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| **SDGS HOTSPOTS ACCELERATION INITIATIVE IN MALAWI** |
| **Final Mid-Term Evaluation Report** |
| Submitted to UNDP Malawi |
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# ACRONYMS

ADC - Area District Council

AP - Action Plan

AWP - Annual Work Plan

CBMNH - Community Based Maternal and Neonatal Health

CCA - Common Country Analysis

CPD - Country Programme Document

CRS - Catholic Relief Service

CSO - Civil Society Organization

DAC - Development Assistance Committee

DAI - Development Alternatives Inc.

DC - District Council

DEC - District Executive Committee

DDP - District Development Plan

DDPS - District Development Plan System

DfiD - Department for International Development

DMECC - District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinating Committee

ED&P - Ministry of Economic Development and Planning

FAO - Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations

FBO - Faith Based Organizations

FCDO - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

GESD - Governance to Enable Service Delivery

GESI - Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

GBV - Gender Based Violence

GEWE - Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

GIS - Geographic Information System

GVH - Group Village Headman

GWAN - Government Wide Area Network

IEO - Independent Evaluation Office

IMCI - Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses

LAC - Latin America and the Caribbean

LAMIS - Local Authorities Monitoring Information System

LGAP - Local Government Accountability and Performance

MDA - Ministries, Departments and Agencies

MEAG - M & E Advisory Group

MGDS III - Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III

MoJ - Ministry of Justice

MoLGRD - Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

MoU - Memorandum of Understanding

MPI - Multi-dimensional Poverty Index

MTE - Mid-Term Evaluation

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

NPC - National Planning Commission

NSO - National Statistics Office

NSS - National Statistical System

OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PPE - Personal Protective Equipment

PRODOC - Project Document

PROSPER - Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience

PWD - Persons with Disabilities

RBLAC - Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean

RCO - Resident Coordinator’s Office

RFMS - Rapid Feedback Monitoring System

RICE - Responsive Institutions and Citizen Engagement

RRF - Results and Resources Framework

RSG - Resilience and Sustainable Growth

SDG - Sustainable Development Goal

SDNP - Sustainable Development Network Programme

SEP - Socio-Economic Profile

SHAI - SDG Hotspots Acceleration Initiative

SMART - Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound

SP - Strategic Plan

TA - Traditional Authority

TOC - Theory of Change

ToR - Terms of Reference

TWG - Technical Working Group

UBR - Unified Beneficiary Registry

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNEG - United Nations Evaluation Group

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

VAP - Village Action Plan

VDC - Village Development Committee

WB - World Bank

WFP - UN World Food Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Project Description

The project “Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Hotspots Acceleration Initiative (“SHAI”), which is also known as the Hotspots Initiative, has established the SDG Hotspots Data Management Platform, an integrated data management tool, designed to improve decentralized implementation of services across social, economic and environmental sectors. The approach involves a real-time data dashboard, a multi-stakeholder platform and a coordinated target “SDG Hotspots service response”. The initiative was formally adopted as a project and began implementation in January 2020 and runs to December 2023. The project is funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Irish Aid, and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the Government of the United Kingdom through Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience (PROSPER) programme and is being implemented by UNDP in Malawi, with the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD).

The project aims to achieve four main expected results: the SDG Hotspots Management System is implemented (data is available); District Council establishes an effective coordination platform and implements integrated and inclusive multi-sectoral approach to district planning and delivery of services (local government planning and service provisions improve); District-level data and management capabilities are strengthened; and District authorities are able to design and deliver integrated, inclusive multi-sectoral SDG Hotspots service responses.

The project results will be achieved through the following outputs:

**Output 1:** Functional SDGs management platform

**Output 2:** Selected District Councils ae enabled to develop and manage evidence-based, gender-responsive policy planning, monitoring and evaluations systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results

**Output 3:** Citizen categories (women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWD)) in selected districts have improved public services for the achievement of Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) outcomes including SDGs

**Output 4:** Project is effectively managed

## 1.2 Context and Purpose of the Evaluation

The mid-term evaluation has been carried out in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Evaluation Norms and Standards of Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Standards, UNEG Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming, UNDP Evaluation Guides June 2021 Update, as well as the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria.: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. The review also included an evaluation of the partnership strategy. Two additional dimensions that cut across key considerations, gender and social inclusion were also assessed.

The purpose of the MTE is to:

* Assess achievements and challenges at mid-point
* Recommend corrective actions to achieve stated outcomes
* Consider sustainability issues

The MTE will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and output as specified in the Project Document and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTE will also review the project’s strategy and its risks to sustainability. The MTE will focus on the following:

* Assess the level of achievement of key indicators
* Meeting the challenges
* Drawing the lessons learned during the implementation
* Propose the recommendations for the rest of the period of implementation

The evaluation process included the desk review of the project documents, site visits and interviews with persons involved in the project. Based on the assessment, the evaluation report makes recommendations possible changes to be implemented during the second half of the project to help achieve the desire outputs. The project development and effectiveness were evaluated using the indicators establish in the project’s logical framework matrix and the corresponding means of verification.

## 1.3 Findings and Conclusions

At this mid-term point of the project implementation, it can be concluded that the project has been correctly executed and will most likely achieve its expected outputs. The evaluation concludes that the **overall project achievement is satisfactory.**

* The **project concept/design, relevance and strategy are highly satisfactory.**  The project design was clearly elaborated, and the project interventions are fully aligned with the MoLGRD decentralization policy and the broader national development priorities, policies and plans of Malawi which includes the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III, Malawi Vision 2063 and the SDGs. The project also builds on UNDP’s technical and financial expertise and added value as a multilateral agency. The project also builds on strong partnerships of UNDP with the Government of Malawi.
* Having reviewed all the elements of the project implementation and financial management, the **project efficiency is rated highly satisfactory.** Project management has been extremely adaptive and strategic and has been carried out in a highly satisfactory manner, fulfilling UNDP project guidelines, utilizing the requisite monitoring and evaluation plans, as well as periodic risk management evaluations.
* Total resources required for the project amount to USD $7,131,000. Actual budget for the period from January 2020 to December 2020 was $1,095,027 and the project achieved 100% budget utilization in 2020. There was no variance between activity projected costs against actual costs. There has been no overspending on the project.
* Of the USD $7,131,000 proposed budget, at present only USD $2,516,000 has been resourced, the majority of which has come from UNDP internal funding.
* Resources have been allocated and reallocated strategically to achieve outputs.
* Project implementation strategy and approaches, conceptual framework and execution have been adaptive, efficient, and cost-effective.
* Project management structure evolved with the departure of the original Project Manager. In lieu of recruiting a new individual for the position, one of the members of the project team was promoted to the position of Project Manager and the funds were repurposed and allocated into service delivery
* Recruitment of a Field Manager for close collaboration with local authorities has proven to be very successful
* The first output has been essentially completed. The Council Data system for Phalombe and Nsanje Districts is fully operational with about 98% of the system functions completed. The system is to be officially launched online in Q3. The second and thirds outputs are substantially completed or in progress of being completed and the work for their completion has been planned for the remainder of the project. The project **effectiveness** at the project mid-term point is rated **satisfactory.**
* At this mid-term stage, it **may be too early to assess the sustainability** of the project’s interventions and benefits as project interventions are still in progress
* The project is aligned to existing structures; it is district focused; recognizes a bottom-up approach; it is people centered; it empowers District Councils; it is participatory; and it is in line with the focus on decentralization and community involvement.
* The way data is being collected is not scalable and will not be sustainable. Hotspot’s initiative must leverage other data sources, or it will not be sustainable.
* Financial risks to sustainability remain one of the main barriers to sustainability
* To be sustainable it must inform services that have a government budget. The Hotspots initiative needs to have linkages with other government institutions.
* The project **sustainability** at the project mid-term point is rated **unsatisfactory.**

## 1.4 Gender Equality

* There was not much emphasis on gender mainstreaming in the project document and gender marker data was not assigned to the outputs and indicators
* The project document does make cursory reference to several gender issues
* To a reasonable extent gender was addressed in the implementation of the project
* In partnership with UN’s Spotlight Initiative, the project team was technically assisted to include GBV indicators into some of the survey tools
* Members of District Councils that did not appear to be aware or have knowledge of what a gender responsive policy was or entailed
* Project team also appears to lack an understanding of how gender mainstreaming is to be implemented in different ways depending on the organizational level and activity

## 1.5 Social Inclusion

* The overall aim of the Hotspots initiative is to bring positive changes to the lives of marginalized and vulnerable populations, leaving no one behind, by tackling the hardest exclusions by gender, race, ethnicity, or geographic exclusion
* The project pays attention to the effects on marginalized, vulnerable, and hard to reach groups as evidenced by the survey tools for the hotspots assessment that build in some questions on special and vulnerable groups
* The 2021 AWP also includes actions to improve survey tools for gender and disability responsive HH service availability access and impact

## 1.6 Partnership Strategy

* While there was no official partnership strategy, at the end of 2020, a total of 15 partnerships have been established but not all of them are actively working with the project
* Main partners are those that sit on the Steering Committee: MoLGRD; NSO; Irish Aid; FCDO; Phalombe District Council and Nsanje District Councils
* To a large extent, the partnership modalities were conducive to delivery of outputs. UNDP and government partners have worked complementarily with UNDP providing technical backstopping to government particularly with MoLGRD and NSO
* There are also complementarities with existing partner programmes. Of note is the FAO indicator mapping and LAMIS project
* Project team exploring working with other partners that could potentially have data system or data sets that can complement the Hotspots initiative

## 1.7 Recommendations

Based upon the detailed analysis from the evaluation exercise, the following are the main Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) recommendations:

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| **No.** | **Recommendation** | **Responsibilities** |
| 1. | Availability and access to adequate funding remains one of the main barriers to sustainability, replicability and scaling up of project interventions. Due to the limited financial resources of the Government of Malawi and the District Councils, external financial support is required to fully implement the project and scale it up.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. UNDP along with partners should develop a robust resource mobilization strategy to generate further external financial resources to replicate and scale up the project in other districts; and 2. The RCO in partnership with Irish Aid should coordinate a meeting of the donor community to discuss the success of the project and seek additional resources. It may also be time for donors to re-conceptualize sustainability beyond the government’s financial contribution. Focus should be on the ownership of the project at all levels, including the village, district and national level given the context in Malawi. 3. Government of Malawi should also focus on domestic resource mobilization both at the national and district levels. | UNDP, MoLGRD, RCO,  Irish Aid |
| 2. | UNDP, in partnership with the NSO, has drafted minimum data standards to inform data collection to enable the matching of different datasets/sources for the District Councils in Phalombe and Nsanje. Different data producers will use difference codes as unique identifiers making it difficult for future system integration.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. UNDP continue its work with the District Councils and MoLGRD to define and strengthen the data that goes through the sector portals. 2. In consultation with NSO and the MoLGRD, the District Councils proceed on a timely basis to adopt the minimum data standards or revise and adopt different minimum data standards and use those standardized codes to improve data quality and enhance integration of different data sources; and 3. Data standards/standardized codes that have been developed and approved should be enforced by DCs. | UNDP, MoLGRD, Sectors, NSO, District Councils |
| 3. | Service providers are not forthcoming to share data as, inter alia, there is a lack of data sharing protocols being enforced by District Councils.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. UNDP encourage the RCO play a greater role in encouraging UN agencies and the larger development community to share data and provide input to the Hotspots System. 2. MoLGRD play a greater role in encouraging service providers to execute the data sharing protocols. 3. MoLGRD needs to provide guidance to District Councils to facilitate effective implementation of the MoU; and 4. District Councils should also be responsible for enforcing the implementation of the MoU with service providers and report any non-compliance to the DEC and the DMECC. | UNDP, RCO, MoLGRD, District Councils, DEC, DMECC |
| 4. | One of the key elements of the Hotspots Management Platform is the multi-stakeholder platform which is to be led to by local planning authorities to propel service improvements and coordinated action on the SDGs. The platform was to be built on top of the already established structure of the DMECCs as designated by the District Councils. UNDP has produced ToR to focus on coordination, design, financing, and delivery of all hotspot service responses at district. To-date the ToR has not been approved and the process of strengthening the DMECC has not yet started.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The MoLGRD in consultation with the District Councils determine the bottleneck in the approval process of the ToR for the revised DMECC. 2. Revise the ToR for the DMECC, if necessary. 3. Explore an alternative established structure within the District Council to serve as the multi-stakeholder platform. 4. Explore revising the ToR of the TWG (sector heads) of the DEC to include the coordination, design, financing, and delivery of all hotspot service responses at district. | MoLGRD, District Councils,  DEC, TWG, UNDP |
| 5. | One of the benefits of digitizing VAPs and using the VAP app by the VDC is to enable the VDC to update the VAP three times a year (not once every 5 years) by placing the tablets with the VDC. However, the tablets have been removed to the District Council pending use by the VDCs every 5 years. There appears to be a lack of understanding of all the attributes that the digital VAPs bring to local planning by both the VDCs and the District Councils.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The project team, in conjunction with NSO and MoLGRD, initially assist the VDCs in updating the VAPs regularly, and determine how often the VAP should be updated (e.g., three times a year or annually, or as otherwise determined). 2. The project capacitates the VDCs and District Councils on the use and attributes of digital VAPs, including the preparation of manuals and the provision of training. | UNDP, MoLGRD, NSO, District Council, VDCs |
| 6. | The Hotspots initiative is part of UNDP’s contribution to the Joint UN programme on data and is being implemented in alignment with other UN partners in Malawi. The UNCT has formed the UN Data Group in Malawi to lead in, inter alia, the identification of areas for joint programming through existing project and programmes and development of a joint programme to promote the integration of data management and strengthen the culture of the use of data in decision makings in all sectors. The Data Group is in the process of organizing a Data Summit which will take place in Q4 of 2021.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The Hotspots initiative be showcased at the Data Summit as a key presenter. 2. The project team utilize the Data Summit to build synergies and complementarities with other projects and potential partners | RCO, Data Group, UNDP, MoLGRD |
| 7. | There are several other management information systems (MIS) being developed in Malawi by other UN agencies (e.g., FAO) and development partners (e.g., LAMIS, RFMS) as well as service delivery programmes in Malawi (e.g., GESD).  Therefore, it is recommended:   1. A mapping of the other MIS and data sources be undertaken. 2. An interface meeting be held to assess the other MISs and data sources currently being developed in Malawi. 3. A mapping of service delivery programmes be undertaken; and 4. An interface meeting be held with other service delivery programmes that have being established   for the purpose of determining complementarities or overlaps with existing programmes. | UNDP, USAID, CRS, WB |
| 8. | A key function of sustainability as the project moves to scaling up is ensuring that the governance and institutional framework is in place. The management tool will only be sustained if the dashboard becomes part of the normal activities of government.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The project examines linkages with other government planning and service delivery systems throughout the entire government, and not just the MoLGRD and DCs, that already have a government budget for data collection, service delivery, e.g., EP & D, NPC 2. In consultation with the MoLGRD, UNDP should undertake the development of a detailed skills transfer strategy. 3. The project invests in strengthening the local systems of government to enable it to embrace the Hotspots’ initiative as the main tool for project decision making and funding. | UNDP, MoLGRD, District Councils, DEC, TWGs, VDCs,  EP & D, NPC |
| 9. | There was not much emphasis on mainstreaming of cross-cutting themes in the project document, e.g. gender mainstreaming and social inclusion.  Therefore, it is recommended as follows:   1. Organize gender mainstreaming workshops for various stakeholders, including the project team, MoLGRD, District Councils, VDCs, TWGs of the DECs, DEC, DMECC, the objective of which is to consult, analyze, reflect, and validate gender mainstreaming strategies and activities for the project and review and implement existing gender mainstreaming guidelines. 2. Future projects of this kind should duly incorporate all cross-cutting themes in the project design at the time of the project formulation. The project design should include relevant cross-cutting indicators, targets, interventions, and gender markers across the project results chain. 3. Organize gender mainstreaming workshops for the project team to facilitate further understanding of gender mainstreaming in the project. 4. Work with the MoLGRD to encourage all sectors to approve minimum gender and social welfare service data requirements to produce SEPs and DDPs. 5. MoLGRD to ensure the current gender guidelines are being implemented at both the national and district level; and 6. Ensure that the Platform integrates the principle of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in future data collection, analysis, and support to local government administrations | UNDP, UN Spotlight Initiative, MoLGRD, District Councils, VDCs, DEC, TWG, DMECC |

# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the Mid-Term Project Evaluation (MTE) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Hotspots Acceleration Initiative (“SHAI”), which is also known as the Hotspots initiative, is to provide insights and feedback on the progress of the project to-date. SDG hotspots are defined as “geographic territories, cities, or regions where multiple SDG gaps intersect, in areas as small as rural communities or parishes, and as large as ecosystems or entire metropolitan districts. The geographic focus is to direct attention to territorially-based development problems that often face weak implementation capabilities, weak data and weak sources of financing.”[[1]](#footnote-1) As the project is aiming to go to scale, the proposal to proceed with scaling up of the project needs to be based on evidence-based results and findings. The best way to get those results is through an evaluation.

The purpose of the MTE is as follows:

* Assess achievements and challenges at mid-point
* Recommend corrective actions to achieve stated outcomes
* Consider sustainability issues

The MTE will assess progress towards the achievement of the project objectives and outputs as specified in the Project Document (PRODOC) and assess early signs of project success or failure with the goal of identifying the necessary changes to be made to set the project on-track to achieve its intended results. The MTE will also review the project’s strategy and its risks to sustainability. The MTE will focus on the following:

* Assess the level of achievement of key indicators
* Meeting the challenges
* Drawing the lessons learned during the implementation
* Propose the recommendations for the rest of the period of implementation

The evaluation is both forward-looking and utilization focused and elaborates lessons and best practices to inform programming as the project uses the lessons learned from the pilot to scale up to additional districts. The evaluation will assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project and of the results, as well as the partnership strategy. The evaluation will assess the intended and unintended outcomes of the SHAI project and recommend strategies for future operational and programmatic effectiveness. The evaluation will also include an assessment of the extent to which programme design, implementation and monitoring have taken the cross-cutting issues of gender and social inclusion into consideration.

The evaluation serves as an important accountability function providing national stakeholders and partners with an impartial assessment of the results.

The initiative was formally adopted as a project and began implementation in January 2020 and runs to December 2023. The project is funded by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Irish Aid and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO[[2]](#footnote-2)) of the Government of the United Kingdom through the Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience (PROPSER) programme and is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD). It also works closely with Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EP&D), National Statistics Office (NSO), National Planning Commission (NPC) and District Councils (DC) and other United Nations (UN) and development partners.

UNDP, Irish Aid, the project partners, including beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project as defined by the project document are the target audience of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE).

## Scope of the Evaluation and Objectives

The mid-term evaluation covers the period of 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2021 and addresses programme design, implementation and monitoring of results. The evaluation focuses on the performance of indicators agreed with the donors.

