addressing finance challenges that Malawian companies have been facing when trying to grow their business.

With initiatives like the Agribusiness Window Challenge, the MCIF is challenging firms to introduce new initiatives that could develop profitable models in Malawi through the introduction of new products, delivery channels and business models in order to increase financing to Small and Medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

In addition, MCIF is challenging the financial sector in Malawi to introduce innovative financial products and services on a sustainable basis that address the needs of the underserved SME sector.

The Innovative Finance window of the MICF is supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

MCIF will provide a grant of up to 50% of the cost of each innovative, commercially driven project in Malawi’s financial sector, helping absorb some of the financial risks involved and thereby speeding up the implementation of new business models and technologies that have the potential of positively impacting SMEs in Malawi.

Businesses can submit their applications for grants between USD200,000 and USD700,000 to info@micf.mw until 30th September, 2019.

By UNDP
In Traditional Authority (T/A) Miolo in Nsanje District, Fatima Police Unit child protection officer, Hanneck Migala, says incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are a common phenomenon in camps for Cyclone Idai flood victims and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the district.

“This is no longer strange news to us. We register many cases of SGBV cases both in and outside flood victims’ camps in the district. However, our biggest challenge has been the lack of resources to respond with necessary support to the victims and arrest perpetrators,” Migala said.

More than 922,900 people were affected by Cyclone Idai in Malawi in March 2019. 56 deaths were registered and 577 people sustained injuries. Nsanje was one of the districts worst hit with heavy rains and flooding. Around 81,000 people and 18,000 households were affected in Nsanje with 17,402 individuals being displaced.

On top of this recent misfortune, Nsanje district is considered the poorest district of a total of 28 districts in the country with the poverty rate at 81.2 percent and the ultra-poverty rate at 56 percent. These high poverty levels in Nsanje put women and girls at the mercy of SGBV incidences, largely due to socio-cultural beliefs that condone such violence. The humanitarian emergency emanating from the floods only exacerbated the situation for vulnerable women and girls. Consequently, girls’ and women’s vulnerability to both SGBV and HIV/AIDS are severe.

In the chaos following a disaster, security can be difficult to establish and opportunities for abuse and exploitation increase. There has been inadequate gender-specific protection measures in the humanitarian response in spite of SGBV pervasiveness and women’s and girls’ vulnerability.

In response to this, UN Women mobilised 200 bicycles and other security materials, which were delivered to Nsanje and Phalombe. “The intervention is aimed to improve the capacity of the security personnel in the two districts to better combat the vice. Thus, we have delivered supplies and materials to Community Policing Forums in the two districts in an effort to strengthen and equip community structures with protection and life-saving devices in order to prevent SGBV in host communities and relocation sites for flood victims and affected by Cyclone Idai,” UN Women National Programme Officer, Pamela Mkwamba-Matumbi, said.

A representative of the Malawi Department of Disaster Management Affairs, Madalitso Mwale, stressed the importance of equipping community-based structures in reducing occurrences of SGBV. “I believe that the donation of security equipment comprising bicycles, reflector vests, whistles, solar-powered torches and raincoats will play a critical role in strengthening security systems in flood-prone areas in Nsanje and Phalombe,” he said.

Security equipment was given to 151 community policing forums in the two districts.

“I am a member of a community policing forum of 10 women, we help women and girls who are being abused which often happens in the night. The torches, reflectors and whistles we have received will make it easier for us to do our work. I am so happy because we will feel safer as we carry out our night patrols now,” said Beatrice Kondole, a 45-year-old member of Fombe community policing forum.
In July 2019, UNHCR concluded its emergency response to Cyclone Idai victims in the affected districts of Phalombe, Nsanje, Chikwawa, Zomba and Machinga. During the emergency response, the UN Refugee Agency distributed core relief items (CRIs) to 9,500 households. The distributed CRIs included tents, mats, solar lanterns, tarpaulins, blankets, and cooking utensils.

In March, nearly 870,000 people were affected by Cyclone Idai, including around 87,000 people who were displaced from their homes. In addition, around 1,900 Mozambicans entered Malawi to seek safety in the Nsanje district and were being accommodated at Bangula and Mphokera evacuation camps. The Mozambicans returned to their areas of origin after receiving a return package, which was jointly put together by UNHCR and the Government of Malawi.

During the emergency response, UNHCR was leading the Protection Cluster together with UNICEF and the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW). UNHCR also worked in close collaboration with the Government of Malawi through the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) and other agencies by supporting an enhanced humanitarian response to mitigate the prevailing protection risks faced by the internally displaced population.

