

# UP Malawi Country Strategy

2021-2025



United  
Purpose   
Beyond aid





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# Message from the Country Director

This strategy provides a framework for United Purpose (UP) to support the Government of Malawi to progress towards a self-reliant Malawi (Government of Malawi Vision 2063). It represents a refinement of our organisational direction and it is UP's way of responding to a complex, changing world.

Our long-term **vision** is a Malawi where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all. Our **mission** is to move people beyond aid. We want to see all people in Malawi determining their own lives supported by strong and accountable government services, and effective local markets and value chains. To achieve our mission, over the next five years, we will work with the Government of Malawi to eliminate poverty and end the recurrent cycle of hunger and humanitarian assistance in Malawi.

We will continue to focus on our impact areas - **Resilient Livelihoods; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Healthier lives; Sustainable Energy; Gender Equality; and Emergency Response** - as these are where we have proven to make the greatest contribution. We will lift our sights to the system level both within and across these areas; in doing this, we will expand the scale and sustainability of our impact. Our **approach** will therefore be embedded in system strengthening. Building upon our capacities and experience, the following three **principles** will underpin all of our work: **Community Focus and Integrated Programmes; Strategic Partnerships; Impactful learning and Influence.**

This strategy has been developed through an extensive and inclusive process over the course of 12 months. We critically assessed how well we delivered against our 2017-20 strategy and consulted our stakeholders - most importantly the women, men, girls and boys that we work with. We sought the views of all of our Malawi team and peers in our global organisation. The outcome strongly reflects UP's culture, passion and vision over the next five years.

To deliver this strategy requires refinement in how we operate. Accordingly, we will implement an operational plan to continue investing in our people, systems and standards to ensure we are equipped to realise this change. Our **values** of **integrity, dignity and respect** will continue to not only shape what we do, but also how we do it and thus will guide our operational objectives.

Join us, together this is possible.

*K. Hartley-Louis*

Kate Hartley-Louis

## Our impact areas



**Resilient Livelihoods**



**WASH and Healthier Lives**



**Sustainable Energy**



**Gender Equality**



**Emergency Response**



# Who we are

We are part of United Purpose (UP), a UK based International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) that strives to end poverty and inequality across the globe. Between 2019-2020 UP deployed £18.6 million to reach 4.5 million people across 12 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and South America. We are a leader in community-led development and grassroots innovation. For more than 40 years (as Concern Universal until 2016), UP has worked with communities to help people gain agency over their own lives – so they can move beyond aid.

We believe the voices of those with whom we work should be at the forefront of everything we do. We pride ourselves on building strong relationships with communities, local organisations and governments, where we implement community-led, sustainable solutions to the challenges people face. These solutions often involve improving access to markets and establishing business opportunities to enhance livelihoods, as well as ensuring equitable and universal access to basic public services. This enables the people we support to take control of their own lives and move beyond aid.

## United Purpose in Malawi

We began working in Malawi in 1988 as Concern Universal, initially supporting refugees from the Mozambican civil war and host communities in Dedza district. Over the past 32 years we have strived to improve the lives of people living in rural areas by working with them to find lasting ways to overcome the challenges they face.

Today we are one of Malawi's largest INGOs with an annual income of more than £7 million over the past three years. We are governed by a Malawian board and work in partnership with local government and communities across 18 districts, mainly in the Central and Southern regions.

We have long taken a multi-sectored approach to development and humanitarian response because the root causes of poverty and disasters are multidimensional. We work in partnership with District Councils, sub-district structures and communities to implement development interventions.

In doing so we have gained significant and specialist experience in Malawi: We are behind some of the largest, most innovative programmes across the entire humanitarian, social protection, **Resilient Livelihoods** spectrum in Malawi and in 2020 our resilience portfolio reached 318,425 project participants across seven districts. We have been delivering nutrition interventions over the past 20 years and between 2012-2017 we contributed to a 38% reduction in child stunting among under-twos in Dedza and Balaka Districts. Our **WASH and Healthier Lives** experience began in 1992 and since then we have enabled 22% of Malawi's national Open Defecation Free (ODF) achievement by December 2020 and built



Our **Resilience** portfolio reached 318,425 project participants across seven districts in 2020



Our **WASH and Healthier Lives** work has built and repaired 2,405 water points since 2011



Through our **Sustainable Energy** work we are recognised as a key driving force behind achieving the Government's ambitious two million fuel-saving stoves by 2020 goal



or repaired 2,405 water points since 2011. Our **Sustainable Energy** work started in 2008 and enables pro-poor market-based solutions for cooking, lighting and enterprise, reaching over 500,000 households with modern energy access and is recognised as the driving force behind achieving the Government's ambitious two million fuel-saving stoves by 2020 goal. UP applies a **Gender Equality** asset gap lens in the design and implementation of all our programmes and uses sport as one of our tools to address gender inequality. Whilst our focus has been to strengthen long-term resilience to shocks, when disaster hits we have been able to support the government to respond. UP has distributed **Emergency Response** food and cash to 925,756 vulnerable people between 2018-2020, providing WASH facilities and solar energy in flood displacement camps, and most recently COVID-19 preparedness, prevention and management.

Our social enterprise CUMO Microfinance has been a remarkable success story, and has grown to become one of the leading rural financial services providers in Malawi with a current client base of over 64,000, of which 83% are women.

External stakeholder consultations for this strategy in 2020 confirmed that United Purpose is well respected and trusted by donors, the government and communities. We are recognised for our engagement and co-ordination at community and local government level, and for listening, building on our experience and sharing that learning. To our partners in development, UP is collaborative, flexible, innovative, and agile.