In addition to assessing the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the SHAI project, the evaluation will explore the key factors that have contributed to the achieving or not achieving of the intended results; determine the extent to which the Hotspots project contributed to building capacities; addressing crosscutting issues of gender and human rights; forging partnerships at different levels, including with government, donors, UN agencies and communities; sustainability of the SHAI project for continued realization of results; and to draw lessons learned and best practices and make recommendations for future programming of projects of a similar nature.

Specific evaluation objectives are to assess:

1. The relevance and strategic positioning of UNDP support to the SHAI project and whether the initial assumptions remain relevant for the project
2. The progress to date under each output and what can be derived in terms of lessons learned for support towards improved integrated data management, stakeholder engagement and local service delivery
3. How the project approach has succeeded to strengthen the delivery of public services to socially vulnerable groups such as women, children and the disabled, by applying a rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming
4. The relevance of the hotspots approach to improving public service delivery and overall contribution to the achievement of SDGs and local development goals
5. Government buy in and “excitement” for the concept and implementation of the project thus far

## Methodology

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Evaluation Norms and Standards of Evaluation, UNEG Ethical Standards, UNEG Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming, UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, as well as the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD)/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria. The review was based on the criteria laid out in the ToR which are provided in Annex 1. Those criteria are closely aligned with the norms developed by OECD and its DAC having regard to six key evaluation criteria that are the basis of the evaluation of development assistance: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, Impact and Sustainability while ascertaining all aspects of project intervention related to, Project Strategy, Progress Towards Results, Project Implementation and Adaptive Management and Sustainability and taking into account the view of all relevant stakeholders. In the case of this review, the ToR did not require either a review based on coherence, or a review based on impact. However, as previously noted, the review included an evaluation of the Partnership Strategy.

Two additional dimensions that cut across key considerations, gender and social inclusion were also assessed.

The evaluation methodology was based on mixed methods and involved the use of commonly applied evaluation tools such as documentary review, interviews, information triangulation, analysis, and synthesis. Evaluation activities were organized according to the following phases: i) planning, ii) data collection; and (iii) data analysis and reporting. The figure below shows the three phases and the main activities under each of them:

The evaluation will be as objective as possible and will include sufficient and convincing empirical evidence. The MTE involved qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate programme implementation and performance and make recommendations for the remainder of the program.

Information obtained through the documentary review and interviewing process was triangulated against available documentary sources, and then synthesized using analytical judgement.

The method of triangulation is shown in the figure below:

**Perceptions of external actors**

**Assessment of project staff**

**Documentation**

**Results**

## Data Collection Methods

The MTE provides evidence based credible and reliable information. Briefing sessions with UNDP and government officials were undertaken. The MTE was carried out through a wide participation of all relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD), Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EP & D), National Statistical Office (NSO), Phalombe District Council, Nsanje District Council, Village Development Committee (VDC) of Group Village Headman (GVH) Gunda, Irish Aid and other UN and development partners.

Data collected was disaggregated by sex, age and location wherever possible.

To use existing sources/information and avoid duplication, data was mainly collected from various information sources through a comprehensive desk review that included the analysis of relevant documents, information, data/statistics, triangulation of different studies, etc.

The following sources of primary data and information were examined:

1. The evaluation reviewed and analyzed all relevant documents, project documents, annual work plans (AWP), monitoring and evaluation plans (M & E). progress reports, assessments, action plans, as well as country development policies and strategies. A complete list of the documents reviewed is found in Annex 3.
2. Face-to-face consultations (interviews) were conducted with a wide range of stakeholders, using “semi-structured interviews” with a key set of questions in a conversational format with partners, donors, stakeholders, and beneficiaries, etc. Triangulation of results, i.e., comparing information from different sources, such as documentation and interview or interviews on the same subject with different stakeholders will be used to corroborate or check the reliability of evidence.

Stakeholders interviewed included individuals from, inter alia, the following:

* Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
* Ministry of Economic Development and Planning
* National Statistics Office
* Phalombe District Council
* Nsanje District Council
* Village District Committee (VDC) of the Group Village Headman (GVH), Gunda
* Irish Aid
* UN Resident Coordinator’s Office
* UNDP
* Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)
* World Food Programme (WFP)
* Catholic Relief Society (CRS)
* Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI)
* World Bank

A detailed list of individuals interviewed is attached as Annex 2.

1. A field visit was undertaken to the District of Phalombe which provided the opportunity to meet with the Village Development Committee (VDC) of Group Village Headman (GVH) Gunda (20 women, 8 men); view the proposed site of the solar irrigation system which had been prioritized because of the local planning process and which UNDP has committed to construct; and meet with members of the District Council of Phalombe (3 men and 1 woman). The following day a meeting was held with the District Commissioner and the Director of District Development Planning (DDP) of the District Council of Nsanje (2 men) in the District of Chikwawa where the members were attending a previously scheduled meeting.

## Data Analysis and Report

In view of the use of mix-method approach for data collection, the acquired data has been analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Since most of the primary data has been acquired in qualitative mode, it was processed using qualitative data analysis techniques like validations, triangulations, interpretations and abstractions. Data collected from review of documents and key informant interviews has been validated and triangulated through comparing data from different sources to identify similarities, contradictions and patterns. Efforts were made to logically interpret opinions and statements, keep in view the specific context of various respondents.

Quantitative data was analyzed using simple statistical methods to determine progress and trends. The Results and Resource Framework was used as the main reference for assessing the progress and performance. Quantitative data related to project outputs and output indicators was analyzed to assess progress towards specified targets. The same was also validated and triangulated with the data obtained from interviews/discussions with key stakeholders.

After detailed analysis of the collected data, the draft MTE report has been prepared and is submitted for review and comments by UNDP and the project team. The report describes in detail the findings of the evaluation exercise including assessment of project design and management, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and cross cutting issues. The report also provides overall conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations. The report will be finalized after duly addressing and incorporating received comments and suggestions.

## Limitations of the Evaluation Exercise

Every effort was made to engage as many key actors, e.g., donors, implementers, partners, beneficiaries, civil society organizations (CSOs), etc. as possible. Documents received from the project team were fully reviewed. However, the limited time assigned to in-country consultations (10 working days) was not sufficient as there was difficulty in obtaining appointments with key interlocutors and it did not allow for a full and complete interaction with all key stakeholders. Moreover, the in-country consultations were extended by another 6 working days.

The anticipated field visit to GVH Tizola in the District of Nsanje did not materialize as district officials were not available for consultations on the proposed date of the field visit; however, as previously noted, it was possible to meet the District Commissioner and the Director of District Planning in the District of Chikwawa where the officials were attending another meeting.

Global and local restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic also posed a challenge in collection of primary data from project stakeholders, which would normally have taken place through in-person discussions. Many stakeholder consultations were conducted remotely using various telecommunications devices. Consequently, selected key persons were reached through Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Notwithstanding occasional connectivity issues with the internet, the online consultations with the project team and stakeholders proved to be a reasonable substitute for face to face consultations.

# THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

In 2015 Malawi joined the international community in adopting Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Malawi has shown strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda. The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III (MGDS) successfully integrated the global agenda 2030 and the regional agenda 2063 which put Malawi on the map in terms of early localization of SDGs. Malawi has made efforts to align district development plans to the MDGS III and SDGs for a new generation of District Development Plans (DDPs) to accelerate progress across SDGs. However, the 2018 progress report indicated that Malawi is currently off-track in terms of achieving SDGs and MGDS III outcomes.

One of the major development challenges affecting the country’s SDGs achievement is the inability of central and local government institutions to develop, coordinate and manage evidence-based policy planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results.

Limited data availability, access, management, and analysis greatly affect central and local level planning, monitoring and evaluation. Some data is available, but generally there is a lack of timely, reliable, relevant, accessible, digestible data to inform programming and policy decisions. There is further inadequate disaggregation of data which negatively affects the scope and extent to which plans can be inclusive, ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups are not left behind. The data most commonly available is currently not in a format that facilitates decision-making and timely intervention by managers, political leaders, and other authorities. In the absence of timely and actionable data, decision-making and programming are not based on evidence, leading to poor prioritization and ultimately inefficient use of resources. There is little data available to help the councils prioritize the interventions that have the most impact or to conduct effective, targeted resource mobilization to attract partners to support the delivery of local development.

The availability of quality and reliable data has been problematic in Malawi. Growing demand for quality statistics continues to outstrip supply. The National Statistics Office (NSO) and the National Statistical System (NSS) under the Ministry of Economic Development & Planning (EP & D) are mandated to collect data and coordinate and manage the production of official statistics; however, they face operational challenges. The Hotspots initiative was welcomed by the national government who had struggled with lack of comprehensive data to inform the planning process. Moreover, at the local level only three sectors, namely, agriculture, health, and education were collecting data, the other sectors had none. The buy-in at the district level and the District Councils to the Hotspots initiative was instant and the Hotspots initiative continues to be embraced.

The Hotspots project will prioritize linkages with complementary programming aimed at improving decentralization and improved governance for service delivery such as the Local Governmental Accountability and Performance (LGAP) programme operated by Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) and funded by USAID/FCDO and the UN-NGO Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience (PROSPER) partnerships. As service providers continue to integrate the National ID card into social service provision, linkages with multiple sector programmes, e.g., water, health, sanitation, transportation, education, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian and emergency response, agriculture, inclusive finance, etc. will serve to aggregate programme- and project-specific performance metrics into composite dashboards geo-referenced to Traditional Authorities (TAs), GVHs, and households.

Weak coordination remains a challenge both nationally and locally. Multiple, diverse actors including the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations (FBO), traditional structures and community-based organizations play an important role in the delivery of services at district and community levels in Malawi. However, often the providers and the services they offer are unknown to the relevant ministries, local authorities and stakeholders. The services do not always conform to government standards and systems and they are rarely well integrated within government structures. The provision of services depends on available projects and funding, resulting in services on offer to beneficiaries being unpredictable and unsustainable.

Local authorities are mandated by the Local Government Act (LGA) to effectively deliver services in their areas of jurisdiction. However, the local authorities face challenges to function to the satisfaction of citizens mainly due to the limited availability of qualified staff and financial resources in all sectors, coupled with mobility challenges, poor infrastructure, and lack of equipment, weak management and weak coordination. It is crucial that scare resources are targeted for maximum impact. Weak implementation of the national decentralization policy and the limited opportunities for district councils to mobilize revenue, leave the districts with little room to effectively meet the needs of their people. Line ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) struggle to coordinate sectoral programmes. Even with sector working groups (SWGs) coordination has remained a major challenge in development programmes in Malawi. Sectors implement projects instead of letting District Councils implement, on the basis that District Councils have limited capacity. While there are Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Councils and NGOs in some districts, there is limited guidance to facilitate effective implementation of such MoUs by MoLGRD, resulting in duplication and fragmentation of rural development programmes. The weak implementation capabilities on the ground are a major challenge for meaningful decentralized multi-sector and multi-level service delivery in rural Malawi.

# UNDP RESPONSE AND CHALLENGES

The hotspots approach aims to substantially contribute to the targets set in Malawi’s Growth and Development Strategy III (MGDS III), District Development Plans (DDPs) and corresponding Village Action Plans (VAPs). The approach combines local planning with the prioritization of integrated service delivery to deprived communities. Prioritized communities are those populations that have been identified as being off-track with respect to the SDGs and therefore at risk of being left behind.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The project has established the SDG Hotspots Data Management Platform, an integrated data management tool, designed to improve decentralized implementation of services across social, economic and environmental sectors. The approach involves the following:

1. A real-time data dashboard collected from household and service providers[[4]](#footnote-4) that digitalizes and geo-references both well-being indicators and service indicators thereby improving transparency and enabling policy makers and citizens to better understand and measure progress on multidimensional development challenges. The service and well-being indicators are derived from the contact, process and impact indicators of the different services provided by government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and various UN agencies. By contact indicators is meant the means of service delivery; how citizens access the service. The process indicators are the detailed steps and protocol for service delivery. The impact indicators are basically the performance indicators for specific service lines. The dashboard will further be able to identify bottlenecks negatively affecting the service delivery in areas such as health, nutrition, education, employment, resilience, agricultural productivity, capacity and others so that these can be addressed, and service delivery improved. Indicator design will contain analysis by social group variables of sex, age and ability.
2. A multi-stakeholder platform led by local planning authorities to strengthen the use of evidence to propel service improvements that target communities, households and people most in need of building resilience to shocks accelerating critical and coordinated action on the SDGs leaving no one behind.
3. Co-ordinated, target “SDG Hotspot service response”, where multiple service providers come together around one multidimensional development challenge and bring a combined package of services to the household level in a campaign style sweep of geographically defined areas, based on analysis of the data in the hotspots map.

The SDG’s Hotspots Management Platform will support the systematic collection of data on community access to services and perceptions on provision, while supporting local government to improve their ability to aggregate and use data for planning, prioritization, monitoring and coordination, leading to improved service delivery and ultimately acceleration of the attainment of sustainable development goals at the local level. The Platform will integrate the principle of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in data collection, analysis, and support to local government administration.

## 4.1 Overarching Outcome

A theory of change (ToC) was formulated based on the following premises:

* if geo-referenced data on public service provision, service providers and service user/disaggregated citizen well-being status is collected, analyzed and disseminated in real time at all levels of the local authorities, the household, village, area and districts levels;
* if service providers and the services they offer are known to local authorities, stakeholders and all citizens.
* if the SDG Hotspots System is developed and utilized to generate timely and relevant disaggregated data to identify priority hotspots, inform planning, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the delivery of services;
* if there is adequate personnel with relevant skills to lead, plan, coordinate, implement/deliver and monitor service delivery required at the village, district and national levels;
* if there are innovative platforms for multi-sectoral coordination and multi-level service provider engagement, sharing of information and designing integrated and inclusive service response to address SDG hotspots.
* if sufficient funding is available to support the integrated service responses

Then all categories of citizens at the village and district council levels will effectively access integrated and improved services with better impact towards achievement of SDGs and MGDS III.

This is because:

* The SDG hotspot dashboard will facilitate management of information for comparative analysis, visualization and reporting on a range of geo-socio-economic features vis-à-vis service lines, service providers and users allowing service providers to prioritize their resources in the neediest areas
* Innovative platforms for multi-sectoral and multi-level service will be effective mechanisms for coordination and integration of service providers operating within the target areas
* Knowledge of service and service providers will provide a basis to identify gaps and division of labour which will ultimately avoid duplication of efforts and better planning to ensure that no one is left behind in terms of sex, age and ability in the target areas
* Evidence-based decision making, prioritization, planning and monitoring, will help regulate political interference in programming

To visualize the ToC, one can think of the hotspots approach in terms of an integrated system that connects gender disaggregated household-level needs, gaps and aspirations with village, area and district-level responses, mediated by a real-time dashboard with multiple feedback loops (from households to service providers to each other, from district authorities to service providers, and so on). The overall system allows all citizen groups, policy makers and service providers to co-design interventions across different “hotspots” (geographic areas) for different sub-groups and for different types of services and interventions.

The overarching outcome of the project aligns with UNSDCF (formerly UNDAF) Programme Results and Resources Framework Outcome 1 in those rights holders in Malawi access more accountable and effective institutions at the central and decentralized levels that use quality and disaggregated data, offer integrated service delivery and promote civic engagement, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

In addition, the overarching outcome aligns with Outcome 2 of the UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021), to wit, to accelerate structural transformation for sustainable development.

## 4.2 Expected Results

The project aims to achieve four main expected results:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Result No. 1** | **The SDG Hotspots Management System is implemented (data is available):**  This involves a number of steps:   1. preparing the dashboard prototype, testing it with data from selected villages in district 1[[5]](#footnote-5), 2. rolling out the dashboard, entering all available static/baseline data and collecting data from service providers across the district; 3. ensure that local authorities routinely use the Hotspots system for prioritization and design of programmatic interventions to inform better engagement between service providers and user |
| **Result No. 2** | **District council establishes an effective coordination platform and implements integrated and inclusive multi-sectoral approach to district planning and delivery of services (local government planning and service provisions improve):**  This involves a number of additional activities:   1. using the dashboard data for evidence-based planning decisions – where to allocate resources, where to focus for impact 2. training extension workers for continuous data collection and service improvement 3. training district council offers to improve planning capabilities for ongoing operations |
| **Result No. 3** | **District-level data and management capabilities are strengthened** to support the use of evidence to propel service improvements that target communities and households most in need of accelerating critical and coordinated action on the SDGs. |
| **Result No. 4** | **The district authorities are able to design and deliver integrated, inclusive multi-sectoral SDG Hotspots service responses** that target identified SDG Hotspot priorities in specific geographical locations in a multidimensional manner. |

## 4.3 Expected Outputs

The Results and Resource Framework (RRF) provides the following four Outputs and accompanying Output Indicators:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Expected Output | Output Indicators |
| **Output 1**  Functional SDGs Management Platform | 1.1 – SDGs Hotspots Monitoring Dashboard developed and operational for selected district(s) |
|  | 1.2 – Complete household, village and district data entered in dashboard |
|  | 1.3 – Availability of geo-referenced service data updated quarterly in the SDG Hotspots management platform |
|  | 1.4 – A number of SDG hotspots status reports produced |
| **Output 2**  Selected district councils are enabled to develop and managed evidence-based, gender-responsive policy planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results | 2.1 – Existence of inclusive, evidence-based action plans covering identified priority hotspots |
|  | 2.2 -Number of Councils with District development plans aligned to MGDS III and SDGs |
|  | 2.3 – Existence of multi-sectoral SDG Hotspot coordination mechanism at District level |
|  | 2.4 – Number of DEC meetings per year reviewing dashboard data/hotspots trends (including gender gaps) for prioritization and to design programmatic interventions |
|  | 2.5 – Proportion of DEC members in target districts utilizing the dashboard for planning and monitoring of services |
| **Output 3**  Citizen categories (women, youth, PWDs) in selected districts have improved public services for the achievement of MGDS outcomes including SDGs | 3.1 – Number of SDG hotspots service responses designed and implemented |
| **Output 4**  Project is effectively managed | 4.1 Rate of implementation of planned project activities as per the Annual Work Plan |

## Main Project Activities

The hotspots project has supported at least five main areas since 2020 with the following activities:

* Collection of data for development of a data management system, including hotspots assessments/surveys and development of indices for assessing deprivation, including support for training of data collectors
* The actual development of a data management system
* The development of local development plans and digitalization of VAPs process
* Support for district governance and coordination structures for planning and service delivery
* Support for legal reform to facilitate access to data (to a lesser extent)

# CONTRIBUTION TO RESULTS

The following sections describe the detailed findings of the Mid-Term evaluation exercise. The analysis and discussion are intended to assess the overall project progress and performance towards achieving its outputs and output indicators, using the key evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability. The evaluation also addresses the cross-cutting issues of gender and social inclusion.

As partnerships play a key role in ensuring that primary stakeholders achieve outcomes, all evaluation criteria will also cover relevant aspects of partnership: i.e. how are they relevant; how effective were they in contributing to the achievement of the of project outcomes, outputs; how efficiently were they managed; and how sustainable are they.

