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COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION MALAWI



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MALAWI

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability
responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT
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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for Malawi.

The evaluation comes as Malawi begins to implement its 2063 Vision, a far-reaching plan that encourages change at all levels, to foster economic growth and improve public services. The evaluation recognizes the support UNDP has provided to help frame and pursue this vision, and the innovative solutions it has put forward to expand the capacity of public institutions. Malawi 2063 highlights the great potential that the country has in its people, and this evaluation identifies areas where UNDP has helped to expand opportunities for smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs, civil servants working on public reform, and civil society organizations supporting justice and peace processes.

The Leave No One Behind principle of the Sustainable Development Goals acknowledges that it is not inevitable that economic growth will benefit those who face financial, physical, social or other impediments to their pathways out of poverty. The severe weather events of the past decade, most recently Hurricane Freddy in early 2023, are an unfortunate reminder that many people in Malawi experience compound and repeated shocks from natural disasters that exacerbate economic hardship. The evaluation notes that the Government, UNDP and donors need to increase their attention to spur longer-term vulnerability reduction that benefits all citizens. We urge the country office to further expand its programming in support of the poorest and most vulnerable during the next programming cycle, and to promote greater integration of climate considerations across development sectors. Such recommendations build upon the important role that UNDP plays as a catalyst for sustainable and equitable economic growth.

I extend my gratitude to the Government of Malawi, national partners and stakeholders, the UNDP country office in Malawi and Regional Bureau for Africa, for their support throughout the evaluation. I hope that the findings, conclusions and recommendations strengthen the formulation of the next UNDP country programme strategy, and ultimately help to achieve inclusive and sustainable development for the people of Malawi.

Alan Fox
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRE	Access to Clean and Renewable Energy
AWP	Annual workplan
BIOFIN	Biodiversity Finance Initiative
CMD	Centre for Multiparty Democracy
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil society organization
DDP	District Development Plan
DIAT	Development Impact Advisory Team
DIM	Direct Implementation Modality
DRM4R	Disaster Risk Management for Resilience programme
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EHIn	Electronic Health Intelligence system
EP&D	Department for Economic Planning and Development
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCDO	United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IACADES	Increasing Access to Affordable Renewable Energy Services project
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ID	Identity document
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
M-Climes	Modernized Climate Information and Early Warning Systems
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission

MICF	Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund
MIP1	First Malawi Implementation Plan
MP	Member of Parliament
NCRP	National Climate Resilience Programme
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIM	National Implementation Modality
NPC	National Planning Commission
NRIS	National Registration and Identification System
ODA	Official development assistance
PASI	Paralegal Advisory Service Institute
PEA	Poverty Environment Action project
PICSA	Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture
PMSU	Programme Management Support Unit
PSDII	Private Sector Development Programme II
RBA	UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
RSG	Resilience and Sustainable Growth portfolio
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEP	Socioeconomic Profile
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
TRANSFORM	Transformational Adaptation to Climate Resilience in Malawi project
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAP	Village Action Plan
VMP	Access to Justice through Village Mediation and Paralegal Services project

Evaluation Brief: Malawi

National economic growth in Malawi is heavily reliant on the export of a small number of agricultural commodities, whilst 85 percent of the population depends on small-scale, rain-fed and low-input farming for their livelihoods and household food consumption. Over the past five decades, Malawi has experienced 19 major floods and seven droughts, with these events increasing in frequency, magnitude and scope, and registering cumulative impacts on national growth and poverty levels. Malawi has been characterized as 'policy rich but implementation poor', with a stalled decentralization process, limited coordination, and typically short-term donor initiatives all attributing to low policy completion.

In the 2019-2023 programming period, the principal objective of UNDP was to contribute to a reduction of poverty, inequality and vulnerability to shocks. The country office focused on three priority areas, namely:

- i. Enhancing economic innovation, inclusive business, job creation and renewable energy access;
- ii. Scaling up climate adaptation and resilience to shocks; and
- iii. Strengthening effective, accountable and inclusive governance.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The evaluation finds that UNDP has introduced new approaches that complement the Government's focus on economic growth, and support several of the key enablers in Malawi's Vision to become an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation by 2063. Supporting the Government to conduct a systematic multi-year scan of economic opportunities and risks, UNDP has set in motion joint working opportunities across and beyond ministries. The country office has demonstrated a successful model for encouraging private sector activity aligned with the national growth strategy, and, if pro-poor impacts can be sustained and replicated, the model may enable the inclusion of smallholder farmers in future economic growth.

Access to electricity is a major challenge for households and businesses in Malawi, and UNDP has increased the viability of community-scale off-grid renewable energy in Malawi through key policies and projects. Despite government targets for the uptake of renewable energy, slow progress has limited the multiplier effect of UNDP pilot initiatives, and little has been achieved by support to shift energy users away from unsustainable biomass.

UNDP has been a key contributor to Malawi's growing focus on climate change, supporting a broad portfolio of downstream resilience initiatives and increasing anticipatory capacity at national, district, village and farm levels. Malawi's climate response still lacks coherence between policy and programming across sectors, and it is often difficult for national and decentralized governments to take ownership of UNDP downstream initiatives. Support for the Government to source and manage climate financing is highly relevant, though the amounts mobilized to date remain low compared to forecast adaptation costs.

In its support to public sector reforms, UNDP has provided significant technical assistance to encourage 'home grown' innovation skills to address specific service provision problems. The National Registration and Identification System project has transformed systems and processes in key ministries, departments and associated institutions, and now requires further support to improve the infrastructure and user-experience. UNDP digital initiatives have improved information flow within and between some government and private institutions, but have also added to an uncoordinated digital environment in Malawi, and have not improved

citizen engagement or government accountability, despite capturing local data. UNDP-supported initiatives have helped to extend and improve the provision of legal guidance and bridge the gap between Malawi's formal and informal justice systems, reducing the number of minor cases that enter time- and cost-intensive formal processes, and the number of people in pre-trial detention.

UNDP support enhanced the core functions of institutions that promote participation and representation, enabling them to adapt and modernize during the COVID-19 pandemic. A focus on long-standing institutions has overlooked critical stakeholders that could broaden and enhance the role of citizens. Through the Spotlight Initiative, UNDP has contributed to gender equality advancements in Malawi, though beyond this notable programme, the country office has largely taken a targeting approach to gender and not paid sufficient attention to the role of women in its programmes.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: UNDP should continue its support for the first Malawi Implementation Plan (MIP1) and Malawi 2063, enabling their coordination groups to become effective spaces for driving Malawian economic growth. To do so, UNDP should: 1) incorporate the objectives of the coordination groups in all of its engagements with ministries, districts, development partners and the private sector; and 2) assess the structural barriers and incentives for cross-government working.

Recommendation 2: UNDP should ensure that its next governance programme considers a broad range of actors in society, identifying those that support civic engagement and those that hinder stability. It should look beyond the usual partners and find opportunities to enhance the capacity of entities that support women's participation in politics and those that can channel public opinion towards effective civic engagement, especially around the electoral process.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should conduct an impact assessment of the Private Sector Development Programme II (PSDII) to establish the levels and types of benefits received by poorer groups, and then promote pro-poor principles widely. The assessment should inform a review of the PSDII engagement model for such groups, and lessons should be promoted to Government and development partners, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and commercial banks. Encouraging other financial providers to adopt pro-poor principles would be an important contribution to ensure that future economic growth is inclusive.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should continue to support effective decentralization, building on the digitization and innovations agenda. The decentralization agenda holds the potential to provide a strong basis for strengthening the drive for evidence-based policy implementation under Malawi 2063, finding room to overcome political bottlenecks that impede effective service provision, strengthening citizen engagement and promoting innovations at the local level.

Recommendation 5: In designing the next Country Programme Document (CPD), the country office should consider where its integrator capacity could add value to sectors in which wider adoption of viable downstream interventions is held back by an ineffective enabling environment. Options include the off- and on-grid electrical energy sectors, digital initiatives, social protection, justice, and natural resource management, especially in relation to unsustainable charcoal production. Such a role would build on the central planning support UNDP has provided during this CPD.

Recommendation 6: In the next CPD, UNDP should increase its efforts to add coherence to Malawi's climate policies and interventions, and enable greater intergration of climate considerations across sectors and within the MIP1. UNDP should support the vertical planning of climate change initiatives from national through district to village levels, and concentrate on establishing a coherent and predictable flow of climate finance to the district level.

Recommendation 7: UNDP should promote the strengths of its fund management arrangements, with the near-term objective of communicating clear budget forecasts and financial standards to all partners, and a long-term objective of building capacity for more robust financial performance in public spending.

Recommendation 8: The country office should prioritise the roll-out of its strategy to mainstream gender, within a clear timeframe of deliverables. This strategy should be delivered by senior management and include workstreams for improved programme design, implementation and monitoring, recruitment, and promoting gender in partnerships.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, as well as the methodology applied. It also describes the development context and UNDP programme in Malawi.

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate the evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to national development priorities, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results.

ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP evaluation policy.¹ The objectives of the ICPE are to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP country programme;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders;
- Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to its Executive Board;
- Contribute to organizational learning and decision-making in UNDP.

This ICPE was carried out in 2022 and covered the period from 2019 to the end of 2022, i.e., the first three and a half years of the current country programme cycle (2019-2023). This is the second country programme evaluation conducted by IEO in Malawi. The ICPE covered all UNDP's activities and interventions in the country under all funding sources, including UNDP own resources, donor and government funds. The ICPE also covered non-project activities, such as coordination and advocacy, which are important in supporting the political and social agenda of the country.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation based its analysis on the outcomes presented in the country programme for the period 2019-2023. It reviewed each of the planned outcomes and their linkages to the strategic objectives of the programme.

The effectiveness of the UNDP country programme was evaluated through an analysis of: 1) progress made towards the expected outputs; and 2) the extent to which these outputs contributed to the expected outcomes of the UNDP country programme. To better understand UNDP performance and the sustainability of results in the country, the ICPE examined the factors that have positively or negatively influenced the

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
 2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
 3. To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support the country's preparedness, response, and recovery process?
 4. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance and eventually, the sustainability of results?
-

¹ See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

country programme. The capacity of UNDP to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to national development needs and priorities was also examined. The evaluation sought to answer the four evaluation questions set out in Box 1.

The evaluation methodology adhered to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards.² It examined the level of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the formulation of the country programme and its operations, as well as the results achieved. Gender marker data were used to analyse the level of expected contribution to gender equality in programme design. The country office results were assessed using the IEO Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.³

The assessment was carried out using two qualitative data collection approaches: an in-depth desk review; and a large number of in-person and virtual interviews at national, district and community levels. Data collection was carried out from June to September 2022. To answer the evaluation questions, the evaluation team collected and triangulated data through the following methods:

- **Analysis of the full portfolio of projects and programmes** carried out by UNDP and the Government of Malawi through a review of associated design documents, budget and expenditure data, implementation reports, monitoring information and decentralized evaluations, as well as UNDP institutional documents (strategic plan, results-oriented annual reports [ROARs], etc.).⁴ Data disaggregated by sex was considered, wherever available. The team reviewed the theory of change used by the country office (Annex 7) and matched the projects implemented against the objectives set in the country programme. The evaluation also made use of other research and publications from Malawi to assess the relevance and coherence of the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) in the country context. The main documents consulted are listed in Annex 4.
- **Interviews with 175 key informants** to obtain a broad view of the perceptions of development partners and actors on the scope, contributions, performance and impacts of UNDP interventions, constraints to programme implementation, and the strengths and weaknesses of UNDP in Malawi. Of these, 23 were staff of UNDP Malawi office and 152 were external stakeholders. Interviews were conducted with the main partners of the UNDP country programme and the main development actors in the country, comprising representatives and officials of government institutions at the national and local level, officials and staff from other United Nations agencies, donors and development partners, civil society, academia and the private sector, and community-level participants in, or relevant to, country programme activities. Interviewees were identified through a desk review of the UNDP programme and the country context, supplemented by suggestions from the country office and interviewees.

The ICPE used the Country Programme Performance Rating System to assess the performance of the country programme against the criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability.⁵ Evidence was triangulated against a set of parameters for each of the criteria, and a four-point rating scale was used for the assessment (see Section 2.5).

² See the United Nations Evaluation Group website: <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

³ The IEO Gender Results Effectiveness Scale classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative (results have a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced gender inequalities and limiting norms), gender blind (results gave no attention to gender, and failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys and other marginalized populations), gender targeted (results focused on the number of women, men, or marginalized populations that were targeted), gender responsive (results addressed the differential needs of men, women, marginalized populations and focused on the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights, etc. but did not address root causes of inequalities), and gender transformative (results contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations).

⁴ Evaluations are available for approximately 12 per cent of the project portfolio during the period under review. The country office has commissioned 13 project evaluations since 2017 (10 final and 3 interim). All 13 evaluations were quality-assessed by IEO, with 11 rated as moderately satisfactory or above. The last IEO evaluation conducted in Malawi was the Assessment of Development Results in 2011.

⁵ <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/ratingsystem.shtml>.

The ICPE report underwent a rigorous quality assurance process with an internal peer review at IEO and two external reviewers, before it was submitted to the country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and, finally, to the Government and other partners in the country for review. This process concluded with an online workshop for the main stakeholders of the programme, offering an additional opportunity to discuss the results and recommendations contained in the report.

1.3 Challenges and limitations

The evaluation faced no challenges that prevented it from answering the overarching evaluation questions. Data availability for the intended results in 2022 was low, but sufficient in preceding years. There was limited secondary data on how women experienced UNDP interventions, though the evaluation was able to collect primary data to fill some gaps.

1.4 Country context

Malawi sits at the southern section of Africa's Great Rift Valley, neighboured by Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania. Most of the country is low-lying, densely populated, and within the basin of the Shire River, which drains from Lake Malawi in the north to the Zambezi River in the south.

Growth in Malawi's national economy is heavily reliant on the export of a small number of agricultural commodities, whilst 85 percent of the population depends on small-scale, rain-fed and low-input farming for their livelihoods and household food consumption.⁶ Boosted by good harvests in 2019, per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached US\$ 636 in 2020, the highest for two decades, over which time the amount has fluctuated with marked drops after flood and drought years.⁷ Despite positive recent trends, economic growth of 0.8 percent in 2020 was below the 7 percent Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target, and outpaced by population growth.⁸ The country currently ranks 174 out of 189 on the Human Development Index, with over 50 percent of the population living in poverty, a level that has marginally decreased since 2015.⁹ Recent national initiatives aim to transform the country into a self-reliant industrialized upper middle-income country by 2063.

Environmental vulnerability: The Shire River and its tributaries provide irrigable water for Malawi's agriculture, but expose the country to the effects of variable rainfall patterns. Over the past five decades, Malawi has experienced 19 major floods and seven droughts, with these events increasing in frequency, magnitude and scope, and registering cumulative impacts on national growth and household incomes.¹⁰ Delayed rains and severe flooding in the 2014/15 agricultural season, followed by drought in 2016, resulted in a significant loss of life, displacement and heightened food insecurity in both years. The total financial

⁶ Benson, Todd (2021) Disentangling Food Security from Subsistence Agriculture in Malawi. International Food Policy Research Institute.

⁷ World Bank 2021 data: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview#> & <https://data.worldbank.org/country/malawi>.

⁸ The country's estimated population of 18.6 million (2019) is expected to double by 2038. World Bank, 2021 data.

⁹ UNDP Human Development Report 2020. <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MWI.pdf>. World Bank data: Poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines (% of population). Most recent value available relates to 2016: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.NAHC?locations=MW>.

¹⁰ Government of Malawi (2019) Malawi 2019 Floods Post-Disaster Needs Assessment. Centre for Social Research, University of Malawi (2020) Afrobarometer Round 8, Survey in Malawi.

cost of the disasters was assessed as \$220.2 million, and the cost of recovery and reconstruction estimated at \$370.5 million.¹¹ Widespread flood and storm events in early 2019 and 2022 further compounded these impacts, and similar events caused widespread damage and loss of life in early 2023.¹²

Public spending in Malawi has been channelled towards disaster response rather than to reduce the country's vulnerability, with limited investment made in improving early warning systems, climate information, catchment and land use management, and improving household access to reliable markets.¹³ The flagship Social Cash Transfer Programme has scaled up significantly since its inception in 2006, but currently reaches only 1.2 million people, and 90 percent of the programme costs are covered by international donors.¹⁴

Leave No One Behind: Specific groups are exposed to additional challenges in addition to their financial and environmental vulnerability. For example, women have unequal land rights, access to education and access to agricultural training and resources, and face gendered food security gaps, despite the presence of a robust legal framework for advancing gender equality.¹⁵

Malawi has made impressive progress in the prevention and treatment of HIV and is on target to reach 2025 goals that may allow an end to the pandemic by 2030, according to UNAIDS. Deaths associated with AIDS have reduced, though the condition remains a significant communicable cause of mortality for Malawians, and women are nearly twice as likely to have HIV as men. Almost 135,000 people (0.8 percent of the population) are estimated to have albinism in Malawi.¹⁶ As well as requiring particular health services, people with albinism have been subjected to violent attacks and face social exclusion that affects their access to education and livelihoods.¹⁷ Malawi has one of the highest child marriage rates in the world. A 2018 survey on traditional practices found that 42 percent of girls married before the age of 15.¹⁸

Governance: Competitive elections have been held on a five-year cycle since Malawi transitioned to a multiparty democracy in 1993. To date, there has been limited diversity in parliamentary representation, and a lower proportion of women members of parliament (MPs) compared to men: seats held by women peaked at 23 percent in 2020, after a decade of increase and reversal in the number of female members MPs. The results of the 2019 presidential election were annulled due to irregularities, and a new election in 2020, replaced the incumbent President. Constitutional bodies and other oversight institutions have been characterized by insufficient capacity and weak structures, which limit their effectiveness in responding to citizens' needs. Ensuring the accountability of duty bearers at national and district levels, and between government departments, has been challenging due to a variable commitment to collaboration, which has decreased the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and citizen engagement.

¹¹ Government of Malawi, Malawi 2019 Floods Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), 2019.

¹² Consolidated Preliminary Report on the Impact of Moderate Tropical Storm Ana (2022) Government of Malawi, Department of Disaster Management Affairs.