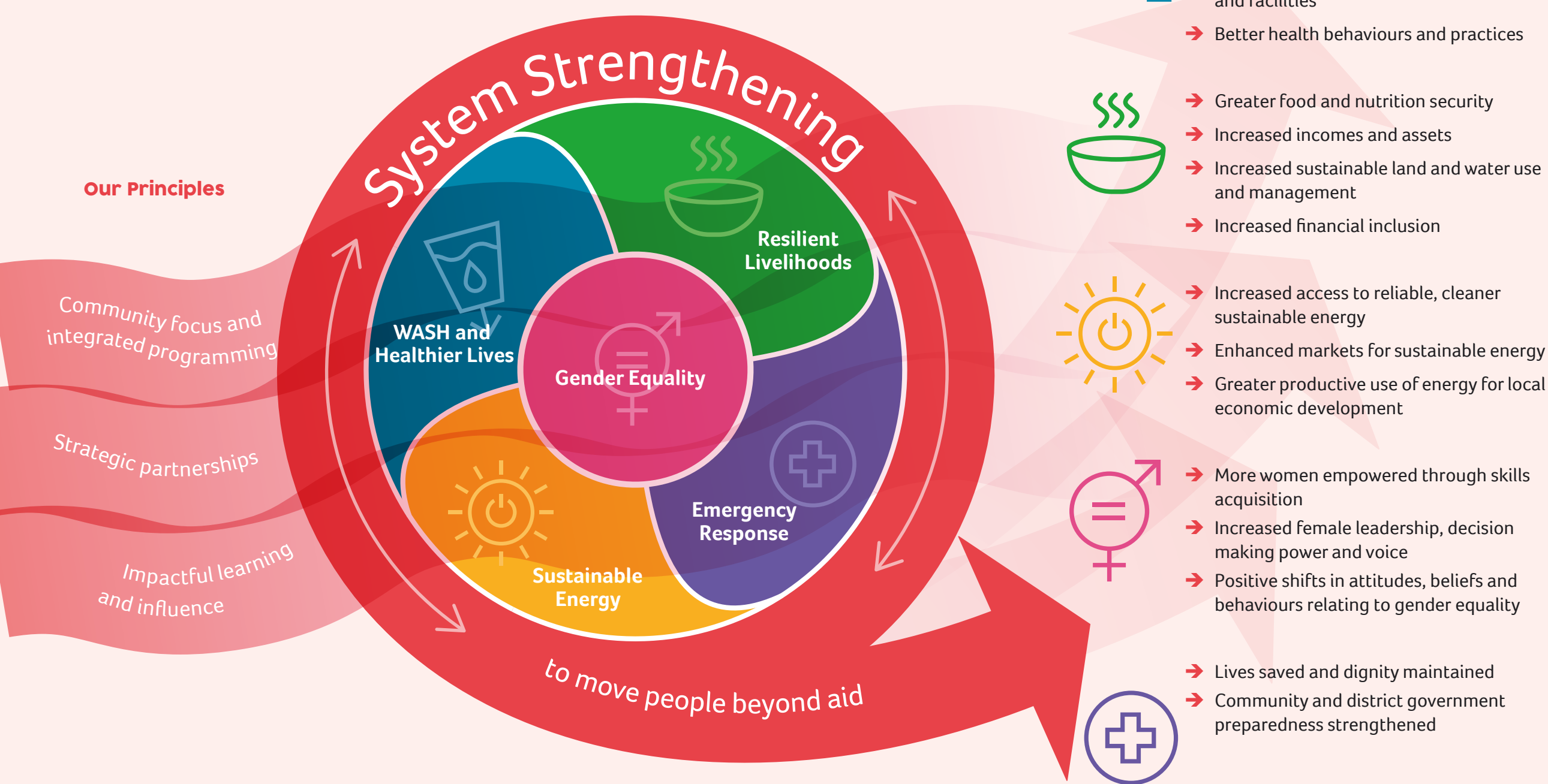


UP applies a **Gender Equality** asset gap lens in the design and implementation of all our programmes



UP distributed **Emergency Response** food and cash to 925,756 vulnerable people between 2018-2020

# UP Malawi Theory of Change 2021 – 2025



**Our Vision**

**UP vision is a Malawi where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all.**

**Our Mission**

**Our mission is to move people beyond aid.**

**Our Impact**

**Eliminate poverty and end the recurrent cycle of hunger and humanitarian assistance in Malawi.**

**our Operational Objectives**

Nurturing our Team and Culture



Impactful Revenue and Reputation



Strengthened Systems, Processes and Standards





# Theory of Change: Overview

Our long-term **vision** is a Malawi where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all. Our **mission** is to move people beyond aid.

We believe that a person's ability to feed themselves, stay healthy or earn an income, should never be dependent on charity, but should be within their control. We want to see all people in Malawi determining their own lives, supported by strong and accountable government services, and effective local markets and value chains. This is recognised in Malawi's Vision 2063, with systems of strong and accountable government, effective local markets and private sector at the core of moving from poverty reduction to resilience. To achieve our mission, over the next five years, we will work with the Government of Malawi to eliminate poverty and end the recurrent cycle of hunger and humanitarian assistance in Malawi through strengthening systems.

We will continue to work from our areas of expertise - through the **impact areas of resilient livelihoods, WASH and healthier lives, sustainable energy and gender equality** - to address key drivers of poverty and vulnerability in Malawi and lift our sights to the system level both within and across sectors. Our approach is therefore embedded in **strengthening systems**. In doing this we will work to ensure service delivery is sustained, and that change can happen at scale. Our impact areas are where we can best leverage our experience, existing partnerships and specialisms.

Whilst our focus is on longer-term development programming, through our **emergency response** work, we will continue to use our added value in scale and agility to support the Government of Malawi to respond to shocks and disaster to save lives immediately, protect the gains that have already been made in our impact areas and increase resilience.

**Three principles** underpin all of our work:

- 1. Community focus and integrated programmes** that bring the multiple solutions needed to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability. Making these demand-driven and fostering social accountability will increase their sustainability.
- 2. Strategic partnerships** that build the capacity of government, service providers, market providers, communities and other actors to take forward those solutions in the longer term.
- 3. Impactful learning and influence** to create evidence based on programmes that work and sharing that widely to achieve scalability.

UP recognises that addressing the key drivers of poverty and vulnerability involves dynamic, complex and multi-dimensional issues. By taking an integrated approach, building upon individual and community strengths, resources and opportunities and effectively harnessing the collective knowledge, skills, resources, and energies of a wide range of actors, sustainable change at a systems level will be achieved.

We will establish a set of indicators to measure organisational progress in each of our impact areas. This will be clearly linked to the Sustainable Development Goals, the seven enablers in the Government of Malawi's Vision 2063 and the priorities of the NGO Board Of Malawi's Corporate strategy (2020- 2024) among others. Our ability to reach these targets and to measure progress will be key to determining our success.





# Our Impact Areas

UP Malawi will design and implement interventions which are in-line with and contribute to selected Government of Malawi priorities in the following areas. We will maximise our strengths, partnerships and experience so we are able to deliver lasting change to millions of Malawians. To do that, we will focus on areas where we can have the most impact.



