

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

Enhancing the social protection system for the poor population in Malawi

The challenge

Guided by Malawi's National Social Support Programme (MNSSP II) the Government of Malawi is committed to reducing poverty and vulnerability for its population through social protection. This is an ambitious goal due to continued chronic poverty, food insecurity and frequent climatic shocks such as floods or droughts. Important achievements have been carried out since the launch of the MNSSP II but, the coordination and implementation of the MNSSP II remains work in progress.

In addition, the social protection sector in Malawi receives a high level of international support. Many different stakeholders and development partners are supporting the Malawian Government with a variety of approaches and programmes to implement the MNSSP II. This can lead to a social protection sector being fragmented, project based and disconnected. Increasing the overall performance of institutions working in the sector are vital for a functioning coordination mechanism with a focus on efficient implementation.

There are various core systems that build a vital foundation for an integrated and less-fragmented social protection sector. One of these core systems is the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR), an integrated beneficiary database that serves the programmes to allow for efficient and reliable beneficiary identification.

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To date the UBR is being used by various cash-based programmes and is recognized as being a progressive social registry in the country. However, this comes with challenges, as a nationwide roll-out of the UBR is dependent on international funding. Also lack of regular updates is impacting its credibility in a long-run.

Facilitating access to complementary measures for the ultra-poor population that enable them to escape poverty



Photo left: Balaka District Council, communities and SPP Team viewing catchment map developed by beneficiaries in the previous phase, SPP II.

Photo right: One of the social protection beneficiaries identified through the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR)



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Photo left: Social support for female headed households is particularly crucial as these households are more vulnerable and often disadvantaged due to lack of access, cultural norms and their social and economic role.

Photo right: A beneficiary caring for tree seedlings.

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through closely available social services is already imbedded in the concept of graduation within the MNSSP II.

This graduation concept addresses resilience building and poverty reduction from a broader perspective. The necessary steps for systematic graduation pathways and guidance have not taken place, though. With this in mind, access to complementary services for the poor population is a long-term strategic vision of the social protection sector in Malawi.



Our approach

Being commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and working in close cooperation with the Poverty Reduction and Social Protection (PRSP) Division within Malawi's Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Social Protection Programme (SPP III) aims to strengthen the performance of the social support system and its institutions at national and district level. Supporting an efficient and reliable identification of beneficiaries and facilitating the access of the ultra-poor population to complementary services are key objectives.

In line with the 2030 Agenda and "Leave no one behind" particular attention is paid to ultra-poor women and women-run households, which are particularly vulnerable due to their social and economic roles which are mostly gendered. The programme is implementing its third phase in the districts of Nkhotakota, Balaka and Thyolo and is focusing on the following priorities:

- To strengthen the capacities of the government to steer the implementation and strategy processes. Including the aspect of coordination in the sector at central level and district level.
- To further strengthen the UBR in its functionality and institutionalization and to pilot the implementation of a decentralized UBR.
- To support the beneficiaries of social support programmes to have access to complementary measures.

Apart from these priorities, SPP III is implementing COVID-19 response measures in 2022 in the disaster (heavy rains, floods and Cyclone Anna) affected districts of Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe, Mulanje, Balaka, Salima and Mangochi, also with funding from the BMZ. The activities are being implemented in coordination with Ministry of Health, and includes constructing and rehabilitating damaged WASH facilities and conducting COVID-19 awareness activities such as theatre performances, panel discussions and school quiz sessions.

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