¹³ USAID (2018) Resilience And Sustainable Poverty Escapes In Malawi: https://agrilinks.org/sites/default/files/resources/final_casestudy_malawi_dec_508.pdf. Chinsinga, Blessings (2021) The Political Economy of Resilience and Adaptation in Malawi. Benson, Todd (2021).

¹⁴ UNICEF (2021) Social Protection Budget Brief 2020/1: <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/9016/file/UNICEF-Malawi-2020-2021-Social-Protection-Budget-Brief.pdf>.

¹⁵ For example, the National Gender Policy (2015), the Gender Equality Act (2014), and the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (1994).

¹⁶ National Statistical Office of Malawi (2018) Malawi Population and Housing Census. <http://populationmalawi.org/wp1/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2018-Malawi-Population-and-Housing-Census-Main-Report-1.pdf>.

¹⁷ Tambala-Kaliati, Thandiwe et al. (2021) Living with albinism in an African community: exploring the challenges of persons with albinism in Lilongwe District, Malawi, Heliyon, 7:5.

¹⁸ National Statistical Office of Malawi et al. (2019) Survey Report: Traditional Practices in Malawi.

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2019-2023 describes Malawi as ‘policy rich but implementation poor’, and national plans have been characterized by clusters of sometimes conflicting policies in certain areas, gaps in others, and low rates of implementation at local level.¹⁹ Policy incompleteness has been attributed to a stalled decentralization process and limited coordination, as well as the typically short-term nature of donor initiatives.²⁰ Improving policy implementation is an objective of the Malawi 2063 vision, which intends for the country to become “an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation,” and outlines steps towards this in its first 10-year Malawi Implementation Plan (MIP1).²¹

The MIP1 review was undertaken alongside a governance drive to tackle intractable corruption in different parts of the society, which is a focus of the current Government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), European Union (EU), United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Within the current CPD period, the World Bank agreed a \$100 million loan to the Government of Malawi to support performance at the local level, through the ‘Governance to Enhance Service Delivery’ programme, which intends to deepen fiscal and political decentralization. At the time of this evaluation the Government was negotiating an extended credit facility with the IMF to support the economy through the COVID-19 pandemic, a forex crisis, and the effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In November 2022 an IMF mission approved an emergency loan arrangement, which other development partners had awaited as an indicator of the possibility of reengaging in direct budget support.

Business: The business environment in Malawi has improved over the past decade, and the country’s ranking on the World Bank’s ‘*Doing Business*’ indicators increased between 2016 and 2020 from 145 to 109 of 190 countries.²² The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy has a focus on developing the domestic private sector, and related policies aim to improve market access and catalyse a commercial transformation of smallholder agriculture.²³ These priority areas are maintained in the Malawi Implementation Plan launched in 2021, which provides the first 10-year plan for the Malawi 2063 vision.²⁴ As part of a drive for economic diversification, the tourism sector has grown significantly over the past two decades,²⁵ and the decline in manufacturing has been reversed,²⁶ though growth still faces constraints from infrastructure, market and governance challenges.²⁷ Opportunities in non-agricultural sectors remain limited, especially outside Lilongwe, Blantyre and the tourist areas of Lake Malawi. This creates a growing challenge to match Malawi’s young population with appropriate employment opportunities.²⁸

Energy: The number of people with access to electricity has grown over the past two decades, but still remained low in 2019 at 11 percent of the population (42 percent in urban areas and 4 percent in rural areas), and with marked distinctions for ultra-poor, older and female-headed households, who are more likely to have no form of indoor lighting and greater reliance on traditional stoves.²⁹ Data suggests that, even with low-tariffs, 65 percent of the adult population (60 percent of households) is unable to afford a Standard Consumption Package of 365 kWh per annum, and that preferences for cheaper forms of energy persist

¹⁹ UNDAF 2019-2023.

²⁰ Chinsinga, Blessings (2021).

²¹ Government of Malawi NPC (2021). Malawi 2063 First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1).

²² World Bank Doing Business 2020 <https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/m/malawi/MWI.pdf>

²³ Government of Malawi (2018) Farmer Organization Development Strategy; (2016) Malawi Contract Farming Strategy.

²⁴ Covering 2021-2030. Government of Malawi NPC (2021).

²⁵ World Tourism Organization, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics 2022, Compendium of Tourism Statistics, and data files.

²⁶ World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

²⁷ Mkwambisi, D. et al. (2020) Manufacturing and Industrialization in Malawi: Trends, Opportunities, and Strategies.

²⁸ Over half of the population is aged 18 years and under, and 70 percent of the population under the age of 30. OECD Development Centre (2018) Youth Well-being Policy Review of Malawi, EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project, Paris.

²⁹ Ther Aung et al. (2021) Energy access and the ultra-poor: Do unconditional social cash transfers close the energy access gap in Malawi?, Energy for Sustainable Development, Volume 60.

even after households achieve connection. A continuing heavy dependence on biomass has contributed to degradation of the country's forest resources, and led to a decline in biodiversity and soil fertility and increased levels of siltation in the river network.³⁰

Electricity supply remains intermittent, even for those connected to the grid, due to weak infrastructure and fluctuating water flow, which affects the country's hydropower. According to the World Bank *Doing Business* score, electricity access is the most challenging operating factor for local businesses, with the reliability of supply and tariff transparency posing major limitations to consistent access. The country has a target of 50 mini-grid systems in place by 2025. Research from the Rocky Mountain Institute shows a \$3 billion investment opportunity for Malawi to leverage renewable energy resources, while providing reliable electricity for growth and rural electrification.³¹ The study identified that leadership is required from government and development partners to improve energy planning, drive cost reductions, de-risk investment in the energy sector, blend finance, and strengthen institutional frameworks.

COVID-19: To date, Malawi has avoided the widespread health impacts of COVID-19 experienced in other countries.³² However, the country suffered the economic consequences of domestic lockdown measures, which reduced livelihood activity and education.³³ Furthermore international travel restrictions reduced the country's ability to generate revenue from its growing tourism sector.³⁴ In response, the Government launched the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2023, outlining a \$708 million package of support (equivalent to 5.8 percent of GDP) to expand vaccination programmes, improve public infrastructure and digital connectivity, stimulate enterprise activity, and scale up safety nets for the urban poor and rural communities.³⁵

Future: In June 2022, the Government of Malawi laid out a plan to shift the country from a development focus towards a goal of becoming 'an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant industrialized upper-middle-income country by the year 2063.'³⁶ Malawi 2063 is developed around three pillars (agriculture, productivity and commercialization, industrialization, and urbanization) and seven enablers (mindset change, effective governance systems and institutions [with strict adherence to the rule of law], enhanced public sector performance, private sector dynamism, human capital development, economic infrastructure, and environmental sustainability). The current Government, which came into power in 2020, has embarked on the process of identifying and implementing clear policy deliverables through the creation of the Presidential Delivery Unit.

³⁰ Biomass accounts for approximately 80 per cent of primary energy supply. Government of Malawi (2018) Energy Policy. FAO (2020) Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020, Malawi <https://www.fao.org/3/cb0032en/cb0032en.pdf>.

³¹ Edward Borgstein et al. (2019). Malawi Sustainable Energy Investment Study: Summary for Decision Makers.

³² As of March 2022, Malawi registered over 85,000 cases of COVID19 and 2626 deaths. World Health Organization, 2022 <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/mw>.

³³ Government of Malawi NPC (2020) <https://npc.mw/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NPC-COVID-cost-benefit-analysis-Malawi.pdf>

³⁴ World Tourism Organization, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, Compendium of Tourism Statistics, and data files.

³⁵ The first phase of vaccination began in March 2021, and targeted 20 percent of the eligible population. In December 2021, half a million people were reported as being fully vaccinated, less than 5 percent of the population.

³⁶ Articulated in Malawi 2063 Vision and MIP1.

1.5 UNDP in Malawi

UNDP has been present in Malawi since 1964, and signed a Standard Basic Assistance Agreement with the Government of Malawi in 1977. In the following decades it supported the Government of Malawi to strengthen its governance structures, pursue equitable economic growth, respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and address environmental disasters. Over the past decade it has increasingly supported national capacity to deal with the threats of climate change.

In the 2019-2023 programming period, the principal objective of UNDP was to contribute to a reduction of poverty, inequality and vulnerability to shocks. The country office continued and expanded a programme of support linked to the Government's Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which has framed the UNDP contribution in the country since 2006, and scaled up eight initiatives from the 2012-2016 CPD (extended to 2018 to align with UNDAF cycles), including private sector development and support for climate change capacity.³⁷ UNDP work focuses on three priority areas, namely:

- i. Enhancing economic innovation, inclusive business, job creation and renewable energy access;
- ii. Scaling up climate adaptation and resilience to shocks; and
- iii. Strengthening effective, accountable and inclusive governance.

The UNDP country programme for 2019-2023 is framed by the UNDAF Malawi 2019-2023. The three priority areas link to four outcomes of the UNDAF:

- i. **Outcome 1.** By 2023, Malawi has strengthened economic diversification, inclusive business, entrepreneurship, and access to clean energy;
- ii. **Outcome 2.** By 2023, households have increased food and nutrition security, equitable access to healthy ecosystems and resilient livelihoods;
- iii. **Outcome 3.** By 2023, rights holders in Malawi access more accountable and effective institutions at the central and decentralized levels that use quality disaggregated data, offer integrated service delivery and promote civic engagement, respect for human rights and rule of law; and
- iv. **Outcome 4.** By 2023, Malawi has strengthened institutions for sustaining peace, inclusive societies and participatory democracy.

For the programming period 2019-2023, Atlas records a total of 39 projects of varying sizes and at various stages of implementation. Of these, 23 projects (51.6 percent) are under Direct Implementation Modality (DIM). Eight projects correspond to Outcome 1; 13 projects to Outcome 2; 13 to Outcome 3; and five to Outcome 4. At the time of the evaluation, 33 projects (84.6 percent) were ongoing, and six (15.4 percent) were closed. Eight projects (20 percent) were initiated during the previous cycle, and three started in 2022 and had been implemented for only a few months at the time of the evaluation.

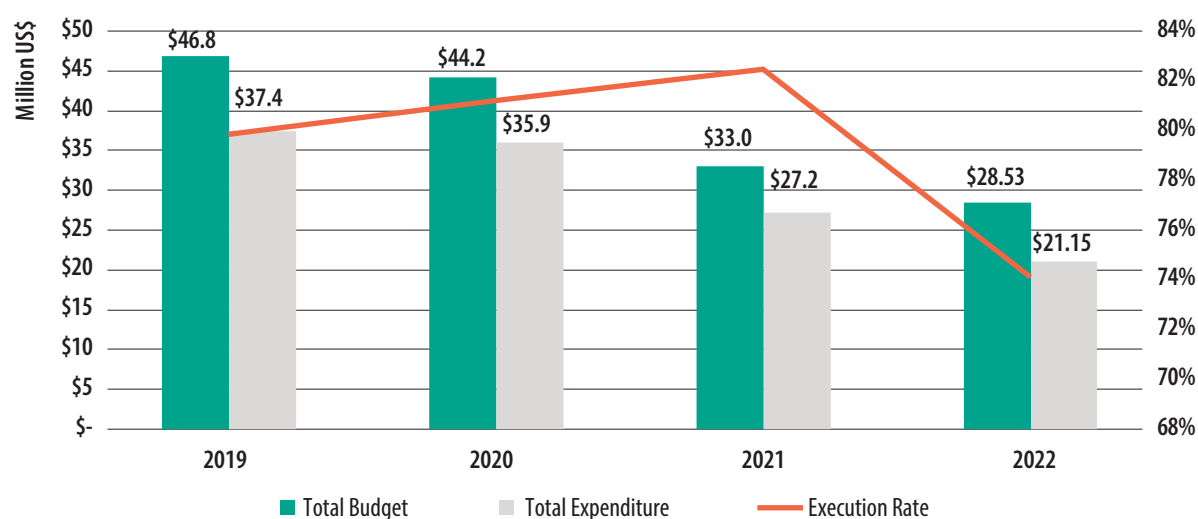
The total budget of the country programme decreased from \$46.8 million in 2019, to \$28.53 million in 2022.³⁸ A notable reduction in the overall budget occurred with the phase-down of UNDP support to the Malawi National Registration and Identification System (NRIS), which accounted for over 16 percent

³⁷ Including: i) Private Sector Development in Malawi project; ii) Climate Proofing Development Gains project; iii) Implementing Adaptation Planning project; iv) Modernized Climate project; v) Malawi Human Rights Support Project; vi) Public Service Capacity Development Project; vii) the Social Cohesion project; viii) and the Malawi NRIS project.

³⁸ Financial data for the total year of 2022 (incl. Dec 2022). Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (IEO Data Mart - Jan 10, 2023).

of the programme budget in 2019 and around 5 percent in 2022. With challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic for project implementation, the execution rate reduced from 80 percent in 2019 to 74 percent in 2022, with total expenditure reducing from \$37.4 million in 2019 to \$21.15 million in 2022. In addition to UNDP core resources (\$47.59 million), non-core programme expenditure over the CPD period (\$74.0 million) came mainly from the following donors: European Commission (\$13.5 million), Green Climate Fund (GCF) (\$8.4 million), Government of Norway (\$8.4 million), Spotlight Initiative Fund (\$6.1 million), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) Development Bank (\$5.9 million), FCDO (\$5.4 million), Japan (\$5.4 million), SDG Acceleration Fund (\$4.9 million), and the Government of Belgium (\$3.1 million). The figures below do not include amounts committed but not actualized by UNDP at the close of the evaluation.

FIGURE 1. Evolution of country programme budget and expenditure by year (2019-2022)



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (IEO Data Mart - Jan 10, 2023)

22 UNDP projects (56.4 percent), accounting for 51.6 percent of total expenditure, have been executed directly by UNDP (DIM modality), while 17 (43.6 percent), accounting for 48.4 percent of total expenditure, were executed by national partners (NIM modality).

The largest share of financial resources were mobilized for Outcome 2, with total expenditure of over \$38.66 million, or 31.8 percent of total expenditure for the period 2019 to 2022. Outcome 4 is the smallest in terms of expenditure, with around \$20.74 million spent over the period (17.1 percent of total programme expenditure). The following table presents the budget, expenditure and execution rate by outcome.

TABLE 1. Budget, expenditure and execution rate by outcome (2019-2022)

Programme Outcomes	Budget total (million \$)	Expenditure total (million \$)	Execution rate (percent)
Outcome 1: By 2023, Malawi has strengthened economic diversification, inclusive business, entrepreneurship, and access to clean energy (15 projects)	41.32	25.75	62%
Outcome 2: By 2023, households have increased food and nutrition security, equitable access to healthy ecosystems and resilient livelihoods (20 projects)	47.18	38.66	82%
Outcome 3: By 2023, rights holders in Malawi access more accountable and effective institutions at the central and decentralized levels that use quality disaggregated data, offer integrated service delivery and promote civic engagement, respect for human rights and rule of law (20 projects)	40.59	36.49	90%
Outcome 4: By 2023, Malawi has strengthened institutions for sustaining peace, inclusive societies and participatory democracy (10 projects)	23.47	20.74	88%
Total	152.56	121.64	80%

Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (IEO Data Mart - Jan 10, 2023)

At the time of this evaluation, the country office had 140 staff, of which 59 were UNDP staff, one international and 57 national Personal Service Contract holders, six United Nations Volunteers and 17 Service Contract holders. Women represent 35.7 percent of the staff.³⁹ The programme team is structured into two large units: Responsive Institutions and Citizen Engagement and Resilience and Sustainable Growth.

³⁹ Source: UNDP Atlas Executive Snapshot (10 Jan 2023).

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter discusses the results of the UNDP country programme in Malawi. The main factors that have influenced UNDP performance and contributed to results are also described. The assessment is based on the results of projects and other activities conducted by the country office, which were correlated to the expected outputs and outcomes, and overall objectives, of the 2019-2023 CPD.

2.1 Enhancing economic innovation, inclusive business, job creation and renewable energy access

UNDAF Outcome 1: By 2023, Malawi has strengthened economic diversification, inclusive business, entrepreneurship, and access to clean energy.

UNDP Strategic Plan Outcome 1: Advance poverty reduction in all its forms and dimensions.

Corresponding outputs:

Output 1.1: Women and youth in targeted areas have access to employment opportunities.

Output 1.2: Public and private sector institutions enabled to develop and implement policies and practices that enhance innovation, productivity and entrepreneurship.

Output 1.3: Inclusive and sustainable solutions adopted at the national and subnational levels to achieve increased energy efficiency and universal modern energy access (especially off-grid sources of renewable energy).

The priority area of “Enhancing economic innovation, inclusive business, job creation, and renewable energy access” contains the three outputs described in the above table.

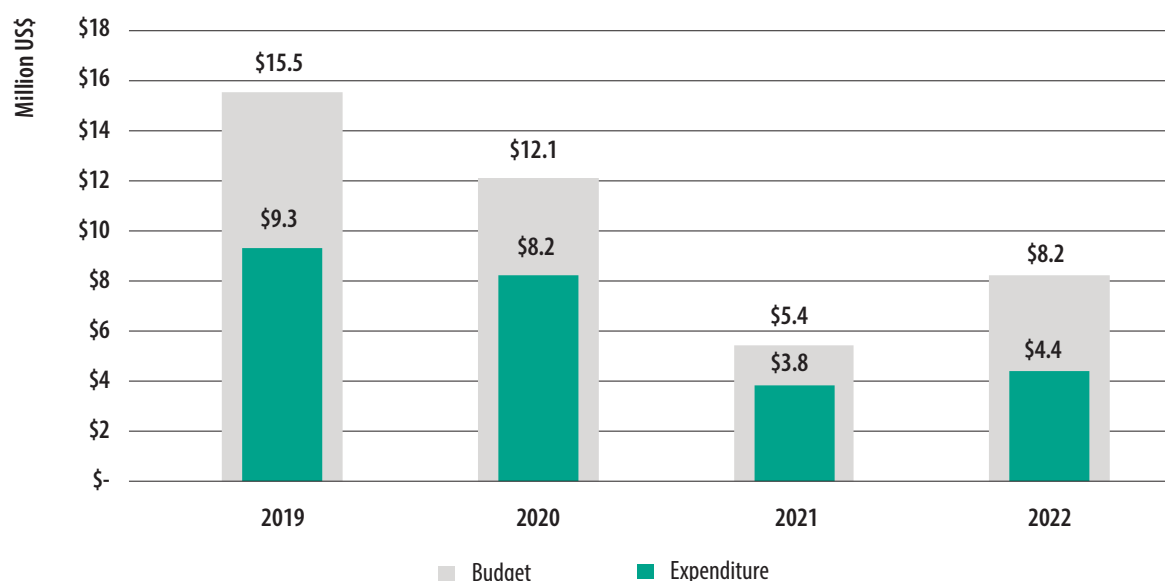
Continuing a focus on the domestic private sector, UNDP planned to support the growth of pro-poor businesses in agriculture, manufacturing, irrigation and the service sector. Through the use of challenge funds, alongside improvements to the business operating environment, UNDP aimed to fill the ‘missing middle’ between large and small enterprises, and create jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities, in particular for women and youth. It also continued a set of energy initiatives intended to increase electricity access for those unlikely to be reached by the grid in the next ten years.

