

Malawi: Health System Strengthening with a focus on Reproductive Health

The health system in four districts of central Malawi has been strengthened to deliver maternal and newborn health services of improved quality.

The challenge

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world and its health sector is heavily underfunded. The health system is weak and reproductive health outcomes are particularly poor: maternal mortality rate is 439 per 100,000 live births and neonatal mortality rate is 27 per 1,000 live births (DHS 2015) despite the attendance of a skilled health worker at most deliveries.

The key challenges are:

- Lack of effective leadership for the health sector, efficient use of resources and accountability towards patients
- Inadequate quality of services
- Insufficient health workforce capacity, i.e. inadequate numbers and skills mix
- Lack of medicines and other supplies

Our approach

In line with the Malawi Health Sector Strategic Plan II (2017-22) the programme addresses these key challenges at national, regional (target districts are: Dedza, Lilongwe, Mchinji and Ntcheu) and facility level through supporting the Ministry of Health and Population with implementing:

- Devolution of decision-making power to local governments and central hospital boards, and increasing efficiency in financing health care;
- The National Quality Management and Health Information Policies and Strategies across the country with a special focus on the target districts;
- Human Resource Policies and Strategic Plans, as well as pre- and in-service training programmes;

Details of the interventions in these three thematic areas can be found in the respective fact sheets. Interventions at national, district and facility level complement each other to achieve the expected results in the performance of the health system. We expect to see improvements in leadership and governance of the health sector, in the management and quality of services in the four target districts through better use of health information and quality improvement approaches, and in the performance of the health workforce contributing to an overall strengthened health system at national level and in the four target districts.



Project name	Malawi German Health Programme
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Implementing organisation	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Project region	Malawi; Target districts: Dedza, Lilongwe, Mchinji & Ntcheu
Lead executing agency	Malawi Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP)
Duration	February 2017 – July 2020
Financial volume	20.650.000 EUR including co-financing from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



Photo left: Good hospital management keeps ambulances functioning © GIZ

Photo right: Proper organization improves outcomes for patients © GIZ



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Photo left: Infection Prevention © GIZ

Photo right: Nurse-midwife students practicing life-saving obstetric skills © GIZ

Results in figures...

In May 2018, after more than two decades of deliberations, the Malawi Cabinet approved **Governance Reforms** of Malawi's central hospitals, based on technical support from MGHP in collaboration with other development partners. All five central hospitals will be established as self-managed, legally independent organizations. This moves decision-making from the MoHP into the hospitals. The MoHP will retain a regulatory and oversight function. Capacity development for hospital trustees and managers is ongoing.

The support MGHP provides to local authorities on strengthening their good financial management in the health sector has helped to improve their adherence to national regulation and their eligibility for funding from the Health Sector Joint Fund, to which the German Development Cooperation contributes through the KfW Development Bank.

In the thematic area of **Quality Management and Use of Data** the following results were achieved with support of MGHP:

- Finalization and launch (October 2018) of the National QM Policy and the related implementation strategy
- Accreditation programme for central, district and faith based hospitals has started
- Definition and launch of National Health Indicators which will enable the country to benchmark performance among districts and against neighbouring countries.
- Created preconditions for using HMIS data for quality improvement measures

Young people are now perceived as a vulnerable group and a potential for country at the same time (AGYW Strategy, 2018). In line with this strategy MGHP supported the MoHP to assess the status of Youth Friendly Health Services and develop improvement plans in the target districts.

Good performance of the **Health Workforce** is an essential precondition to achieving Universal Health Coverage as stated in the recently launched National Health Policy as an overarching goal for Malawi. In line with this goal the following results were achieved with support from MGHP:

- Launch of HR Strategic Plan 2018 – 22
- Revitalized Continuous Professional Development programme for NMW including harmonizing of mentoring for in-service training
- Capacity Development on HR management in CHAM facilities

... and in stories

Dr. Jonathan Ngoma, Executive Director of Kamuzu Central Hospital, expects that patients will benefit from hospital autonomy: "Our hospital faces many challenges, from lack of funding to understaffing. Management autonomy will not solve all problems – but it will allow us to become more flexible and creative to find solutions that will help us to serve more clients and improve the quality of care."

Supporting public financial management at the district level has supported unlocking funds from the Health Sector Joint Fund, which includes funding from the German Development Cooperation and other donors, to Dedza and Mchinji. "We have managed to pay our utility bills because of your technical support. You have assisted us to do the bank reconciliation and related reports for HSJF" says Mr. Mazoni, a health sector accountant in Mchinji.

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