## 1. Resilient Livelihoods

Malawi is still one of the poorest countries in the world despite economic growth of ~5% p.a. The economy continues to be 80% dependent on agriculture. Poverty is driven by low agricultural productivity, little value addition and limited opportunities in non-farm activities, in part due to lack of energy. The majority of agriculture is by smallholders, with women responsible for 70% of food production. Food security remains a significant challenge; in the 2020 IHS 63.5% of households felt they had inadequate food in the last 30 days, and 33.7% of children under-five suffered from chronic malnutrition (stunting). Due to climate change, it is estimated that maize-based food systems may experience yield losses of 18–22% by 2050.

We will take a comprehensive approach to strengthen food, nutrition and income security through helping to **develop stronger pro-poor rural enterprises, value chains and markets**. This will involve further collaboration with CUMO to stimulate rural entrepreneurship, savings and lending, and the development of small and medium enterprises, through improving peoples' functional and financial literacy, enhancing access to information and technology. We will encourage households to **diversify their livelihood options, both on- and off farm**, as a platform for growth and support markets and value chains to sustain this.

Working with the private sector and government, we will **promote diversified agricultural production, irrigation to enable multi-season cultivation, and diverse, nutritious foods** to reduce malnutrition. We will continue to **enhance access to agricultural inputs**, such as early-maturing, drought-tolerant, and disease-resistant crops, and also support improvements in post-harvest handling, such as preservation and storage to minimise food loss. To adapt to climate change, we will continue to **promote awareness and adoption of sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices**.

### Measurement Indicators for 2021–2025

- Greater food and nutrition security
- Increased incomes and assets
- Increased sustainable land and water use and management
- Increased financial inclusion



## 2. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Healthier Lives

Diarrhoea, malaria, and HIV/AIDS continue to affect a large population of Malawians. Water supply coverage is 67% basic access, but 30% of water points are not functioning at any given time. This highlights that there are issues in the wider WASH sector 'system' that need to be addressed. Only 26% of the population have basic sanitation, and 6% still practise open defecation. Worse still, very few people wash their hands with soap at critical times. These factors are a catalyst for diarrhoeal diseases, which contribute to more than 3,100 under-five child deaths every year.

We will continue to take an integrated approach to tackling the drivers of ill-health, primarily focussing our attention on WASH, malaria, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH), including HIV/AIDS. Using systemic analysis, we will strengthen the capacities and processes of service providers and authorities, to deliver sustainable and inclusive services. A key focus will be to **ensure universal, resilient, inclusive and sustainably managed water and sanitation services and facilities across the districts we work in**. On the demand side, we will strive to increase the **adoption of positive health behaviours** and the **uptake of health products and services** through innovative, sustainable direct support and broad-based behavioural change and communication initiatives.

### Measurement Indicators for 2021–2025

- Increased equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation
- Increased number of sustainably-managed water and sanitation services and facilities
- Better health behaviours and practice in:
  - i. Hygiene and sanitation
  - ii. Nutrition
  - iii. Sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS

## 3. Sustainable Energy



Access to clean and modern energy is critical to sustainable, equitable development in Malawi. Yet only 11% of the population have access to the national grid, which falls to under 1% in rural areas. Households account for 84% of total energy use, and this is provided predominantly by firewood and charcoal. Forests are depleting with a 32% reduction in forest cover in less than 40 years. While the Government recognises these issues, its focus has been on rural electrification through national grid extension. This approach does not deliver to the majority of the population in the short to medium term. It also adds a disproportionate burden on women who are responsible for collecting firewood.

We will support poor and marginalised communities with increased access to sustainable energy as a route to improved service provision, mitigating climate change and promoting wealth creation. Our initiatives contribute towards the Sustainable Energy for All agenda and will continue towards three primary objectives: (1) **Increased access** to sustainable energy (household, institutional and productive); (2) **Enhanced markets for sustainable energy**; and (3) **Innovative, pro-poor deployment of climate finance**.

### Measurement Indicators for 2021–2025

- Increased access to reliable, cleaner sustainable energy
- Enhanced markets for sustainable energy
- Greater productive use of energy for local economic development



## 4. Gender Equality

Malawi has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.565, ranking 142 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index, with women less likely to be food secure, more likely to be classified as living under the national poverty line, and less likely to own land than men. Malawi also features among the 20 countries with the highest incidence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and the prevalence of traditional practices, such as child marriage and sexual initiation rituals has largely remained unchanged over the last 15 years, despite these falling globally (often together with economic development). All of this has been further exacerbated by low levels of citizen activism and poor governance that fails to both properly involve and represent women, and other marginalised groups.

We will support women's **access to resources** to have an equal chance to work their way out of poverty

through addressing the systematic barriers that preclude this. We will support women in their efforts to **take part in decision-making at all levels and promote leadership and participation of women**. We will work with **others to stop violence against women by challenging culturally accepted practices** that treat women as second-class citizens and by supporting shifts in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours among men and women relating to gender equality.

### Measurement Indicators for 2021–2025

- More women empowered through skills acquisition
- Increased female leadership, decision-making power and voice
- Positive shifts in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours relating to gender equality



## 5. Emergency Response

Malawi's largely agricultural-based economy is highly vulnerable to weather-related shocks (cyclones, floods and drought - all experienced during our previous strategy period) and the effects of climate change. This limits Malawi's ability to withstand other shocks, such as pest outbreaks, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Malawi's vulnerability risk index of 6.1 is the 22nd highest globally and the lack of coping capacity index of 6.7 is 'very high'. Even in a year with normal rainfall patterns, the average humanitarian caseload has been 1–2 million. This vulnerability to shocks and stresses undermines development gains and blocks the path out of poverty and towards sustainable development.

We will continue to use our added value in scale and agility to support **the government to respond to shocks and disaster to save lives immediately, protect the gains that have already been registered in our impact areas and reduce vulnerability for affected households**. Throughout all our emergency response work, we will tailor our activities towards meeting the different needs of women and men in a way that promotes equality between them. We will use our capability in working in both development and humanitarian spheres to bridge the gap between humanitarian work and longer-term resilience to end the recurrent cycle of hunger and humanitarian assistance in Malawi through strengthening systems across our other impact areas.

### Measurement Indicators for 2021–2025

- Lives saved and dignity maintained
- Community and district government preparedness strengthened





# How we work: System strengthening

Research and evidence shows that delivery of sustainable services at scale in each of our impact areas requires system strengthening.