Outcome 1 is comprised of eight projects of varying sizes, and has a total budget of \$41.32 million. By January 2023, it had total expenditure of \$25.75 million, with a delivery rate of 62 percent, the lowest of all four CPD outcomes, though still on track. Three projects, together accounting for 48.4 percent of outcome expenses, are implemented under DIM.⁴⁰ The largest project under this outcome is the ‘Private Sector Development Programme II’ (PSDII), which accounts for 42.3 percent of the outcome expenditure, followed by (its predecessor) ‘Private Sector Development in Malawi’, accounting for 28.8 percent, ‘Access to Clean

⁴⁰ The three projects implemented under the DIM modality are: Accelerator Lab – Malawi; Africa Mini-grids Programme; and the Private Sector Development Programme II.

and Renewable Energy’ with 8.8 percent, ‘Poverty Environment Actions’ (PEA) with 7.3 percent, and four small projects (of which two are closed) accounting for the remaining 12.8 percent. Projects under this outcome were funded by UNDP core resources (46 percent) and non-core resources (54 percent), comprising vertical funds (Global Environment Facility - GEF), bilateral donors (KfW, Norway, FCDO, Germany, Italy, Qatar Fund for Development, Austrian Development Agency and Japan) and multilateral funds including the European Commission, Joint SDG Fund, and pooled funds managed by UNDP.

FIGURE 2. Evolution of budget and expenditure of CPD outcome 1 (2019-2022)



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (IEO Data Mart - Jan 2023)

Finding 1. UNDP Malawi has demonstrated a successful model for encouraging private sector activity aligned with the national growth strategy, which is being used as a learning opportunity for other country offices.

Under CPD 2019-2023, UNDP continued its partnership with the Government of Malawi to develop an enabling environment for the domestic private sector to drive economic growth and employment creation. This is a key objective of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III and relevant to the country’s efforts to achieve SDGs 8 and 9.⁴¹ Under the flagship PSDII, UNDP scaled up the use of financial instruments, including the Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund (MICF) and the Growth Accelerator Entrepreneurship Challenge. In partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNDP launched a blended finance mechanism, BUILD Malawi, in September 2021, the results of which were not available at the time of the evaluation.

The financial instruments of PSDII were relevant and effective in a context where most businesses are constrained by limited access to finance, and where small and medium sized business are often forced to build personal debt through unregulated lenders. UNDP performance-based and reimbursable models for matching grants responded to demand, providing participating businesses with temporary finance to

⁴¹ SDG 8 “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” and SDG 9 “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”.

promote entrepreneurial capacity. Though the type and level of activity varied by grant recipient, across the whole portfolio enterprises used the support to acquire equipment, consolidate their position in supply chains, add value to their products, and take steps toward higher value and export markets, yielding a significant boost to the activity of micro-, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in agriculture, manufacturing, finance and other sectors. The Growth Accelerator Entrepreneurship Challenge supported 59 enterprises (44 percent run by women and 56 percent by men) under five funding windows, each with a different focus area. A total of 43 private sector companies were supported through MICF by 2021. In total, PSDII supported the creation of 48 new products and services from Malawian businesses and established almost 80 partnerships.

It is clear from project reporting and interviews that many participating enterprises continue to face cash-flow issues, exacerbated by COVID-19, foreign currency shortages, and the depreciation of the Kwacha over the CPD period. These factors weakened the customer base of the enterprises and delayed capital investments intended to improve productivity and quality.⁴² Fund managers took steps to secure short-term loans for some firms, to continue a level of implementation towards milestones, and UNDP launched a new window under the MICF to respond to socioeconomic challenges linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. These setbacks meant that, at the time of the evaluation, few of the new products or services supported by the grants had reached sufficient sales volumes for pro-poor activities to be sustained through regular revenue (see Finding 2), though prospects appear stronger where the grants supported existing business activities.

UNDP provides support across several value chains (rather than to up- and downstream enterprises for a single commodity), which is also likely to have delayed profitability. However, this broader approach remains the most relevant, as it positions PSDII across Malawi's growth agenda and distinguishes it from other development partners working on the country's private sector. Establishing and replicating self-sustaining initiatives will be crucial, however, if Malawian SMEs are to contribute to the Malawi 2063 agenda, as intended by the Government. Many government-proposed private sector initiatives have faced challenges in achieving commercial viability and reaching a scale that can be delivered by domestic firms, provide attractive propositions for foreign direct investment, and promote affordable products for Malawian consumers.⁴³

As part of the first phase of PSD, UNDP played a role to support the policy and legislative framework necessary for creating a conducive business environment, complementing efforts by the Government to mainstream the private sector in economic development. These included support for development of the National Trade Policy, the National Industrial Policy, and the Anti Counterfeit and Smuggling Policy and Bill, which is intended, *inter alia*, to protect gains made under the Buy Malawi Campaign, which UNDP supported in 2016. Elements of these policies now require adjustment since the launch of Malawi 2063. UNDP also supported a review of the Business Licensing Act and automation of the licensing system, which are central for encouraging new businesses and enabling access to credit for informal enterprises, though the process to establish the systems was delayed and had to avoid duplication with similar initiatives of other development partners.

The institutional sustainability of PSDII initiatives appears to be high. There are indications that the Government has a strong degree of ownership of PSDII, which is a mandated and mainstream activity of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and receives regular commitments to its annual work plans (AWPs) and implementation strategies. The launch of Private Sector Labs in June 2022 is viewed by several stakeholders as a sign of

⁴² Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund (2021) Annual Report.

⁴³ World Bank (2021) Country Private Sector Diagnostic. Creating Markets in Malawi.

continued commitment by the Government to strengthen private sector engagement, and the initiative intends to identify and resolve obstacles to foreign investment and promote forms of business growth that support food security and create wealth. In addition, in 2022 UNDP signed a 13.5 million Euro agreement with the EU to expand entrepreneurship and financial support, to reach 3,800 entrepreneurs and involve young graduates of technical and vocational education and training. Additional funding has also been secured through KfW. The success of MICF in Malawi has raised interest from UNDP country offices in Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, who were supported by the Malawi country office through South-South exchanges to develop a deeper understanding of the model and encourage possible replication.

Finding 2. UNDP was key to the establishment of a pro-poor focus in the first phase of the PSD.⁴⁴ It remains to be seen whether the private sector model promoted by UNDP will deliver strong pro-poor impacts or encourage the inclusion of smallholder farmers in future growth.

Of all activities under CDP 2019-2023, PSDII has the greatest potential to contribute to the overarching objective of reducing poverty and inequality, sustained by improvements to Malawian livelihoods, rather than by donor funding. To be eligible for a UNDP grant, businesses must demonstrate that their proposed activity will have a pro-poor impact. The most common approach in the MICF has been the integration of smallholder farmers in the upstream value chain for the supply of raw materials.⁴⁵ Others include (or combine) the provision of agricultural extension and training for smallholders and affordable agricultural technologies, such as irrigation pumps and soil testing equipment.

Growth Accelerator pathways include job creation and the promotion of products that could offer some form of social good if widely adopted in Malawi. The programme has put in place a commendable system to monitor commercial and financial indicators for each grantee and associated smallholder farmers. It is difficult at this stage to fully assess the pro-poor or social impact of PSDII, and its contribution to inclusive growth, because other dimensions of poverty are not systematically captured either in the monitoring processes or in the evaluation of the first phase of the programme, which focused on institutional and policy aspects (See Finding 19).

Project reporting, interviews and field visits to businesses and farmers across MICF and the Growth Accelerator provide reasonable indications that the programme has established near-term pro-poor results through business growth, employment generation and improved livelihoods.⁴⁶ These are reinforced by the CPD midterm review, which found that the programme empowered communities by introducing innovations, adding value and supporting the development of local SMEs.⁴⁷ The MICF portfolio reached over 627,285 individuals, and more than 77,650 smallholder producers directly engaged with MICF projects. Of these, over 90 percent have seen direct income gains. UNDP estimates that more than 60,000 smallholder farmers have seen an increase in their incomes by participating in the supply chains of companies supported by the PSDII. For example, Estrelle Trading engages more than 2,500 smallholder groundnut farmers in Blantyre, and the guaranteed market for the farmers' produce has reportedly increased household incomes by 50 percent. Enterprises supported by MICF are reported to have created 2,893 jobs (40 percent female)

⁴⁴ UNDP Malawi (2017) End of Term Independent Evaluation of the Private Sector Development Project.

⁴⁵ Coherent with models that are widely promoted outside Malawi as a strategy for poverty alleviation, economic growth, employment generation, gender equality, and improved wellbeing, including by international financial institutions. IFAD (2015) Scaling up note: Sustainable inclusion of smallholders in agricultural value chains. <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/-/scaling-up-note-sustainable-inclusion-of-smallholders-in-agricultural-value-chains>. Mirjam AF Ros-Tonen et al. (2019). Conceptualizing inclusiveness of smallholder value chain integration. Elsevier - Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability 2019, 41:10-17 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877343519300636>.

⁴⁶ These include a small number of endline quantitative assessments of differences to production, revenues and incomes, conducted by the fund manager.

⁴⁷ UNDP Malawi (2022) Midterm Evaluation Report. Triangulated with findings from interviews and field observations.

as of December 2022. However, reporting does not describe whether the project or the businesses have ensured wage equality between men or women, or whether the jobs created take into consideration women's burden of unpaid care work or influence their bargaining power within the economy.

The engagement of smallholder farmers has presented challenges, a number of which are linked to the programme focus on the business viability of SME grant recipients, rather than the risks absorbed by smallholder farmers as they invest time, and financial and land resources in business partnerships.⁴⁸ Many private sector grant recipients underestimated the time required to establish commercially functional smallholder supply chains, and small-scale suppliers lacked the capacity to quickly meet the requirements of quality, delivery and the management of produce. Reporting suggests that the project has successfully managed cases where SMEs were unable to purchase from smallholder farmers, but that most relationships between businesses and smallholder farmers do not yet appear strong enough to manage these contingencies independently.⁴⁹ Almost half of the business grantees worked with third party organizations to support their relationships with smallholder farmers, with the greatest proportion contracting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and cooperatives.⁵⁰ The contribution of cooperatives should be more widely recognized, as MICF is predominantly promoted as a private sector initiative and most of its mechanisms are orientated towards business engagement.

Other challenges linked to COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine were beyond the control of the project, but their continued impact provides lessons for the measures that the country office may need to support in order to protect supplier-purchaser agreements during droughts, flooding or disease outbreaks. Smallholder farmers continued to face fertilizer problems in the 2021/22 planting season, which has been a long-running challenge in the MICF Irrigation Window.⁵¹ As a significant number of the purchase agreements in certain MICF windows require smallholder farmers to adopt some form of input (such as seeds, fertilizer or equipment), the liability of poorer households is not negligible, and has not been fully taken into account. Despite extraordinary shocks at a time when many of the initiatives promoted by the projects remain novel, results to date are in line with the experience of other pro-poor private sector initiatives.⁵²

Finding 3. UNDP has been integral to policies and projects that have improved the potential for community-scale off-grid renewable energy in Malawi, developing lessons on the cost models for solar energy and hydropower, and providing standalone energy generation in locations where the grid will not reach in the next five years. Slow progress has limited the intended multiplier effect of these small pilots.

Since the start of the 'Increased Access to Clean and Decentralized Energy Service' project in 2014,⁵³ UNDP has helped to triple the generating output of the Mulanje site by installing capacity to produce 169 kWp⁵⁴ and set up a new greenfield solar mini-grid with a capacity of 80kWp in Sitolo.⁵⁵ Though these make a small reduction in the number of people without electricity in Malawi, they are the two largest installations

⁴⁸ This emphasis is reflected in the PSDII theory of change, SES assessment, and project monitoring.

⁴⁹ However, there are examples of strong partnerships between SMEs and farmer-led supply chains. An example is the Lilongwe Dairy and the Shire Highlands Milk Producers Association. However, in some cases partnerships do not stand the test of time, this is mainly due to misaligned expectations between the company and the partner (See MICF End of Contract report, 2022).

⁵⁰ Nathan Associates (2022) MICF End of Contract Report.

⁵¹ MICF (2021) Quarterly Report July – September 2021, MICF Round 3 – Irrigation.

⁵² See for example, Independent Commission for Aid Impact (2014) Review of DFID's Private Sector Development work: <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/ICAI-PSD-report-FINAL.pdf>.

⁵³ The project was originally designed to end in December 2019 and was extended by a year, into 2020.

⁵⁴ Kilowatt Pea.

⁵⁵ Aitken, R. and Nkhonjera, L. (2019) Terminal Evaluation of Increasing Access to Clean and Affordable Decentralised Energy Services in Selected Vulnerable Areas of Malawi ICADES project and project reporting for ACRE.

of public off-grid energy in the country, and important trial sites for wider replication.⁵⁶ Through these off-grid sites, UNDP has partially achieved its energy-related outcomes, because it has offered new energy solutions at national and subnational levels. However, it will miss the output targets because the projects developed prior to and during CPD 2019-2023 do not contain the required number of new connections to extend access to the intended numbers of people, nor the level of installed capacity to alter the share of the renewable energy in the national energy mix.⁵⁷

At both off-grid sites, the expansion of generating capacity was initially met by low consumer demand for the electricity generated.⁵⁸ UNDP has subsequently designed projects (Access to Clean and Renewable Energy (ACRE) and the forthcoming 'Africa Mini-Grids' project) with components focused on demand-generation through productive use overlays, and by promoting connections to local businesses. Site visits for this evaluation to the Mulanje solar and hydro schemes indicate that consumer demand has grown, and the site operator reported a waiting list of approximately 2,000 households, in addition to the 1,000 households already installed, bringing it close to break-even point. Consumer demand is key to demonstrating that mini-grids can be profitable, and to enable a switch from grant-funded mini-grids to community, public, private and hybrid ownership models. These challenges could have been identified earlier, based on experiences in other African countries.

UNDP has supported steps towards community and hybrid ownership at each of the sites by building the capacity of the operators (MEGA in Mulanje and Community Energy Malawi in Sitolo), and both sites have been successful in attracting further grant funding. Replication by private enterprises, as initially anticipated by the Government and UNDP, remains a more distant possibility, because local businesses are unable to access the investment for the upfront costs and Malawi does not have a concession model to reduce the investment risk. Although the African Mini-Grids Programme will introduce a de-risking approach for macro-investments, it is not clear if this will operate as an incentive due to the risks that local banks perceive in lending to the private enterprises that may install smaller systems.⁵⁹ The absence of a viable self-sustaining model limits the replication of mini-grids at other sites, and has historically led to stand-alone solar technologies going unused or being recalled into storage by the Government.

To establish energy systems at these sites, UNDP has taken greater control of key project components (such as demand estimation, site identification and procurement), raising a question about national capacity to adopt the African Mini-Grids Programme, which was developed using regional expertise and introduces digital monitoring of energy systems and other technological leaps. The fact that Malawi has only two district energy officers in post (despite a target for one in each region by 2023), hinders the ability to tailor mini-grids to local conditions, and may pose challenges for future efforts regarding technology advancements. The experience of other energy funders shows that demonstrating first-of-a-kind technologies and business models in Malawi and other least developed countries is subject to a high degree of project risk,⁶⁰ and

⁵⁶ UNDP initiatives provide electricity connections to 1,000 additional customers as reported by the project's terminal evaluation (2019). The impact of the new connections is hard to gauge and understand through a gender lens because the country office counts only the fact that a household has been connected to electricity and not the quality or affordability of the supply. An in-depth assessment of Malawi's energy sector in 2019 projected that the country would achieve 27 percent electrification by 2030 based on the pipeline of programmes at that time. It would miss the SDG target of universal access and national goals for rolling out energy (Borgstein et al.). Data from the CESET mini-grid tracker was triangulated with interviews with MoE, University of Strathclyde: cesetproject.com/sites/default/files/An%20Overview%20of%20CES%20in%20Malawi_Nov21.pdf.

⁵⁷ UNDP reported installing actual generation capacity of 385 kW in 2021 (2021 milestone was 600 kW) and is falling behind its 2023 target of 2,000kW.

⁵⁸ Terminal Evaluation of IACADES triangulated with UNDP and government interviews.

⁵⁹ UNDP IEO (2021) Thematic Evaluation of UNDP Support to Energy Access and Transition. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/19690>. This evaluation found that the de-risking approach was found to require follow-on tools to address financial barriers once the macro analysis was complete.

⁶⁰ Climate Investment Funds (2022) Evaluation of the Scaling up Renewable Energy Programme in Low-income Countries https://www.cif.org/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/srep_evaluation_report.pdf.

other agencies have found it challenging to establish project implementation units for energy projects in countries with more advanced energy and business sectors.⁶¹ Working through NIM with the Ministry of Energy, UNDP work has been subject to delays and over-expenditure on project costs, both of which limit the ability to demonstrate a replicable model for mini-grids.⁶² Staff departures in the country office also had an impact on the ability of UNDP to ensure that project activities were implemented on time.

UNDP work on the enabling environment has helped to frame other off-grid energy initiatives in national processes. The design of the forthcoming World Bank Energy Access Project, which aims to deliver 10 new mini-grids, was informed by the 2018 National Energy Policy and Regulatory Framework for Mini-Grids, both of which were supported by UNDP, reflecting a significant success under this CPD. Such cases, in addition to UNDP support to national planning processes (See Finding 8), demonstrate that the country office has the capacity to support vision planning and governance arrangements in the energy sector. This could build the confidence of larger-scale renewable energy investors,⁶³ an outcome which stakeholders felt was difficult for bilateral partners to address.