## 5.1 Relevance (of UNDP’s involvement and the project approach)

### 5.1.1 Strategic consideration and comparative advantage

The project adapts similar experiences implemented by UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean which combines the use of household-level universal beneficiary registries with service provider dashboards that collect real-time (or near real-time) data on how multi-sector and multi-level interventions impact local and regional government. While the context under which the project was implemented in Latin America was different[[6]](#footnote-6) than the context in Malawi, the project has adapted over time to the Malawian context. Malawi is one of the first countries in Africa to adapt the Hotspots initiative approach to local development planning and prioritization of service delivery as an effort to accelerate progress on Malawi’s national development objectives and the achievement of the SDGs. Interest from neighboring countries is envisioned in addressing similar challenges: weak data availability, local implementation capabilities and constrained financial resources. The project is further expecting to share the implementation lessons learned from Malawi.

UNDP identified the District of Nsanje as the district within which the project could be piloted. The project team undertook a field visit to Nsanje and met with local stakeholders (e.g., district commissioners, chiefs, and citizens in the villages) and obtained their complete buy-in for the project. The team approached the MoLGRD who also embraced the concept. Thereafter, the project team went with the officials of the MoLGRD to the proposed site, met with the District Executive Committee, NGOs and other ministries that were present. The process was very consultative. The project team also worked with Directors of Planning at the technical and strategic level.

The project needed baseline data and looked at the data provided by the Census. However, it was quickly determined that the census data did not have enough information and felt that the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR) provided better data. However, there was no UBR data for Nsanje and it would take too long for the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EP & D) to produce the data. The Resilience and Sustainable Growth (RSG) unit of UNDP through PROSPER funding already had data and UBR had been collected in the District of Phalombe. Nsanje had nothing. Consequently, the MoLG and UNDP team developed the project for Phalombe. The project team worked closely, in partnership, with the National Statistics Office (NSO) to obtain the necessary data.

Prior to the project, UNDP had supported the GoM (both technically and financially) in local planning. Moreover, the project was meant to continue with this ongoing support and that is why $500,000 was allocated for development of DDPs in Year 1 of the project.

The anticipated results of the project are directly related to the UNSDF which specifies that the UN will “*support Government to improve local Government service delivery and public engagement in local development planning, budgeting and monitoring processes in selected districts, through: ensuring roll-out of sector devolution, strengthening local government systems and coordination structures, and ensuring alignment of national and local development planning processes”.[[7]](#footnote-7)*

“UNDP builds local-level partnerships, initiates rapid response actions during crises, deploys cumulative capacity building in non-crisis s context and builds networks of social, cultural and political actors like no other multilateral or bilateral donor on the ground. The density and reach of [UNDP’s] local and subnational network is a critical UNDP comparative advantage.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

The project also builds on UNDP technical and financial expertise and added value as a multilateral agency. The project also builds on strong partnerships of UNDP with the Government of Malawi including the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLGRD), the Ministry of Economic Development and Planning (ED & P), the National Statistics Office (NSO), the District Council of Phalombe and the District Council of Nsanje who all were actively n the original project design. As previously noted, site visits were undertaken to the districts prior to the completion of the project document.

The Hotspots initiative is also part of UNDP’s contribution to the Joint UN programme on data and is being implemented in alignment with other UN partners in Malawi. The 2019-2023 UNSDCF (former UNDAF) specifically identifies data development as one of the seven transformational principles to ensure evidence-informed implementation of sustainable development in Malawi.

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Malawi has formed a UN Data Group to lead relevant policy analysis and advocacy by the UN family, identify areas for joint programming through existing project and programmes, and develop a joint programme to promote the integration of data management and strengthen the use of data in decision makings in all sectors. The UN Data Group seeks to address the gaps and systemic issues across the data landscape in Malawi by supporting the NSO and other stakeholders.

The Data Group provides UNDP with a forum to showcase the Hotspots project and encourage other UN agencies to partner with it. The Data Group is in the process of overseeing the organization of a Data Summit which will be held in Q4 of 2021. The Data Summit is aimed at facilitating exchange of best practices and innovative approaches to promote innovation and the use of new technologies in the humanitarian and development response and to create a space for discussion on what is being done and how those initiatives can be applied to local contexts.

### 5.1.2 Project relevance to Malawi’s sustainable development objectives

Review of documents also confirms that the project interventions were fully aligned with the MoLGRD decentralization policy and the broader national development priorities, policies and plans of Malawi which include Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III; Malawi Vision 20631; and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Effective decentralization, by making governance more responsive to the needs of the citizens and ensuring social accountability, is currently a government priority. MGDS III underscores the need for the devolution of more functions from the central to the local levels of government. To this end, the Government of Malawi has the decentralized framework as the mechanism for implementing the MGDS III. The expectation is that this will create space for local councils to take a more active role in undertaking policy decisions that will facilitate inclusive and sustainable development. This provides a unique opportunity to introduce innovative programming aimed at accelerating the achievement of the SDGs at the local level.

The SDG approach in tandem with the current deepening decentralization reforms of the GoM could equip the district authorities with a holistic SDG management system that would give them an overview of the key data and analysis they need to prioritize interventions and ensure that scarce resources are inclusively targeted for maximum impact. The project addresses the service delivery gap by merging an integrated management tool designed to help decentralized implementation of services across social, economic, and environmental sectors into Malawi’s District development planning and budgeting process.

The project also considered national realities, both in terms of institutional capacity and legal and policy frameworks, by using existing structures such as the VDC, the ADC, the DC and the DMECC as well as working with existing government ministries (MoLGRD, EP & D) and agencies (NSO). A critical feature of the Hotspots initiative is to merge both the dashboard and platform into the existing DDPs planning systems. Capacity building training and a skills transfer strategy form an integral part of the project.

The project has been fully embraced by both the government at the national and at the district level.

## 5.2 Effectiveness (in contributing to the achievement of project outcomes, outputs)

As mentioned in Chapter III, the project logic model envisaged that the overall objective will be achieved through attaining four key results. A set of four interrelated outputs have been identified to achieve project specific objectives. Similarly, the main outputs were further broken down into eleven (sub) outputs for clarity and implementation purposes. The following are the outputs:

|  |
| --- |
| * **Output 1:** Functional SDGs Hotspot Management Platform * **Output 2:** Selected District Councils are enabled to develop and manage evidence-based gender-responsive policy planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results * **Output 3:** Citizen categories (women, youth, PWDs) in selected districts have improved public services for achieve of MGDS outcomes including SDGs * **Output 4:** Project is effectively managed |

Since its inception, the project has made rigorous efforts and implemented a wide range of interventions to achieve the outlined outputs notwithstanding challenges posed by a change in the project management team, the CO-VID 19 pandemic as well as late approval of the 2021 Annual Work Plan. The results framework indicators have been monitored in the 2020 Annual Progress Report, the 2021 Q1 Progress Report, and the 2021 Q2 Progress Report. The following sections provide a detailed assessment of the achievement status and effectiveness of these outputs at this mid-course.

### 5.2.1 Output 1: Functional SDG Hotspot Management Platform

#### 5.2.1.1 Indicator 1.1: SDGs Hotspots Monitoring Dashboard developed and operational for selected districts

Key progress has been made on the Council Data System (hereinafter referred to as “the System).

In consultation and in partnership with the MoLG, the design of the dashboard, including its back and front-end features is now complete. The dashboard is now populated with data across twenty-seven (27) themes from three data sources: the UBR; census (for Phalombe district only); and SDG Hotspots assessment (undertaken for 1 GVH per district).

As at the end of Quarter 2 (Q2) of 2021, the System was fully operational with about 98% of the system functions completed with only the Geographic Information System (GIS) functionality of the System is outstanding.[[9]](#footnote-9) The system is currently operating offline, and it was planned to be launched in Quarter 2 (Q2); however, the administration processes required to allow the system to go online took a longer time to finalize than originally anticipated. In particular, the issue of who would own the domain and whether it would be situated at the national level, or the local level took time to resolve. It was ultimately resolved that the domain would be registered in each district.

IN 2021 Q3, as at mid-August 2021, UNDP ICT Analyst had set up the server at the MoLG. What remained to be done was to test the system. Initially the ICT Analyst experienced connectivity problems with the Government Wide Area Network (GWAN) and consequently it was not possible to test it. It was agreed that the MoLGRD would test it once the network was operating but to-date limited capacity of the IT personnel at the ministry have prevented the system from being tested.

As the testing of the system was the responsibility of the Ministry and beyond the control of the project team, the System was delayed in becoming full operational.

The MoLGRD has only one permanent IT person and one intern and these individuals are used in all the IT projects of the Ministry. It is anticipated by the project team that once the server is set, things will go more smoothly. Moreover, the system will be managed by Management Information System (MIS) officers at the district level who will be accessing the server centrally at the MoLGRD data centre. The IT personnel at the Ministry will only occasionally be required for server maintenance and administration. All information management will be done at the local level.

It is anticipated that the System will be online by the end of Q3.

The System is composed of the following components:

1. **Council Website**:

The websites for both Nsanje and Phalombe District Councils have been developed and updated. As with any website, site development will be ongoing to improve content, speed, functionality, and usefulness. The programme continues to work with District Planners to source and upload relevant content.

The Council website will be the storefront for each district in Malawi and it will be the landing page for the overall Council Data System. Once on the site, users can navigate to the various functions of the System, e.g., data portals, dashboard, heat maps, geographic information maps and digital Village Actions Plans.

1. **Data Portals**

The Hotspots system is designed to utilize data collected from different government sectors as well as non-governmental organisations which will enhance data sharing among different stakeholders at district level and avoid duplication of efforts in data collection. The introduction of customized sector data portals that feed directly into the Council Data System will greatly improve the management and integration of data at district level. UNDP continues to work with the District Councils and the MOLGRD to define and strengthen the data that goes through the sector portals. In addition to the sector portals, the system has also incorporated a portal for the non-governmental organisations where they can input their data. UNDP needed to assure data contributors that any raw data shared to the System would be fully protected and under the control of the original data custodian. Consequently, the data will be aggregated at district level and ring fenced to ensure that raw data is not displayed for privacy purposes. UNDP has drafted minimum data standards for the Councils which when adopted will improve data quality and enhance integration of different data sources. The data entry portals have been configured for the following departments/sectors at council.

**Table 1: Sector Portals for District Councils Departments as at end of Q2 2021**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sector Data Portals** | | |
| Environment | Trade | Agriculture |
| Labour | Health | Forestry |
| NGO Portal | Disaster | Irrigation |

1. **Data Dashboard**

The data dashboard is one of the major components of the SDG hotspots system where indicator data is visually presented through graphs and charts. The indicators currently in the dashboard relate to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The indicators do not reflect the globally accepted SDG targets and indicators.

As previously noted, the dashboard is now populated with data across twenty-seven (27) themes from three data sources. The data from the multiple sources allows one to make comparisons of one theme across the various sources. Indicators can also be filtered by organization and year of collection.

When browsing the dashboard, users can also explore information aggregated to four geographic levels:

1. District (default)
2. Traditional Authority (TA)
3. Specific Group Village Headman (GVH)
4. Standardized 400 x 400-meter quadrants

The 400 x 400–meter quadrants are not yet active in the system. However, UNDP has engaged a GIS expert to develop the standardized 400 x 400-meter quadrants.

The Hotspots team has held some initial meetings with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations to explore a partnership opportunity on data sharing with respect to how data collected by the FAO on SDG 1 and SDG 2 in the Phalombe district can be utilized for the dashboard. Follow up meetings are scheduled to be held to work out the modalities.

Meetings have also been held with UNICEF to explore how they can use the Hotspots system for their data. An agreement was reached that UNICEF will start inputting their data into the system; however, discussions are still ongoing on some modalities.

1. **Data Heatmaps**

The Heatmaps represent indicator data using colors to represent indicator values. Heatmaps can be prepared against any of the data captured in the System, and to four geographic levels: District, TA, GVH and 400 x 400-meter quadrants. IN Q2 of 2021, the non-spatial heatmaps using boxes were configured for Nsanje and are currently working for both Phalombe and Nsanje. The non-spatial heatmaps will be crucial for the data that is not georeferenced. However, with the developed data standards, the goal is for every stakeholder collecting data in the district to include GPS coordinates. The non-spatial heatmaps are configured proportionally to population size.

As with the data dashboard, the GIS expert is currently in process of configuring the 400 x 400-meters quadrants which will also allow for the spatial representation of the heatmaps using the georeferenced data. The heatmaps will become an important analytical tool for the district councils, other organizations, and donors to quickly identify areas that require specific service interventions.

Currently, the system for non-spatial heatmaps is using 25 pre-defined development themes; 202 pre-defined indicators across the themes; and 6 predefined indices.

#### 5.2.1.2 Indicator 1.2: Complete household, village and district data enter in dashboard (Baseline values for UBR and Census, disaggregated where possible)

As noted above, the dashboard is populated with data across 27 themes from three data sources. These sources are the UBR; census (for Phalombe district only); and SDG Hotspots assessment (undertaken for 1 GVH per district.)

The project team initially determined that two sets of data would be used to establish baseline values by making use of the 2018 Population and Housing Census and the existing Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR) system: 8 districts had a +/- 50% household coverage for the UBR questionnaire. Phalombe was the first district to have 100% coverage. Consequently, the MoLGRD decided to pilot the Hotspots project in Phalombe. The Census is updated every 10 years and the UBR is updated every 4 years.

UNDP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Statistics Office (NSO) to access the data and create a partnership. However, they quickly learned that there were issues of privacy that needed to be addressed as NSO could only supply aggregated data and that any additional data would require an amendment to the 2013 Statistics Act to ensure data quality. It was also learned that the UBR had a number of inconsistencies especially due to different definitions that had been used. NSO tried to clean up Phalombe’s UBR data but recommended to the Ministry of Economic Planning that it redo the UBR data collection for Phalombe. At one point it was decided that the project go back to Nsanje. The project team could not wait for the data collection to be redone and proceeded to work with NSO to develop a Hotspots Baseline survey tool, one of the most comprehensive survey tools in Malawi. This was achieved by reviewing, editing and adopting questions from other survey tools in Malawi and from the Region. What was eventually produced was a survey that contained over 250 questions. This new tool was then used to complete district surveys in Phalombe and Nsanje.

#### 5.2.1.3 Indicator 1.3: Availability of geo-referenced service data updated quarterly in the SDG Hotspots management platform

Since the inception of the hotspots programme, service responses have always been referred to as “integrated” and coordinated”. This basically means all service responses delivered by the programme must be collective and done in a highly coordinated manner. To begin any type of coordination, the project team first needed to understand what organizations were present and operating in the pilot districts. Using a snowball sampling approach, the programme was eventually able to identify 23 service providers in Phalombe and 20 in Nsanje.

One of the major challenges facing the Hotspots initiative is that service providers are not forthcoming to share data for several reasons including, the fact that the cost of collecting data is expensive; the data is proprietary; and most organizations are bound to strict data protection measures notwithstanding the fact that UNDP has assured data contributors that any raw data shared to the System would be fully protected.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid, the Hotspots team has sold the project to various partners, and many have showed interest in sharing data. However, the District Councils are to take the lead in attracting service providers to share data. At the time of the evaluation, not much had been done by Councils to engage the service providers at district level in adhering to the data sharing. There is some progress on data sharing with FAO e.g., the Hotspots system has already incorporated FAO land degradation data in addition to the already available Census and UBR data.

To encourage stakeholders to share information, the project prepared a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) template for use by District Commissioners to formalize data-sharing arrangements with the service providers. MoUs are necessary for data sharing as it gives a sense of security to the person sharing the data. The project team received UBR data and Census data through executing MoUs. The Hotspots programme will continue to promote the use of the MoU and continually encourage stakeholders to collect and voluntarily share information whilst observing the District Data Standards that have been drafted. However, the key issue is that the District Councils need to take leadership in enforcing data sharing at the district level after the signing of the MoUs with the service providers.

To-date the implementation of the MOU has not been enforced by the District Councils and there appear to be no consequences for non-compliance.

It is envisaged that the District Councils will engage with the identified organisations to encourage participation in the initial integrated services response(s). Further it is envisaged that the RCO will also play a key role in the coordination of UN agencies.

#### 5.2.1.4 Indicator 1.4: Number of SDG hotspots status reports produced

Two Hotspots assessment reports were prepared: one for GVH Gunda in the Phalombe District and another one for GVH Tizola in the Nsanje District. The assessments were prepared in partnership with the NSO and the Hotspots Project Team. NSO provided the analysis of the data.

### 5.2.2 - Output 2: Selected District Councils are enabled to Develop and Manage Evidence-Based Gender-Responsive Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems for Inclusive and Effective Delivery of Services and Achievement of Development Results

#### 5.2.2.1 Indicator 1: Existence of inclusive, evidence-based action plans covering identified priority SDG hotspots

In efforts for supporting the MoLGRD and in consultation with the MoLGRD and subsequently District Councils, to reduce the cost of consolidating the priorities of the communities and formulating Village Action Plans (VAPs), and improve on data quality, the process has been digitized on a pilot in Nsanje and Phalombe district.

The idea of digitization of VAP arose when concern was expressed by different development partners/organizations that had been supporting the government with funding for the development of VAP. Major issues raised were as follows: the process for developing VAPs for the whole country was expensive; poor quality of the documents produced; VAP process as a “tick-box” exercise for the MoLG i.e., a lot of money was spent on developing those plans, but there was no way of following up on whether the plans were implemented or note. The high costs of the VAPS were partly due to the fact that the extension workers were taking a long time to facilitate the VAP development process with the VDCs which the project team believed digitization would cure. From a small pilot that the project team undertook with 6 GVH, it was indeed shown that an extension worker would take 2 to 3 days using the digital VAP tool as compared to one week with the paper-based process. The project team is continuing to test this on a larger scale with the Nsanje and Phalombe. Having a digital App also minimizes the errors which will help improve the quality as well as improve accessibility of the documents by all development actors since the documents will be accessed on line. The digital VAPs will make it easier to monitor implementation of community plans since the application was designed to show when a project transitions from a planned project; to when it is being implemented (in progress)to when it is a completed project. Members of the project team worked with a team from the MoLG and the IT consultant to design the App, the VAP content and process.

The VAP App was designed to fully operate offline. This means that donors, councils and communities do not need to purchase expensive data bundles or use 3G networks to operate the system. In fact, the apps were purposefully designed to avoid data fees and poor rural connectivity. To transfer data from tablets a new innovative approach was developed that transformed tablets into independent wireless servers/receivers. The technology has allowed data to hop from one table to the next until reaching its intended destination – the Council Data system.

The system works by leaving one tablet with each GVH/VAP Village Development Committee (VDC). VDC members – in consultation with the community – use the tablet to input data to create a digital VAP. However, it is important to note that VAP development is intended to be a continual process. As and when new information becomes available in the community, the information will be uploaded to the table by the VDC member through the digital VAP.