This is because food, nutrition, health, energy, and WASH services exist within systems made up of different building blocks: institutions, policy and legislation, finance, regulation and accountability, monitoring, planning, infrastructure, natural resource management, and learning and adaptation. By understanding these and the linkages between them, we can identify weak points and target interventions for greater effect.

Through much of our work to date we have strengthened different aspects of systems, such as supporting the Government of Malawi to map national water point functionality, enabling citizen groups to engage and demand accountability from authorities, and capacity building of District Council staff to develop their strategic investment plans. A **system strengthening approach** requires us to shift our focus from the individual parts to understanding how these parts are organised, interact, and function together to address the challenges to resilient and inclusive service delivery.

UP will not strengthen all parts of a given system ourselves, but we will ensure that all programmes are underpinned by a comprehensive understanding of the system they are part of, through diagnostics by UP or work done by other actors and then we will design programmes that work to improve the overall quality and sustainability of the purpose of that system.

System change is long term and so we will continue to deliver “on-the-ground” work with government and civil society partners as we work with others to strengthen the systems in our impact areas.



# Our Principles

Building upon our capacities and experience, we will ensure that the following three principles underpin all of our work:

## 1. Community focus and integrated programmes

### Building on our past

UP’s multi-sectoral and layered approach provides a key lever towards system strengthening. Our experience shows that the most sustainable and cost-effective interventions are generally those that take an integrated multi-sector approach to effectively address diverse community needs. We see a multiplier effect where the overall outcome of our various interventions is greater than the sum of their parts. UP has always been embedded in the community to ensure we are listening to the people we work with, hence the majority of our vibrant and skilled team of 185 staff are based in nine satellite offices close to the communities we serve, supported by a small head office in Lilongwe. We will continue to take a community-focused participatory approach to programming, because we believe that people should lead their own development and that it is critical to triggering and delivering wider social change. We have had significant success with social accountability to strengthen the voices of communities and create opportunities to hold duty bearers to account.

### 2025 Objective

The problems that people face – such as the lack of clean water, poor health, uncertain livelihoods prospects, reliance on biomass for energy and

gender-based violence– are interrelated. So, we will continue to focus on integrated multi-layered programmes – taking more than one sectoral approach in the same target area – which we know have a practical and meaningful impact on people’s lives. We will build social accountability into more of our work, so that women, men, boy and girls are better able to exercise their rights and influence decision making, and governance systems have increased capacity to respond to their needs. We will ensure all programmes have guidance for effective gender mainstreaming across the programme cycle and we will take advantage of opportunities to transform the social position, power, and agency of women and vulnerable people.

### Achieving this

- Address the diverse priorities of communities through integrating our programmes either through layering of different sectoral projects in the same geographical area or combining impact areas in one programme.
- Build social accountability to promote citizen engagement, to give women and people from other traditionally excluded groups greater visibility and influence and ensure responsiveness of duty bearers to public and individual needs.





## 2. Strategic Partnerships

### Building on our past

Partnerships have been at the heart of how UP understands the world and our role in working for change in Malawi for the past 30 years. We believe that positive, sustainable and equitable change can best be achieved through combining the efforts of communities, civil society partners, Government at all levels, research institutions and the private sector working in partnership to identify and address the root causes and effects of poverty and vulnerability. We have strong experience of such inter-disciplinary working and so will build upon this. The services and practices which UP provides and promotes are long-lasting, primarily because the partnerships co-ordination with community and district engagement undertaken is high. We also broker innovative partnerships to ensure sustainability and scale-up, such as Baker's Gold and through our social enterprise CUMO. Achieving our mission will require us to work even more collaboratively with the government, private sector, communities and other actors.

### 2025 objective

Over the next five years we will capitalise on a wider set of skills and experience, unlock new resources

and mobilise collective action enabling the longer term commitments needed for system strengthening through strategic partnerships. This will include building on the strength of our partnership with government at all levels, integrating CUMO into more of our programmes and explicitly seeking partnerships with local organisations and organisations that showcase women's meaningful participation and influence.

### Achieving this

- Develop and nurture broad-based partnerships, explicitly seeking partnerships with local organisations and organisations that showcase women's meaningful participation. Supporting organizational and institutional capacity strengthening in all our partnerships;
- Working through networks and clusters, we will strengthen connectedness and linkages with other development efforts; increase harmonisation / alignment of sector actors to work together on common problems.

## 3. Impactful Learning and Influence

### Building on our past

Evidence based research and analysis has long guided our work. We have generated evidence from our programmes and shared that widely with our partners and others for influence, for example our leading role in the NCSC has allowed us to influence national policy and regulation, using impactful learning from our long experience of promoting clean cooking. Through our partnerships and by participating in relevant networks, we learnt best practices from the work of others, particularly in areas where we do not have expertise. We will build on this to become a better influencer to increase the impact, scale and sustainability of our work, and that of others.

### 2025 objective

We shall achieve a step change in UP's learning and influence contribution to maximise impact in eliminating poverty. We will systematically take the evidence and lessons learned from communities and civil society and bring them to the national level – effectively sharing and supporting the

institutionalisation of this learning in government and the wider development space. As part of UP internationally, we will share what we have learned with our other country programmes, draw on relevant experience that they have and together bring this into a global development forum. We shall become part of a flow of information and influence that moves in both directions, from communities to district to national to global, and vice versa.

### Achieving this

- Become a learning and knowledge connector: collaborating with other organisations to build learning from our community presence up to the district and then national level and vice-versa.
- Systematically disseminate our learning to influence others.





## Who we work with

We design programmes that support the most marginalized and excluded people, ensuring that they can assert their rights to services, and then meeting this in a responsive and accountable way.

Whilst no one is excluded, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution and our work will be tailored for particular stakeholders, for example, free cleaner cookstoves to Social Cash Transfer beneficiaries, sales to others. This also means that many of those we partner with and train are those more likely to deliver wider change.

A systems approach means that indirectly UP will work at all 'levels' within a system - e.g. community, service authority, service provider, district and national stakeholders and institutions. This will give our work

further reach and influence. In all systems, women play a vital role, so we shall build on UP's gender experience and ensure that our programmes are designed with and for women and take advantage of opportunities to transform harmful gender norms; recognising that gender inequality and gender-based violence are major inhibitors to resilience.