Finding 4. The country office has achieved limited results in support of Malawi's much-needed shift away from unsustainable energy usage, missing the opportunity to promote improved biomass use in ways that contribute to many of the CPD outcomes, the SDGs and national economic growth.⁶⁴

The energy-efficiency component of CPD Output 1.3 is highly relevant to Malawi, given the levels of biodiversity loss from unsustainable wood use and the severe strain on the national electrical grid. The interconnection between these issues has been evident over the CPD period, as increasing siltation problems have reduced Malawi's hydropower production, while biodiversity loss depletes natural defences against flooding and reduces the opportunities for a long-term source of national income.⁶⁵ UNDP work in this area is limited to activities promoting clean cooking, which were delayed or partially completed because of re-budgeting for the COVID-19 response, and the absorption of country office capacity in the challenges of establishing mini-grid electrical systems. Although it is feasible that household electrification will eventually support rural cooking and livelihood replacements for charcoal producers in Malawi, achieving this is expected to take several decades based on the current electrification rate. Households cooking with biomass often continue, even after achieving access to electricity.⁶⁶

UNDP early-stage cooking activities contain some unique initiatives for the context.⁶⁷ However, it is not clear whether UNDP adds significant value by working at the household level in Malawi, as the private sector and other development partners have increasingly effective value chain initiatives for improved stoves and liquid petroleum gas. Furthermore, analysis of wood-fuel supply and demand has shown that the reduction of biodiversity loss in Malawi will require a much broader and combined package of interventions (beyond cooking alternatives in rural areas) to tackle the increased use of charcoal in urban areas and the use of wood-fuels in industry and public

⁶¹ Rwanda Renewable Energy Fund Project case study (2022) Climate Investment Funds https://www.cif.org/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/cdi_rwanda.pdf.

⁶² Aitken, R. and Nkhonjera, L. (2019) Terminal Evaluation of Increasing Access to Clean and Affordable Decentralised Energy Services in Selected Vulnerable Areas of Malawi ICADES project.

⁶³ Recommendations from an in-depth study of Malawi's energy sector. Borgstein et al. (2019).

⁶⁴ Sustainable biomass has linkages to several outputs in CPD 2019-2023, including those relating to economic growth, livelihoods, gender, natural resource management, DRR, as well as broader impacts on health and people with disability.

⁶⁵ It has been calculated that unsustainable natural resource use costs Malawi 5.3 percent of its GDP year, making sustainable wood fuel and alternative energy an important part of Malawi's growth ambitions. Yaron, G., Mangani R., Mlava J., Kambewa P., Makungwa S., Mtethiwa A., Munthali S., Ngoola W., Kazembe J. (2010). Malawi Poverty and Environment Initiative Economic Study, Lilongwe.

⁶⁶ Shankar AV, et al. (2020) Everybody Stacks: Lessons from household energy case studies to inform design principles for clean energy transitions. Energy Policy. USAID, FCDO (2020) Modern Cooking for Healthy Forests in Malawi: Clean Cooking Market Information Package for Urban Malawi: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XJDJ.pdf.

⁶⁷ Such as the performance-based three-year grants for 8-12 businesses to promote biomass technology. The ACRE project also plans to work with qualifying employers to guarantee loans to staff to procure alternative cooking appliances through a revolving fund.

institutions.⁶⁸ Despite having environmental projects under its climate change portfolio, UNDP engagement in the enabling environment for biomass has been limited. Malawi continues to have an ineffective regulatory and business environment for sustainable wood production and use, which sits across the Ministry of Forests and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Energy, and should involve the Malawi Bureau of Standards. Stakeholders report that incoherent enforcement has deterred sustainable wood producers from entering the market and making long-term investments in planting sustainable wood plots.

2.2 Scaling up climate adaptation and resilience to shocks

UNDAF Outcome 2: By 2023, households have increased food and nutrition security, equitable access to healthy ecosystems and resilient livelihoods.

UNDP Strategic Plan Outcome 3: Strengthening resilience and shocks to crises.

Corresponding outputs:

Output 2.1: Scaled-up action, finance and partnerships for climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk management across sectors.

Output 2.2: Adaptive capacity of rural households and reduced exposure to climate risks strengthened.

Malawi's economy, and the incomes and food security of its population, are particularly exposed to flooding, drought and cyclones. Under this CPD period, Malawi experienced the impacts of cyclones Jasmine, Gombe and Ana in 2022, Chalane in 2020, and Kenneth, Idai and Desmond in 2019. The connections between Malawi's challenges have been visible during the CPD period: the country lost a third of its national power generation capacity after Cyclone Ana damaged the Kapichira hydro-plant, reducing electricity for businesses and households in large parts of the country and necessitating a \$45 million restoration project.⁶⁹

Malawi is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change (ranking 165 out of 181 countries in the ND-GAIN Index, and fifth in the Global Climate Risk Index in 2021.⁷⁰ The costs of extreme weather events in Malawi are rising, with a high chance of undermining development gains.

CPD 2019-2023 focused on building the resilience of vulnerable groups to shocks, by increasing their knowledge and skills to adapt to the effects of climate change. UNDP intended to improve the integration of climate change adaptation into national, subnational and sector development plans, including accelerating adaptation investments based on community priorities, sustainable solutions to natural

⁶⁸ USAID (2019) Woodfuel Integrated Supply/Demand Overview Mapping Malawi: Analysis of Woodfuel Demand, Supply and Harvesting Sustainability: https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2021-06/2021_USAID-Woodfuel-Integrated-Supply-Demand-Overview-Mapping-WISDOM-Malawi.pdf.

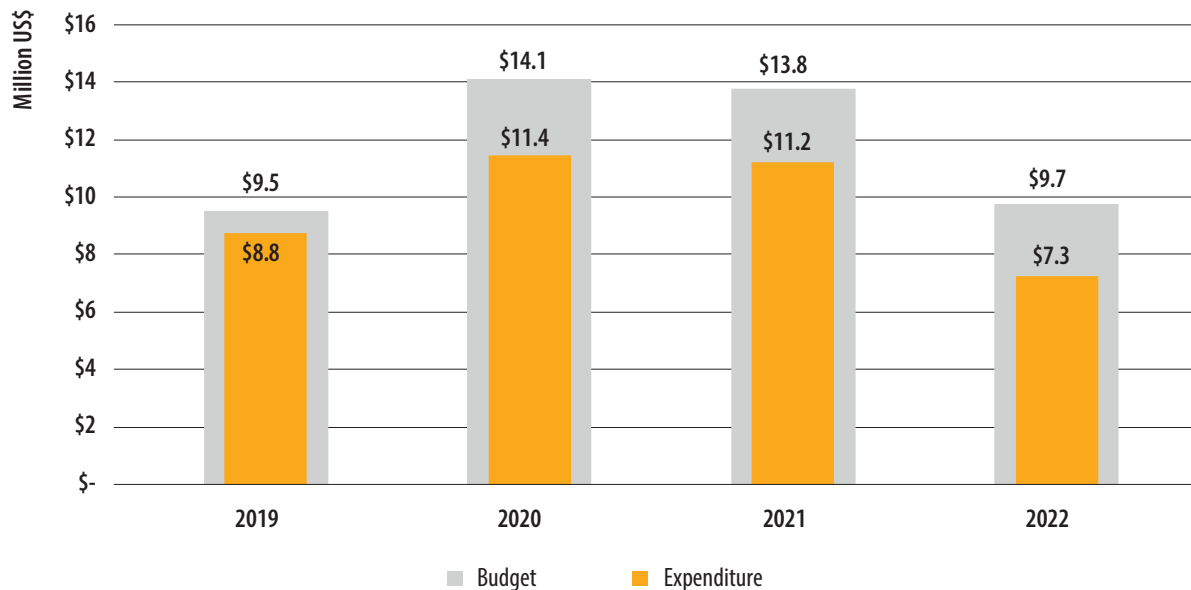
⁶⁹ See statement by Electricity Generation Company (Malawi): <https://www.egenco.mw/malawi-emergency-power-restoration-project/>.

⁷⁰ The ND-GAIN Index summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience. See <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/26620-building-climate-change-resilience-most-vulnerable-rural-communities-and-watersheds-malawi.pdf>.

resources management and responsive local institutions. Linked to the first stream, the support intended to offer sustainable livelihood opportunities for vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities and albinism, and for communities living in areas prone to flooding, drought and other shocks.

CPD Outcome 2 includes 13 projects with a total budget of \$47.18 million, total expenditure of \$38.7 million, and a delivery rate of 82 percent to January 2023. Five projects, together accounting for 9.4 percent of the outcome expenses, are implemented under DIM.⁷¹ The largest projects under this outcome are 'Disaster Risk Management for Resilience' (DRM4R) (29.4 percent of expenditure), 'Modernized Climate Information and Early Warning Systems' (M-Climes) (25.4 percent), the 'National Climate Resilience Programme' (NCRP) (13.3 percent), the 'Climate Resilience Initiative in Malawi' (9.3 percent), 'Transformational Adaptation to Climate Resilience in Malawi' (TRANSFORM) (6.2 percent), the Malawi – China Post-Disaster Recovery Partnership (4.1 percent), and seven small projects (of which three have closed) together accounting for the remaining 12.3 percent of expenditure under this outcome. In addition to \$14 million of core funding (36 percent), non-core funds (64 percent) have been mobilized, mainly through vertical funds (GEF and more than \$8.3 million from GCF), bilateral donors (Japan, Belgium, Ireland, China, Germany) and multilateral funds (UNITAR, SDG Acceleration Fund) and UNDP core resources.

FIGURE 3. Evolution of budget and expenditure of CPD outcome 2 (2019-2022)



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (IEO Data Mart - Jan 2023)

These projects touched on different areas, including resilience to climate change, environmentally sustainable agricultural practices and water management, disaster management and recovery, early warning systems and climate information services.

⁷¹ BIOFIN Phase II; Increase Universities' Production Capacity for COVID-19 personal protective equipment (PPE); Increasing COVID 19 PPE Access in Malawi; Malawi – China Post-Disaster Recovery Partnership, & Transformational Adaptation for Climate Resilience.

Finding 5. UNDP has supported a broad portfolio of downstream resilience initiatives and has increased anticipatory capacity at national, district, village and farm level.

UNDP supported the development of the 2016 National Climate Change Management Policy, and activities during this CPD have made an important contribution to its implementation. Most UNDP targets for climate change adaptation and resilience-building were on track in 2022, though progress in some projects had been halted by delays in final approval, first disbursements and finalizing annual workplans, flooding linked to Cyclone Idai in 2019, post-election demonstrations in May 2019, and lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Evidence from field visits to particularly vulnerable areas of Malawi indicate that the projects have provided valuable learning, which can be replicated or scaled-up for wider impact. The TRANSFORM project focused on enhancing the resilience of communities through ecosystem-based adaptation, and serves as a two-year bridging project leading from the Adapt Plan to the development of a large-scale Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) project on resilience. The Climate Resilience Initiative in Malawi, implemented in Mzimba and Kasungu Districts, aimed to enhance the adaptive capacities of vulnerable communities to climate change and other hazards and disasters. Other activities include climate-proofing local development gains in rural and urban areas of Machinga and Mangochi Districts, funded by GEF. Discussions with farmers and irrigation development committees under the Adapt Plan, TRANSFORM and Poverty Environment Action (PEA)⁷² projects highlighted achievements in building absorptive capacity through improved access to water, which resulted in improved agricultural productivity, livelihoods and food security. However, the capacity of irrigation development committees to operate the irrigation schemes was variable, and this was verified as a wider problem by stakeholders. A large number of women have reportedly dropped out of the irrigation clubs after the first year due to membership costs, a problem linked to the lack of women's participation in the village action plan development.

The M-climes project supported the expansion and scale-up of modernized early warning systems and climate information across 21 of the country's 28 districts, deploying hydro-met infrastructure through the procurement and installation of 33 automated weather stations, a lightning detection system with eight sensors located across Malawi, two lake-based weather buoys, and a weather data integration and processing system.⁷³ Five Automatic Weather Stations were installed by a supplier, in partnership with the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services that strengthened the capacity of their engineers to install and commission the equipment. The project helped to install 37 hydrological water-level recording stations and 34 automatic weather stations. These stations extend existing coverage, servicing both hydrological forecasting and localized weather data, to co-develop tailored weather- and climate-based agricultural advice for dissemination through mobile, print and radio channels.⁷⁴ Several radio and television programmes on climate and flood-risk management were developed in local languages and English and broadcast throughout the country.

A UNDP project helped the Department of Agriculture Extension Services to meet upfront investments in adopting the Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture (PICSA) approach, which has enabled smallholder farmers to improve their seasonal decision-making in targeted districts.⁷⁵ PICSA has been

⁷² These included the Tiyanjane, Chiliko, Chiswa Mafupa, Namosi B and Namosi A irrigation schemes.

⁷³ Interim Evaluation for UNDP-supported GCF-Funded Project: Saving Lives and Protecting Agriculture- based Livelihoods in Malawi: Scaling Up the Use of Modernized Climate Information and Early Warning Systems. This was triangulated with interviews conducted with Agricultural Extension Development Officers and Lead Farmers in Chikwawa District.

⁷⁴ GCF IEO (2022). Learning-Oriented Real-Time Impact Assessment Programme: Impact evaluation report for FP002 - Scaling Up the Use of Modernized Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Malawi.

⁷⁵ Government of Malawi, Department of Agricultural Extension Services (2020) Annual Brief Report. According to the UNDP Malawi Midterm Evaluation, the CPD has achieved 67 percent of the target set by the programme in 2021.

included in the National Extension Strategy and is also being integrated into the curricula for trainee extension officers at the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Experience outside of Malawi shows that sustaining PICSA implementation requires less resources once adopted within key institutions.⁷⁶ Government and NGO counterparts expressed that UNDP has the opportunity to move to a more strategic level to roll out climate advisory material more broadly in Malawi, and especially to Village Civil Protection Committees.

UNDP has also invested in building national and local capacity for disaster risk management and delivered risk reduction services in shock-prone areas.⁷⁷ DRM4R supported the construction of evacuation centres in Mangochi, Balaka, Chikwawa, Zomba and Phalombe. Field visits showed that the evacuation centres have strengthened capacity for district- and local-level disaster risk preparedness and management. Through the same project, UNDP supported the development of the Disaster Risk Information Management System in targeted councils, which is being finalized and will likely enhance disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the targeted communities.⁷⁸ UNDP also supported the construction of 180 safe, green and climate-resilient houses in four of the worst-hit communities in two districts (Zomba and Phalombe), and the restoration of essential infrastructure and services damaged by floods, such as community markets, irrigation infrastructure and community water points.

UNDP delivered well on the partnership component of CPD output 2.1 and has been instrumental in enabling climate resilience work between the Government and donors, such as in the FCDO resilience-building programme and Japan's contribution to Malawi's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). Partnerships created through projects have helped to combine specialisms for Malawi's climate sector. For example, under the PEA project, a research team from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the Universities of Cambridge, Southampton, East Anglia and Sheffield developed an environmental-adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Index for the country. The PEA also connected to resilience activities implemented by FAO and UN Women in Blantyre, Zomba, Phalombe and Neno districts, and market initiatives in Kasungu and Mzimba. Climate partnerships have not been developed with the private sector, a more difficult challenge because of limited private sector activity in adaptation initiatives.

Finding 6. UNDP has enabled improved planning capacity in some districts but has not added sufficient coherence to Malawi's climate sector. It can be difficult for national and decentralized government to take ownership of UNDP downstream initiatives.

The CPD objective of integrating climate change adaptation into national, subnational and sector development plans has been achieved with individual plans. However, there has not been a comprehensive initiative to coordinate planning and resources towards national and community priorities, natural resource management and responsive local institutions. The NCRP 2019-2023 is the closest initiative to this objective, aiming to build accountable, inclusive and effective implementation of climate change policies, and programme approaches for building resilient ecosystems and communities, in line with the National Resilience Strategy.⁷⁹ The institutional challenges associated with the Strategy have created uncertainty in Malawi's climate sector, which undermines progress towards greater coherence.

⁷⁶ Clarkson G. et al. (2022). Stimulating small-scale farmer innovation and adaptation with Participatory Integrated Climate Services for Agriculture: Lessons from successful implementation in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and South Asia.

⁷⁷ DRM4R Programme 2019-2023 Project Document.

⁷⁸ Midterm Evaluation of Malawi Country Programme 2019-2023 (2020) triangulated with field visits to Chikwawa.

⁷⁹ UNDP Project Documents triangulated with interviews.

UNDP has helped to strengthen environment and natural resource policies and implementation at the national and district levels. These include the Adapt Plan partnership with the Department of Disaster Risk Management Affairs, funded by GEF-LDCF, to strengthen decentralized and national development plans in Zomba, Ntcheu and Nkhata-Bay districts. The partnership modelled a framework for integrating climate change adaptation into development planning at community, subnational and national levels, and established tools and indicators for appraising the contribution of development projects to diversified and strengthened livelihoods and sources of income for vulnerable households, and the facilitation of sectoral strategies and District Development Plans (DDPs) that prioritize climate change adaptation. The partnership contributed to the establishment of the National Climate Change Management Fund, Sectoral Guidelines for the Integration of Climate Change Adaptation in Development Planning and Guidelines for Analysing Climate Change Budgets. These frameworks provide a more conducive institutional space for replication in other districts.

Other initiatives include strengthening the Agriculture Sector Working Group, through funding for the organization of Joint Sector Review sessions and the provision of technical inputs on policy coherence and consistency.⁸⁰ Through the PEA Project, UNDP facilitated a review of the draft district Socioeconomic Profiles (SEPs) in Salima and Chiradzulu, to assess compliance of SEP minimum requirements drawn up by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. This guides district personnel to prepare SEPs that respond to key development challenges in the district, and ensures alignment with national policies and selected SDG targets, helping to integrate environmental initiatives into broader development planning. This has encouraged the mainstreaming of community priorities for climate change adaptation within DDPs, the integration of community solutions to natural resource management, and greater attention to building resilient ecosystems. Additionally, the PEA team provided inputs and guidance to interventions related to poverty alleviation and food security. These areas included climate smart agriculture, biodiversity, and mainstreaming gender as a cross-cutting issue in DDPs. Environmental and Social Impact Analysis was mainstreamed to screen projects and utilize the Public Sector Investment Programme to ensure the integration of vulnerable and marginalized communities and people with disabilities in projects. UNDP has supported the Government to review climate change related policies, including the recent NDC.