The transferring of data at the grass root level occurs when an extension officer visits the community and encounters the tablet held by the VDC member. In such instances the data from the community’s tablet (when approved) will be wirelessly transferred to the extension officer’s tablet. The information is then later transferred from the extension officer’s table to the System when at council.

Digital VAPs are to be prepared and controlled by communities using customized software applications operated on Android Tablets (Lenovo Smart Tab M108). District data is transferred to the centralized Data System which is situate at Lilongwe’s Data Center using the District Councils’ uncapped fiber connection.

With the concept now fully working, the team pushed forward to pilot VAP digitalization. A total of six extension officers (6 men only) in Phalombe and a further six officers in Nsanje (5 men and 1 woman) were trained on the use of tablets/VAP application(s). Thereafter, using the Training of Trainers approach, the extension officers were invited to join the training of VDC members in:

* GVH Gunda, Phalombe (17 VDC members of which 10 were men and 7 were women)
* GVH Mphale, Phalombe (17 VDC members of which 10 were men and 7 were women)
* GVH Likaka, Phalombe (17 VDC members of which 5 were men and 12 were women
* GVH Tizola, Nsanje (17 VDC members of which 12 were men and 5 were women)
* GVH Meza, Nsanje (15 VDC members of which 7 were men and 9 were women)
* GVH Nyathono, Nsanje (16 VDC members of which ten were men and 6 were women)

At the end of 2020, GVH Gunda and GVH Tizola had fully grasped the digital concepts and had proceeded to produce their digital VAPs. Georeferenced data, fixed assets and proposed projects have now been shared to the Council’s System. All geo-reference features in the VAP are now mapped and pointed using 66 customized illustrations.

Local and central government authorities are so far impressed with the results of VAP digitalization and have indicated that they want to proceed to digitize all of the villages in each district.

The digitalization of VAPs is a major step forward for the Government of Malawi (GoM). The approach has already begun to revolutionize the local planning process by reducing the long-term costs of grassroots planning, increasing the speed of VAP formulation and improving the overall effectiveness of local planning. The digitization of the VAP can be adopted for planning processes for the whole nation.

Digital VAPs will bring never before seen attributes to local planning by allowing Districts to:

* Formalize GVH identification codes
* Give communities full “ongoing” ownership of the VAPs process
* Embed the nine 2063 NPC vision principles into the digital VAPS
* Spatially map GVHs boundaries
* Spatially pinpoint community assets
* Spatially pinpoint proposed projects
* Source community identified service needs
* Update VAPs three times a year (not once every 5 years) and
* Evaluate each VAP on its implementation performance

The VAP digitalization process will allow communities to transition from hand drawn maps to digital maps that capture spatial information seamlessly integrated with Web Mapping tools and Google Maps.

However, in District of Phalombe the tablets which were intended to remain with the VDC are currently situate with the District Council. There appears to be a lack of understanding by both the District Council and the VDC that the VAPs are to be updated three times a year (not once every 5 years). In addition, members of the VDC are concerned about the lack of connectivity in the village and the lack of capacity of its members to operate the tablets. Consequently there is also a lack of understanding at the VDC that the tablets can be utilized without internet connectivity.

#### 5.2.2.2 Indicator 2.2: Number of District development plans aligned to MGDS III and SDGs

In addition to VAP digitalization, the Hotspots programme technically and financially supported the MoLGRD in the development of Social Economic Profiles (SEP), District Development Plans (DDP) and the old traditional system of consolidated Village Action Plans (VAP). On the latter, as described in Section 4.2.2.1, the Hotspots programme has been working to transform the old static and lengthy traditional VAP process to a fully digitized form. With regards to the preparation of SEP/DDPs, this work was done jointly with the Local Government Accountability Performance (LGAP) programme operated by Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). As at December 20, 2020, the following achievements had been made on planning documents:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **COUNCIL** | **CURRENT STATUS OF SEP, DDP AND CONSOLIDATED VAPs[[10]](#footnote-10)** |
| Chikhwawa | SEP approved by DEC, consolidated VAP & DDP formulation in progress |
| Nsanje | SEP, consolidated VAP and DDP approved |
| Mchinji | VAP formulated, SEP completed, DDP in draft form |
| Ntcheu | SEP and consolidated VAP approved and DDP drafted |
| Chitipa | SEP drafted, consolidated VAP formulated and DDP drafted |
| Dedza | SEP drafted, consolidated VAP formulated and DDP drafted |
| Chiradzulu | SEP finalized, consolidated VAP formulated and DDP drafted |
| Phalombe | SEP and consolidated VAP approved and DDP finalized |
| Dowa | SEP drafted, consolidated VAP formulated and DDP finalized |

The traditional consolidated VAP approach proved to be very expensive. In 2020, the project could only support 9 districts out of the anticipated 16 districts, because the traditional consolidated VAP approach proved to be very expensive and actually doubled with the advent of COVID and personal protection equipment (PPEs). The high cost of support to the traditional planning process was the genesis to the concept of digitizing the process. Consequently the approach for support was adapted and changed; resources this year for VAP support have been allocated to digitizing the process. Consequently, the project is only supporting Nsanje and Phalombe districts to test the proof of concept for the digitized VAPs this year.

#### 5.2.2.3 Indicator 3: Existence of multi-sectoral SDG Hotspot coordination mechanism at District level

A multi-stakeholder platform is to be led by the local planning authorities to strengthen the use of evidence to propel service improvements in communities. However, to-date the multi-sectoral SDG Hotspot coordination mechanism has not been officially established. The District Councils had proposed that the existing District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordination Committee (DMECC) serve as the multi-sectoral coordination mechanism at the District Level. This recommendation was in line with the use of existing District Council structures to establish/incorporate the Hotspots initiative. However, the process of strengthening the DMECC has not yet started. To-date the DMECC has not been revamped as the proposed amended ToR that seek to expand its scope and composition have not been adopted by the District Councils. Currently the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) which are subcommittees of the District Executive Committee (DEC) have been developing the Action Plans and are serving as the *de* *facto* multi-stakeholder platform. It is much easier to get the district sectors to work together (as they already do) as to coordinating the other stakeholders.

In 2021 Q1, the district sector heads in Phalombe convened to develop an Action Plan (AP) for GVH Gunda. The AP developed by the sector heads was presented to the sector representatives at the MoLGRD through a stakeholder engagement session. The sector representatives from the different ministries analyzed the Action Plan based on their expertise and provided input. The district sector heads revised the Action Plan based on the input received and then presented it to the DEC for approval which was subsequently approved. The UNDP team together with the MoLGRD returned to GHV Gunda with the Action Plan to get feedback on it from the community which the community endorsed. The District Council will be using the Action Plan to source more funds.

#### 5.2.2.4 Indicator 2.4: Number of DEC meetings per year reviewing dashboard data/hotspots trends (including gender gaps) for prioritization and to design programmatic interventions

As the dashboard data is still not operational on-line, it is premature/not possible to comment on the use of the dashboard by DEC.

#### 5.2.2.5 Indicator 2.5: Proportion of DEC members in target districts utilizing the dashboard for planning and monitoring of services

As the dashboard data is still not operational on-line, it is premature/not possible to comment on the number of DEC members in target districts utilizing the dashboard for planning and monitoring of services.

### 5.2.3. Output 3: Citizen Categories (women, youth, PWDs) in selected districts have improved public services for the achievements of MGDS outcomes including SDGs

#### 5.2.3.1 Indicator 1: Number of SDG hotspots service responses designed and implemented

An integrated service response (also referred to as a coordinated service response) involves bringing service providers together around selected, multidimensional development challenges, designing and delivering a combined package of services tailored to household or community level needs. The steps towards a coordinated service response include:

* Identification of a hotspot. GVH Tizola was selected as a hotspot for Nsanje and GVH Gunda for Phalombe based on the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) calculated from the 2018 census data;
* A Hotspots Assessment which is a social economic study targeting all the households within a hotspot in order to get a better understanding of current levels of vulnerability;
* Multi-Stakeholder Platforms which are led by the local planning authorities with the DMECC currently designated to act as the coordinating unit. The platforms analyze the hotspots assessment report, representing the quantitative data; the digital VAPs, representing qualitative data; and making reference to the District Development Plan (DDPs); to come up with an Action Plan for a coordinated service response; and
* The developed Action Plan informs the coordinated service response.

Service responses for GVH Gunda in the Phalombe District and GVH Tizola in the Nsanje District were designed and implemented based on the initial assessments that were undertaken which were then followed up with the Action Plans for each of the aforesaid GVH.

The priority issues for and proposed interventions from the Action Plan s for GVH Gunda and GVH Tizola are noted in the following tables:

**Table 2: Priority Issues and Interventions in Action Plan for GVH Gunda**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Priority Issue** | **Proposed Interventions** |
| 1. | Food Insecurity | * Promote irrigation farming * Climate smart agriculture * Diversified incomes |
| 2. | Inadequate Access to Portable Water | * Construction of reticulated piped water system * Rehabilitation of non-functioning boreholes |
| 3. | Environmental Degradation | * Afforestation |
| 4. | Poor Road Networks | * Roads and bridge rehabilitation |
| 5. | High Illiteracy Rates | * Construction of school * Establishment of adult literacy centers |
| 6. | High Infant and Maternal Mortality Rates | * Infrastructure development * Community engagement on Community Based Maternal and Neonatal Health (CBMNH) |

**Table 3: Priority Issues and Interventions in Action Plan for GVH Tizola**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Priority Issue** | **Proposed Interventions** |
| 1. | Food Insecurity | * Promote irrigation framing * Promote use of water harvesting technologies * Promote the use of modern crop and livestock technologies * Promote use of drought tolerant crops * Promote use of integrated pest management technologies * Improve farmers’ capacities in agribusiness |
| 2. | Inadequate Access to Potable Water | * Construction of reticulated piped water systems * Drill boreholes |
| 3. | Losses and Damage due to Floods and Drought | * Improve early warning systems * Promote catchment conservation * Improve capacity of disaster management structures * Investment in flood control measures |
| 4. | High Illiteracy Levels | * Promote the construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure * Promote child case management |
| 5. | High Infant and Maternal Mortality Rates | * Infrastructure development: clinics * Promote Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) * Improve referral and ambulatory system * Improve the availability of drugs and health care commodities * Improve capacity of health care workers * Strengthen access to Youth Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (YFSRHS) * Community empowerment through HCMC and CHAGs |

The priority issues for GVH Gunda and GVH Tizola are quite similar. The major priority issue for each GVH was food insecurity and the priority proposed intervention was the promotion of irrigation farming.

UNDP has committed to the construction of a 40ha irrigation system in GVH Gunda. It is anticipated that the irrigation system will contribute to food insecurity in the GVH as households will be able to grow crops more than once in the agricultural calendar year. Procurement for a consultant to undertake construction was finalized and the work was to commence in July 2021. During a field visit to Phalombe, the proposed site of the irrigation system was visited with members of the VDC. At a meeting with members of the VDC of GVH Gunda, (20 women and 8 men), the female committee members stressed how important the construction of the solar irrigation system and boreholes were especially for women and their families and what a huge positive impact it will have on their day-to-day lives.

UNDP has also committed to the construction of an irrigation system and five boreholes in GVH Tizola.

The project team together with the MoLGRD is still working on getting other stakeholders, mostly donors and development partners, to fund other parts of the Action Plan for both Phalombe and Nsanje district. It is further envisaged that the Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) will also play a key role in the coordination of UN agencies.

### 5.2.4 Output 4: Project is effectively managed

#### 5.2.4.1 Indicator 4.1: Rate of implementation of planned project activities as per the Annual Work Plans

The project management structure evolved over the initial 18 months of the project with some changes in the project responsibilities at UNDP. Notwithstanding the changes the project team has made substantial progress in implementation of planned project activities as per the Annual Work Plans.

The project team to implement the annual work plans has consisted of the following persons (originally the team consisted of 4 women and 3 men; currently the team consists of 5 women and 2 men):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Person** | **Title** | **Responsibility** |
| 1. | Agnes Chimbiri | Portfolio Manager | Overall management and technical advice |
| 2. | Julie Van Dassen | Governance Advisor | Technical and financial advice |
| 3. | Christina Maseko | Programme Manager[[11]](#footnote-11)  (formerly programme analyst) | Overall programme leadership and direction since 2021 |
| 4. | Mercy Chirambo | Hotspots Programme Analyst | Programme analytics and community development; lead on digitizing the VAP component |
| 5. | Moses Masaiti | Data Specialist | Data mining, analytics and interpretation |
| 6. | Precious Nkoka | Field Manager | Phalombe operations and the management of field officers |
| 7. | Jessie Kalepa | Hotspots Programme Analyst |  |

The majority (more than 70%) of the planned activities in the 2020 Work Plan were completed or substantially completed. These activities included the following:

Output 1:

* design, testing and maintenance of the SDG dashboard;
* design and testing of standardized SDG hotspot survey tool;
* development of data sharing agreement for SDG hotspot dashboard;
* training of trainers and collection of data using SDG survey tool – HH service delivery and impact data
* IT procurement
* incorporating Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) into SDG hotspot dashboard
* disbursement of NSO Grant to obtain an amendment to the 2013 Statistics Act[[12]](#footnote-12) and ensure data quality for the SDG hotspots dashboard

Output 2:

* Support of district planning process – development of SEP, DDPs and VAPs
* Digitalization of VAPs process and linked to SDG hotspot dashboard
* Support to District Councils to establish district coordination mechanism for service providers

Output 4:

* Office equipment procured
* Salaries paid
* Quality assurance meetings and monitoring and evaluation were effected through site visits to monitor progress which were subsequently reported on using Back to Office Reports
* Quality assurance meetings have were also undertaken with officials from the MoLG and NSO as the key partners to discuss progress for the work

Finance campaigns to deliver and support targeted communities under Output 3 have not yet commenced.

The SDG Hotspots Accelerative Initiative also had a relatively progressive start to the year in 2021 despite the challenges posted by the CO-VID 19 pandemic. Q1 and Q2 of implementation was dedicated much to the planning processes and getting the Annual Work Plans and budgets approved while continuing with some activities from the previous implementing year. The Annual Work Plans and budgets were approved near the end of Q2 which enabled the team to kick start some activities planned for the year. Key progress was made on the Council Data system and the Coordinated Service Response.

### 5.2.5 Results

Attached please find a mid-term evaluation rating table of the achievement of project outputs in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency which is based on a six-level scale as follows:

* Highly satisfactory (HS), the project had no shortcomings
* Satisfactory (S), minor shortcoming
* Moderately satisfactory (MS), moderate shortcomings
* Moderately unsatisfactory (MU) significant shortcomings
* Unsatisfactory (U), major shortcomings
* Highly unsatisfactory (HS), severe shortcomings

Many of the outputs/targets have been achieved or substantial progress has been made towards their achievement. Output 1, SDGs hotspot management platform is not fully functional but substantial progress has been made towards full functionality and it is on track to be completed by the end of the project. There are also a couple of indicators under Output 2 which are still pending because they rely on an operational SDG Hotspots Monitoring Dashboard. However, it is also important to note the 2021 AWP includes specific actions to enable the output/indicators to be achieved.

#### 5.2.5.1 Project Mid-Term Evaluation Rating Table

STATUS OF EXPECTED OUTPUT DELIVERY AS PER MEASUREABLE INDICATORS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **EXPECTED OUTPUTS** | **OUTPUT INDICATORS** | **STATUS OF DELIVERY** | **RATING** |
| Output 1:  Functional SDGs Hotspot Management Platform | 1.1 SDG Hotspot s Monitoring Dashboard developed and operational for selected districts | The Council Data System for Phalombe and Nsanje Districts is fully operational with about 98% of the system functions completed and only the GIS functional of the System is outstanding. The system is currently operating offline and was planned to be launched in Quarter 2 (Q2); however the administrative processes required to enable the system to be online took a lot longer than expected. Connectivity problems with the GWAN have prevented testing it. The team is working with the MoLGRD towards having the System online and launched in Q3. | Satisfactory |
|  | 1.2 Complete household, village and district data entered in dashboard (Baseline values for UBR and Census, disaggregated where possible) | Household, village and district data UBR and Census data have been entered along with data obtained from Hotspots assessments which had been prepared by the project team in partnership with NSO. | Highly satisfactory |
|  | 1.3 Availability of geo-referenced service data updated quarterly in the SDG Hotspots management platform. | The introduction of customized data portals that feed directly into the Council Data have been created and will greatly improve the management and integration of data at district. As at the end of Q2 in 2021, data entry portals had been configured for 9 sectors. In addition to sector data portals, the same approach is being used to capture information from non-government and intergovernmental organizations. A NGO portal has been established. To encourage stakeholders to share information, the programme has prepared an MoU template for use by District Commissioners to formalize data-sharing arrangements with service providers. The Hotspots programme continues to work with the MoLGRD, NSO, RCO, FCDO PROSPER programme to promote the idea of information sharing to the Council Data System. The team identified 23 service providers in Phalombe and 20 in Nsanje. The Councils will engage with the identified organisations to encourage participation in the initial integrated service response(s). Further it is envisaged that the RCO will also play a key role in the coordination of UN agencies.  2021 Annual Work Plan also includes orienting local authorities, service providers and major stakeholders on the use of the dashboard for monitoring service delivery. | Satisfactory |
|  | 1.4 A number of SDG hotspots status reports produced. | A Hotspots Assessment which is a social economic study targeting all the households within a hotspot in order to get a better understanding of current levels of vulnerability was undertaken for GVH Gunda in Phalombe and GVH Tizola in Nsanje. The assessment is one of the steps towards a coordinated service response. | Highly satisfactory |
| Output 2  Selected District Councils are enabled to develop and manage evidence-based gender-responsive policy planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results. | 2.1 Existence of inclusive, evidence-based action plans covering identified priority SDG hotspots. | An evidence-based Action Plan was developed for GVH Gunda and GVH Tizola by the sector heads (the Technical Working Sub-Group of the DEC) in GVH Gunda and GVH Tizola, respectively, in consultation with the MoLGRD and the GVH which was subsequently approved by the respective DECs. | Highly satisfactory |
|  | 2.2 Number of Councils with District Development Plans (DDPs) aligned to MGDS III and SDGs | In partnership with LGAP, the project team supported 9 districts councils out of targeted 16 with their development plans because the cost of supporting them was too high; the cost was doubled by the advent of COVID and the cost of PPEs. The overly costly provision of support to DDCs was the genesis to the concept of digitizing the process. The Project Team is only supporting Nsanje and Phalombe districts to test the proof of concept for the digitized VAPs this year. | Satisfactory |
|  | 2.3 Existence of multi-sectoral SDG Hotspot coordination mechanism at District level | Project team worked with the MoLG and councils to establish the framework for operating district multi-stakeholder platforms. These platforms are to be led by the local planning authorities with the DMECC as the coordinating unit. Project team prepared ToR to revise the objective of the DMECC which focus on coordination, design, financing and delivery of all hotspot service responses at district. To-date the ToR has not yet been approved by the DCs and the process of strengthening the DMECC has not yet started. In lieu thereof, to-date the district sector heads (TWGs of the DECs) in Phalombe and in Nsanje drafted the Action Plans for GVH Gunda and GVH Tizola, respectively and are serving as the  *de facto* coordinating unit. | Moderately Satisfactory |
|  | 2.4 Number of DEC meetings per year reviewing dashboard data/hotspots trends (including gender gaps) for prioritization and to design programmatic interventions | Dashboard is not yet on-line. 2021 Action Plan includes development of a comprehensive hotspot system user manual; and sensitizing and training VDC, ADC and DEC councillors and MPs on Hotspots system | Satisfactory |
|  | 2.5 Proportion of DEC members in target district utilizing the dashboard | Dashboard is not yet on-line. 2021 Action Plan includes development of a comprehensive hotspot system user manual; and sensitizing and training VDC, ADC and DEC councillors and MPs on Hotspots system | Satisfactory |
| Output 3  Citizen categories (women, youth, PWDs) in selected districts have improved public services for the achievement of MGDS outcomes including SDGs | 3.1 Number of SDG hotspot service responses designed and implemented. | Two service responses have been designed and are being implemented in GVH Gunda in Phalombe and in GVH Tizola in Nsanje. A 40ha irrigation system is being constructed in GVH Gunda and UNDP has committed to constructing an irrigation system and 5 boreholes in GVH Tizola. | Highly Satisfactory |
| Output 4  Project is effectively managed. | 4.1 Rate of implementation of planned project activities as per the Annual Work Plans | All stakeholders appear to be unanimous in terms of acknowledging that the project is being effectively managed, notwithstanding a change in the Project Manager in early 2021. The project team was on track in implementing at least 70% of planned project activities as per AWP. | Highly Satisfactory |

Status of delivery colouring codes:

Green: Indicator shows successful achievement

Yellow: Indicator shows expected completion by the end of the project

Red: Indicator shows poor achievement. Unlikely to be completed by the end of the project

## 

## 5.3 Efficiency (in delivering outputs)

The total resources required for the project amounted to US $7,131,000, out of which $2,000,000 was to be provided by UNDP TRAC allocations (the annual level of regular programme resources targeted to be available for an individual programme country during the programming period); Euro 250,000 from Irish Aid; and 238,000 British pounds from FCDO PROSPER programme. Irish Aid further supplemented its contribution in 2021 with an additional USD $100,000.