# Where we work

We will continue to focus our work in the central and southern regions of Malawi, as these remain areas of high poverty and vulnerability. The southern region continues to experience the highest incidence of poverty at 56%, with 47.5% in the central region.

Meanwhile, both the southern and the central regions are disaster-prone areas which further exacerbates the vulnerability of the populations living there. Our experience in responding to emergencies means that where we work will be flexible in the face of shocks.

By working to strengthen systems, we will ultimately broaden and deepen the scale of our impact beyond the target communities and build foundations for sustainable change at a national level.

## Some of our existing programming



**Enhancing Agriculture Diversification and Climate Resilience of Smallholder Farmers (AgDiv)**

**Donor:** USAID through Palladium; 2018-2021

**Location:** Dedza, Balaka

**Objective:** Increase the adaptive capacity of 35,000 female and male smallholder farmers to respond to the impact of climate change and improve their nutritional status.



**Rural Energy Access through Social Enterprise and Decentralisation (EASE) project**

**Donor:** University of Strathclyde and Scottish Government; 2018-2023

**Location:** Dedza and Balaka

**Objective:** Address energy poverty in marginalised rural communities by establishing 6 renewable energy supply businesses, reaching 1900 direct project participants and serving a catchment area of 10,000 households.



**Livelihoods Chitetezo Project in Malawi**

**Donor:** Livelihoods Fund; 2020-2030

**Location:** Zomba, Machinga

**Objective:** Provide free cleaner cookstoves to 30,008 Social Cash Transfer Beneficiaries; sell stoves at 'market value' to 31,770 households; repair 287 boreholes in two TAs in Zomba and Machinga



**Accelerating Commercial and Community Energy Supply Sustainability (ACCESS)**

**Donor:** The Embassy of Ireland; 2017-2022

**Location:** Dedza, Machinga, Mzimba South, Nkhotakota

**Objective:** To improve the livelihoods of 44,000 households living in 'energy poverty', by increasing energy access to rural and peri-urban households to meet their cooking and lighting needs.



**Nutrition & Food Security, Enhanced Resilience Programme (FNSP)**

**Donor:** GIZ-BMZ; 2020-2022

**Location:** Dedza

**Objective:** Improved the nutritional status and resilience to food crises of people in Dedza district who are vulnerable to nutrition insecurity, specifically 18,277 children under-two and 11,770 pregnant and lactating women.



**Achieving Sustainable Poverty reduction through Increased inclusive Resilience and Empowerment (ASPIRE)**

**Donor:** The Embassy of Ireland; 2017-2021

**Location:** Dedza

**Objective:** Increase the resilience of 25,000 households and 30 Village Development Committee (VDC) community structures to economic, social, and environmental shocks in TA Kaphuka and TA Chauma, Dedza.



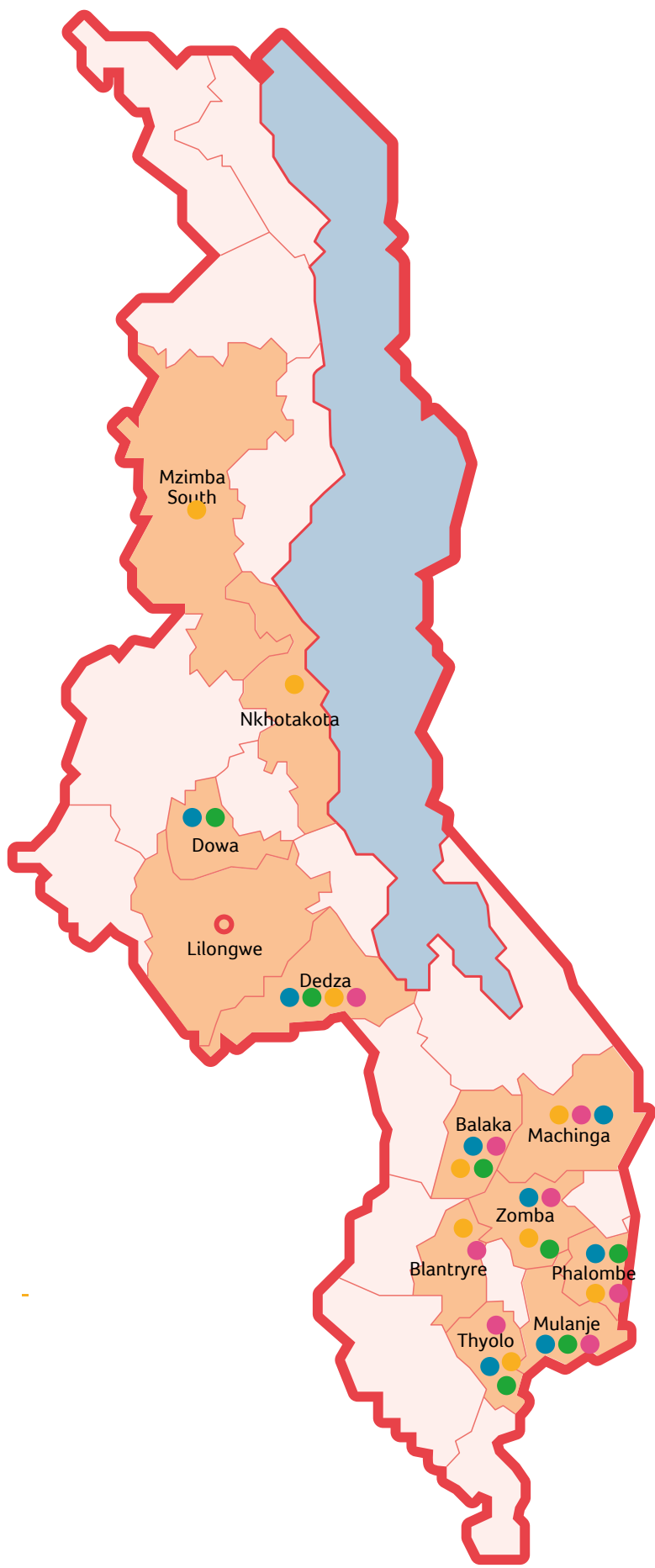
**Dowa Integrated WASH project (DI-WASH)**

**Donor:** Charity: water

**Implementation period:** 2021

**Location:** Dowa

**Objective:** To provide sustained access to safe water and improved and appropriate sanitation and hygiene facilities in 135 villages and 3 schools across 5 TAs in Dowa District reaching 40,106 unique water users and 2,422 school pupils.



