Malawi: Support to the implementation of social protection for the ultra-poor people in Malawi

The Social Protection Programme (SPP) is strengthening systems to implement the Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP) II

The challenge

In the face of chronic poverty, food insecurity and frequent climatic shocks, Malawi’s efforts to provide social support remain inadequate and fragmented. Even though there has been progress, more than two thirds of the population still live below the international poverty line of $1.90 per day.

To reduce poverty and vulnerability the timely provision of social support and social protection is crucial. Therefore, improved coordination within and beyond the social protection programme is pressingly needed.

Our approach

SPP supports Malawi’s Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in implementing the Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP) II through a holistic system strengthening approach that operates both on national and district level.

SPP’s first priority is to strengthen coordination for successful implementation of the MNSSP II. Therefore the formation and harmonisation of District and Community Social Support Committees is supported.

Capacity Development at district level is the second priority of SPP. The focal activity is the development and implementation of a training course on social protection for extension workers. Hereby one of the major observed obstacles to successful social support programming at district level, the limited knowledge of frontline workers in the communities is tackled.

An improvement of the management of MNSSP II at district level, the third priority, is accomplished through the development and application of a digital Geo-Information-System (GIS) coordination tool

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<th>Project name</th>
<th>Support to the implementation of social protection for the ultra-poor people in Malawi</th>
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<tr>
<td>Commissioned by</td>
<td>BMZ, co-funded by DFID and EU</td>
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<td>Implementing organisation</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH</td>
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<td>Project region</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
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<td>Lead executing agency</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MFEPD)</td>
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<td>Duration</td>
<td>01.07.2018 – 31.12.2021</td>
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<td>Financial volume</td>
<td>EUR 16.55 million</td>
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This tool provides a comprehensive overview of the demands and supply of the districts. This planning tool will enable development plans drawn up at community level to be incorporated into district planning and hence take local needs into account.

Applying harmonized tools to implement MNSSP II is the fourth priority of SPP. This includes the further development of the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR) and its promotion as a one-stop-shop for all the social protection programmes. Another tool is an e-payment mechanism for cash-based programmes like social cash transfers and public works. A further tool to improve programme efficiency and quality is a harmonized grievance and redress mechanism that allows beneficiaries of all social protection programmes to use one common channel to issue grievances and feedback on programmes.
The final SPP priority area aims at creating linkages between different measures to increase the resilience of the population and to support a graduation pathway out of poverty for beneficiary households. Here, for instance, watershed management measures and public works programmes are linked. In addition to watershed management, the SPP will support beneficiaries link up to other complementary services such as nutrition, livelihoods and other services.

**Results in figures will be...**

Through the support of SPP in 11 districts and 110 communities, *harmonized social support committees* will be functioning. More than four million households living in these areas will benefit from the establishment of the committees to further improve on the coordination of the different social support programmes.

By the end of 2021 80% of all extension workers and district staff, out of which approximately 40% are women, in 15 districts will have received *capacity development* training on Social Protection. The training is expected to increase their knowledge on Social Protection considerably and its application in their work.

SPP’s support of the Geo-Information-System (GIS) coordination tool will reach six districts and will enable a comprehensive planning at district level. This tool will serve as one instrument to further ensure the harmonised implementation of the MNSSP II at district level. Ultimately, more than three million households in these districts will be reached out using this tool that consolidates community needs.

SPP’s support of the development and roll-out of e-payment will benefit 50% of Social Cash Transfer and Public works beneficiary households in nine districts. These are approximately 250,000 beneficiary households who are expected to benefit from a smooth and harmonised payment transaction. The *harmonisation of tools* further incorporates that 70% of the submitted complaints in five districts regarding any of the social protection programmes are closed according to the guidelines.

Finally, SPP will target 10,000 additional beneficiary households, out of which at least 5,500 are female-headed households that are considered to be ultra-poor and recipients of the Social Cash Transfer, to participate in *complementary interventions* like livelihood projects or nutrition-sensitive interventions. Moreover, it will be ensured that more than half of the target households are female-headed. By 2021, 12 Village Action Plans in four districts will include watershed activities as climate adaption measures with a clear division between voluntary community work and work conducted and remunerated through the Public Works Program. These inter-programme linkages will support graduation and a sustainable path out of poverty.

... and in stories: GIZ SPP spearheads community engagement and ownership of Social Protection Programmes

Perceptions towards Social Protection Programmes greatly affect the success and results of the programs. Beneficiaries need to understand the opportunities that Social Protection offers such as placing them on a graduation pathway out of poverty apart from the consumption support offered. This is the vision of the National Social Protection Programme in Malawi.

To build this awareness there is need for a capacity building strategy which can enhance the skills and knowledge of the beneficiaries and unleash their productive capacity. The phase II of the GIZ SPP in Malawi prioritizes capacity building of both implementing stakeholders and beneficiaries of Social Protection Programmes.

From a recent three-day learning visit that GIZ SPP organised for communities from Dedza and Mchinji Districts to a best practice site on Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) in Zomba District, the guest communities commented that the discussions that they held with host villagers (who are in the same social and economic situation like them) about the benefits from IWM were very insightful as they got to appreciate and understand a real-life example. They further committed to take up the IWM initiatives in their own communities.