

Malawi German Health Programme (MGHP)

Epidemic preparedness and response (EPR)

Challenge

Malawi confirmed its first COVID-19 cases on April 2nd, 2020 and has since gone through four epidemic waves. The first wave occurred in July 2020 and fourth wave at the beginning of December 2021 with Omicron variant causing high transmissibility rate resulting in a sharp increase in the number of COVID-19 cases. In response to the upsurge of cases, the country opened more Emergency Treatment Units (ETUs) to treat cases that required admission. The national case fatality rate is at 3.07 which is caused by late presentation to the health facility as well as limited knowledge and skills to treat severe COVID-19 cases.

Additionally, COVID-19 vaccination was approved and started in March 2021, to protect the population and normalize socioeconomic activities. However, the uptake progress has been slow due to local and external reasons such as short vaccine shelf life, supply chain challenges, difficulties accessing vaccines in hard to reach areas, low uptake of vaccine fueled by vaccine hesitancy and misconceptions.

At the time of registering first COVID-19 cases, Malawi like other developing countries had little capacity to deal with COVID pandemic. To improve COVID-19 pandemic response, the government appealed for support from donors and implementing partners. In response, GIZ through MGHP has provided technical and financial support to COVID-19 pandemic preparedness and response.

Our approach

From the start of the pandemic, the Malawi German Health Programme (MGHP) received additional funding in phases from the German government to support the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Health with the implementation of the national COVID-19 preparedness and response plan 2020-2022.

The first funding was made available in the second quarter of 2020 and in consultation with MOH, MGHP entered into

strategic partnerships with three local organisations that had the capacity and necessary expertise to act fast. Story Workshop Educational Trust (SWET) took charge of creating awareness of COVID-19 in the community, Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) facilitated the renovation of the Emergency Treatment Unit (ETU) at Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH) and Luke International supported Mzuzu Central Hospital to get prepared for the first COVID-19 patients.



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 and Ntcheu
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Health (MoH)
National partners	MoH, Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM) facilities Kamuzu Central Hospital (KCH); Local Councils in target districts;
Duration	01.08.2020 – 31.12.2023
Financial volume	EURO 12,752,917

MGHP also allowed the target districts to reprogram existing Local Subsidy Agreements and use the available resources for screening incoming travelers at Kamuzu International Airport and follow up of any suspected cases. The Quality Management Department was supported to update the Infection Prevention and Control guidelines including the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE's) and capacity was built on IPC, contact tracing and case management.



Photo left: German Ambassador Juergen Bosch and DC for Dedza during presentation of COVID-19 PPEs to Dedza DHO

Photo right: Minister of Health, Secretary for Health and WHO country representative at the official launch of oxygen and critical care strategies



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Photo left: health worker at Bwaila hospital practicing hand hygiene from a tap renovated by MGHP

Photo right: German Ambassador Juergen Borsch, and Country director for GIZ handing over PPEs to Ntcheu District Hospital

With additional funding in the third quarter of 2020, MGHP also entered into partnerships with Partners in Health (PIH) to strengthen screening and surveillance, including the border post in Mwanza, and WaterAid to strengthen WASH in selected health facilities.

In 2021, MGHP started supporting the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination deployment plan, directly in targeted districts through the EPI program and later on through follow on partner agreements with MRCS and SWET. MGHP also procured a mobile PSA oxygen plant for KCH, donated ventilators to all Central hospitals and entered into a partnership with Save the Children to build the necessary capacity on case management including use of oxygen as well as patient flow and adherence to strict IPC standards in ETU's. Besides the response to COVID-19, MGHP also supported the continuity of essential health services through procurement of additional medical equipment and support to integrated outreach clinics.

The approach in 2022 might change slightly and focus more on expanding existing initiatives by the health programme. The plan is to expand the child health (immunization) module of the e-Register platform, to test vaccines through drone deliveries, to contribute to the construction of a COVID-19 ward at Zomba CH initiated by a Federal State project, to improve waste management facilities in targeted health facilities and to continue supporting COVID-19 immunisation with a special focus on districts affected by floods.

Results in figures...

Through the MGHP support, the national EPR and central west zone districts have achieved major milestones with 7 ETU's and 16 health facilities having capacity for COVID-19 surveillance and treatment strengthened through infrastructure renovation, supply of WASH facilities, medical equipment and accessories and capacity building of health workers. A total of 1329 people were screened and 329 tested at border point of entries. Over 7000 health workers were

trained in IPC, COVID vaccine, case management and use of ventilators.

MGHP also supported with procurement of IPC materials, medical equipment and supplies including an oxygen plant and piping system at Kamuzu Central hospital, 60 ventilators and their accessories, and 5000 pulse oximeters.

With MGHP funding, 56 integrated MNH outreach clinics were conducted reaching over 10000 women and children. For roll out of COVID-19 vaccination, over 900,000 people were mobilized and 71,752 vaccinated.

MGHP also contributed to improved IPC at two health facilities in Lilongwe and Ntcheu districts reaching out to over 241000 people with improved service delivery and health outcomes through water supply by rehabilitating 102 water access points.

...and in stories

Malawi launched the first Emergency and Critical Care Strategy (2021-2031) on 21st December 2022. The ECCS aims at saving lives and prevent disability through the provision of high quality, equitable essential emergency and critical care to achieve Universal Health Coverage. MGHP provided support in developing the document including baseline assessment which informed the development of the strategy. The event was presided over by senior government officials and the Deputy Head of Cooperation from the Malawi German Embassy. Speaking at the launch, the Minister of Health, honourable Khumbidze Chiponda acknowledged GIZ and other partners for their contribution towards the development of the strategy and urged for continued support for implementation.

"This is a plan of action for all of us; MOH and partners and cannot be achieved without financial resources as Scaling up implementation will require significant investment of around \$1.3 billion US dollars over the next 10 years. Therefore, both the government and donors should prioritize funding the ECCS to make it a living document"

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