The projectized nature of UNDP funding has detracted from the objective to systematize resilience-building at national and subnational levels, as each project adds new objectives, management structures and reporting lines associated with the funding source. Although 37 percent of UNDP spending in this area comes from core funding, this is largely channelled through projects rather than having a separate workstream focused on building government capacity to integrate and sustain climate initiatives. There is evidence of implementation and coordination challenges among district-level sectoral departments,⁸¹ and national and local stakeholders had reservations about the ability of fragmented projects to achieve the UNDP objectives of integrating climate and disaster risk management capacity in the Government. National-level planning and subnational implementation modalities have not been well aligned in some DRR projects, and a lack of clarity on project budget allocations has resulted in the development of AWP that were not informed by available financial resources, resulting in poor planning and the development of unrealistic targets. Stakeholders also argued that current DRR projects are overly focused on technology and infrastructure, rather than the skills and capacity that communities require to adopt and take ownership of these assets, and some raised concerns that some local DRR initiatives were not community-driven.

⁸⁰ This consists of government ministries (Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development), non-state actors (NASFAM, FUM, CISONECC), and development partners (three members of DCAFS). The Agriculture Sector Working Group is supported by technical working groups on Policy, Resilience, Service delivery, Technological Growth and Marketing.

⁸¹ For example, in some irrigation schemes in Zomba, the fisheries component was not as developed as the crop production component, yet the components were supposed to achieve a balanced approach towards building community resilience.

The greenhouse gas mitigation actions in the NCRP (and CPD output 2.1) are of questionable relevance to the country. Projections show that Malawi will continue to have one of the smallest carbon footprints globally, even after planned economic and forecast population growth.⁸² UNDP preparatory work to establish a carbon tax will be relevant if targeted at large-scale foreign and domestic extractive and/or polluting industries, but the awareness campaigns to encourage the public to reduce their carbon footprint, vehicle tax and calls for innovation in emission reduction plans, need to be carefully monitored to ensure mitigation actions add value to, rather than delay, domestic SME and livelihood initiatives.

Finding 7. UNDP has been instrumental in supporting the Government of Malawi to source and manage climate financing, an important alternative to large and recurring public expenditure on disaster responses. The total amount mobilized to date remains low compared to forecasted adaptation costs.

Malawi's financial allocation to environment and climate change management is less than 1 percent of public expenditure (\$12.4m), and UNDP projects have therefore partially filled a gap in preparatory and preventative action.⁸³ For example, UNDP supported the Government to secure funding for the scale-up of M-Climes, which was funded to a total of \$16.2 million (\$12.3 million from GCF, Government co-financing of \$2.2 million and \$1.8 million from UNDP). Starting in 2017 and running to 2023, the project was the first to use GCF funding in Malawi.

UNDP has supported the Government to look inwards for sources of climate finance, to supplement international support. This has included focusing on domestic financing alternatives, including the establishment of green taxes and carbon levies, which are intended to be channelled to the climate change fund. Support to generate national funding for climate change initiatives is a relevant response to Malawi's reliance on donor funding for climate responses, which is associated with short-term implementation strategies, mixed reporting lines for government entities, lack of government buy-in, and project closures when bilateral support withdraws. Carbon levies were operationalized before the agreement to transfer the revenue generated to the climate fund was fully recognized by all stakeholders, which put the public transparency of the levies at risk. If the taxes succeed, they may generate domestic demand for accountability over their use, and if not balanced appropriately there is a risk that new levies may face opposition from the private sector and the public.

UNDP supported the Government with the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN) Phase II, funded through GEF. The 'BIOFIN Malawi' project commenced activities in October 2019 and focused on measuring existing biodiversity expenditure levels, assessing future funding needs, and identifying tools for enhancing future funding mechanisms. The policy and institutional review and policy brief were approved in November 2020 by the Steering Committee followed by validation sessions for the budget and expenditure review, and the financial needs assessment later the same month. One of the recommendations from the reviews, around natural capital accounting coding in the national budget, has been rolled out, and consultations with the Ministry of Finance are at an advanced stage. The project planned to conclude the budget and expenditure review by April 2021, but delays in approving the 2021 annual workplan and the peak of COVID-19 in February 2021 meant that activities could not be effectively rolled out until March 2021.

Malawi estimates a funding requirement of over \$46 billion (including additional external support estimated at over \$35 billion) between 2021-2040 to deliver its NDC commitments.⁸⁴ Against the requirements for adaptation priorities alone (\$4.5 billion, the equivalent of \$236 million per year), the amounts that UNDP and others have helped to mobilize so far are low. Despite UNDP support under the NCRP, Malawi does

⁸² <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099545010272237260/pdf/P1772201ced75ce9182e7142761bde013662bca4fe42.pdf>.

⁸³ Government of Malawi, Ministry of Natural Resource, Energy, and Mining (2019) Malawi's Climate Finance Landscape.

⁸⁴ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Malawi%20Updated%20NDC%20July%202021%20submitted.pdf>.

not have the institutional framework in place to manage and deliver such funding. UNDP has assisted the Government with the development of monitoring systems to track resources coming into the country to support climate change. Interviews with District Councils and external experts highlighted the need for greater management of climate funding at the district level to avoid logistical and bureaucratic challenges associated with channelling through the national level. The Government is not accredited for direct access to GCF, GEF or Adaptation Fund funding, and recognizes that it has inadequate institutional and technical capacity to develop project proposals and attract private sector support.

2.3 Strengthening effective, accountable and inclusive governance

UNDAF Outcome 3: By 2023, rights holders in Malawi access more accountable and effective institutions at the central and decentralized levels that use quality disaggregated data, offer integrated service delivery and promote civic engagement, respect for human rights and rule of law.

UNDAF Outcome 4: By 2023, Malawi has strengthened institutions for sustaining peace, inclusive societies and participatory democracy.

UNDP Strategic Plan Outcome 2: Accelerate structural transformation for sustainable development.

Corresponding outputs:

Output 3.1: Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MoJCA), Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), Police Services, Prison Services, Judiciary, Legal Aid Services and the Paralegal Advisory Service Institute (PASI) are enabled to implement and monitor policies, laws and strategies for equitable access to justice.

Output 3.2: Selected governance institutions are enabled to perform core functions for improved transparency and accountability

Output 3.3: Central and local government institutions are enabled to develop and manage evidence-based policy planning, monitoring and evaluation systems for inclusive and effective delivery of services and achievement of development results.

Output 3.4: Use of digital technologies and quality disaggregated data enabled for improved public services and other government functions

Output 4.1: Parliament, Malawi Electoral Commission, Centre for Multi-Party Democracy (CMD) and selected non-state actors are enabled to perform core functions for inclusive participation and representation

Output 4.2: Gender-sensitive national peace architecture structures with real-time conflict early warning monitoring systems at national and district level are adopted.

Over the 2019-2023 period, UNDP focused on strengthening governance and human rights institutions for greater development effectiveness and accountability, improved service provision and civic participation. The work sought to promote access to effective justice processes and support participation in decision-making processes for marginalized groups, including women, children, people with disabilities, people with albinism, people living with HIV/AIDS and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. UNDP continued to strengthen oversight institutions, decentralized structures and systems, and disaggregated data generation and analysis, with a particular focus on the localization of the SDGs and reducing the transaction costs of district-level interventions.

The governance component of the CPD comprises 18 projects divided between CPD outcomes 3 and 4.

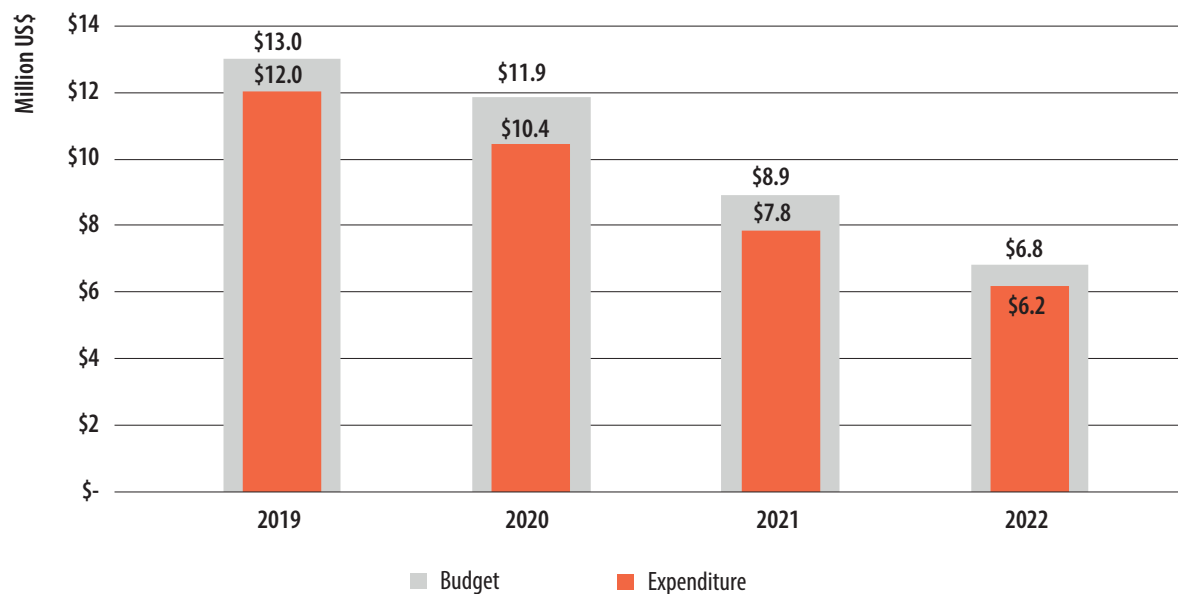
Outcome 3 comprises 13 projects, with a total budget of \$40.59 million, expenditure of \$36.5 million, and a delivery rate of 90 percent. 11 projects, together accounting for 81.4 percent of the outcome expenditure, were implemented under DIM.⁸⁵ The largest project under this outcome is Malawi NRIS (48 percent of expenditure), followed by 'Access to Justice through Village Mediation and Paralegal Services' (VMP) (12.9 percent of expenditure), the Electronic Health Intelligence Network Initiation Plan (10.1 percent of expenditure) and the 'SDG Hotspots Acceleration Initiative' (7.2 percent of expenditure). The remaining 21.8 percent of the outcome expenditure is divided over nine smaller projects that individually account for 0.5 percent. In addition to \$16 million of UNDP core funding (44 percent), non-core resources (56 percent) have mainly been mobilized through bilateral donors (FCDO, Ireland, Norway, USAID) and multilateral funds including the European Commission (more than \$7.7 million, 25 percent of the outcome expenditure) and several Multi Partner Trust Funds. The expenditure figures include COVID-19 country response funds (\$0.3 million) sourced from the United Nations COVID-19 Response Recovery Fund. Co-funding by the Government of Malawi under this outcome was \$1.3 million (3.6 percent of total expenditure).

CPD Outcome 4 comprises five projects, with a total budget of \$23.47 million, total expenditure of \$20.7 million, and a delivery rate of 88 percent. Four projects, together accounting for 82 percent of the outcome expenditure, were implemented under DIM modality.⁸⁶ The largest project under this outcome is 'Malawi Electoral Cycle Support' 2017-2021 (44 percent of expenditure), followed by the 'Malawi Spotlight Initiative Programme' (35 percent), and the 'Social Cohesion' project (18 percent). The remaining 4 percent of expenditure was funnelled through the 'Support to Credible, Inclusive and Peaceful Elections' project and the Spotlight Initiative. Approximately \$6 million (29 percent of total expenditure) was funded by UNDP core resources, further supported by non-core resources (71 percent) through bilateral donors (FCDO, Norway, USAID), multilateral funds including the European Commission (\$4.6 million, 22.5 percent of outcome expenditure), and the Spotlight Initiative Fund (\$6.1 million, or 29.5 percent).

⁸⁵ Malawi NRIS, VMP, Electronic Health Intelligence Network Initiation Plan, SDG Hotspots Acceleration Initiative, Development Impact Advisory Services, 30 Malawi Human Rights Support Project, Electronic Health Information Network, Strengthening Parliament, Strengthening local governance systems for effective SDG, Public Service Capacity Development Project, Foresight & Anticipatory Governance, Public Sector Innovation Programme, and the Anti-Corruption for Peaceful and Inclusive Societies. The 30 Malawi Human Rights Support Project has both DIM and NIM implementation modalities.

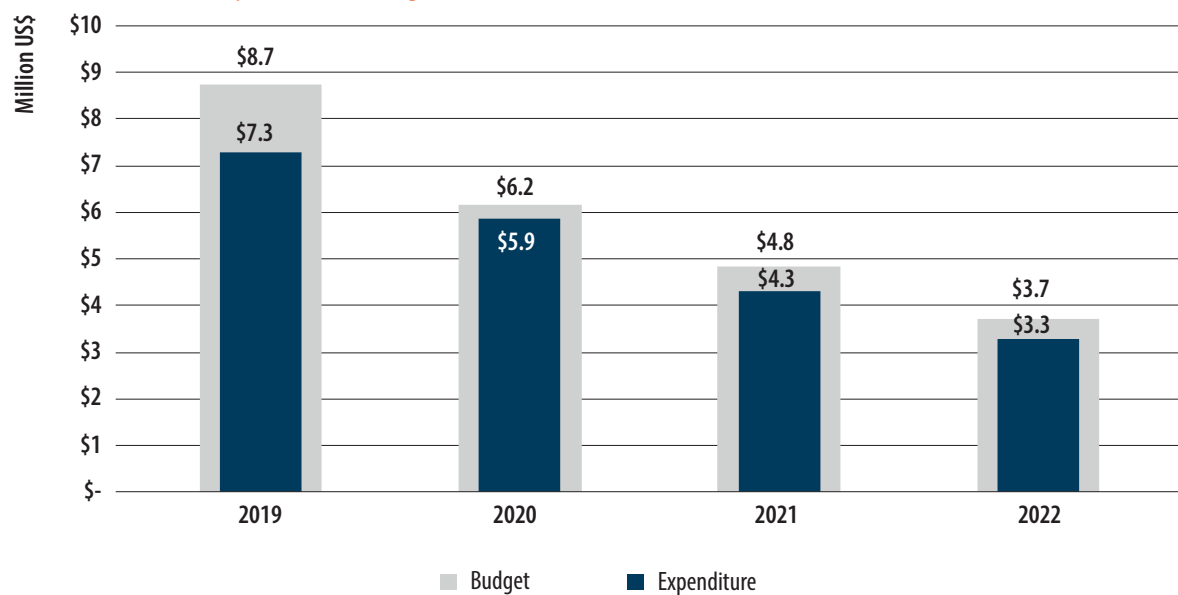
⁸⁶ Malawi Electoral Cycle Support (2017-2021); Malawi Spotlight Initiative Programme; Support to credible, inclusive and peaceful elections; and the Spotlight Initiative Country Programme for Malawi.

FIGURE 4. Evolution of expenditure and budget in Outcome 3 (2019-2022)



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (IEO Data Mart - Jan 2023)

FIGURE 5. Evolution of expenditure and budget in Outcome 4 (2019-2022)



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (IEO Data Mart - Jan 2023)

Finding 8. UNDP has supported the Government to apply a systematic multi-year scanning for economic opportunities and risks, improving the quality of policy guidance in a context where years of short-term and uncoordinated initiatives yielded few of their intended policy results. UNDP set in motion joint working opportunities across and beyond government departments, but implementation of the new plans remains subject to pre-existing flaws in institutional arrangements.

Working with the National Planning Commission (NPC), Ministry of Finance and the Department of Economic Planning and Development (EP&D), UNDP introduced the concept of foresight and anticipatory governance, which has been welcomed as an alternative to a widely-recognized lack of coherence in policy creation.⁸⁷ NPC led the sense-making process whilst developing Malawi 2063 and MIP1, which covers the next 10 years of implementation. UNDP helped to establish the NPC in 2017, and has provided technical and financial support to the review of Vision 2020 and the research, analysis and drafting stages of Malawi 2063. MIP1 was adopted by the Cabinet, and improves on previous national plans in two areas: first, by creating a structure of pillars and enablers based on an analysis of Malawi's key growth opportunities; and second, in its focus on consistent policy implementation across political transitions, which have undermined previous plans.

UNDP sought to deepen the vertical and horizontal interactions required for policy delivery, by bringing actors including Government, development partners, private sector and civil society to a series of dialogues around the review of Vision 2020 and the priorities framing Malawi 2063 and MIP1. Interviews with participants indicate that the process created awareness of new opportunities to work together and demonstrated the unique capacity of the country office to facilitate across the governance system. However, it is yet to result in practical coordination among ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), including those that directly participated in the sense-making process. With UNDP financial support, NPC has established Pillar and Enabler Coordination Groups, but is yet to succeed in guiding MDAs to set more realistic and coordination-focused targets and encourage them to invest in their areas of greatest comparative advantage.

Malawi 2063 and MIP1 planning instruments are the reference documents for the current review and realignment of new DDPs. UNDP interventions supported alignment through Village Action Plans (VAPs) in certain districts, providing resources to support the Government's mission to build awareness of the essential policy and programme components of Vision 2063 and MIP1 at the district level. This campaign missed the opportunity to promote the replication of sectoral synergies and coordination issues at the district level, which would have contributed to CPD Output 3.3. Stakeholders raised a concern that DDPs will be nominally aligned with MIP1 by listing the same sectors and flagships, which would undermine the support and learning processes between national and district level coordination groups for the Pillars and Enablers. UNDP intends to support greater synergy at the district level, though has so far been constrained by the financial resources available.

⁸⁷ The focus came about through UNDP sense-making process which found that UNDP governance work was over-focused on horizontal interactions between citizens or government departments, and vertical interactions (i.e., citizen to government and vice versa), but lacked focus on actions that establish the relevance of public policy to its own citizens.

Finding 9. UNDP has provided research and facilitation expertise in the development of the Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), which holds the potential for Malawi to widen its resource revenue base as the Government rebalances the economy against the country's debt payments. The INFF currently lacks the political buy-in to establish the framework, and its effectiveness is subject to underlying financial performance issues.