The total budget for Year 1 and Year 2 was originally projected at USD $3,463,000. The actual budget for the period from January 2020 to December 2020 was $1,095,027 and the project achieved 100% budget utilization in 2020. There was no variance between activity projected costs against actual costs.

The budget for year 2 was established at $1,609,081. As at the end of Q1 (January 2021 to March 2021), total expenditures only amounted to $115,295.10 (7.2% of the overall budget). During this period, the Annual Work Plan (AWP) was still pending approval and the programme had only a few budget lines from the AWP approved and as such there were not many resources available for implementation in Q1. Travel was also restricted due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As at Q2 (April 2021-June 2021), total expenditures amounted to $370,088 or 23% of the overall budget.

Of the USD $7,131,000 proposed budget for the entire project, at present only USD $2,516,000 has been resourced, the majority of which has come from UNDP internal funding. It is anticipated that once a comprehensive integrated service delivery is carried out in the two pilot districts, other donors will be interested in investing in the scale up. Irish Aid has offered to lead donor coordination for the project.

The only discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures resulted from receiving less than the anticipated funding from FCDO as a result of government budget cutbacks in the United Kingdom. The project had anticipated receiving USD $450,000 from FCDO budget but the project only received approximately USD $160,000.

According to a majority of stakeholders and partners, the project support has been provided in a cost-efficient and effective way. The project implementation strategy and approaches, conceptual framework and execution have been efficient and cost effective. There has been no overspending on the project and there has been an economical use of both financial and human resources. The project utilizes the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) to manage the project funds which essentially means that monies do not go directly to a Ministry or government department. There were some minor complaints about the funding mechanism and UNDP financial processes in that it took UNDP a long time to process payments for services or activities that had been planned.

As previously noted, the project management structure evolved over the first 18 months of the project with some changes in the project responsibilities at UNDP, the most notable of which was the departure of the original Project Manager. In lieu of recruiting a new individual, and due to the strength of the project team itself, it was decided to promote one of the members of the project team to the position of Project Manager and repurpose the funds allocated for the recruitment of a new Project Manager into the service delivery.

The headquarters of the project is situated in Lilongwe where the main central Government partners (MoLG, NSO, and ED&P) and Development partners are located. However, as the project is an initiative with a focus on field-level results, the project team recruited a Field Manager for close collaboration with local authorities and service providers and to provide oversight on how data is being gathered and to monitor the service delivery response initiatives. Based on consultations with members of the District Councils, the District Councils are very satisfied with their relationship with UNDP and the Field Manager. For the first phase of the project the Field Manager was based in Phalombe. As at the end of 2021 Q2, a field office had not yet been established.

Resources have been allocated and reallocated strategically to achieve outputs. The project management also took advantage of the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisory Group (MEAG) within UNDP to ensure proper monitoring of the project which allowed it to learn and adjust implementation accordingly. Yearly M & Evaluation Plans were also prepared by the project team.

The project strategy has been sensitive to the political and development constraints of Malawi and has adapted accordingly. The following are a couple of specific examples of same:

* The original concept of the project was to use unemployed Malawians at district to function as voluntary survey enumerators. However, after preparing a quick study on the use of voluntary enumerators, it was recommended by the MoLG and NSO that the initial stages of the programme use a combination of voluntary enumerators and district extension workers. This set up was preferred to balance the lack of experience from voluntary enumerators with that of seasoned extension officers. The proposed combination worked fairly well. Around 86% of voluntary enumerators were able to quickly learn how to use tablets and the best approaches for interviewing respondents. A total of 99 (64 men and 35 women) volunteer enumerators were trained. The combined enumerator approach was used for both the larger baseline surveys and the target GVH surveys. Due to the relative success of the combined enumerator approach, the same system will be employed when scaling up to other districts. Further, all successfully trained enumerators will be registered with their Councils to support future survey needs.
* And as previously noted when it became obvious that the traditional way of developing DDPs was increasingly becoming very costly, the genesis of the development of the digital VAP was borne.

To a large extent, quality outputs and planned activities have been delivered on time or substantial progress has been made towards their achievement. Where outputs have not been achieved or where the achievement of same have been delayed, some of the delays can be attributed to a lack of timely decision making or inaction by other stakeholders that were integral to the achievement of the outputs and were due to circumstances beyond the control of the project team. Based on conversations with members of the project team inaction by other stakeholders may be attributable to the lack of capacity to undertake the action required. Some of the processes like restructuring the DMECC are processes that needed in-depth deliberations by the Councils and the MoLGRD as it touches on the structure of local governance; hence the process is longer. However, it is difficult to point out why the ministry has delayed in making the requisite decisions.

When considering whether a different approach could have produced better results, recommendations included initially recruiting a Data Specialist to serve as a member of the project team and recruiting a full time Technical Specialist for the UNDP project team to build the system. A data analyst was not recruited until Q3 in 2020. Currently the project team’s data analyst serves as a link between the Hotspots initiative and the consultants and the MoLGRD.

The project management structure has been operating quite well notwithstanding the fact that the first meeting of the Steering Committee was not held until more than eighteen months after the commencement of the project in July 2021 at which time the project was formally embraced by both national and local government officials. The addition of the District of Nsanje as an additional pilot project was officially approved at the Steering Committee meeting. However, the Technical Committee has been meeting on a quarterly basis.

The donors are very satisfied and pleased with the project management of the project, especially to the extent which it has adapted with respect to management and technical requirements. They have been well informed by regular meetings with UNDP. They were always kept apprised as to why there were delays to timelines; the difficulties encountered with cutting and pasting the Hotspots project from Latin America; and how the project was restructured to meet the Malawi context.

## Sustainability

The Project Document acknowledges that the most important features of the project are scaling up and merging into the existing district development planning system to ensure sustainability and that it will require a successful sequence of steps:

1. A strong dashboard prototype that mobilizes government and community interest in using inclusive evidence-based and household-based data systems for development planning.
2. An effective dashboard and platform rollout process in Phase One, that is open to adaptation and troubleshooting.
3. Local political commitment to address the multiple obstacles and bottlenecks that hinder development impact; and
4. National buy-in and commitment to supporting service providers with the fiscal and technical assistance needs required to make a measurable shift on district-level performance.

The Project Document further anticipates that all the aforesaid steps are attainable. The project’s first 24 months were intended to be data-intensive and dedicated to scaling up operations. It also acknowledges that there will be a need to mobilize an expanding stakeholder group as roll-out proceeds. Capacity building and training will continue throughout the 4-year period of the project and the last six months will be exclusively dedicated to securing the financial and non-financial means of implementation to make the approach sustainable. Once the initial investment in data and platform services is made, the scaling up and ongoing operations will have lower marginal costs. The annual cost of sustaining the system will be far less than the initial investment.

Generally, the sustainability of project interventions and the continuity of benefits in the post-project period depend on availability of desired policies, institutional frameworks, human and technical skills, social acceptance, environmental viability and most importantly availability of desired financial resources. At this mid-term stage, it is a bit early to assess the sustainability of the project’s interventions and benefits, as project interventions are still under implementation.

However, several stakeholders have already commented that one of the reasons why the project will be sustainable is because the project is aligned to existing structures; it recognizes a bottom-up approach; and is in line with the focus on decentralization and community involvement. Moreover, the project strives to empower the districts. The project has also empowered line ministries and agencies, most notably the MoLGRD and NSO.

A detailed strategy for skills transfer will be integral to continued sustainability. In addition to continuing to work with DCs to digitalize VAPs, the 2021 Annual Work Plan includes a number of activities that appear to be part of a skills transfer strategy including supporting the training of data collectors, data collection and entry of household service delivery and impact data into the dashboard; development of a comprehensive Hotspots system user manual; sensitizing and training VDC, ADC and DEC councillors and MPs on hotspots system; and orientation of local authorities, service providers, and major stakeholders in the use of the dashboard for monitoring service delivery.

The following is a brief analysis of the main risks to the sustainability of the project:

1. **Financial risks to sustainability**

Availability of and access to adequate finances remains one of the main barriers to sustainability, replicability and scaling-up of the Hotspots initiative. Due to the limited financial resources of the national government and the District Councils, external financial support will be required to fully implement the project and replicate it in other Districts.

The Hotspots Initiative as a stand-alone initiative is not sustainable. It is currently its own ecosystem of information, services, delivery, and monitoring. It needs to fit into the bigger systems of government to be sustainable. It must inform services that already have a government budget.

However, during discussions about sustainability with stakeholders, it was noted that perhaps there is a need to think about sustainability differently, e.g. rethink what is required to ensure that the project is sustainable. Currently donors do not appear to be thinking deeply enough. It is time for donors to re-conceptualize sustainability beyond the government’s financial contribution. Evidence of government ownership of the project is equally if not more important than its financial contribution given the Malawian context.

UNDP is always exploring and will continue to explore new ways of reducing costs associated with programming. The Hotspots team has been investigating ways to reduce costs through expanding partnerships for data sharing. At the present time, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has agreed to share its data. Other potential partners for data sharing and building on their complementarities include the Local Authorities Monitoring Information System (LAMIS), Rapid Feedback Monitoring System (RFMS), and Governance to Enable Service Delivery (GESD) administered by the World Bank (WB).

Project team has also been engaging other UN agencies to commit resources towards the coordinated service responses.

Expanding partnerships to enable cost reduction is still a work in progress.

1. **Institutional frameworks and governance risks to sustainability**

As mentioned in previous sections, the project is fully aligned with broader national development priorities, policies and plans of Malawi, including the MGDS III, Malawi Vision 2063, the SDGs and most notably the Government of Malawi’s decentralization policy. Overall, these commitments provide adequate institutional basis and frameworks at both the national level and district level for implementation of the project. The project has been making efforts to improve coordination among stakeholders; instituting MoUs with service providers; building capacities of local government; and raising awareness among local communities of their role in district development planning and service delivery .

1. **Other key strategic risks**

The project document also outlined several other key strategic risks, and the measures to be taken to mitigate them. The following table provides a summary of the identified risks, mitigation measures and its status at the mid-term.

**Table 4: Identification of Programme Risks and Measures Taken**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk No.** | **Description** | **Countermeasures** | **Status** |
| 1 | Inadequate political commitment | Work closely with DEC and District Councils. Ensure the Council Data System meets the needs of Council Sectors/Departments. Provide Councils with support to carry out SDG service response interventions. | Ongoing. |
| 2 | Access to data to populate the Council Data System | MoU drafted for use by District Councils. This document will be used to secure data from actors working at district.  Portals developed for council sectors to populate data directly into the System will gradually improve the data needs of councils. | Ongoing. Data secured from Census, UBR, sectors, and hotspots assessments into Council System for sharing. |
| 3 | Ensure the timely coding (design) of the council’s data system | Current delays in the System’s completion relates to the establishment of GIS functionality of the overall System. A specialist consultant has been selected to perform this critical work. | Ongoing. System consists of website, dashboard, heatmaps, VAPs. |
| 4 | Council Data System not used by local stakeholders | Once the Council Data system is populated with district-wide data sets with the ability to produce heatmaps across indicators and indices, the System will gradually become a go-to resource for the district. | Ongoing. Yet to be determined. |
| 5 | Service providers do not supply data to the Council dashboards | Enforce the implementation of the MoU and discuss any non-compliance with the DEC and district platform.  Work with the RCO to encourage the development community to participate.  Inform NGOs/agencies of data privacy standards in the System. | The DEC has acknowledged the MoUs for district Service Providers. Councils are insisting on compliance. |
| 6 | High turnover of personnel at district | The system will be institutionalized within the District Councils. This means all sectors will use the System so not to create a single point of failure.  Video presentations will be developed to instruct officials on how to use the System. | Ongoing. Focusing on the institution and not individuals. |
| 7 | COVID-19 | Hotspots activities have continued during the pandemic, although at a slower rate of delivery. It is anticipated that COVID will cause delays to the delivery of the integrated service responses. Assuming these activities continues, all PPE measures will be applied. | Ongoing. |

## 5.5 Hotspots Mid-Term Evaluation Performance Criterion Rating Summary

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PERFORMANCE CRITERION** | **RATING SCALE** | | | | | | **RATING** |
|  | **HU** | **U** | **MU** | **MS** | **S** | **HS** |  |
| **RELEVANCE** |  |  |  |  |  |  | **HIGHLY SATISFACTORY** |
| UNDP comparative advantage |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Project relevance, country ownership |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Stakeholder involvement |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| **EFFECTIVENESS** |  |  |  |  |  |  | **SATISFACTORY** |
| Achievement of project expected outcomes and objectives |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |
| Contribution of other partners and organizations to project results |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |
| Partnership with NGOs/CSO to promote evidence-based service delivery |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| Mainstreaming gender into the project |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **EFFICIENCY** |  |  |  |  |  |  | **HIGHLY SATISFACTORY** |
| Adaptive management |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Economical use of financial and human resources |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Financial management |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Work planning |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Establishment of partnerships |  |  |  |  |  | **X** |  |
| Local resource users and NGOs participation |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| **SUSTAINABILITY** |  |  |  |  |  |  | **UNSATISFACTORY** |
| Involvement and support of government institutions |  |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |
| Financial contribution by government |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Development of sustainability strategy |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Existence of regulatory frameworks |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mainstreaming of gender and social inclusion by primary stakeholders |  |  | **X** |  |  |  |  |

## 5.6 Gender Considerations

The application of gender analysis in policymaking and budgeting is lacking in Malawi.[[13]](#footnote-13) The original project design does not place much emphasis on gender mainstreaming and gender marker data was not assigned to the project.[[14]](#footnote-14)

However, the following cursory references to gender are found in the Project Document:

* The Project Document states that the Platform will integrate the principle of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in data collection, analysis, and support to local government administration but how it will do so is not addressed
* There is an acknowledgement of inadequate disaggregation of data which negatively affects the scope and extent to which plans can be inclusive, ensuring that vulnerable and marginalized groups are not left behind
* There is also an acknowledgment of women’s lower social status, lower access to higher education and economic resources, which leads to vulnerability to violence exacerbated by negative cultural attitudes. This places them as the single largest social group among those living in poverty
* The Hotspots Problem Tree notes that there is inadequate gender analysis in the planning process and there is no gender budgeting
* A merge between a tailored hotspot approach and the district development planning system will require adapting the methodology to a number of key features and capabilities by providing continuous quality assurance (e.g. gender mainstreaming often weakens during implementation and requires ongoing monitoring)
* Acknowledging that a weakness with the current DDPs process is that there is the lack of gender analysis and integration which leaves a gender gap in the SEP and the minimum data requirements for tracking social inclusion
* The Theory of Change (TOC) addresses gender disaggregated data
* One of the additional anticipated results to achieve the project’s outcome will include local authorities routinely using the Hotspots system for prioritization and design of programmatic interventions (including gender gap analysis) but how that gender gap analysis will be effected
* Ultimately the results will also ensure gender equality and women’s empowerment
* Output 2 specifically provides that selected district councils are enabled to develop and manage evidence-based gender responsive policy planning et al.

Notwithstanding the aforesaid, to-date gender has been addressed to a certain extent in the project as follows:

* In partnership with UN’s Spotlight Initiative, the project team was technically assisted to include Gender-based Violence (GBV) indicators into the standardized Hotspots survey tool and the dashboard. The Spotlight team is developing “District Hubs” where data on GBV will be aggregated
* The interventions for the service responses in both GVH Gunda and GVH Tizola addressed issues that predominately affect women.
* Gender issues were implemented as a cross-cutting theme by ensuring that both women and men were included in all project activities, starting with the local governance structures of the VDCs; to data collectors; to technical working group meetings in the districts that developed the action plans for service responses. Evidence of gender mainstreaming was found in Progress Reports and Annual Work Plans as well as obtained from interviews with members of the project team, other UNDP interlocutors, and stakeholders/beneficiaries encountered during field visits. The attendance sheets of meetings also confirm the participation of women; the local governance structures are constituted using a set of ToR and women are always represented in the committees; data collection was done by extensions workers and volunteers which included both men and women; the technical working groups also had representation from men and women; the Chairperson for the technical working group in Phalombe, leading the development of the action plan, was a woman.
* There is some sex-disaggregated data in the progress reports regarding the participation of men and women in project activities

Aside from the GBV indicators the surveys that were developed for the project are not gender sensitive. Specifically, the Service Demand Self-Assessment Tool is not gender sensitive. To incentivize potential respondents, the community was informed that they stood a chance to benefit personally and as a community by completing the survey. One of the 18 questions listed on the survey asked if the individual completing the survey would like to learn a trade (e.g., mechanic, electrical, plumber, etc.). All these trades are traditionally associated with men.

The 2020 Annual Progress report also notes that as the activities of the project involved support and working with institutionalized structures, it thereby limited the extent to which the project could directly address gender mainstreaming. However, “…[gender] mainstreaming is meant to be implemented in different ways depending on the organizational level (institutional vs. programmatic) and activity (e.g., policy development vs. programme delivery). At an institutional level, gender mainstreaming involves addressing gender equality and empowerment of women (GEWE) through internal organizational changes, such as resource allocation, strategic planning, policies, culture, human resources, staff, capacity, leadership, management, and accountability and performance management. At a programmatic level gender mainstreaming ensures that gender equality is considered at all stages of a project/programme, such as resource allocation, context analysis, programme/project development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure the equal distribution of programmatic benefits and to not reproduce or deepen existing inequalities”.[[15]](#footnote-15)

While Output 2 notes that selected district councils are enabled to develop and manage evidenced based gender responsive policy planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results, members of the District Councils that were interviewed did not appear to be aware or have knowledge of what a gender responsive policy might be. It was indicated that the gender officer in the district was responsible for gender but whether that gender officer is involved in the DDPS or has the capacity to ensure gender-responsiveness in the DDP was unclear.

The Risk Log in the project document specifically describes the fact that Districts do not integrate gender and social inclusions measures in the DDPs as a risk and notes that there is a general tendency to pay lip service to gender, either through cursory mention, or assumed integration which is not supported in project design or by data and/or process requirements.

It should be noted that the MoLGRD mandates gender mainstreaming in local councils and has developed gender guidelines in context of decentralization. However, it is not clear if and how those guidelines are being implemented.

It should also be noted that until the 30th of April 2021, there were no national minimum data requirements for gender. These minimum data requirements were developed by the Ministry of Gender in consultation with the Spotlight Initiative. While the SDG Hotspots initiative will be supporting the development of the DDPs, Spotlight Initiative will attempt to integrate them with gender and disability issues to benefit vulnerable persons. However, the minimum data requirements still need to be approved by all the sectors.

## Social Inclusion

The overall aim of the Hotspots initiative is to bring a positive change in the lives of marginalized and vulnerable populations, leaving no one behind, by tackling the hardest exclusions by gender, race, ethnicity, or geographic exclusion.

The focus of the Hotspots’ initiative is to direct attention to groups and places with weak implementation capabilities, weak data and weak sources of financing. As noted by numerous reports, national SDG acceleration requires addressing local SDG gaps, exclusions, and deprivations head-on. Only by “moving the local needle” in the most remote or excluded contexts, for the most vulnerable groups of the population, will the needle move nationally. [[16]](#footnote-16)

SDG hotspot data can be used for localized acceleration strategies in cities or rural areas. First, it can pinpoint districts, neighbourhood and rural hamlets that need most attention based on trends and projections for SDG targets. Hotspot examples might include pockets of exclusion: extreme poverty, violence again women, malnutrition, teenage pregnancy or geographic locations are vulnerable to nature disasters, depredation or deforestation.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The District of Phalombe was chosen as the trial District as it is the one where current SDG indicators are among the weakest in Malawi and therefore where the project could potentially have the greatest impact.

While the project was not per se informed by human rights treaties and instrument, the project paid attention to the effects on marginalized, vulnerable and hard to reach groups as evidenced by the survey tools for the hotspots assessment that build in some questions on special and vulnerable groups. The 2021 AWP also includes activities to improve survey tools for gender and disability responsive HH service availability access and impact.

## Partnership Strategy

While the project document did not initially include a project strategy as such, the project document did acknowledge the involvement of a broad coalition of stakeholders: (i) MOLGRD, EP & D and all devolved line ministries, NSO, and the National Planning Commission; (ii) District Councils; (iii) local service providers in each district (both government and non-government); UN agencies with programmes and projects on the ground; (iv) NGOs and bilateral donors with programmes and projects on the ground; and (v) donors committed to supporting the prototyping, and roll-out and implementation of the whole initiative.

In the first months of the project which was dedicated towards the development of the Hotspots data system, civil society networks and groupings including the NGO Board were engaged several times at both the national and local level (e.g. Phalombe CSO network) and oriented on the initiative.

According to the 2020 Annual Progress Report a total of 15 partnerships had been established to support the implementation of the Hotspots initiative but not all of them have been actively working with the project. The main project partners are those that sit at the Steering Committee: the MoLGRD; NSO; Irish Aid; FCDO; Phalombe District Council; and Nsanje District Council. In fact, to a large extent these partnership modalities were conducive to the delivery of outputs. UNDP and government partners have worked complementarily with UNDP providing technical backstopping to government particularly with MoLGRD and NSO. The NSO led on the data component. UNDP and NSO teams worked together on the formulation of survey tools; data collection; and data analysis.

There are also currently complementarities with existing partner programs. Of particular note is the FAO indicator mapping and the Local Monitoring Information System (LAMIS) project which is being funded by FCDO, DAI, and USAID. Its aim is to improve the monitoring and evaluation of local government, improve data management and information flow and provide the MoLGRD with comprehensive oversight of transparent, real-time harmonized district level reporting.

UNDP has proposed to the MoLGRD to link LAMIS with SDG Hotspots data system to leverage on the data that is already being collected by the sectors. Indicators under LAMIS can be used as the first level of identifying communities facing some deprivations. This would act as the first pointer to the deprived communities where a hotspots assessment can be undertaken. However, sector data collected under LAMIS will have to incorporate TA and GVH as geographic identifiers to make the data easily useable

This year the project team has been exploring working with other partners that could potentially have data systems or data sets that can complement the Hotspots initiative. In addition to FAO and LAMIS, the project team is looking at potentially partnering with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and their Rapid Feedback Monitoring System (RFMS).

The project team is also examining potential complementarities with the Governance to Enable Service Delivery Program (GESD) of the World Bank’s core program in Malawi.

# 6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the detailed analysis of the evaluation exercise, the following are the summary conclusions:

1. **Project Relevance**

* The project adapts similar experiences implemented by UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) which combines the use of household-level universal beneficiary registries with service provider dashboards that collect real-time (or near real-time) data on how multi-sector and multi-level interventions impact over local and regional government.
* The project builds on UNDP’s technical and financial expertise and added value as a multilateral agency. The project also builds on strong partnerships of UNDP with the Government of Malawi including the MoLGRD, ED & P, NSO, the District Council of Phalombe and the District of Nsanje who all were actively involved in the original project design.
* The project aligns with the intended outcome of the UNSDAF Results and Resource Framework (RRF); the intended outputs of the Country Programme RRF; and UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021).
* The project interventions are fully aligned with the MoLGRD decentralization policy and the broader national development priorities, policies and plans of Malawi which include MGDS III; Malawi Vision 2063; and the SDGs.
* The SDG Hotspots initiative seeks in tandem with the current deepening decentralization reforms of the GoM to equip the district authorities with a holistic SDG management system that would give them an overview of the key data and analysis they need to prioritize interventions and ensure that scarce resources are inclusively targeted and coordinated for maximum support. The project also addresses potential service delivery gaps by merging an integrated management tool designed to help decentralized implementation of services across social, economic and environment sectors into Malawi’s District Development Planning and Budgeting processes.

1. **Project Effectiveness**

***Output 1: Functional SDGs Hotspot Management Platform***

* Key progress has been made on the Council Data System (hereinafter referred to as “the System”). The System is currently 98% completed and only the GIS of the System is outstanding. The System is currently operating offline; it was planned to be launched in Q2 of 2021 but due to delays in resolving administrative issues the launch was delayed. Once the system has been tested, it is anticipated that the System will be online by the end of Q3
* One of the major challenges facing the Hotspots initiative is that service providers are not forthcoming to share data. To encourage stakeholders to share information, the project prepared a MoU template for the use by District Commissioners to formalize data-sharing arrangements with service providers.

***Output 2: Selected District Councils are enabled to develop and manage evidence-based gender-responsive policy planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results***

* In efforts to support the MoLGRD to reduce the cost of consolidating the priorities of the communities and formulating VAPs as well as improve on data quality, the process has been digitized in a pilot in Nsanje and Phalombe districts. The approach involves capturing data using tablets by both members of the VDC and extension workers and foregoes several steps of organizing data manually. The process works offline. The digitized VAPs are available on the Council websites. The test for the few GVHs revealed gains for both quality and speed for VAP formulation and an improvement and thereby improving the overall effectiveness of local planning. As a next step all VAPs in Phalombe and Nsanje will be digitized in 2021 for a larger scale proof of concept.
* In partnership with the LGAP programme, the Hotspots programme technically and financially supported the MoLGRD in development of Social Economic Profiles (SEP), District Development Plans (DDPs) and the old traditional system of consolidated Village Action Plans (VAPs). Due to the high cost of support to the traditional planning process, the project could only support 9 districts out of the anticipated 16 districts. The approach for support has changed; resources this year for VAP support have been allocated to digitizing the process. The project is only supporting Nsanje and Phalombe districts to test the proof of concept for the digitized VAPs this year.
* Based on the initial digitization of VAPs for 6 GVHs, the digital VAPs proved to be both both effective and efficient
* Two action plans have been completed: one for GVH Gunda in the Phalombe District and another one for GVH Tizola in the Nsanje District. The Action Plans were developed by the Sector Heads/Technical Working Groups being subcommittees of the DEC. The process of strengthening of the DMECC which was to be originally tasked as the coordinating unit has not yet started as there have been delays in the approval of the revised ToR that seek to expand its scope and composition by the District Councils.

***Output 3: Citizen Categories (women, youth, PWDs) in selected districts have improved public services for the achievement of MGDs outcomes including SDGs***

* An integrated service response (also known as a coordinated service response) involves bringing service providers together around selected, multidimensional challenges, designing and delivering a combined package of services tailored to household or community level needs.
* Service responses for GVH Gunda in the Phalombe District and GVH Tizola in the Nsanje District were designed and implemented.
* UNDP has committed to construction of a 40ha irrigation system and 7 bore holes in GVH Gunda
* During the field visit with the VDC in GVH Gunda the female members of the VDC stressed how important the construction of the solar powered irrigation system and boreholes were for women and their families
* UNDP has also committed to the construction of an irrigation system and five boreholes in GVH Tizola
* Project team in conjunction with the MoLGRD is working on getting other stakeholders to fund other parts of the Action Plans

***Output 4: Project is effectively managed***

1. **Project Efficiency**

* Total resources required for the project amount to USD $7,131,000. The total budget for Year 1 and Year 2 was projected at USD $3,643,000. Actual budget for the period from January 2020 to December 2020 was $1,095,027 and the project achieved 100% budget utilization in 2020. There was no variance between activity projected costs against actual costs.
* Actual budget for Year 2 is $1,609,081. As at the end of Q2, total expenditures amounted to $370,088 or 27% of the overall budget. During this period, the AWP was still pending approval. Travel was restricted due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As at Q2, total expenditures amounted to $370,088 or 23% of the overall budget
* Of the USD $7,131,000 proposed budget, at present only USD $2,516,000 has been resourced, the majority of which has come from UNDP internal funding. It is anticipated that once a comprehensive integrated service delivery response is carried out in the two pilot districts other donors will be interested in investing in the scale up. Irish Aid has offered to lead donor coordination for the project
* According to stakeholders, the project implementation strategy and approaches, conceptual framework and execution have been adaptive, efficient, and cost effective. There has been no overspending on the project and there has been an economical use of both financial and human resources.
* More than 70% of the planned activities in the 2020 Work Plan were completed or substantially completed
* Project management structure evolved over the first 18 months of the project with some changes in the project responsibilities at UNDP, the most notable of which was the departure of the original Project Manager. In lieu of recruiting a new individual, and due to the strength of the project team itself, it was decided to promote one of the members of the project team to the position of Project Manager and repurpose the funds allocated for the recruitment of a new Project Manager into service delivery
* The recruitment of a Field Manager for close collaboration with the local authorities has proven to be very successful
* Resources have been allocated and reallocated strategically to achieve outputs
* The project strategy has been sensitive to the political and development constraints and has adapted the project as necessary
* To a large extent, quality outputs and planned activities have been delivered on time or progress has been made towards their achievement.
* Where outputs have not been achieved or where the achievement of same have been delayed, some of the delays can be attributed to a lack of timely decision making or inaction on the part of other stakeholders that were integral to the achievement of the outputs and were due to circumstances beyond the control of the project team.
* The donors are very satisfied and pleased with the project management of the project, especially to the extent to which it has adapted with respect to management and technical requirements.

1. **Sustainability**

* At this mid-term stage, it may be too early to assess the sustainability of the project’s interventions and benefits as project interventions are still in progress
* One of the reasons why the project may be sustainable is because the project is aligned to existing structures; it is district focused; recognizes a bottom-up approach; it is people centered; it empowers District Councils; it is participatory; and it is in line with the focus on decentralization and community involvement
* There is a continuing need to stress utilization of dashboard as providing technical guidance for DCs and as a tool to determine funding
* District Councils need to also embrace the System as a major tool for new entrants
* The way data is being collected is not scalable and will not be sustainable. Hotspot’s initiative must leverage other data sources, or it will not be sustainable
* Financial risks to sustainability remain one of the main barriers to sustainability
* To be sustainable it must inform services that have a government budget. The Hotspots initiative needs to have linkages with other government institutions.
* How district coordination will interface with national coordination needs to be determined
* Strategy for skills transfer will be integral to continued sustainability

1. **Gender Equality**

* There was not much emphasis on gender mainstreaming in the project document and gender marker data was not assigned to the outputs and indicators
* The project document does make cursory reference to several gender issues
* To a reasonable extent gender was addressed in the implementation of the project
* In partnership with UNDP’s Spotlight Initiative, the project team was technically assisted to include GBV indicators into some of the survey tools
* Members of District councils that were interviewed did not appear to be aware or have knowledge of what a gender responsive policy was or entailed
* Project team also appears to lack an understanding of how gender mainstreaming is to be implemented in different ways depending on the organizational level and activity
* Minimum data requirements for gender were recently developed by the Ministry of Gender in consultation with the UNDP Hotspots Initiative but requirements have not yet been approved by all sectors
* Gender mainstreaming guidelines which have been developed by the MoLGRD need to be implemented

1. **Social Inclusion**

* The overall aim of the Hotspots initiative is to bring positive changes to the lives of marginalized and vulnerable populations, leaving no one behind, by tackling the hardest exclusions by gender, race, ethnicity or geographic exclusion
* The project pays attention to the effects on marginalized, vulnerable and hard to reach groups as evidenced by the survey tools for the hotspots assessment that build in some questions on special and vulnerable groups
* The 2021 AWP also includes actions to improve survey tools for gender and disability responsive HH service availability access and impact

1. **Partnership Strategy**

* While there was no official partnership strategy for the project, the project document acknowledges the broad coalition of stakeholders: (i) MoLGRD, EP & D and all devolved line ministries; NSO, and NPC; (ii) District Councils; (iii) local service providers; UN agencies with programmes and projects on the ground; (iv) NGOs and bilateral donors with programmes and projects on the grounds and (v) donors
* In the first months of the project which was dedicated towards the development of the Hotspots data system, civil society networks and groupings including the NGO Board were engaged several times at both the national and local level and oriented on the initiative
* A total of 15 partnerships have been established but not all of them are actively working with the project
* Main partners are those that sit on the Steering Committee: MoLGRD; NSO; Irish Aid; FCDO; Phalombe District Council and Nsanje District Councils
* To a large extent, the partnership modalities were conducive to delivery of outputs. UNDP and government partners have worked complementarily with UNDP providing technical backstopping to government particularly with MoLGRD and NSO
* There are also complementarities with existing partner programmes. Of note is the FAO indicator mapping and LAMIS project
* UNDP has proposed to MoLGRD to link LAMIS with SDG Hotspots data system to leverage on the data that is already being collected by sectors
* Project team exploring working with other partners that could potentially have data system or data sets that can complement the Hotspots initiative, e.g., CRS and RFMS
* Project team to investigate complementarities with World Bank’s Governance to Enable Service Delivery (GESD)

# 7. LESSONS LEARNED

Based upon the detailed analysis of the evaluation exercise and the conclusions, the following is a summary of the lessons learned:

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| * Data found in the 2018 Census and Unified Beneficiary Register (UBR) was not complete and insufficient for the purposes of the dashboard * UBR had several inconsistencies based on the use of different definitions |
| * NSO did not have complete data; moreover, raw data could not be shared with UNDP without seeking amendments to the Statistics Act (which amendments have not yet been obtained) * Issues of privacy were raised |
| * Different sectors, and most NGOs and intergovernmental organizations are also bound to strict data protection measures * Concerns of data protection within the dashboard were raised by service providers |
| * There is a need for standardization of methodology and definitions used for data collection otherwise there will be a discrepancy in data based on different definitions, e.g., depending on how household is defined |
| * Lack of minimum data standards: there are no standard requirements put in place by government to inform data collection. As such, different datasets/sources cannot be matched |
| * There was a lack of standard GVH identification codes: data cannot be disaggregated to pre-defined geographic locations unless all actors use standardized codes during the collection of survey or programmatic data |
| * Process of collecting household data with volunteers proved to be problematic due to lack of literacy and capacity of volunteers in collecting data |
| * Process of collecting data with extension workers was also found to be unsustainable, costly and time consuming |
| * There was a lack of minimum gender data requirements to produce socio-economic profile and DDPs at start of the project |
| * There is an inability of the District Councils to coordinate stakeholders |
| * Decisions and actions required of national and district stakeholders to move the project forward and achieve outputs are not made in a timely fashion |
| * The approach for support for VAP, DDP in 2021 changed. Resources in 2021 for VAP support were allocated to digitizing the process. In 2020 the project could only support 9 districts with DDP out of the anticipated 16 districts, because the cost was too high, doubled by the advent of COVID and the cost of PPEs. |
| * There are other UN agencies and development partners who are collecting data sets and have data systems |
| * The Government Wide Area Network (GWAN) has low bandwidth and as such makes meeting internet demands difficult |

# 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the detailed analysis from the evaluation exercise, the following are the main Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) recommendations:

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| **No.** | **Recommendation** | **Responsibilities** |
| 1. | Availability and access to adequate funding remains one of the main barriers to sustainability, replicability and scaling up of project interventions. Due to the limited financial resources of the Government of Malawi and the District Councils, external financial support is required to fully implement the project and scale it up.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. UNDP along with partners should develop a robust resource mobilization strategy to generate further external financial resources to replicate and scale up the project in other districts; and 2. The RCO in partnership with Irish Aid should coordinate a meeting of the donor community to discuss the success of the project and seek additional resources. It is time for donors to re-conceptualize sustainability beyond the government’s financial contribution. Focus should be on the ownership of the project at all levels, including the village, district and national level given the context in Malawi. 3. Government of Malawi should focus on domestic resource mobilization both at the national and district levels. | UNDP, MoLGRD, RCO,  Irish Aid |
| 2. | UNDP, in partnership with the NSO, has drafted minimum data standards to inform data collection to enable the matching of different datasets/sources for the District Councils in Phalombe and Nsanje. Different data producers will use difference codes as unique identifiers making it difficult for future system integration  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. UNDP continue its work with the District Councils and MoLGRD to define and strengthen the data that goes through the sector portals. 2. In consultation with NSO and the MoLGRD, the District Councils proceed on a timely basis to adopt the minimum data standards or revise and adopt different minimum data standards for the District Council and usethose standardized codes to improve data quality and enhance integration of different data sources; and 3. Data standards/standardized codes that have been developed and approved should be enforced by DCs. | UNDP, MoLGRD, Sectors, NSO, District Councils |
| 3. | Service providers are not forthcoming to share data as, inter alia, there is a lack of data sharing protocols being enforced by District Councils.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. UNDP encourage the RCO play a greater role in encouraging UN agencies and the larger development community to share data and provide input to the Hotspots System. 2. MoLGRD play a greater role in encouraging service providers to execute the data sharing protocols. 3. MoLGRD needs to provide guidance to District Councils to facilitate effective implementation of the MoU; and 4. District Councils should also be responsible for enforcing the implementation of the MoU with service providers and report any non-compliance to the DEC and the DMECC. | UNDP, RCO, MoLGRD, District Councils, DEC, DMECC |
| 4. | One of the key elements of the Hotspots Management Platform is the multi-stakeholder platform which is to be led to by local planning authorities to propel service improvements and coordinated action on the SDGs. The platform was to be built on top of the already established structure of the DMECCs as designated by the District Councils. UNDP has produced ToR to focus on coordination, design, financing, and delivery of all hotspot service responses at district. To-date the ToR has not been approved and the process of strengthening the DMECC has not yet started.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The MoLGRD in consultation with the District Councils determine the bottleneck in the approval process of the ToR for the revised DMECC. 2. Revise the ToR for the DMECC, if necessary. 3. Explore an alternative established structure within the District Council to serve as the multi-stakeholder platform. 4. Explore revising the ToR of the TWG (sector heads) of the DEC to include the coordination, design, financing, and delivery of all hotspot service responses at district. | MoLGRD, District Councils,  DEC, TWG, UNDP |
| 5. | One of the benefits of digitizing VAPs and using the VAP app by the VDC is to enable the VDC to update the VAP three times a year (not once every 5 years) by placing the tablets with the VDC. However, the tablets have been removed to the District Council pending use by the VDCs every 5 years. There appears to be a lack of understanding of all the attributes that the digital VAPs bring to local planning by both the VDCs and the District Councils.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The project team, in conjunction with NSO and MoLGRD, initially assist the VDCs in updating the VAPs regularly, and determine how often the VAP should be updated (e.g., three times a year or annually, as deemed necessary). 2. The project capacitates the VDCs and District Councils on the use and attributes of digital VAPs, including the preparation of manuals and the provision of training. | UNDP, MoLGRD, NSO, District Council, VDCs |
| 6. | The Hotspots initiative is part of UNDP’s contribution to the Joint UN programme on data and is being implemented in alignment with other UN partners in Malawi. The UNCT has formed the UN Data Group in Malawi to lead in, inter alia, the identification of areas for joint programming through existing project and programmes and development of a joint programme to promote the integration of data management and strengthen the culture of the use of data in decision makings in all sectors. The Data Group is in the process of organizing a Data Summit which will take place in Q4 of 2021.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The Hotspots initiative be showcased at the Data Summit as a key presenter. 2. The project team utilize the Data Summit to build synergies and complementarities with other projects and potential partners | RCO, Data Group, UNDP, MoLGRD |
| 7. | There are a number of other management information systems (MIS) being developed in Malawi by other UN agencies (e.g., FAO) and development partners (e.g., LAMIS, RFMS) as well as service delivery programmes in Malawi (e.g., GESD).  Therefore, it is recommended:   1. A mapping of the other MIS and data sources be undertaken. 2. An interface meeting be held to assess the other MISs and data sources currently being developed in Malawi. 3. A mapping of service delivery programmes be undertaken; and 4. An interface meeting be held with other service delivery programmes that have being established   for determining complementarities or overlaps with existing programmes. | UNDP, USAID, CRS, WB |
| 8. | A key function of sustainability as the project moves to scaling up is ensuring that the governance and institutional framework is in place. The management tool will only be sustained if the dashboard becomes part of the normal activities of government.  Therefore, it is recommended that:   1. The project examines linkages with other government planning and service delivery systems throughout the entire government, and not just the MoLGRD and DCs, that already have a government budget for data collection, service delivery, e.g., EP & D, NPC 2. In consultation with the MoLGRD, UNDP should undertake the development of a detailed skills transfer strategy. 3. The project invests in strengthening the local systems of government to enable it to embrace the Hotspots’ initiative as the main tool for project decision making and funding. | UNDP, MoLGRD, District Councils, DEC, TWGs, VDCs,  EP & D, NPC |
| 9. | There was not much emphasis on mainstreaming of cross-cutting themes in the project document, e.g. gender mainstreaming and social inclusion.  Therefore, it is recommended as follows:   1. Organize gender mainstreaming workshops for various stakeholders, including the project team, MoLGRD, District Councils, VDCs, TWGs of the DECs, DEC, DMECC, the objective of which is to consult, analyze, reflect and validate gender mainstreaming strategies and activities for the project and review and implement existing gender mainstreaming guidelines. 2. Future projects of this kind should duly incorporate all cross-cutting themes in the project design at the time of the project formulation. The project design should include relevant cross-cutting indicators, targets, interventions, and gender markers across the project results chain. 3. Organize gender mainstreaming workshops for the project team to facilitate further understanding of gender mainstreaming in the project. 4. Work with the MoLGRD to encourage all sectors to approve minimum gender and social welfare service data requirements to produce SEPs and DDPs; and 5. Ensure that the Platform integrates the principle of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in future data collection, analysis, and support to local government administrations | UNDP, Spotlight Initiative, MoLGRD, District Councils, VDCs, DEC, TWG, DMECC |

# Annex 1: Terms of Reference of the Evaluation

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|  | **UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**  **TERMS OF REFERENCE** |

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| 1. **Consultancy information** |
| **Consultancy title:** Mid-term Project Evaluation for SDG Hotspots Acceleration Initiative  **Duration:** 30 days  **Duty Station:** Lilongwe, Malawi with travel to Phalombe and Nsanje districts |
| 1. **Background and context** |
| Malawi is one of the first countries in Africa to adapt the Hotspots approach to local development planning and prioritization of service delivery as an effort to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. Th SDG Hotspots Acceleration Initiative (SHAI) project runs from January 2020 to December 2023. The project has established the SDG Hotspots Data Management Platform - an integrated data management tool designed to improve decentralized implementation of services across social, economic and environmental sectors. The approach involves:   1. A **real-time data** **dashboard** collected from household and service providers[[18]](#footnote-18) — that digitalizes and geo-references both well-being indicators and service indicators — improving transparency and enabling policymakers and citizens to better understand and measure progress on multidimensional development challenges. The service and well-being indicators are derived from the contact, process and impact indicators of the different services provided by government, NGOs and various UN agencies. By contact indicators is meant the means of service delivery; how citizens access the service. The process indicators are the detailed steps and protocol for service delivery. The impact indicators are basically the performance indicators for specific service lines. The dashboard is further able to identify bottlenecks negatively affecting service delivery in areas such as health, nutrition, education, employment, resilience, agricultural productivity, capacity and others so that these can be addressed, and service delivery improved. Indicator design shall contain analysis by social group variables of sex, age and ability. 2. A **multi-stakeholder platform** led by local planning authorities to strengthen the use of evidence to propel service improvements that target communities, households and people most in need of building resilience to shocks, accelerating critical and coordinated action on the SDGs, leaving no one behind. 3. **Coordinated, targeted “SDG Hotspot[[19]](#footnote-19) service response”,** where multiple service providers come together around one multidimensional development challenge and bring a combined package of services to the household level in a campaign style sweep of geographically defined areas, based on analysis of data in the hotspots map.   For the first phase of the roll out, Phalombe and Nsanje districts were selected because they rate low on several social and economic indicators and complete Universal Beneficiary Registry (UBR) data sets were available for the districts. The initiative was formally adopted as a project and began implementation in January 2020, with the Irish Aid as the donor. |
| 1. **Purpose of the evaluation** |
| This evaluation is being conducted to provide insights and feedback on the progress of the project to date. The evaluation will be both forward-looking, and utilisation focused and will elaborate lessons and best practices to inform programming as the project uses the lessons learnt from the pilot to scale up to additional districts. This evaluation will assess relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, sustainability, and impact of the project and of the results. The evaluation will assess the intended and unintended outcomes of the SHAI project and recommend strategies for future operational and programmatic effectiveness.    The evaluation serves as an important accountability function, providing national stakeholders and partners with an impartial assessment of the results including gender equality results of this project.  The project is funded by Irish Aid and DfID through the PROSPER programme, and works closely with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EP&D), National Statistical Office (NSO), National Planning Commission (NPC), and other UN and development partners. |
| 1. **Evaluation scope and objectives** |
| **Scope**  The evaluation will cover the period of 1 January 2020-30 June 2021 and cover programme design, implementation, monitoring of results. The evaluation will also focus performance of indicators agreed with the donors.  In addition to assessing the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the SHAI project, the evaluation will explore the key factors that have contributed to the achieving or not achieving of the intended results; determine the extent to which the SHAI project contributed to building capacities; addressing crosscutting issues of gender and human rights; forging partnership at different levels, including with government, donors, UN agencies, and communities; sustainability of the SHAI project for continued realisation of results; and to draw lessons learned and best practices and make recommendations for future programming of projects of similar nature.  **Specific evaluation objectives are to assess:**   1. The relevance and strategic positioning of UNDP support to the SHAI project and whether the initial assumptions remain relevant for the project. 2. The progress to date under each output and what can be derived in terms of lessons learned for support towards improved integrated data management, stakeholder engagement and local service delivery. 3. How the project approach has succeeded to strengthen the delivery of public services to socially vulnerable groups such as children and the disabled, by applying a rights-based approach and gender mainstreaming. 4. The relevance of the hotspots approach to improving public service delivery and overall contribution to the achievement of SDGs and local development goals. 5. Government buy in and ‘excitement’ for the concept and implementation of the project thus far.   **Target Audience**  UNDP, Irish Aid, the project partners, including beneficiaries and stakeholders of the project as defined by the project support document. |
| 1. **Evaluation questions** |
| The evaluation seeks to answer the following questions, focused around the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability:  **Relevance**   1. To what extent is UNDP’s engagement a reflection of strategic considerations, including UNDP’s role in the particular development context in Malawi and its comparative advantage vis-a-vis other partners? 2. Was the design of the project adequate to properly address the issues envisaged in the formulation of the programme? 3. Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended outcomes and effects? 4. To what extent has UNDP capacity building support contributed to influencing national policies/strategies focusing on effective public service delivery, gender equality and equitable sustainable development? 5. To what extent was UNDP’s selected method of analysis and delivery appropriate to the development context?   **Effectiveness**   1. To what extent have project results/targets been achieved or has progress been made towards their achievement? 2. What has been the contribution of other UNDP projects, partners and other organizations to the project results, and how effective have project partnerships been in contributing to achieving the results? 3. What were the positive or negative, intended or unintended, changes brought about by the project’s work? 4. To what extent did the project benefit women and men equally?   **Efficiency**   1. Has the project implementation strategy and approaches, conceptual framework and execution been efficient and cost effective? Are they sufficiently sensitive to the political and development constraints of the country? 2. Has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outputs? 3. To what extent were quality outputs delivered on time? 4. Could a different approach have produced better results? 5. How is the project management structure operating? 6. To what extent did monitoring systems provide management with a stream of data that allowed it to learn and adjust implementation accordingly? Did it help ensure effective and efficient project management and accountability of results?   **Sustainability**   1. What indications are there that the project results will be or have been sustained, e.g., through requisite capacities (systems, structures, staff, etc.)? 2. To what extent has a sustainability strategy, including capacity development of key national stakeholders, been developed or implemented? 3. To what extent are policy and regulatory frameworks in place that will support the continuation of benefits? 4. How will concerns for gender equality, human rights and human development be taken forward by primary stakeholders?   **Partnership strategy**   1. To what extent were partnership modalities conducive to the delivery of outputs? 2. Are there current or potential complementarities or overlaps with existing partners’ programmes? 3. How have partnerships affected the progress towards achieving the outputs? 4. Has UNDP worked effectively with partners to deliver on this current initiative? 5. How effective has UNDP been in partnering with civil society (where applicable) and the private sector to promote evidence-based service delivery in the country?     The evaluation should also include an assessment of the extent to which programme design, implementation and monitoring have taken the following cross cutting issues into consideration:  **Gender**   1. To what extent has gender been addressed in the design, implementation and monitoring of programme interventions? Is gender marker data assigned this project representative of reality? 2. How were gender issues implemented as a cross-cutting theme? Did the project give sufficient attention to promote gender equality and gender-sensitivity? 3. To what extent did the project pay attention to effects on marginalized, vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups? 4. To what extent was the project informed by human rights treaties and instruments? 5. To what extent did the project identify the relevant human rights claims and obligations? 6. How were gaps identified in the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights, and of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations, including an analysis of gender and marginalized and vulnerable groups, and how the design and implementation of the project addressed these gaps?   **Social inclusion**   1. How did the project consider the plight and needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged to promote social equity, for example, women, youth, disabled persons?   Based on the above analysis, the evaluator is expected to provide overarching conclusions on the project results in this area of support, as well as recommendations on how the UNDP Malawi could adjust its programming, partnership arrangements, resource mobilization strategies, and capacities for similar future initiatives. |
| **6. Methodology for the evaluation** |
| The evaluation will be carried out in accordance with UNEG Evaluation Norms and Standards of Evaluation and Ethical Standards as well as OECD/DAC evaluation principles and guidelines and fully compliant with the DAC Evaluation Quality Standards (206). This mid-term evaluation involves qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate programme implementation and performance, and make recommendations for the remainder of the programme next programme cycle.  The evaluation will be carried out by an independent evaluator and will engage a broad range of key stakeholders and beneficiaries, including government officials. Evidence obtained and used to assess the results of UNDP support should be triangulated from a variety of sources, including verifiable data on indicator achievement, existing reports, and technical papers, stakeholder interviews, focus groups, surveys and site visits as applicable.  **Data Collection**  The mid-term evaluation will be carried out through a wide participation of all relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EP&D), National Statistical Office (NSO), National Planning Commission (NPC), Irish Aid, and other UN and development partners. Field visits will be undertaken to selected project sites in Phalombe and Nsanje. Briefing and debriefing sessions with UNDP and the government officials are envisaged. Data collected should be disaggregated by sex, age and location where possible.  In order to use existing sources/information and avoid duplication, data will be mainly collected from various information sources through a comprehensive desk review that will include the analysis of relevant documents, information, data/statistics, triangulation of different studies etc. Data will also be collected from stakeholder key informants through interviews, discussions, consultative processes, and observations in field missions. This phase will comprise:   1. Review and analysis of relevant documents, including government strategies, programmatic documents & reports; UN(DP) strategic documents, project documents & reports; recent studies and research reports, developmental and social reports, (see list attached and relevant links); 2. Critical analysis of available data with regards to the national guiding documents as well as the intended project inputs to the GRSS.   The evaluation will benefit from and optimally use the data collected through other evaluation exercises, such as the project mid-term evaluation, programmatic surveys/evaluations, donor reports, outcome evaluations to determine the effectiveness of the project in supporting the achievement of national priorities. Other documents to be reviewed are in Annex 1. |
| **7. Evaluation timeline** |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Activity** | **Deliverable** | **Time allocated** | | Evaluation design, methodology and detailed work plan | **Inception report** | **5 days** | | Inception Meeting Initial briefing | | Documents review and stakeholder consultations | **Draft report** | **20 days** | | Field Visits | | Data analysis, debriefing and presentation of draft Evaluation Report | | Validation Workshop | | Finalization of evaluation report incorporating additions and comments provided by all stakeholders and submission to UNDP Malawi. | **Final evaluation report** | **5 days** | | **Total number of working days** | | **30 days** | |
| **7. Evaluation products (Deliverables)** |
| Under the guidance and supervision of the Governance Portfolio Manager, in consultation with the Programme Results Management Unit, and the mid-term evaluation reference group, the consultant shall provide the following deliverables:   1. **Inception report:** The evaluator will prepare an inception report that details the evaluator’s understanding of the evaluation and how the evaluation questions will be addressed. This is to ensure that the evaluator and the stakeholders have a shared understanding of the evaluation. The inception report will include the evaluation matrix summarizing the evaluation design, methodology, evaluation questions, data sources and collection analysis tool for each data source and the measure by which each question will be evaluated. The evaluator will also propose a rating scale in order that a performance rating will be carried out for the four evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The inception report will be discussed and agreed with partners and UNDP before the evaluator can proceed with site visits. (**Structure Annexe 2)** 2. **Draft mid-term evaluation report** - The consultant will prepare the draft evaluation report cognisant of the proposed format of the report and checklist used for the assessment of evaluation reports (see annexes). The report will be submitted to the mid-term evaluation reference group through the UNDP Resident Representative for validation. Comments from the mid-term evaluation reference group, and stakeholders will be provided within 10 days after receiving the draft report. The report will be reviewed to ensure that the evaluation meets the required quality criteria. The evaluator will produce an ‘audit trail’ indicating whether and how each comment received was addressed in revisions to the final report. The report will be produced in English. 3. **Final evaluation Report.** The final report (30-50 pages) will include comments from the mid-term evaluation reference group will be submitted 10 days after receiving all comments. This will be submitted to the mid-term evaluation reference group through the UNDP Resident Representative for validation. It will include recommendations, policy options and conclusions. (**Structure in Annexe 3)** |
| **8. Evaluation team composition and required competencies** |
| **Functional competencies**   * Minimum Master’s degree in in the fields of Public Administration, Economics, Human Rights, Conflict Prevention, Development Studies, International Development, Political Science, or any other relevant university degree. * Minimum 10-15 years of professional experience in areas of democratic governance, public administration, human rights, regional development, gender equality and social services. * At least 10 years of experience in conducting evaluations of government and international development organisations. * Direct experience with civil service capacity building is an added advantage. * Excellent writing skills with a strong background in report drafting. * Demonstrated ability and willingness to work with people of different cultural, ethnic and religious background, different gender, and diverse political views. * Ability to use critical thinking, conceptualize ideas, and articulate relevant subject matter in a clear and concise way. * Fluency in English is required.   **Corporate competencies**   * Demonstrated integrity by upholding the United Nations' values and ethical standards. * Appreciate differences in values and learning from cultural diversities. * Promotes UNDP vision, mission and strategic goals. * Displays cultural, gender, religion, race, nationality and age-based sensitivity and adaptability. * Demonstrates diplomacy and tact in dealing with sensitive and complex situations.   **Professionalism**   * Demonstrates professional competence and mastery of subject matter. * Demonstrated ability to negotiate and apply good judgment. * Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results. |
| **Planning & Organizing**   * Establishes, builds and maintains effective working relationships with colleagues to achieve the planned results. |
| 1. **Evaluation ethics** |
| This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG ‘Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. The consultant must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees and stakeholders through measures to ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on it data. The consultant must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses unless with the express authorisation of UNDP and partners. |
| 1. **Implementation arrangements** |
| UNDP will be responsible for the management of the consultant and will in this regard designate focal persons for the evaluation and any additional staff to assist in facilitating the process (e.g., providing relevant documentation, arranging visits/interviews with key informants, etc.) The UNDP will take responsibility for the approval of the final evaluation report in liaison with the partners.  The designated focal point will assist the consultant in arranging introductory meetings with the relevant parties in UNDP, partners and government and civil society.   * The consultant will work full time, based in UNDP Malawi. Office space and limited administrative and logistical support will be provided. The consultant will use her/his own laptop and cell phone. * The consultant will report to the Governance Portfolio Manager and the evaluation reference group that will review progress and will certify delivery of outputs. |
| 1. **How to apply** |
| Please submit the following documents:   * Profile (max. 2 pages) detailing suitability, experience and proposed methodology to successfully accomplish the task; * **Please note that applications which do not have a proposed methodology will not be considered.** * Completed CV * Financial proposal as per Section 9 below. |
| 1. **Financial Proposal** |
| The financial proposal must be expressed as an all-inclusive lump sum amount in USD, presented in the following template:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | Unit cost (USD) | No. | Total | | a) Professional fee: |  |  |  | | b) Daily Subsistence Rate: |  |  |  | | c) Other costs (specify): |  |  |  | | Total (lump sum): | | |  |   Notes:   1. The information in the breakdown of the offered lump sum amount provided by the Offeror will be used as the basis for determining best value for money, and as reference for any amendments of the contract; 2. The agreed contract amount will remain fixed regardless of any factors causing an increase in the cost of any of the components in the breakdown that are not directly attributable to UNDP; 3. Approved local travel related to this assignment will be arranged and paid by UNDP Malawi; 4. The contractor is responsible for arranging and meeting the cost of their vaccinations and medical/life insurance. |
| 1. **Selection criteria** |
| Offers received will be evaluated using a combined scoring method, where the qualifications, experience and proposed approach will be weighted 70%, and combined with the price offer, which will be weighted 30%.  Breakdown of technical proposal on 100% which will be brought to 70%:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Criteria** | **Max Points** | | Minimum Master’s degree in in the fields of Public Administration, Economics, Human Rights, Conflict Prevention, Development Studies, International Development, Political Science, or any other relevant university degree. | 10 | | Minimum 10-15 years of professional experience in areas of democratic governance, public administration, human rights, regional development, gender equality and social services. | 20 | | At least 10 years of experience in conducting evaluations of government and international development organisations. | 35 | | Fluency in English is required. | 5 | | **TOTAL** | **70** |   Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 49 points in the Technical Evaluation will be considered for the Financial Evaluation.  Financial evaluation (total 30 points):  All technically qualified proposals will be scored out of 30 based on the formula provided below. The maximum points (30) will be assigned to the lowest financial proposal. All other proposals receive points according to the following formula:              p = y (μ/z)  where:   * p = points for the financial proposal being evaluated * y = maximum number of points for the financial proposal * μ = price of the lowest priced proposal * z = price of the proposal being evaluated. |
| 1. **Schedule of payments** |
| **13. Cost**  Interested consultants should provide their requested fee rates in USD when they submit their expressions of interest. Fee payments will be made upon acceptance and approval by the UNDP and MOJLPA of planned deliverables, based on the following payment schedule:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Inception report | 10% | | Draft Evaluation and Lesson Learned Report | 70% | | Final Evaluation and lesson learned Report | 20% | |