UNHCR has now moved to a post-distribution monitoring phase, which is running concurrently with early recovery assistance. The post-distribution monitoring ensures that beneficiaries receive the CRIs and assesses the extent to which the items are meeting the needs of returned Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).
One, two, three, four. She counts the MK2,000 notes from her envelope. She pauses, shakes her head and lifts her chin slightly. She puts the money back in her envelope, grabs her walking stick and starts to leave as her face breaks into a huge smile, relief spread all over it. Steria Tomas, from T/A Mwambo in Zomba district, is 70 years of age and one of the victims of the March 2019 floods, which displaced 86,976 households and killed at least 56 people across 15 affected districts.

Steria was counting money she received from the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP), which was part of the support provided to flood-affected households under the part of early recovery efforts. This money is provided to SCTP beneficiary households through the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW), with financial support from the Department For International Development (DFID), and technical support from UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP).

“It had been raining incessantly for 2 days. On the third day, my house collapsed, beginning with the outer walls. I held on to my 4 grandchildren and dived outside into the water which was now waist high,” Steria outlines. Her grandchildren are between 5 and 14 years old and they are all in primary school. They live with her from time to time when their parents travel outside the district for piece work. None of the children could swim, so she struggled to keep afloat. They had lost all their belongings, escaping with only the clothes on their backs.

Fortunately, a boat appeared. The boat was owned by the village headman who lives just a few houses away from Steria. Upon seeing the devastation, the headman mobilized his household and started rescue efforts with his fishing boat. His boat, which normally fits eight people, carried more than twenty people that day. They were taken to Chinkhwanga school about 200 meters away from Steria’s house. Classes were put on hold and the school became a camp for those escaping the floods.

Thankfully, the water receded after a few days and Steria was able to start looking for piece work to support her grandchildren, as her crops and belongings were lost to the floods. She was able to find work harvesting rice a few kilometers from her village but her daily earnings were not enough to feed her family.

This is why it made Steria very happy to receive cash assistance. “This money will support me and my grandchildren to have enough food. It will also support me to prepare for the upcoming growing season. I plan to buy three chickens and a goat to replace the eight chickens I lost in the floods. I am very grateful to have received this financial support at such a time like this,” she added, breaking into a small dance and throwing her walking stick up in the air.

The early recovery multipurpose cash transfer is provided to SCTP beneficiary households who are labour constrained and ultra-poor (e.g. elderly-headed household and chronically ill-headed household), reaching approximately 10% of the population in each district affected by the floods. With DFID funds, UNICEF and WFP supported a rapid assessment which confirmed the eligibility of SCTP households for emergency assistance. Given the underlying vulnerable status of these households, it was expected that affected SCTP households will take longest to recover from the effects of the flooding.

In addition, past experience has indicated that households on an existing social assistance programme (e.g. SCTP) tend to be excluded during community-based targeting for emergency assistance, under the premise that they are already in receipt of routine support. Therefore, DFID provided further financial assistance to provide multipurpose cash support to SCTP households as part of the early recovery interventions in Chikwawa and Zomba districts.

With the support she has received, Steria is now very hopeful that she will make a better life for herself and her grandchildren. She plans for them to complete primary school and move on to secondary school in the next coming years. She will use part of the money she received to start rebuilding her house.
Providing safe water to flood-affected communities

Linley Manda, 30, remembers the night of the 9th of March like it was yesterday. She was woken up around midnight by heavy rains at her home in Nsanje district. She saw water entering her house and rising quickly. She started to scream and woke up her children with her husband. The children were crying and shouting for help. They fled to a nearby school for safety, away from the rising waters.

“I remember it was raining nonstop for two weeks. When the water started to rise the whole village was scared, so we helped each other to go to Mguda Community Based Childcare Centre (CCBC). We were afraid that these floods would be worse than the 2015 floods,” Linley recalls.

The floods that hit southern Malawi in March 2019 affected 15 districts, with Nsanje being the most heavily impacted. In total, more than 868,900 people were affected and almost 86,980 people were displaced across 173 camps. Linley and her family were based at Mguda Camp in TA Tengani for two weeks. Despite being safe from flooding, it was a difficult experience.

“Sleeping in the tents was tough because there was little room. We weren’t comfortable at all. It was easy to catch a cold from other people living there and we were afraid we would contract diseases from each other because of how crowded the environment was. It wasn’t a good situation,” Linley discloses. “My middle child had diarrhea at some point, but luckily we were helped by a health worker at the camp. We had a clinic at the camp that would check on children regularly.”

After a week, the water levels in Linley’s village started decreasing and she decided to return home with her family. When they got there, they immediately noticed some of their valuables were stolen and their maize fields were ruined. “When this happened, we were trying to figure out what’s next. My husband started looking for piece work to get us back on our feet so we could have food to feed the family,” she explains.

Before the floods, her husband did sporadic piece work to support the family but the money was never enough to sustain them. They often struggled to have enough food and clothes for their 3 children. After the floods, the situation was exacerbated by a lack of access to safe water. Flood damage resulted in the malfunctioning of the borehole at the nearby school and they had to walk to the Shire river to collect water for the family.

As part of recovery efforts following the catastrophic floods, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) provided US $4.5 million (£3.4 million) to fund UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP) and Red Cross humanitarian response for people displaced by the disaster. These funds included support for food, health care, shelter, logistics, water, and sanitation. DFID support has enabled UNICEF to install 13 water systems in four flood-affected districts. These water systems comprise 73 stand taps and 146 taps, giving communities access to safe water again.

“It is vital to ensure that people affected by the floods have access to clean water. This is key in preventing waterborne diseases, such as cholera, and improving hygiene in the communities,” says Michele Paba, Chief of Wash Sanitation and Hygiene.

Linley is ecstatic with the new water tap in the village. Lucky for her, the tap is just a few steps from her house. “When we got the water tap we were so happy because we said goodbye to unsafe water. It makes me so happy and we hope the same can be done in other villages. The cases of diarrhea have reduced as a result,” says Linley.

The Nsanje native has also made good use of the water by starting a vegetable garden in her backyard. She plants tomatoes, onions and various vegetables with the hope that it can provide more income to take care of their household and better their lives.

“I see a bright future ahead of me now. Every morning and evening I take care of my garden. I collect water to water my garden. People in our village have also been using the water to build houses following the destruction of the floods,” says Linely. “My children are also bathing almost three times a day, and they love it”

The Health Surveillance Assistants in their village have taught the community good hygiene practices now that they have safe water. They were told to always wash their hands before and after meals, as well as after the bathroom.

In the meantime, Linely is thankful that her family is well on their way to recovery after the floods and she doesn’t have to walk long distances to collect water anymore. “Now I can make better use of my time that would previously go to the trolley walks to the Shire river to collect water. I was also terrified of the crocodiles which would regularly attack people. I am so thankful for this water,” Linely describes with joy.

By Lulutani Tembo | UNICEF
74-year-old Anne Moyo is one of the victims that had to escape from the raging Cyclone Idai and the floods that followed. “Last year, I grew onions and, after selling, I got over 200,000 kwacha (USD 270) with which I bought iron sheets. I plan to build a modern house soon,” says Anne.

“I now grow maize, onions and green vegetables on a land which is safe from flooding. I produce enough to feed my children and sell the surplus to buy other things,” adds Anne.

Since disasters became a regular occurrence in Malawi, WFP has been trying to equip families like Anne’s to resist climate shocks such as floods and drought. Thanks to the introduced irrigation system and other flood mitigation structures, thousands of families were able to partly withstand the devastating effects of Cyclone Idai.

It’s now been three months since floods affected 800,000 people in Malawi, killing 60 people, displacing 90,000 families, and destroying many livelihoods. Since then, most displaced people have been staying in evacuation camps. WFP is providing humanitarian support to 430,000 people in need. Ruth Lazo, a 36-year-old widow and mother of 5, is living in an evacuation camp in Chikwawa district, which accommodates over 1,000 displaced people.

“At the time of the floods, I was 8-months pregnant and very weak. My house collapsed, and my crops were destroyed so I moved to this camp for safety.” A few weeks later, Ruth delivered a cute baby in a nearby clinic. “People at this camp have been very supportive. We live like a family,” she says.

Since she has been in this camp, Ruth and her children are receiving cash to buy food in the local markets. The initiative supports the local economy and ensures people can buy the food they prefer. People received 18,000 MK (USD 25) each month with pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, like Ruth, receiving an additional top-up so they could buy more nutritious food.

Thanks to the generous support of our donors, WFP was able to quickly roll out initiatives for food and cash distributions in the most affected districts of Malawi. Since the cyclone, WFP has assisted over 430,000 people with emergency food and cash assistance.

From now until the end of 2019, WFP plans to assist 48,000 families to rebuild damaged infrastructures and regain their livelihoods. Beneficiaries will receive food or cash to meet their immediate needs, while they rebuild their communities by clearing debris, building houses, and repairing damaged roads.
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