The country office supported the INFF Development Finance Assessment, which reviews private as well as public sources, international finance, diaspora bonds, philanthropy, green bonds and loans, and Foreign Direct Investments. These have helped the Government to expand its focus beyond the limited horizon of tax and revenues generated by the Malawi Revenue Authority and the grants and loans associated with official development assistance (ODA) and became increasingly relevant in later phases of the CPD as shortages of forex, fuel energy, and heavy debt repayments resulted in an exponential increase in domestic borrowing. The country office is also supporting the next three INFF steps, which involve developing the INFF framework (policies for leveraging new sources), a governance framework, and a suitable monitoring and reporting framework.

The INFF process has not yet reached the stage at which additional resources for the Government may be generated. The four steps were due to be complete by June 2023, though it is a concern that the process exhibits low national ownership beyond the Ministry of Finance. For example, UNDP has faced significant challenges in securing the participation of MPs to discuss the necessary reforms, and consultation meetings were inhibited by the need to incentivize participation. Progress has also been slowed by the need to navigate potential rent-seeking practices and the care required to avoid introducing new opportunities for corruption.

UNDP work to promote the INFF process at the district level is relevant to the resource mobilization agenda of the Ministry of Local Government. Councils are over-dependent on Intergovernmental Financial Transfers from the central level, and receive, on average, a fifth of their allocated proportion of government revenue, with problems in the predictability, timeliness, and transparency of resourcing.⁸⁸ UNDP has helped to build the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system at the district level, which includes innovations in data disaggregation and management planning. These are considered important actions by district councils, and may contribute to a more robust use of financial resources. However, to date the initiatives are dependent on UNDP or other donor funding and have no clear sustainability or exit strategy.

Finding 10. UNDP has provided significant technical assistance to encourage 'home grown' innovation skills that are addressing specific service provision problems. Innovations have engaged citizens in policy implementation processes and are helping to shape the public sector reform agenda, though they need greater institutionalization.

UNDP focus has been relevant to the Government's prioritization of innovation in its public reform agenda, which is expanding from MDAs and local councils to include constitutional bodies and all 70 parastatals. UNDP has promoted this agenda through two innovation prizes, one of which awards district councils for innovation in internal systems and client services, to encourage replication.⁸⁹ Despite a drive for innovation, there has been limited centralized coordination of the innovation agenda in Government, the United

⁸⁸ See World Bank (2022) Malawi Economic Monitor. The Local Government Act makes provision of 5 percent of government revenue to be directly disbursed to local councils. On average 1 percent is disbursed.

⁸⁹ In 2020 four councils, including Zomba, Mwanza, Dowa and Chiradzulu, received \$25,000 each in the first awards. The other prize is Malawi Innovators design competition launched in 2021 through the Malawi University of Business and Applied Science.

Nations system or other development partners. Though organizations have focused on different innovation areas, stakeholders recognized that the engagement of different sectoral and institutional entities are at risk of overlapping.

Government counterparts recognized the introduction by UNDP of innovative solutions for Malawi's ongoing public sector reform process, by promoting 'game changing' innovations to improve implementation. Both the innovations, and the process for developing them, are relevant to the UNDP aim of enabling governance institutions to perform their core functions for improved transparency and accountability (Output 3.2).⁹⁰ These have involved the direct engagement of citizens and policymakers in problem analysis, design and trials. Prominent examples include upgrades to the Malawi Road Traffic Information System, which has improved the processing of driving licenses and vehicle registration, and the development of a Local Revenue Management Information System in Mwanza. Technologies for converting waste into gas and energy have gained prominence beyond Balaka, where they were introduced. These innovations have provided evidence of what works or not, in different departments and councils. For example, the e-ticketing process for revenue collectors in Zomba, Blantyre and Karonga has proved popular and is highly relevant as councils lack the means to collect rent, business license fees, forest dues and market fees, and have suffered for many years from high wastage and leakage. These technical innovations have not overcome the underlying challenges, however, as traders and service users have found loopholes in the system.

Innovations introduced through UNDP support are largely dependent on UNDP resourcing and require further work to institutionalize improved service delivery and citizen engagement into formal and informal institutions. Not enough has been done to engage traditional governance systems, which are a key channel for citizen engagement, but do not have the capacity to engage in the innovations or resolve problems that emerge. Field visits show that local councils are interested in innovations that increase their revenue generation capacity and reduce their financial reliance on central government, and may also enable the central treasury to allocate greater resourcing to social services.

Finding 11. UNDP has been one of several agencies supporting the development of digital capacity in Malawi. Its initiatives have improved the flow of information within and between some government and private institutions, but also added to a largely uncoordinated digital environment in Malawi. Despite capturing local data, they have not improved citizen engagement or government accountability.

Digitalization is high on the Government's agenda, and included as a key enabler in Malawi 2063 and MIP1.⁹¹ UNDP has supported various digital initiatives at the national level, and certain initiatives in a small number of districts and communities.⁹² These are largely technical projects, enhancing information flows in certain government functions, with no evidence that more accountable institutions are emerging.

UNDP support of the SDG Hotspot platform in two of Malawi's 28 districts (Phalombe and Nsanje) does not provide compelling evidence that they will be adopted in other districts. Councils have argued that the systems, which involve the digitalization of VAPs and geolocation of community assets, are too expensive to undertake effectively, especially amidst the constraints imposed by fiscal decentralization. There has been minimal progress in attempts to integrate gender into the Hotspot survey and the development of VAPs. The Hotspot programme evaluation highlighted the need for development partners to work towards a common system that integrates national and local level data generation and aligns with District Monitoring and

⁹⁰ See World Bank (2014) Making services work for poor people.

⁹¹ See also <https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/component/content/article/79-blog/157-chilima-digitalization-key-to-sadc-economic-growth>.

⁹² UNDP digital initiatives include: the NRIS, digitization of VMP, the digitization of VAPs as part of the SDG Hotspots project, and the Electronic Health Intelligence.

Evaluation Coordination Committees.⁹³ However, it was noted that there are multiple M&E systems operating and performing similar functions at district level, without government direction on the integration/ and interoperability of the various district-level systems with those at national level. It is still unclear how the UNDP-supported digitalized systems relate to government initiatives such as the Harmonized National Management Information System and the Local Authority Management Information System.

UNDP support to digitalize the tracking of drugs and vaccines at facility level through the Electronic Health Intelligence system (EHIn) is helping to reduce wastage drugs and vaccines, as well as improving efficiency of the distribution system. EHIn addressed a gap in inventory management, but was developed without analysis of other systems used for similar purposes by the health sector. For instance, USAID introduced the Open Logistics Management Information System, which is being used in most hospitals in Malawi, but without integration with EHIn to add value for district pharmaceutical and other health staff. Field staff use the systems in parallel, rather than as a harmonized model, to overcome their respective shortcomings. As part of the Supply Chain Systems Architecture Coordination Group, UNDP is supporting the correction of these challenges. Neither of these systems provide information useful for health service users to know when supplies are available or to monitor the performance of facilities, because they have yet to properly address the last mile of delivery – providing medication to an identifiable patient. There is potential to link the health system with UNDP support for civic registration if identification cards can be accompanied with other means of identification on delivery. Under access to justice, UNDP supported village mediators from the Paralegal Advisory Service Institute (PASI) to improve the tracking and reporting of cases using tablets, which is helping to improve centralized oversight and reporting. There is no mechanism for localizing data analysis and use, and as such the digitalization process is not improving the mediator service or supporting council discussions of local problems. It is not possible for the Area and Village Development Committees to sustain them without donor support.

Under the Spotlight Initiative, UNDP is supporting the harmonization and development of systems for real time data on gender-based violence (GBV) through hubs in the National Statistics Office and targeted districts. The project provided tablets to volunteers situated at Community Victim Support Units, who collect data on the number of victims of GBV to inform district level planning. The data is expected to be fed into a district hub and to the central national data hub. Although the national hub is functional, the district hubs are still under development, and the districts are not sure how the operational cost will be handled once they are set up. There are also clear inefficiencies affecting the quality of the data and persistent data gaps due to connectivity and cost challenges experienced by the volunteer data collectors. Similar data is also collected by the police, though integrating these data processes is more challenging because of data security requirements. Overall, usage of generated data to inform decision-making is still very low as most of the population and users are not yet aware of the systems.

UNDP is taking steps to improve the coordination of digital initiatives in Malawi, providing support that is closer to its intended integrator role. As a co-chair of the United Nations Digital Working Group with the United Nations Population Fund, UNDP is working on the Harmonized Management Information System and a design concept for “Digital Malawi,” which will propose a framework to integrate digital initiatives at national level.

⁹³ UNDP Malawi (2022) Mid-term evaluation SDGs Hotspots Acceleration Initiative in Malawi.

Finding 12. UNDP played a key role in expanding civil registration in Malawi in 2017, enabling the country to move from the lowest to one of the highest registration rates in the region, and winning an award from the International Telecommunication Union. The NRIS project has transformed systems and processes in key MDAs and associated institutions, but requires further support to improve the infrastructure and user experience.

Throughout the CPD 2019-2023, UNDP supported a range of institutions to incorporate the registration system into their functions. Government counterparts reported cost savings and a reduction of some fraudulent practices after adopting the system. For the Ministry of Agriculture, identity documents (IDs) are reported to have helped improve targeting and the removal of ghost recipients during the distribution of fertilizer and seeds, and more efficient use of the Ministry's budget. Similar results were reported in the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Ministry of Finance (for pensions), Department of Human Resource Management (removing ghost workers), efficiency and accountability in commercial banks, Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority, and improving the work of the Financial Intelligence Authority.⁹⁴ Field visits confirm that linking the national registration process to the National Economic Empowerment Fund has offered women the chance to access loans and claim inherited assets.

In its fifth year, the operating infrastructure for the NRIS remains heavily centralized, and the user experience for ID cards has not been well documented. With no printing or distribution capacity, Malawi's districts send applications to the National Registration Bureau in Lilongwe. Applicants wait long periods (in some cases over three months) for their IDs to be processed, delaying access to services, especially in the rural areas. With no digital system for tracking the return of physical ID cards or for applicants to know when their ID is ready, applicants often travel long distances at some cost, throughout the application process. Women interviewees mentioned that the time they invest in the application further reduces the time they have for productive activities, and that travelling such distances to check on their application puts them at risk of violence.

The system also experiences challenges in processing service registers, entering and removing individuals, raising concerns about the accuracy of the electoral roll, and reducing the utility of the ID card in electoral processes. In the 'Affordable Inputs' programme, national IDs have helped banks to reduce the transaction costs of authenticating eligible farmers, but there has been limited difference for the holders of the card to date. Service access points have faced challenges, as input-distributing agents divert fertilizer from farmers by collecting their IDs in exchange for money or food to meet their immediate needs.⁹⁵

Finding 13. UNDP-supported initiatives have helped to extend and improve the provision of legal guidance and bridge the gap between Malawi's formal and informal justice systems, reducing the number of minor cases that enter time- and cost-intensive formal processes and the number of people in pre-trial detention.

Providing match-funding and fund management, UNDP supported PASI to expand and improve the guidance they offer through cell visits, camp courts and by dealing with issues in Court User Committees (which facilitate access to victim support, social welfare, health and other forms of legal advice).

The Village Mediation approach introduced by PASI is a unique value-addition to Malawi's justice system and is considered to make a wider contribution to social cohesion and peace. The UNDP-supported VMP programme became fully operational in 11 districts (Mchinji, Salima, Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mulanje, Zomba, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Kasungu, Mzimba and Karonga). Project reports show that, in a typical year, village

⁹⁴ UNDP Malawi (2021) Mid-Term Evaluation of the Malawi NRIS Project.

⁹⁵ Anticorruption Bureau (2021) Report on the Monitoring of the 2020/21 Affordable Inputs Programme.

mediators received 11,651 cases from the police, courts, prisons, and traditional chiefs, and referred 1,038 cases to other justice institutions. 62 percent of cases were referred to mediators from other justice institutions, suggesting an increasing recognition of the mediation services. Although the formal justice system has components of victim support, and pre-trial services are offered by the courts, the VMP uses local volunteers to incorporate contextual understanding of societal values, power structures and norms in the mediation process. Mediators are trained to remain neutral in handling cases and offer a safe space for reflection and reconciliation, which makes them more effective than formal channels in resolving minor civil cases that involve community or family relations, and reduces the likelihood that unaddressed disputes develop into criminal cases or family breakdowns. The PASI recruitment policy has ensured gender parity in the cohort of village mediators, and the model provides more sensitive and efficient handling of women's small cases than the formal system.

The Access to Justice programme had limitations in addressing more serious cases and systemic issues. Despite discussions with PASI, the model was not transferred to the Spotlight Initiative for addressing GBV, and mediators are required to refer cases involving the abuse of women and children's rights into the police and court infrastructure in the country, which does not have appropriate means of securing their comfort and protection. Furthermore, mediators follow a set package of support, with limited ability to deal with regional and emerging variations in crime. For example, field visits showed that the justice sector in Phalombe deals with child-trafficking, while in Rumphi, crimes linked to the Vyaza and Nyika wildlife reserves and high rates of GBV linked to tobacco vending are more common.

UNDP has increased the sustainability of the model by building the financial and monitoring evaluation capacity of PASI such that they are now under consideration for direct EU granting. It proved too challenging to establish Memoranda of Understanding between PASI and UNDP government counterparts to institutionalize the village mediation approach in government services, for reasons which do not appear to have been well communicated between project stakeholders.⁹⁶ In this context, other ways of establishing protocols for support to the village mediation approach need to be adopted, especially at district council level where the interface with traditional chiefs and other local level actors is greatest.

Finding 14. UNDP support has enhanced the core functions of institutions that promote participation and representation. A focus on long-standing institutions has overlooked critical stakeholders that could broaden and enhance the role of citizens.

Under CPD 2019-2023, the country office has enhanced the facilitation skills of senior clergy of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), which were used to mediate conflicts between opposing parties in the run up to the 2019 elections. PAC is now recognized for its ability to create dialogue opportunities and mediation to the extent that it has been accredited as an 'internal mediator' for the African Union Committee on Political Affairs for peace and security. PAC is a well-rooted forum for State-society relations, and draws on membership from various religious denominations and other social groups, district coordination teams and special structures for women and youth. Despite longstanding UNDP support to build the capacity of CMD as a body for promoting political pluralism, the entity still faces organizational challenges in its governance and membership models and financial processes, which have overshadowed its positive results (such as the creation of the Political Parties Act) and raised concerns about connections to businesses and procurement practice. UNDP took greater control of project funding to compensate for these issues. Governance donors are considering alternative models for supporting similar democratic initiatives.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Key informant interviews and UNDP Malawi (2020) Midterm evaluation VMP.

⁹⁷ UNDP Malawi (2021) End term evaluation of the Malawi Electoral Cycle Support 2017-2021, triangulated with interviews.

UNDP also supported Parliament through various technological initiatives, such as the move from manual to digital systems to ensure parliamentary functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for Hansard records, which has reportedly led to lasting improvements in parliamentary business. UNDP also supported online outreach to enable citizens to access and provide feedback on discussions in the Chamber via social media. However, coverage is largely limited to urban households because communication services in rural areas are weak and expensive. UNDP has not yet supported Parliament to strengthen its oversight role, and the overall state of inclusive participation and representation through MP consultations with citizens remains poor. Several bills with wide-reaching implications, such as the Land Bill, have passed without public hearings or inquiries.

UNDP support towards elections has mostly focused on strengthening the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) and CMD, and was mostly delivered during the election period. The focus on these institutions came at the expense of much-needed support for civil society organizations (CSOs) and other entities that could support civic awareness on election processes and gender, and facilitate citizen engagement.⁹⁸ UNDP has not sufficiently promoted women's access to Parliament, which rolled back in terms of absolute numbers of female MPs in the election preceding the CPD period. Through its work with MEC, UNDP supported various activities promoting aspiring female MPs and male champions for the 2019 elections, which likely helped to rebuild the number of women MPs to 23 percent of Parliament in the 2019 election, but the number of women in political positions remains well below parity. UNDP missed an opportunity by not providing more decisive support for the Gender Bill to be included in electoral reforms, or providing more active promotion of nascent women's political movements.

UNDP has increased the capacity of key institutions responsible for operationalizing the Gender Equality Act, including support to the Malawi Human Rights Commission and the creation of the Gender Equality Committee within it.⁹⁹ UNDP also contributed to improving the legal environment for gender through its support for the development of various associated pieces of legislation. These include the model Gender and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy for Higher Education by the National Council for Higher Education along with 22 public and private universities, as well as its support for the development of the Public Sector Gender and Anti-Sexual Harassment policy by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development. While this is commendable work, further support is required to ensure the implementation of this legislation.

Finding 15. UNDP made significant contributions to passing the 2022 Peace and Unity Act. The Act anchors the Malawi National Peace Architecture in a legal and policy framework, and is expected to provide an enabling environment for the continuation of local-level peace initiatives.

The passing of the Peace and Unity Act started with the adoption of the National Peace Policy in August 2017, with delays and periods of uncertainty during the current CPD cycle.¹⁰⁰ Now established, the Act provides the basis for a legislative framework to promote peace and unity in Malawi in a coordinated, collaborative and structured manner, to contribute to political stability and socioeconomic development. The creation of the Ministry of Civic Education and National Unity from the National Peace Architecture Secretariat contributed significantly to the establishment of the Malawi Peace and Unity Commission (the implementing entity mandated by the Act) and the ongoing process of establishing District Civic Assemblies.¹⁰¹ This has begun to address some of the major threats to peace, including lack of information

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ UNDP Malawi (2020) ROAR.

¹⁰⁰ Notably, after the contested 2019 election and between its approval by Cabinet in December 2020 and its parliamentary approval and Presidential sign-off in May 2022.

¹⁰¹ The Ministry aims to coordinate and regulate civic education services and promote national peace and unity through the enforcement of civic education policies, promotion of shared public interests and values and supporting collaborative peace building and conflict management interventions for national development Ministry of Civic Education and National Unity (2020).

and the issue of rebalancing rights and responsibilities, and introduced the ‘Pabwalo Initiatives’, an online platform to support engagement between citizens and duty bearers, and the promotion of civic values and duties among citizens.

The peace architecture offers an integrated and coherent model for conflict prevention and resolution, but does not sufficiently address latent factors that produce conflicts in Malawi. These include the campaigning of political parties, the relationship between the Executive, judiciary and legislature, and the social contract between the State and its citizens, as reflected in the weakness of civil society and the unequal status of different cultural groups. Within rural and urban communities, conflicts manifest in terms of GBV, land disputes, mob-justice for crimes and child abuse, and attacks on people with albinism. Instances of these conflicts increase as they link to economic and social rights, arising from reduced land productivity, poor distribution of agricultural inputs (such as farm input subsidies), and population growth. Land laws have now been passed, but with contentions as they are said to have been rushed through by the current Government. The post-2019 election period demonstrates that the national peace architecture has uncertain institutional foundations, reliant on a political settlement that is already being challenged by opposing social groups.