1. **Annexes**

**Annex 1: Recommended list of documents**

1. UNEG standard for evaluation in the UN system, UNDP evaluation policy
2. UNDP handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluation of development results
3. United Nations Global Strategy
4. Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III
5. Project annual work plans
6. Project annual reports – Year 1
7. Project board minutes

**Annex 2: Structure of inception report**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Introduction** | 1.1. Objective of the evaluation  1.2. Background and context  1.3. Scope of the evaluation |
| **Methodology** | 2.1. Evaluation criteria and questions  2.2. Conceptual framework  2.3. Evaluability  2.4. Data collection methods  2.5. Analytical approaches  2.6. Risks and potential shortcomings |
| **Programme of work** | 3.1. Phases of work  3.2. Team composition and responsibilities  3.3. Management and logistic support  3.4. Calendar of work |
| **Annexes** | 1. Terms of reference of the evaluation  2. Evaluation matrix  3. Stakeholder map  4. Tentative outline of the main report  5. Interview checklists/protocols  6. Outcome model  7. Detailed responsibilities of evaluation team members  8. Reference documents  9. Document map  10. Project list  11. Project mapping  12. Detailed work plan |

**Annex 3: Structure for final evaluation report**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Indicative Section** | **Description and comments** |
| **Title and opening pages** | Name of programme or theme being evaluated  Country of programme  Name of the organization to which the report is submitted  Names and affiliations of the evaluators  Date |
| **Table of contents** |  |
| **List of acronyms and abbreviations** |  |
| **Executive summary** | This should be an extremely short chapter, highlighting the evaluation mandate, approach, key findings, conclusions and recommendations. Often, readers will only look at the executive summary. It should be prepared ***after*** the main text has been reviewed and agreed and should not be circulated with draft reports. |
| **Chapter 1: Introduction** | Introduce the rationale for the evaluation, including mandate, purpose and objectives, outline the main evaluation issues including the expected contribution at the outcome level, address evaluability and describe the methodology to be used. Refer to the outcome model and evaluation matrix, to be attached as annexes. |
| **Chapter 2: The Development challenge** | In addition to providing a general overview of historical trends and development challenges, specifically address the development challenge in the data management and service delivery. Explain how issues surrounding data management and service delivery have been addressed by government, and how it is reflected in national policies and strategies. Also provide information on the activities of other development partners in the area. |
| **Chapter 3: UNDP response and challenges** | Against the background of Chapter 2, explain what the project has done in this area (purely descriptive, not analytical). Provide the overarching outcome model, specifying the results frameworks for the project, descriptions of the main project activities, especially if they are going to be assessed later. |
| **Chapter 4: Contribution to results** | Against the background of Chapters 2-3, analyse findings without repeating information already provided. Also, minimize the need to mention additional factual information regarding projects and programmes (these should be described in Chapter 3). Focus on providing and analysing ***evidence*** relating to the evaluation criteria.  Preferably, structure the analysis on the basis of the main evaluation criteria:   * Relevance (of UNDP’s involvement and the project approach) * Effectiveness (in contributing to the achievement of project outcomes, outputs). * Efficiency (in delivering outputs) * Sustainability (of the project outcomes, outputs) * Gender considerations * Social inclusion   In addressing the evaluation criteria, the narrative should respond to the corresponding questions identified in the evaluation matrix and provide a summary analysis of the findings. Partnerships play a key role in ensuring that primary stakeholders achieve outcomes. As such, all evaluation criteria should cover relevant aspects of partnership: i.e., how were they relevant; how effective were they in contributing to the achievement of project outcomes, outputs; how efficiently were they managed; and how sustainable are they?  Where appropriate, discuss cross-cutting themes separately using the main evaluation criteria.  **Do not allow the discussion to drift into conclusions and recommendations.** |
| **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations** | Conclusions are judgements based on evidence provided in Chapter 4. They are pitched at a higher level and are informed by an overall, comparative understanding of all relevant issues, options and opportunities.  Do not provide new evidence or repeat evidence contained in earlier chapters.  Recommendations should be derived from the evidence contained in Chapter 4. They may also, but need not necessarily, relate to conclusions. In line with the nature of the evaluation, some recommendations may be more strategic in nature, while others may be more action-oriented. Recommendations should be important and succinct.  **Please limit to 5-10.** |
| **Annexes** | * ToR for the mid-term evaluation. * List persons interviewed, sites visited. * List documents reviewed (reports, publications). * Data collection instruments (e.g. copies of questionnaires, surveys, etc.).   + Assessment of the progress by outcomes and outputs, in relevance to the nationally defined goals.   + Photos   + Stories worth telling (most significant changes [MSC]) |

**Annex 4: Sample Evaluation Matrix**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Relevant evaluation criteria** | **Key Questions** | **Specific Sub-Questions** | **Data Sources** | **Data collection Methods/ Tools** | **Indicators/Success Standard** | **Methods for Data Analysis** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

# Annex 2: List of Individuals Consulted

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Dates of Consultations** | **Name of Individual** | **Organization and Position within Organization** | **Email** | **Other Contact Information** |
| 17-06-2021 | Julie Vandassen  Christina Maseko | Hotspots Governance Adviser  UNDP  Hotspots Project Manager, Programme Analyst  UNDP | [julie.vandassen@undp.org](mailto:julie.vandassen@undp.org)  [christina.maseko@undp.org](mailto:christina.maseko@undp.org) | Mobile: +265 99 307 0047  Mobile: +265 88 844 1456 |
| 22-06-2021 | Christina Maseko  Julie Vandassen  Mercy Chirambo  Moses Masaiti  Precious Nkoka | Hotspots Project Manager  UNDP  Hotspots Governance Adviser  UNDP  Hotspots Programme Analyst  UNDP  Hotspots Data Specialist  UNDP  Hotspots Field Manager  UNDP | [christina.maseko@undp.org](mailto:christina.maseko@undp.org)  [julie.vandassen@undp.org](mailto:julie.vandassen@undp.org)  [mercy.chirambo@undp.org](mailto:mercy.chirambo@undp.org)  [moses.masaiti@undp.org](mailto:moses.masaiti@undp.org)  [precious.nkoka@undp.org](mailto:precious.nkoka@undp.org) | Mobile: +265 88 844 1456  Mobile: +265 99 307 0047  Mobile: +265 880 035 056  Mobile: +265 998 675 804  Mobile: +265 99 769 4200 |
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| 08-07-2021 | Christina Maseko  Precious Nkoka  Julie Vandassen | Hotspots Project Manager  UNDP  Hotspots Field Manager  UNDP  Hotspots Governance Adviser  UNDP | [christina.maseko@undp.org](mailto:christina.maseko@undp.org)  [precious.nkoka@undp.org](mailto:precious.nkoka@undp.org)  [julie.vandassen@undp.org](mailto:julie.vandassen@undp.org) | Mobile: +265 88 844 1456  Mobile: +265 99 769 4200  Mobile: +265 99 307 0047 |
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| 09-07-2021 | James Campbell | Chief of Party  Rapid Feedback Monitoring System (RFMS)  Catholic Relief Services (CRS) | [james.campbell@crs.org](mailto:james.campbell@crs.org) |  |
| 12-07-2021 | Barnet Chidziwe  Adack Tawanga  Chrissie Walusa  Stella Simon  Magret Mussa  Modester Paplusi  Asiyawo Sonyo  Aisha Magombo  Fanny Alfred  Margaret Simeon  Abese Mangani  Lejina Aironi  Bertha Benesoni  Josophine Gonyole  Modesta Jumbe  Cecelia Makiyi  Mary Saimoni  Margret Makoka  Loveness Maononga  Eliza Mwendekale  Lucy Kachala  Jumbe Zakariya  Lamosi Chikopa  Harrison Chabola  Blessings Wadson  Edward Chitsulo  Lucia Isaac | VDC Chair -Gunda GVH  Member  Member  Secretary  NICE ACEC  Member  Member  Women Representative  Women Representative  VDC Vice-Chair  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Mother Group member  Group Village Head Chome  Group Village Head Gunda  Senior Group Village Head Gunda  VDC member  VDC member  Group Village Head Mkhwayi |  |  |
| 12-07-21 | Rodrick Mateauma | District Commissioner  Phalombe District Council | [rodiem66@gmail.com](mailto:rodiem66@gmail.com) | **Mobile: +265 999 214 268** |
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|  |  |  |  |  |
| 16-07-2021 | Ernest Mlenga | Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI)  Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Director  Local Government Accountability Performance programme (LGAP) | [ernest\_mlenga@dai.co](mailto:ernest_mlenga@dai.co) | **Mobile: +265 882 605 305** |
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| 19-07-2021 | Max Bonnel | Head of Office, UN Resident Coordinator’s Office Malawi (UNRCO) | [max.bonnel@one.un.org](mailto:max.bonnel@one.un.org) | Telephone: +265 1 773 500  Mobile: +265 994 000 303 |
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| 20-07-2021 | Walusungu Vitumbiko Kayira | Deputy Director of Planning and Policy  Ministry of Local Development and Rural Government | [wvkayira@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:wvkayira@yahoo.co.uk) | Mobile: +265 (0) 999 198 913 |
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| 22-07-2021 | Charles Kalemba  Co-Chairperson of Steering Committee | Secretary for MoLGRD |  |  |
|  | Rugare Mukanganise  Co-Chairperson of Steering Committee | Deputy Resident Representative (a.i)  UNDP |  |  |
|  | Julie Van Dassen | Portfolio Manager – Governance UNDP |  |  |
|  | Dr. Agnes Chimbiri | Senior Governance Advisor UNDP |  |  |
|  | Walusungu Kayira | Deputy Director Planning  MoLGRD |  |  |
|  | Mercy Kanyuka | Commissioner for Statistics NSO |  |  |
|  | Christina Maseko | Hotspots Project Manager  Programme Analyst,  Governance UNDP |  |  |
|  | Precious Nkoka | Hotspots Field Manager |  |  |
|  | Moses Masaiti | Hotspots Data Analyst |  |  |
|  | Mercy Chirambo | Hotspots Programme Analyst |  |  |
|  | Jessie Kalepa | Programme Analyst, Accountability UNDP |  |  |
|  | Sylvester Gawamadzi | Deputy Director, M & E  MoLG |  |  |
|  | Moses Zuze | Principal Economist  MoLG |  |  |
|  | Flemmings Nyirenda | Chief Economist  MoLG |  |  |
|  | Diarmuid Maclean | Deputy Head of Mission  Embassy of Ireland |  |  |
|  | Gerald Chigona | Governance Advisor  Irish Aid |  |  |
|  | Alick Mphonda | Director NSO |  |  |
|  | Lameck Million | Chief Economist NSO |  |  |
|  | Lucy Ndiwo | Principal Nutrition Officer  Phalombe District Council |  |  |
|  | Lukes Kalilombe | Director MoLG |  |  |
|  | Raphael Lali | Economist MoLG |  |  |
|  | Rodric Mateauma | District Commissioner  Phalombe District Council |  |  |
|  | Smith Mnenula | Director of Planning and Development  Nsanje District Council |  |  |
|  | Chrispin Kalungulu | Principal Economist-Planning MoLG |  |  |
|  | Charles Chinangwa | Principal Economist-Planning  MoLG |  |  |
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# Annex 3: List of Documents Reviewed

2020 Annual Progress Report – Year 1

2020 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

2020 Work Plan

2020 Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) Plan

2021 Annual Work Plan (AWP) 3 January – 31 December 2021

2021 M & P Plan

2021 Q1 Progress Report

2021 Q2 Progress Report

Agenda for Development of Nsanje Action Plan for Integrated Service Response (GVH Tizola) meeting held on 2 June 2021

GVH Gunda Action Plan

GVH Gunda Hotspots Assessment

GVH Tizola Hotspots Assessment (Draft)

GVH Tizola Action Plan

Hotspots Assessment Survey – Final

Hotspots Evaluation Stakeholder List as at 12 June 2021

Minutes of the SDG Hotspots Technical Committee Meeting, Tuesday 23 March 2021

Minutes of the SDG Hotspots Technical Committee Meeting, Wednesday 21 June 2021

OECD/DAC Evaluation Criteria

Project Document (PRODOC) executed 10/01/2020

SDG Hotspots Initiative Survey Tool 2020

Self-Reporting Tool

Sustainable Development Goals

UN Malawi, “Common Country Analysis (CCA) Update 2021 (Draft)”, June 2021

UN Global Strategy

UNDP, “Country Programme Document (CPD) for Malawi (2019-2023)”

UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), “Evaluation Guidelines, Revised Edition: June 2021”

UNDP Malawi Project Document dated 10 January 2020

UNDP, “SDG Hotspots: Trending, Mapping and Dash-boarding Off-Track SDGs”, July 25, 2018

UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021

UNDP-RBLAC, “SDG Hotspots in LAC: Data Capabilities, Local Platforms and New Sources of Financing for SDG Acceleration”, July 2018

UNEG, “Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation”, 2020

UNEG, “Evaluation Norms and Standards for Evaluation”, 2017

UNEG, “Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming: Guidance Document”, April 2018

UNSDCF 2019-2023

1. UNDP, “SDG Hotspots: Trending, Mapping and Dash-boarding Off-Track SDGs”, July 25, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Formerly Department for International Development (Dfid) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. GVH Gunda Hotspots Assessment report [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Data sources include government ministries, agencies, and departments; development partners; non-governmental organizations; community-based organizations; academia; and the private sector [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. If possible, testing dashboard with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) responsive data [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In Malawi, the Hotspots Initiative was adapted to the local planning process as a local planning service delivery tool; in Latin American it was a high-level central government planning tool. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Project Document, page 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC), “SDSG Hotspots in LAC: Data Capabilities, Local Platforms and New Sources of Financing for SDG Acceleration”, June 27, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. UNDP has retained a GIS consultant to develop the GIS functionality for the whole system. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Consolidated VAPs describes the currently approved MoLG process for preparing Village Action Plans [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The initial Programme Manager was Nathan Leibel who was replaced in 2021 by project team member Christina Maseko. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. To-date the 2012 Statistics Act has not been amended. The proposed review and amendment was forwarded to the MoJ; however the individual responsible for the review left the MoJ and no further action has been undertaken [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. UNDP, Country Programme Document for Malawi (2019-2023) [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Gender marker data provides a means to categorize project outputs based on their “gender relevance” and expected contribution to gender equality and/or the empowerment of women (GEEW) within the context of inclusive and sustainable development: See UNIDO Gender: Gender Marker User Guide [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. UNEG, “Guidance on Evaluating Institutional Gender Mainstreaming: Guidance Document”, April 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. UNDP, RBLAC, “SDG Hotspots in LAC: Data Capabilities, Local Platforms & New Sources of Financing for SDG Acceleration: June 27, 2018. The note was prepared by George Gray Molina, Luca Renda and Alejandro Pacheco, in preparation for RBLAC’s DRR meeting in Panama, June 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. UNDP, “SDG Hotspots: Trending, Mapping and Dash-boarding Off- Track SDGs”, July 25, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Data sources include government ministries, agencies and departments; development partners; non-government organizations; community-based organizations; academia; and private sector actors. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. SDG Hotspots are geographical areas that display intersections of multiple SDG gaps, exclusions and deprivations. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)