**Social Support for Resilience Programme Food and Nutrition for Resilience (SoSuRe FUTURE)**

**Donor:** The European Union; 2021-2023

**Location:** Mulanje and Zomba

**Objective:** To reduce poverty through enhancing resilience among the most vulnerable households in Malawi targeting 68,231 Social Cash Transfer Programme beneficiaries (10% poorest households in Malawi).



**Beyond Boreholes: Strengthening WASH systems for sustainable and inclusive WASH services in Thyolo District**

**Donor:** The One Foundation; 2021

**Location:** Thyolo

**Objective:** To enhance the health and quality of life of tea growers and their communities (58,237 people) living in all 37 villages of TA Khwethemule, Thyolo district, through sustained access to safe water. Applying a WASH systems strengthening approach, the programmes aims to achieve cost-effective impacts across the whole district.



**Energising Development (EnDev)- Commercialisation of the Chitetezo Mbaula - Phase 2**

**Donor:** EnDev-GIZ; 2019-2021

**Location:** Thyolo, Blantyre, Phalombe

**Objective:** Reach Urban and rural households in targeted districts of Southern Malawi with 120,000 improved cookstoves sold.



**Reaching Our Goals**

**Donor:** Comic Relief

**Implementation period:** 2021-2023

**Location:** Dedza

**Objective:** 316 marginalised girls and 40 marginalised boys in Dedza will be supported to complete an accelerated learning programme and transition into mainstream education, vocational training, or employment using the power of sport.

Key:

Resilient Livelihoods

WASH and Healthier Lives

Sustainable Energy

Gender Equality



# Underpinning our Strategy: Our Operational Objectives

Our ability to successfully implement this Strategy over the next five years depends on a strong organisation. We recognise that elements of this strategy entail a change in how we will operate. Accordingly we need to continually invest in our people, communications and systems to ensure we are equipped to realise this change. Our values of integrity, dignity and respect, not only shape what we do, but how we do it and thus guide the following three operational objectives.

## 1. Nurturing our Team and Culture

Our Strategy depends on valuing our team of talented individuals. Our system strengthening approach will require our entire team to move ‘beyond the comfort zone’ of the community level, to work in more partnerships, at higher ‘levels’ of the system. Over the next five years we are committing to professional development in key focus areas: systems strengthening, gender and social inclusion, and social accountability. We will also communicate with and train our team in new ways internally to foster a reflective culture based on learning between projects and strengthen our skillsets to effectively work on systemic issues.



## 2. Impactful Revenue and Reputation

The development sector is rapidly changing, making reliance on traditional sources of revenue riskier and requiring innovation to diversify. Through strategic partnerships,



we aim to broker long-term partnerships to unlock new resources and mobilise collective action enabling the longer term commitments required for system strengthening. Our reputation is paramount to our success in both these areas. We must ensure that our actions and our communication are consistent with our values so as to consistently deliver quality work that continues to strengthen UP as a partner of choice. Our external communication strategy will build our reputation across all impact areas.

## 3. Strengthened Systems, Processes and Standards

Our systems, processes and standards must grow in the sophistication required by our new strategy. Over the next five years, we will further strengthen our systems for finance, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL), IT, procurement, communications, risk management and Human Resources. We will prioritise the use of technology in the delivery of internal services to be efficient and reduce our impact on the environment. All of this will be underpinned by standards that create more coherence for our team and partners by clearly defining processes and interfaces, and prioritising an internal control environment that promotes transparency and mutual accountability.





# What shapes us

## Our Impact 2017-20

We are proud of the results achieved against the four programme pillars of our last strategy:

**2,044,600**  
direct project participants



## Livelihoods and Food Security

- **363,550 people** increased their cash income
- **392,913 people** increased their yields
- **473,614 people** with a decrease in 'hungry months'
- **126,284 people** established or strengthened their businesses
- **222,927 people** were provided with micro-finance services
- **296 Village Civil Protection Committees** developed preparedness plans
- **53,44,891 hectares** under catchment conservation
- **4,536,632 trees** were planted and communities were trained to manage them
- **23,438 households** used at least three types of climate change and Disaster Risk Reduction strategies
- **250,316 people** have an increased understanding of environmental issues
- **7,215 people/CSOs** were in dialogue with local government on issues affecting livelihoods
- **1,094 advocacy** (lobbying) actions were led by communities
- **693,840 people** supported with Humanitarian Assistance
- **925,756 people** supported with emergency relief (including emergency cash/food distribution) or helped to prepare for disasters (e.g. contingency planning)

→ To adapt and expand the success of CUMO's Entrepreneurship Training Centre (CETC) so it could be delivered to a wider audience in 2020, CUMO transitioned from the mobile training on wheels delivery model to a virtual one. The new virtual entrepreneurship training system responds to the strong interest expressed by CUMO's 64,000 clients and is tailored to the specific needs of rural communities.

→ CUMO's repayment rate for its loan products continues to average at 99.8% per annum with its clients successfully starting or expanding their businesses. Since 2017, CUMO has disbursed over £14.7m in loans and has facilitated over £3.9m in client savings.

→ We strengthened social accountability and transparency systems in Dedza district leading to the first ever public hearing being held in June 2019 after successfully lobbying and negotiating with district council officials. As a result of the hearing, the authorities allocated funding for 2019/2020 financial year to complete Dedza District Hospital Mortuary and Kapalamula School block.



## WASH and Healthier Lives

- **638,331 people** have access to safe water
- **101,575 households** using insecticide-treated net (ITNs)
- **79,964 people** received HIV Testing and Counselling
- **27,234 school children** have access to safe water points
- **52,250 school children** have access to a single sex latrine
- **564,329 people** received primary healthcare support
- **200,000 people** in 9 affected districts were supported with emergency WASH supplies after Cyclone Idai
- **2,759,209 people** in 13 districts were reached through our COVID-19 WASH Response
- UP is a successful champion of **Open Defecation Free (ODF)** status.



→ UP is a successful champion of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. Through our use of the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, UP has supported 2,726 villages to be declared ODF which represents 22% of Malawi's national ODF achievement (MoH).

→ Our nutrition programme has successfully facilitated the creation and training of 2,009 care groups in Balaka and Dedza districts. An external evaluation of the Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) project showed that over the project's six-year lifespan, impressive progress has been made surpassing national achievements and reversing national trend.