Finding 16. Through the Spotlight Initiative, UNDP has contributed to gender equality advancements in Malawi. However, institutional components have encountered slow uptake.

UNDP has been a proactive and valued partner of the United Nations Spotlight Initiative, which tackles the root causes of GBV by engaging duty bearers and community leaders to address harmful cultural practices. UNDP took steps to improve the district-level coordination of gender initiatives through the revamping of Gender Technical Working Groups and district and community chiefs’ forums. UNDP supported the integration of gender into the Chiefs Policy, which regulates the work of traditional leaders in Malawi, and which may be adopted in non-project areas when approved at national level. A real-time system was developed, linking GBV data from the police, courts and communities, though the district data hubs are not expected to become operational until late 2023 and there has been slow progress in integrating DDPs. Most district councils will develop their socioeconomic plans in the coming year, but the training provided appears not to have sufficiently prepared the recipients to integrate gender considerations, and is further undermined by a lack of documented guidance. Interviews and field visits suggest that these initiatives face low commitment and understanding by district and city council leadership, low attendance in Gender Technical Working Group meetings, and gender issues are still siloed and delegated to gender officers.

Interviews and field visits suggest that the women’s forums trained by the project have achieved successes in reducing patriarchal practices around land ownership in the northern region of Malawi. Other reported results include a reduction in “chokolo” (marrying a relative’s widow) and traditional rites of passage for adolescents, increased prioritization of girls’ education, and the establishment of community laws to end child marriage. Without proper institutionalization and reinforcement, it will be difficult to sustain behavioural changes, which are already facing strain. The field visits met women’s groups who are losing trust in their new engagements with the justice system and not reporting GBV cases because perpetrators continue to be able to bribe officials to give them lower sentences. A revolving fund was set up to enable women’s forums to travel to GBV cases, but funds have so far been used to support girls who have been rescued from early marriages. Similarly, though the project registered successes in reducing the backlog of GBV cases by enabling judges to visit remote areas, these mobile courts are not institutionalized in core justice services and have the potential to compete with other projects running mobile courts for other types of cases.

2.4 Country programme design and implementation and other cross-cutting issues

Finding 17. UNDP has introduced new approaches that complement the Government's focus on a mindset change towards economic opportunities. This technical focus has overlooked structural issues that inhibit policy implementation in Malawi from central to subnational levels, and undermined the access of rights holders to public institutions.

There are prominent examples of Malawi's recurrent structural gridlocks in decision-making and authority in the horizontal relationships between institutions directly related to UNDP outcome areas. Under Outcome 3 these include the institutional relationships between the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Director of Public Prosecution, between the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority and the Government Procurement Unit, and between the Presidential Delivery Unit and the Reforms Department, which have several institutional overlaps in practice.¹⁰² UNDP support to add coherence to innovation planning has faced challenges in moving from policy to implementation for similar reasons. Of importance to Outcomes 1 and 2, the National Resilience Strategy 2018-2030 has faced institutional challenges which, among other issues, have prevented the adoption of its model of wealth graduation, which gives prominence to social protection.¹⁰³ The model could have informed greater connections between UNDP business- and resilience-focused projects, and a more explicit approach to inclusion in the design of country office private sector projects.

The INFF process is being implemented at a time of wider debate around the management of fiscal and monetary policy between the Reserve Bank of Malawi and the Ministry of Finance, and when the private sector, civil society, MDAs and Parliament lack access to accurate information on Malawian financial policies (despite the passing of the Freedom of Information Act in 2021). The INFF focuses exclusively on opportunities for resource mobilization, not budget allocation and expenditure, which have both incurred well-designed but frustrated public finance initiatives in the past.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, the success of the INFF (and all public service outcomes of the CPD) is dependent on the work of government reform departments and development partners with a focus on anti-corruption initiatives and public finance management. The latter are reportedly limited to technical improvements to the system as they do not have the ability to work on broader governance components.

These structural problems have far-reaching impacts, though these are difficult to identify as there are few performance measures beyond those introduced two years ago by the World Bank's Governance for Enhancing Service Delivery programme. Though stakeholders widely welcome UNDP support to planning processes and policy reforms, they also noted areas where UNDP has contributed to institutional incoherence by not consistently applying the planning of Pillar and Enabler Coordination groups in its separate initiatives with MDAs.

¹⁰² The mandate of the Presidential Delivery Unit includes facilitating delivery, supporting implementation to ensure effectiveness, and multilateral coordination, which are also in the Reforms Department under the Office of the President and Cabinet, housed under the Vice President's Office, while also driven by the Secretary to the President and Cabinet.

¹⁰³ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Malawi_National_Resilience_Strategy.pdf

¹⁰⁴ See Chingaipe, Henry (2022) 'A decade of governance as roving banditry': the political economy of Public Finance Mismanagement in Malawi 2010-2020; in Ross, K, et al. (eds) 'Beyond Impunity: New Directions for Governance in Malawi'.

Finding 18. UNDP Malawi has been an early adopter of the portfolio approach, doing so with limited corporate guidance. The process has led to improved design of the UNDP governance programme and encouraged new conceptual models for development planning. The country office is exploring funding modalities to avoid the new programme reverting to a set of smaller projects.

In addition to the use of sense-making for government planning, UNDP Malawi has used the approach to assess and restructure its governance investment patterns into a programme with pillars focused on the supply, demand and oversight of public institutions and services. With limited internal support from headquarters or RBA, the process for developing the portfolio approach was inefficient, taking over two years from the initial engagement of an external facilitator to the redesign of one half of the CPD.¹⁰⁵ External facilitation provided a defined process of portfolio design, through which the country office was prompted to reflect on connected challenges and solutions in Malawi's governance systems, though the substantial technical undertaking of programme redesign was delivered by staff. With other pilot countries, the Malawi country office has contributed to an informal knowledge sharing group on the portfolio approach, coordinated by the Resident Representative in Burundi and supported by RBA.

The new governance programme has reportedly received a positive reaction from donors for the clarity it adds to the UNDP offer. The programme faces a logistical challenge in processing the resource requirements, because the country office cannot retain funding at the portfolio level, and donors are reluctant to allocate a proportion of funding to portfolio fund management services. Funding the portfolio through smaller projects will re-introduce inefficiencies as the country office develops detailed designs and unique reporting mechanisms for specific components of the portfolio. The country office will also have less flexibility to reappportion funding to address new areas that emerge as it builds synergy.

The country office now plans to adopt the approach to redesign the other outcome areas through the next CPD, and has taken steps to lighten the process before using it again. Initiatives under outcome areas have missed opportunities to connect UNDP interventions, but offer good potential given the governance, accountability and capacity challenges that affect climate change and DRR, especially at district level and between national and decentralized departments.¹⁰⁶

Finding 19. Going beyond its CPD objectives, the country office has taken steps to improve the coherence of development partners within certain areas of government planning. This support is valued, but has experienced challenges, whilst UNDP has not well articulated its integrator role.

Malawi's heavy dependence on donor funding, outside of direct budget support, has long been acknowledged as a strain on policy coherence and prioritization. UNDP coordination of donor support to Parliament during the CPD period was highly regarded by participants, especially the Steering Committee which UNDP co-chairs with the Speaker, and the Technical Committee which UNDP co-chairs with the Clerk of Parliament. This enabled Parliament to meet development partners as a block, and reduced transaction costs on both sides. Furthermore, the UNDP Resident Representative (acting Resident Coordinator at the time) initiated engagement with the Government on Daily Stipend Allowances, which resulted in a more harmonized approach through a collective effort of United Nations and development partners. Prior to this agreement, the participation of officials in donor initiatives was influenced by the relative value of per diems for attending meetings, which particularly affected the INFF process (see Finding 9). Though a seemingly small change, the initiative demonstrates that UNDP can address the incentive structures that effect development programming in Malawi. The UNDP Deputy Resident Coordinator is also co-chair of the

¹⁰⁵ Mid-Term Review triangulated with internal interviews.

¹⁰⁶ UNDP (2021) Mid-term evaluation of CPD 2019-2023.

National Climate Change Steering Committee, a coordination body for relevant ministries and departments to provide policy direction on climate change issues in the country.¹⁰⁷ On a smaller scale, during this CPD, UNDP has been revolving Chair for the Energy Donor Coordination Group. Starting with experience sharing, the group has developed a list of activity areas on which it plans to work with the Ministry of Energy.

Despite a review of comparative advantages in the United Nations System, agency overlaps remain, and are reported to be increasing as ODA to Malawi decreases. There are notable overlaps, for instance in initiatives for climate change, fiscal decentralization and budget tracking for Parliament, and with other governance reforms which are key to CPD Outcome 3.¹⁰⁸ Some donors argued that United Nations agencies should isolate their comparative advantages, and expressed reluctance to resource UNDP in areas where other entities have initiatives on the ground. Similar mandate overreaches exist among multilateral actors, however, that have overlapped in areas where UNDP has a comparative advantage.

The delinking of UNDP from the Resident Coordinator Office is reported to have helped to distinguish the two entities as separate functions, which proved important in the period directly following the contested 2019 election. During several months of dispute, the legitimacy of the voting process and the major institutions involved (MEC, EU and the United Nations system) were called into question by opposing political groups. As separate entities, the Resident Coordinator Office was able to demonstrate a United Nations-wide position of impartiality on the election outcome, while designating UNDP as the lead technical agency supporting electoral processes and dialogue between political opponents. Had UNDP been the Resident Coordinator at that moment it would have been required to defend its technical support to the election whilst voicing the United Nations position, blurring the roles and potentially exposing both UNDP and the wider United Nations system to greater jeopardy. The transition of UNDP from the other major functions of the Resident Coordinator Office is not yet fully complete, but all United Nations and development partners consulted described the process as collegiate. UNDP retains a sizable role in cross-government liaison (and administrative processing for United Nations agencies), and stakeholders felt that this role could be more strategic if UNDP better communicates how it intends to fulfil its integrator role.

Finding 20. UNDP has played an important role in providing evidence and knowledge to support the Government's COVID-19 response and development initiatives.

Over the CPD period, UNDP produced practical research alongside government departments and Malawian think-thanks, generating policy advice from evidence assessments. A study on the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 is an impactful example, as the findings supported the Government to raise \$3.8 million from donors for its COVID-19 response and triggered the direct provision of a significant amount of safety equipment by development partners. The study was followed by the publication of the COVID-19 Socioeconomic Recovery Plan, which the Government is using in its post-COVID strategies.¹⁰⁹ Working with Ministry of Finance, NPC and EP&D, UNDP provided technical support on economic modelling and incorporated the Multidimensional Poverty Index.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ With the Chief Director of Economic Planning and Development, and with delegated authority from Secretary to the Treasury.

¹⁰⁸ Such as the reviews of the Local Government Act and the Decentralization Policy.

¹⁰⁹ Government of Malawi (2021) Malawi COVID-19 Socio-Economic Recovery Plan 2021-2023: <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/malawi-covid-19-socio-economic-recovery-plan-2021-2023>. According to the Plan, COVID-19-related threats included the erosion of domestic institutional capacity, and the reversal of recent achievements in health and education and in trade and private sector investment streams. Social insecurity was heightened, and the evolving situation exposed various deficiencies in the healthcare system which needed to be addressed urgently. With large job losses in the formal sector, the informal sector ceased to be effective at absorbing the shock for alternative livelihoods, which were not spared the COVID-induced decline.

¹¹⁰ UNDP Malawi (2021) Annual Report.

UNDP led the articulation of the current National Human Development Report: “Delivering Sustainable Human Development and Accountability at the Local Level: The Experience of Decentralization in Malawi”. The process and publication of this report were considered the first serious attempt to interrogate how decentralization in Malawi could be linked to human development indicators at the district level. It has indirectly provided the basis for incentivizing demand for disaggregated data at district and local council levels, as well as for the MIP1 and Malawi 2063. However, structural barriers at the district council and local levels mean that fiscal and administrative decentralization has lagged behind and delayed implementation. Centralized decision-making has undermined the ability of local institutions to provide greater access to citizens and civil society.

Under the PEA project, analytical reports and accompanying policy briefs on poverty and the environment were developed and disseminated to the public and policymakers. These include two reports disseminated in 2019 to district councils in the Northern, Central and Southern regions,¹¹¹ and studies for a climate-smart aquaculture toolkit and a soil strategy commissioned in 2020. UNDP promoted knowledge sharing on energy mini-grids and other components of the ACRE project, though these lessons were not directed quickly enough towards removing the barriers to further public and private investment. Interviews with Growth Accelerator stakeholders indicated the need for more strategic knowledge management, beyond reports on the enterprises supported by the initiative.

Finding 21. The country office delivered a reasonable evaluation plan despite limited capacity dedicated to M&E. Project monitoring has overly focused on a narrow set of quantitative indicators that reduce the ability of the country office to understand which participants benefit and how.

The country office conducted 13 decentralized evaluations through the CPD period, of which 70 percent were assessed as satisfactory and 30 percent moderately satisfactory.¹¹² The evaluations were balanced across the CPD outcome areas and covered the projects with the largest expenditure in both areas. A midterm evaluation of the CPD was conducted late in the cycle, but did not provide the level of detail around beneficiary experiences that could have been achieved by the three outcome evaluations that were cancelled. Most of the evaluations have been relatively well-resourced, though there was a general pattern of under-expenditure against budgeted amounts. UNDP Malawi is one of the few country offices to have conducted an impact evaluation in 2022, developing a rich understanding of the results of the M-Climes project.

Most of the projects have strong arrangements for periodic reviews, monitoring reports, steering committee meetings, results frameworks with measurable indicators, baseline values and targets. The M&E capacity in the country office, and in project teams, has been overstretched, limiting the breadth and utilization of evidence to reviews of implementation reports, and interaction with beneficiaries and implementing partners on the ground remains limited.¹¹³ The UNDP Results Framework uses narrow indicators and data disaggregation that does not capture relevant information to understand aspects of inclusivity and sustainability as stated in some output descriptions. For example, the ‘Increasing Access to Affordable Renewable Energy Services’ project (IACADES) focused primarily on the quantity of connections rather than the inclusive benefits described in Output 1.3, and as a result was slow to identify the bottlenecks and opportunities for expanding the consumer base for the energy generated. No data was collected on

¹¹¹ These reports are: UNDP Malawi (2019) Soil and Nutrient Loss in Malawi; and UNDP Malawi (2019) Factors Driving the Gender Gap in Agriculture Productivity in Malawi.

¹¹² One outcome evaluation, 11 project evaluations, and one UNDAF evaluation. Four individual country programme outcome evaluations were cancelled because the country office had completed a midterm evaluation of its CPD and assessment of all CPD outcomes is covered by both this ICPE and the UNSDCF evaluation, both of which took place in 2022.

¹¹³ UNDP Malawi (2022) Midterm Evaluation of UNDP Malawi CPD 2019-2023 triangulated with interviews.

energy access for people with disabilities. Both MICF and the Growth Accelerator captured the number of jobs created rather than the quality of employment, and therefore only partially covered the access of women and youth to employment opportunities as described in Output 1.1. Progress reporting made several assumptions about the potential employment opportunities that may be created within enterprises and/or value chains in the future.¹¹⁴ Stakeholder interviews confirmed that there was no rigorous M&E structure to quantify the jobs created, and little understanding of how qualitative aspects were being monitored and evaluated. The NRIS and MECS evaluation reports pointed out that limited M&E capacity at project and country office level has affected the robustness of M&E, and that greater use of beneficiary feedback during the implementation of NRIS could have informed improvements to the ID systems.¹¹⁵

Finding 22. Outside of two large and notable projects, the country office has taken a targeting approach to gender and not paid sufficient attention to the role of women in its programmes. The country office has taken steps to prioritize gender in all UNDP operations.

Over 51 percent of country office expenditure was delivered through projects designed with gender-targeted approaches (GEN1), in which UNDP aimed to ensure that interventions reached a certain number of women and/or engaged institutions with purview over issues related to women (see Figure 6). Field visits for this evaluation and analysis of self-reported UNDP results confirm the country office has had mixed success in ensuring that the number of women engaged in UNDP's project are on parity with the number of men, with the private sector initiatives overachieving, energy and governance programmes missing targets, and several project indicators and results reported with no disaggregation. The evaluation analysis also showed that projects classified by the country office as gender responsive (GEN2, making up 36 percent of total expenditure) are often undermined by a limited qualitative focus on women's experience in accessing and using UNDP interventions. More transformative approaches and results are found in the Access to Justice project and Spotlight Initiative, both of which are designed with an understanding of the risks women face and their experience of support services, and are well monitored. No CPD results were classified as gender-negative, though the level of reporting on gender does not allow this possibility to be ruled out. Country office reporting on gender results often listed women within the broad category of 'marginalized populations', without sufficient evidence of results, little emphasis on changes to gender relations, or the control over and access to resources and benefits for men and women. There has been limited use of gender evidence to stimulate discussion on the specific gaps, opportunities and challenges for country office project operations.

¹¹⁴ MICF Annual Report 2020.

¹¹⁵ UNDP Malawi (2021) Mid-Term Evaluation of the Malawi NRIS Project.

FIGURE 6. Expenditure by gender marker



FIGURE 7. Expenditure by gender marker and year

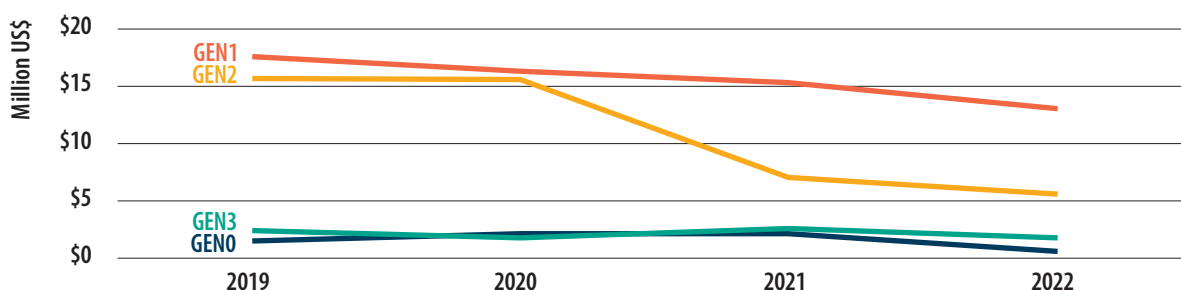


TABLE 2. Percent of total outcome expenditure per gender marker (2019-2022)¹¹⁶

Row Labels	GEN0	GEN1	GEN2	GEN3	Grand Total per Outcome
Outcome 1	11.5%	51.7%	34.9%	0.0%	100%
Outcome 2	0.6%	95.6%	3.5%	0.3%	100%
Outcome 3	8.8%	20.2%	71.0%	0.0%	100%
Outcome 4	0.0%	21.7%	36.7%	41.6%	100%
Grand total per gender marker	5.7%	51.1%	36.0%	7.2%	-

The country office Gender Unit has appropriate expertise, but is understaffed for the workload assigned to its two members.¹¹⁷ Their responsibilities include mainstreaming gender throughout the UNDP portfolio of 39 projects. Given the low levels of gender awareness in programme teams, this has required promoting improved project design principles (and a redesign under one outcome) in addition to their routine quality

¹¹⁶ Calculated from ATLAS data.

¹¹⁷ The office has one gender expert, a programme officer (hired late 2019) and a young professional officer, who joined on a temporary basis at the end of 2021.

appraisal role. The Unit is also involved in all country office recruitment processes and delivers the UNDP component under the Spotlight Initiative, which absorbs a significant amount of capacity as the project is implemented in six districts and requires the management of several CSO partners.

UNDP Malawi scored silver in a Gender Equality Seal assessment in 2020 and has been working on implementing the recommendations, though without a localized strategy or a workplan to guide these efforts. The country office is yet to attain gender parity at the office, with 33 percent female staff compared to 67 percent male staff and most senior roles held by men. Human resource officers received gender equality training in 2019, and in 2021 the country office conducted an informal assessment to determine the root causes that discouraged women from applying to work at UNDP.¹¹⁸ The country office leadership committed funds to raise awareness of United Nations opportunities and application processes amongst female university students, though it is too early to determine the impact of these activities. A more comprehensive gender analysis to understand internal factors relating to the low number of women in more senior positions has not been conducted.

2.5 Country programme performance ratings

The following table provides an overview of the performance of the country programme, using the five evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and a set of parameters for each. A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest rating.¹¹⁹ These ratings are provided in conjunction with the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide more detailed explanations.

TABLE 3. Country programme performance ratings

Key criteria and parameters	Rating	Remarks/Justification
1. RELEVANCE	3	UNDP work has been highly relevant to longstanding challenges in promoting growth, building resilience and reforming public services in Malawi. The programme and project logic is mostly appropriate for achieving these results, though lacking analysis of institutional issues and requiring more emphasis on those that may be left behind during economic growth.
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	3	
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/ UNDP goals	4	
1.C. Relevance of programme logic	3	
2. COHERENCE	2	The country office has taken steps to increase the coherence of its governance portfolio and is in the process of assessing linkages across all outcome areas through this lens. Projects and initiatives are coherent with the objectives of the Government and development partners, but limited coordination in implementation has added pressure at district level and cases of duplication.
2.A. Internal programme coherence	3	
2.B. External programme coherence	2	

¹¹⁸ A clause indicating that women are encouraged to apply was included in each vacancy. There were no specific women-only vacancies.

¹¹⁹ 4 = Fully Achieved/ Exceeds Expectations. 3 = Mostly Achieved. 2 = Partially Achieved. 1 = Not Achieved.

Key criteria and parameters	Rating	Remarks/Justification
3. EFFICIENCY	2	Challenges in project management and procurement between UNDP and the Government have delayed activities and limited multi-year planning in some projects. Under outcome 3, UNDP has introduced several efficiencies to government services. Under outcomes 1 and 4, UNDP has been forced to take greater control of project mechanisms from partners.
3.A. Timeliness	2	
3.B. Management efficiency	2	
4. EFFECTIVENESS	2	Most output targets are on track, but outcomes face delays, especially in energy access and improved public services. The CPD has delivered results for those at risk of being left behind due to environmental shocks and GBV but, with the exception of the Spotlight Initiative, has weaknesses in understanding how women and other groups engage with UNDP interventions.
4.A. Achieving stated outputs and outcomes	2	
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	2	
4.C. Prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment	2	
4.D. Programming processes adhered to sustainable development principles	3	
5. SUSTAINABILITY	2	CPD 2019-2023 promoted capacity in relevant government counterparts, especially the NPC, and this was supported by evidence generation, but several initiatives are too advanced or uncoordinated for district-level uptake. Matched grants under PSDII have generated private sector funds for development initiatives. Finance features in other UNDP activities, but the amounts mobilized over the period are low.
5.A. Sustainable capacity	2	
5.B. Financing for development	2	

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the conclusions of the evaluation on the performance and contributions of UNDP to development results in Malawi, the recommendations and the management response.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. UNDP work under CPD 2019-2023 has been highly relevant to Malawi's long-term economic growth prospects and its immediate need to build resilience against recurring shocks and stresses.

UNDP has introduced several flagship initiatives that move Malawi's growth potential and public reform processes beyond policy and towards implementation, providing practical demonstrations that complement the 'mindset change' promoted by the Government. With the creation of a new governance programme, the country office has adjusted its own support to complement this ambition. To date, these are steps towards policy implementation, and the shift toward fully nationally-led implementation is still challenged by the institutional alignment between MDAs, disconnects between national and district planning, and ongoing issues with donor coordination. Whether the foresight and sense-making approaches become routine planning tools depends heavily on further UNDP engagement of relevant stakeholders, and to date the country office has not sufficiently taken account of the institutional dynamics and incentives to overcome barriers.

Conclusion 2. The UNDP private sector focus is innovative for the organization and is promoting business engagement in development initiatives across various sectors.

The business activity stimulated under PSDII demonstrates the ability of UNDP to encourage policy implementation, and the organisation helped to incorporate pro-poor principles into a sizable scheme with good sustainability prospects. DRR, climate and energy activities of the CPD directly respond to the needs of poorer groups in Malawi, but PSDII has the greatest potential to fulfil the overarching CPD objective of reducing poverty and inequality, sustained by national economic growth. More needs to be done to ensure that pro-poor impacts are realized and embed the lessons of job creation and buyer-schemes into planning for national growth. The impacts of COVID-19 restrictions make it too early to tell whether revenues will sustain the initiatives. However, the experience of farmers to date, plus an over-focus on business results in M&E processes, indicate that a full assessment of the benefits for men and women is overdue. This will be essential as the Government emphasizes economic growth as Malawi's main means of poverty alleviation. Levels of poverty remain high in Malawi, and with low coverage and quality of social protection, poorer groups are at risk of being left behind if economic growth initiatives target only those that can create wealth. Malawi's economic growth to date has coincided with widening inequality, and stakeholders recognize that the gap between wealthier and poorer groups may increase as the Government shifts its development policy.

Conclusion 3. UNDP climate support has provided an important alternative to recurring expenditure on disaster response, though greater coherence is needed with districts and non-governmental initiatives.

The limitations of emergency funding have been increasingly apparent over the CPD period, as communities in certain areas struggle to recover in the narrowing window between natural events. The UNDP multisectoral approach combines water resources, meteorological services, agriculture and fisheries in climate change adaptation and resilience-building. This approach has delivered important support, which needs to be scaled up and applied widely to deal with recurrent food insecurity and challenges in natural resource and environmental management in the country. Public expenditure remains imbalanced towards disaster response rather than preparatory measures, and is slowed by levels of institutional capacity and the political dimensions of funding.

Conclusion 4. The main focus of UNDP governance support has been on institutional processes - supporting public entities responsible for economic planning around the COVID-19 response, ID registration and digitalisation - rather the principles of 'rights' or mechanisms for civic engagement.

UNDP has greater potential in this area because of its long history of support to governance reforms. UNDP digital solutions are built on the premise that the efficiencies of computerized systems will improve institutional performance and, therefore, the services received by the population. This has not yet manifested; though the systems are relatively new, experience has shown that digital systems require good governance and are subject to institutional and human influences. Even where data digitization has improved data disaggregation, this has not resulted in evidence of stronger citizen engagement, or improved respect for human rights and rule of law.

Conclusion 5. Across the CPD outcome areas, UNDP has supported pilots of different approaches relevant to Malawi's national priorities.

In a context of national budget shortages and problematic and incomplete decentralization, these initiatives have had variable adoption rates and limited sustainability, with few strategies for achieving scale. As well as increasing administrative processes for both UNDP and the Government, scattered initiatives have undermined opportunities for citizens to engage in Malawi's public institutions, as projects are not well coordinated with district planning or the interventions of other donors. The overall approach of UNDP to project fund management has been appropriate, whilst national financial performance remains a concern. However, management processes in both the Government and UNDP have led to activity delays and frustrated longer-term planning.

Conclusion 6. UNDP has registered significant technological improvements, but not enough attention has been paid to the user experience to ensure that effectiveness is maintained over time.

Achievements in NRIS, off-grid energy, M-Climes and other projects have delivered first-of-their-kind demonstrations in Malawi, though their effectiveness has been challenged by the ways in which people access and interact with the technologies. The experience of women, in particular, in engaging with UNDP-supported interventions has been a key weakness, and not enough is known about whether women have benefited. Proving the technical success of mini-grid sites has absorbed a significant amount of UNDP capacity, more of which could have been used to identify the prerequisites for mini-grid deployment in Malawi and to enable the Government to prepare the technical groundwork and investment case for a pipeline of other mini-grid sites. ID cards are a revolution, and empowering to the Government and associated institutions, but the infrastructure and associated loopholes risk undermining the intended purpose of empowering people.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

The following recommendations are provided to support the UNDP contribution to Malawi's development priorities. They cover key elements of UNDP performance under the current programme cycle that could be improved, and recognize changes in the external context that may influence the design of the next country programme.

RECOMMENDATION 1.



UNDP should continue its support for MIP1 and Malawi 2063, enabling their coordination groups to become effective spaces for driving Malawian economic growth. To do so UNDP, should:

- 1. Incorporate the objectives of the coordination groups in all of its engagements with MDAs, districts, development partners and the private sector; and,**
- 2. Assess the structural barriers and incentives for cross-government working.**

UNDP should actively support Malawi 2063 to become a national initiative that all political parties reinforce, and position itself as an advocate for those that may be left behind in the growth agenda.

Management response: **Accepted.**



In the 2023 Governance Annual Work Plan, key strategic interventions have been defined with the NPC and EP&D which will support implementation of the recommendation.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Support the establishment and population of an M&E database to track implementation of MIP1.	March 2024	Governance/ and Development Impact Advisory Team (DIAT)		
1.2 Support NPC and EP&D coordination mechanisms and cross-organizational integration capacity for strengthened planning and monitoring of MIP1.	June 2024	Governance and DIAT		
1.3 Support NPC to conduct training for all MDAs on fore-sighting instruments and approaches.	December 2024	Governance and DIAT		

RECOMMENDATION 2.



UNDP should ensure that its next governance programme considers a broad range of actors in society, identifying those that support civic engagement and those that hinder stability. It should look beyond the usual partners and find opportunities to enhance the capacity of entities that support women's participation in politics and those that can channel public opinion towards effective civic engagement, especially around the electoral process. UNDP should build and improve on its model of support to the institutional capacity of PASI as way to support other CSOs that are currently nascent.

Management response: **Accepted.**



UNDP has developed an entire programme area under its Governance portfolio dedicated to civil society engagement, with a particular focus on women's participation in political processes and decision-making. UNDP has been working closely with Government and civil society actors focused on women's participation in national and local governance through the Spotlight Initiative. UNDP will conduct a mapping of potential partners to target / engage in the area of women's participation in national and local governance which will inform calls for proposals prior to elections.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1. Conduct a mapping of potential partners to target/ engage in this area of women's participation in national and local government elections.	June 2024	Governance		

RECOMMENDATION 3.



UNDP should conduct an impact assessment of PSDII to establish the levels and types of benefits received by poorer groups, and then promote pro-poor principles widely. The assessment should quantify the costs and returns of engaging in MICF and the Growth Accelerator for people at different socioeconomic strata, with a special focus on smallholder farmers, women and youth. The assessment should inform a review of the PSDII engagement model for such groups, and lessons should be promoted to Government and development partners, the private sector, NGOs and commercial banks. Ensuring that other financial providers adopt UNDP pro-poor principles would be an important contribution to ensure that future economic growth is inclusive.

Management response: **Accepted.**



The country office acknowledges the importance of conducting an independent impact assessment of PSDII to quantify benefits and costs of the project and provide lessons for future interventions. In this regard, the country office will incorporate requirements for the impact assessment into the project end of term evaluation which is planned to be conducted this year. The process will take into account baseline surveys and impact assessments commissioned by MICF management over the course of implementation of the Growth Accelerator and MICF initiatives.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Commission PSDII evaluation which will include explicit requirements for impact assessment.	December 2023	Resilience and Sustainable Growth (RSG) portfolio and M&E Unit		

RECOMMENDATION 4.



UNDP should continue to support effective decentralization, building on the digitization and innovations agenda. The Government of Malawi has embraced decentralization, but it currently exists in form rather than function. This challenge of coordination and coherence is reflected in MDAs as well as donors that are supporting it. The decentralization agenda holds the potential to provide a strong basis for strengthening the drive for evidence-based policy implementation under Malawi 2063, finding room to overcome political bottlenecks that impede effective service provision, strengthening citizen engagement and promoting innovations at the local level.

Management response: **Accepted.**



In order to achieve the objectives of this recommendation, UNDP will focus on strengthening local-level governments with systems, skills and mechanisms that empower them to take better-informed decisions and deliver better services to the public. UNDP will also work with district councils and NPC to link local governance priorities and spending with the MIP1 dashboard, to provide better oversight and coherence to decentralization objectives.

◀ Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Support local-level governments with skills and mechanisms for evidence-based decisions and delivery of public services.	December 2023	Governance		
4.2 Support district councils and NPC to link local-governance priorities and spending with the MIP1 dashboard.	December 2024	Governance		

RECOMMENDATION 5.



In designing the next CPD, the country office should consider where its integrator capacity could add value to sectors in which wider adoption of viable downstream interventions is held back by an ineffective enabling environment. Options include the off- and on-grid electrical energy sectors, digital initiatives, social protection, justice, and natural resource management, especially unsustainable charcoal production. Such a role would build on the central planning support UNDP has provided in this CPD, though should involve greater political economy and barrier analysis, and make targeted use of downstream innovations.

Management response: **Accepted.**



In principle, UNDP would like to exercise its integrator role at all levels in the next CPD. UNDP will explore applying its integrator role and value addition in governance, inclusive digital transformation, climate change and disaster risk management, natural resource governance, clean and affordable energy access, strong capacity for diversifying development finance, and private sector development focused on green economic transition.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Make provision for UNDP to practice its integrator role and value addition in the next CPD.	December 2023	Programme Portfolios		

RECOMMENDATION 6.



In the next CPD, UNDP should increase its efforts to add coherence to Malawi's climate policies and interventions, and enable greater intergration of climate considerations across sectors and within the MIP1. UNDP should support the vertical planning of climate change initiatives from the national through district to village level, and concentrate on establishing a coherent and predictable flow of climate finance to the district levels. The organisation should review which of its downstream interventions can now be fully adopted by district governments and local NGOs, allowing it to refocus on the gaps and innovations in Malawi's climate response.

Management response: **Accepted.**



The next CPD will: a) include key elements of current initiatives with potential to increase coherence of enabling environment for climate policies, strategies across sectors at all levels; b) promote an enabling environment for greater integration of climate considerations across sectors from the national through to the sub-district levels; and c) advocate for establishment of a coherent and predictable flow of climate finance to the district levels. The country office will also support a review current downstream interventions to identify gaps and innovative climate responses those that can be fully adopted by district governments and local NGOs.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Include elements on climate response coherence and integration in next CPD.	September 2023	RSG Portfolio		
6.2 Conduct a review of current downstream climate responses to identify innovative interventions for adoption.	December, 2023	RSG Portfolio		

RECOMMENDATION 7.



UNDP should promote the strengths of its fund management arrangements, with the near-term objective of communicating clear budget forecasts and financial standards to all partners, and a long-term objective of building capacity for more robust financial performance in public spending. With clearer communication about its financial operating procedures, UNDP should be able to create efficiencies in its partnership processes and reduce the frustrations that arise on both sides of partnerships. Compliance with UNDP financial procedures should be promoted as an opportunity to build donor confidence in providing more direct budgetary support and public confidence in tax mechanisms.

Management response: Partially accepted.



The first part of the recommendation is not clear. UNDP already prepares multi-year budgets for its regular or development projects. Other types of projects, such as initiation plans or engagement facilities, by their nature may not require multi-year budgets. With regard to the second part, UNDP accepts the need for better ways of communicating its financial operating procedures. This would reduce delays in completing transactions as well as build trust in public financial management.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
7.1 Prepare a brochure on UNDP financial operating procedures targeting key partners.	October 2023	Programme Management Support Unit (PMSU)		
7.2 Hold a briefing session on UNDP financial operating procedures for key partners.	December 2023	PMSU		

RECOMMENDATION 8.



The country office should prioritise the roll-out of its strategy to mainstream gender, within a clear timeframe of deliverables. This strategy should be delivered by senior management and include workstreams for improved programme design, implementation and monitoring, recruitment, and promoting gender in partnerships. The strategy should involve capacity-building for the whole country office and enable outcome teams to improve the gender lens in their programme designs, freeing the gender unit to undertake quality assurance and promote best practice. The strategy should be rolled out with clear milestones and a process for accountability.

Management response: Accepted.



The country office will develop a clear gender mainstreaming strategy aligned to the new Global Gender Strategy with the active involvement of senior management.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
8.1 Develop and launch a clear gender mainstreaming strategy for the country office.	December 2024	Governance portfolio		

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database (ERC).

ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of IEO at:
<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/detail/22461>.

Annex 1. Evaluation terms of reference

Annex 2. Evaluation framework

Annex 3. People consulted

Annex 4. List of projects for review

Annex 5. Status of CPD outcome and output indicators matrix

Annex 6. Theory of change

Annex 7. Country at a glance



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