→ We were the first organisation in Malawi to apply an innovative financing approach for carbon-financed maintenance of rural water points. 940,706 carbon credits have generated reinvestment for borehole sustainability funds.

→ Supporting the National Taskforce, we played a key role in the implementation of the mWater National Evaluation of WASH assets across Malawi. UP has overseen 157,439 surveys in 18 districts of Malawi mapping water and sanitation assets. The mapping and condition data is captured in digital form to allow better targeting of future investment and support evidence-based and equitable SDG-aligned District and National WASH plans.

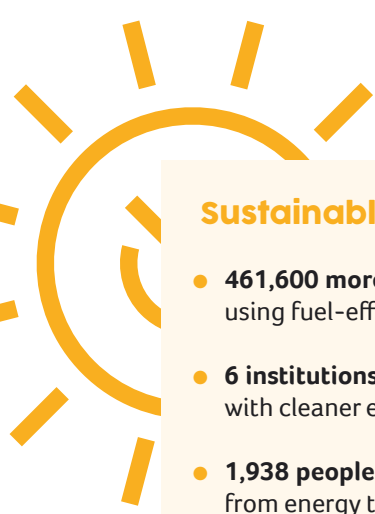
→ A mid-term evaluation of our DIVERSIFY project, showed a remarkable 378% gross income increase among target farmers and reduction in hunger months from 3.9 to 2.4. Average Orange-Fleshed Sweet Potatoes (OFSP) yields have grown from 1.17 t/ha to 7.17.

→ An external evaluation of our ASPIRE programme found that the proportion of households with energy food reserves in critical months from December to March has increased from 49.2% to 60.7%. And those households growing two or more crops in addition to maize have more than doubled to 74.4%.

→ The 2020 survey of the EU funded Pro-ACT FUTURE project led by UP revealed that 47% of the respondent households produced enough food lasting 6-8 months in a year compared to only 20% of the households producing enough for the same 6-8 months period at baseline.

→ UP takes a holistic approach, integrating WASH into other initiatives wherever possible. UP has found that behaviour change is key to sustained improved health, so we always accompany WASH projects with supporting sanitation and hygiene interventions. We developed an innovative school-based 'Shasha Whatanzi' ('Hygiene Heroes') toolkit which uses games to train children to become knowledge champions and leaders in hygiene behaviour change. These learning games and participatory activities have been tested and proven to educate children about the transmission and prevention of waterborne diseases in a child-friendly, fun way.





## Sustainable Energy

- **461,600 more people** are now using fuel-efficient stoves
- **6 institutions** were supported with cleaner energy
- **1,938 people** earned income from energy technologies
- We are the **first organisation** in Malawi to implement rural community carbon reinvestment – so far, **940,706 carbon credits** have generated reinvestment for borehole sustainability funds.



- **339,749 Cleaner Cooking Stoves** were produced
- **£262,134 total sales** from energy technologies

→ UP installed a solar PV micro-grid, which is currently providing electricity to 40 households, 18 small businesses, a church and a school in GVH Mthembanji, Dedza district.

→ Through UP's leadership as a key member of the National Cookstove Steering Committee (NCSC), Malawi has reached its goal of 2 million improved cookstoves by 2020, generating income of over \$1.3 million for production groups, saving 5.4 million tonnes of wood and reducing 8.1 million tonnes of carbon emissions. UP

has contributed 500,000 clean cookstoves towards the target.

→ Our innovative integration of improved cookstoves into the Social Cash Transfer Programme has reached 165,118 ultra-poor households with free modern cooking access across 15 districts in Malawi. A recent IIED policy brief subsequently recommended that 'humanitarian funding can offer critical support to households while also developing cookstove markets. The Malawian government, along with the World Food Programme and UN High

Commissioner for Refugees should establish humanitarian packages that include local cookstove enterprises.'

→ Under the ACCESS programme, UP has trained 961 pupils from 8 primary schools in Dedza using our Forest Champions training guide. The training sessions cover: the negative impacts of the three-stone fire for the environment and the health of those using it, mainly women and girls, as well as the benefits of using energy-efficient cookstoves.

is fully owned and led by the Government structures.

→ A learning paper on how to use netball to empower girls and engage boys in gender equality in rural areas was developed by UP to serve as an implementation guide and be of practical help to practitioners, including other organizations working to promote gender equality through sport as well as UP staff.

→ UP adopted the Gender Household Approach and developed adapted Household Approach training manual and facilitators' guide. This approach is an extension approach that was developed by the gender section under the Ministry of Agriculture and it promotes power relations among adult and youth household members in order to promote equitable access to and control over resources, assets and benefits.

## Gender Equality



→ Our DIVERSIFY project established 26 STAR Circles in Thyolo, Chiradzulu and Balaka to enable community level discussions on social issues and human rights. In 2020, the STAR circles in Thyolo supported four girls who were forced into child marriages. As a result, the marriages were dissolved and the girls went back to school.

→ Harnessing the power of netball, UP's pilot Sport for development project uses sport to empower girls and engage boys in gender equality in rural Dedza. 56% of the girls (155 of 275 girls) demonstrated an increase in their self-worth. 87% of girls (242 of 275) have increased their leadership skills and 79% of parents (218 of 275) have increased knowledge of gender issues and improved attitudes around gender equity.

→ Under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and in coordination with the British Council, we spearheaded initial meetings on the development of an SFC Technical Working Group (TWG), which is currently developing TORs and work plans to create a platform where actors share learning in using sport to engage and support women and girls. UP will continue this engagement to ensure the TWG

## Success stories

### Pro-Resilience Action (Pro-ACT) 2017-2020

- 33,797 (75% women) direct project participants
- EU Funded

These are the success stories that shaped us and inspired us to set more ambitious goals for the next five years.

## Pro-Resilience Action (PRO-ACT)

Pro-ACT FUTURE worked with 33,797 Social Cash Transfer (SCT) most vulnerable households (75% female-headed) in Mulanje, Zomba and Nsanje. To build greater resilience, the project targeted participants with multiple interventions, including Livestock production, Irrigation, Village Savings and Loans (VSLs) groups, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Natural Resources Management (NRM), Crop Diversification, Nutrition, Cash Top-Ups and Adult Literacy. Households were encouraged to take up a combination of at least three interventions.

The Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) survey conducted by the European Union in March 2020 concluded that "the fact that SCT beneficiaries simultaneously join extension groups and VSL associations proved to be very successful, as loans or savings are often used to buy inputs, assets (goats) or to start a small business." The ROM report also found that the promotion of VSL schemes and the adult literacy activities significantly contributed to women's increased access to and control over resources at household level as most of beneficiaries of these two activities are women. Furthermore, livestock has

proved to be a successful fall-back mechanism when a household experiences a climatic or any other shock (Pro-ACT research study report June 2020).

Building on the foundations laid by Pro-ACT, in February 2021 UP started the implementation of the European Union-funded Social Support for Resilience Programme (SoSuRe) which will continue to build the resilience of people in the NSSP, to bring people into the programme and successfully exit people from the programme ensuring that they have the tools and support to transition from dependence on the Government of Malawi's financial support to sustain their own livelihoods. Guided by the NSSP, the SoSuRe programme will demonstrate how "cash +" interventions can be built into the NSSP and will demonstrate that with the right approaches tailored to the needs of individuals we can break a protracted cycle of food and nutrition insecurity in Malawi.

We have learned from many of our projects, such as Pro-ACT, that such **integrated programming** offers households greater adaptive flexibility and strengthens their resilience.







#### Developing Integrated Value chains to Enhance Rural Smallholders' Incomes and Food Security Year round (DIVERSIFY) project 2016-2021

- 4,102 (58% women) direct project participants
- EU and Australian Aid funded

## Baker's Gold

In 2017, with funding from the EU and the Australian government through Action on Poverty, UP started implementing the Developing Integrated Value chains to Enhance Rural Smallholders' Incomes and Food Security Year round (DIVERSIFY) project. DIVERSIFY is a pioneering demand-driven value chain development project focusing on orange-fleshed sweet potato (OFSP) and pigeon peas (PPs), targeting 4,102 smallholder farmers (58% women) in Balaka, Thyolo and Chiradzulu districts.

This project blends different skills, knowledge and expertise to form a unique NGO-research-technical advisory-private partnership. It combines UP's 25 years' experience of developing smallholder agriculture in Malawi; the International Potato Centre's (CIP) technical expertise crop research and production; market analysis and value chain development expertise from Imani Development; with the end-market opportunities of the Mothers Holding Company, the largest player in the Malawi baking industry.

Together, in September 2019, we launched Baker's Gold, a bio-fortified OFSP-based bread. The OFSP are sourced locally from around 3,000 smallholder farmers supported by United Purpose. While this type of product has been demonstrated at small-scale in other countries, this is the first time globally that this has been attempted at such scale – as UP is working with the largest baker in the country to make a truly mass market product. The OFSP bread provides

farmers with an assured market for their produce, and at the same time reduces the bakers' costs and reliance on expensive imports. This represents a 'win-win' situation for both smallholders and processing companies. Consumers also benefit as the bio-fortified bread is high in vitamins A, C, E, K and other healthy micronutrients.

A mid-term evaluation of our DIVERSIFY project in November 2019, showed a remarkable 378% gross income increase among target farmers and reduction in hunger months from 3.9 to 2.4. OFSP yields have grown from 1.17 t/ha to 7.17.

**This project taught us that achievements at scale are often the result of a strategic partnership.** In the face of the ever more complex development challenges in Malawi, no single organisation can address all systemic weaknesses across all sectors and at all levels.



#### National Cookstove Steering Committee

- More than 2,032,526 improved stoves
- At least \$1.34 million in income for stove producers and retailers
- Wood saving of 5.4 million tonnes,
- Reduction in carbon emissions of 8.1 million tonnes
- Income generating opportunities for 4,780 people

## The National Cookstove Steering Committee (NCSC)

UP has been supporting the community production and social marketing of cleaner cooking stoves since 2008, promoting, in particular, the adoption of Chitetezo Mbula, a locally made ceramic fuel-efficient cookstove which reduces fuelwood usage by 40 to 60%. In rural areas of Malawi there is usually no access to electricity. Actually, only 2% of the rural areas are connected to the national electricity grid. Hence, people rely on biomass, mostly firewood, for their cooking needs. The traditional three-stone fire, which is energy inefficient, is predominantly used for cooking. The use of biomass as an energy source not only drives deforestation and contributes to climate change but is also detrimental to human health and associates with respiratory diseases due to smoke exposure. In addition, this traditional way of cooking is a very time-consuming work for women and girls.

In 2012, concerned by the negative impacts of traditional cooking on women and girls, the Ministry of Disability, Gender and Social Welfare signed on as a partner to the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves (GACC). The GACC aimed to reach 100 million households with improved cookstoves by 2020 and the Government of Malawi (GoM) pledged a target of two million stoves towards this. From this pledge, the National Cookstove Taskforce was established in 2013, which later became the National Cookstove Steering Committee (NCSC).

Chaired by the Ministry of Energy, the NCSC is a multi-stakeholder partnership with over 100 members spanning Government, academia, donors, private sector, civil society organisations and NGOs. The NCSC took ownership of the two million stoves by

2020 target and is advocating nationally for cleaner cooking. With funding from the Embassy of Ireland, most recently under the ACCESS project, UP has served as the NCSC Secretariat and has taken a leading role in guiding the work towards the target.

Along the road to achieving the 2 million by 2020 goal, the NCSC has significantly increased awareness about cleaner cooking in Malawi through national campaigns. It has also played a central role in shaping policy and regulations, such as the National Energy Policy, the Malawi Renewable Energy Strategy, the National Charcoal Strategy, the national cookstove standards and the removal of VAT and Duty on some cooking technologies and fuels. Through the annual Cleaner Cooking Camp, the NCSC convenes national and regional stakeholders to share lessons and build capacity around cleaner cooking.

In total, more than 2,032,526 improved stoves have reached Malawian households resulting in at least \$1.34 million in income for stove producers and retailers, a wood saving of 5.4 million tonnes, reduction in carbon emissions of 8.1 million tonnes, as well as income generating opportunities for 4,780 people. UP's work directly contributed 25% of the target, through **integrating** stoves with livelihoods, nutrition and social protection programmes. While achieving the national target would not have been possible without the **strategic partnership** of the NCSC. Our leading role in the NCSC has allowed us to influence national policy and regulation, using **impactful learning** from our long experience of promoting clean cooking.



We would like to thank our current supporters and partners.



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Charity registration number: 272265. In Malawi, United Purpose's legal status is governed by an agreement between the Government of Malawi and Concern Universal United Kingdom dated 18 December 1989. It is registered to operate under the NGO Board and is a member of the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA).