

Malawi: Social Protection Programme

The Social Protection Programme (SPP) is building systems to improve the delivery of welfare support for people in extreme poverty in Malawi.

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 in Malawi effectively, social protection programmes need to be standardized and harmonized. On the one hand, they should respond to the various vulnerabilities people face during their lifetimes by complementing each other. On the other, they can create synergies by using common implementation mechanisms.

Our approach

The SPP supports Malawi's Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development in implementing the Malawi *National Social Support Programme (MNSSP)* and in harmonizing the country's social protection sector.

The SPP is *establishing best practice guidelines* for Public Works Programmes (PWP), School Meals Programmes (SMPs) and Savings and Loan Groups (SLGs). By doing so, it sets common standards for the design and implementation of the programmes in collaboration with other stakeholders.

The SPP also works on harmonizing the *targeting* approach, i.e. the selection of beneficiaries for social protection interventions. In view of this goal, the SPP has spear-headed support for the creation of the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR) which will contain information on at least 50% of the population in each district. Different programmes can use this information to choose eligible beneficiaries.

Strengthening government capacity is the third of the programme's priorities. The SPP has developed a capacity building plan and is working to create a curriculum on social protection for the training of government extension workers.



	Social Protection for People in Extreme Poverty
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Moreover, the programme is supporting the development of a *harmonized M&E system* for social protection.

Lastly, the SPP has carried out several *pilot projects* to add to the knowledge on social protection in Malawi and feedback lessons and inputs to the development of the *MNSSP II*. The Economic Empowerment Pilot tested the impact of lump-sum payments and trainings on the livelihoods of people in poverty. In another trial, people with disabilities were integrated in the PWP. In view of the shock-sensitive focus of the *MNSSP II*, the SPP is working on a pilot looking at the contributions of the PWP to catchment management and supported a study on shock sensitive SP in Malawi. Furthermore, a management information system and a planning tool which uses geo-spatial data for PWPs have been created. Lastly, looking at linkages between different programmes to under the MNSSP, the SPP demonstrated that Public Works Programmes can provide a workforce and inputs for School Meals Programmes.





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Results in figures ...

The *best practice guidelines* established by the SPP will improve the delivery of social support programmes that benefit a large number of people. 451,000 beneficiaries participate in the PWP that is implemented by the Malawi Government's Local Development Fund. In the case of School Meals, the best practice guidelines have been developed by a group of implementers which provide meals to approximately 2.23 million learners across Malawi. More than 63,000 Village Savings and Loan groups with typically 15 to 25 members exist in Malawi and can benefit from the SLG best practice guidelines.

The *UBR* allows for more efficient targeting and will help to improve the access of 700,000 households to social protection programmes by the end of 2017. The SPP also took the technical lead in the development of a Management Information System for the PWP which to date reaches more than 30,000 households in two districts. It is being expanded to 10 more districts and will reach close to 100,000 PWP households by end of October 2017.

The *Economic Empowerment Pilot* included more than 500 households. These were given either a lump-sum payment for business investment, a training package (on savings group formation, financial literacy and business management), or both. The results of the pilot contribute to national level discussions around graduation.

130 persons with disabilities (PwD) benefitted from the *SPP Inclusion Pilot* allowing them to participate in a PWP from which they were previously excluded. As a consequence, options for mainstreaming the inclusion of PwD in the PWP are being discussed at national level.

As part of the *PWP Watershed Pilot*, 200 community members, extension workers, and district officers working on the PWP were trained on watershed management practices and sensitized on its importance. Work is ongoing in 8 micro-showcase catchments. Lessons from the pilot are feeding into national discussions around shock-sensitive SP.

The linkage between the *School Meals and Public Works Programmes* has initiated or improved school meals for 5,251 learners in 17 schools by August 2017.

... and in stories

Lukesiyi Maxwel lives in a village in Dedza District, Malawi, and is raising six children without the help of her husband, who left the family. Ever since she was born, she can hear only partially and is unable to speak. This has limited her ability to earn a living, and she has even struggled to be included in social protection interventions.

This changed with the start of the inclusion pilot, which was implemented by Dedza District Council in partnership with the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) and GIZ. Maxwel was one of the people with disabilities who were able to participate in the Public Works Programme in the district. The programme paid her a salary for working alongside others on establishing a forest near her village.

Maxwel spent the money she earned on food and clothes for her children, but also made improvements on her house. Moreover, she was able to buy soybean seeds which she planted – she is hoping to sell part of the harvest and thus further improve her income. As part of the inclusion pilot, Maxwel was encouraged to join a local savings and investment group. The group pools its members' savings and gives out loans from this common fund. As the loans get paid back with an interest, the fund grows, thus benefitting all members.

As they saw that she could contribute to building community assets during the programme, Maxwel has gained the respect of other people in her community. She also says that she is more confident since she is able to provide more food and a better shelter to her children.

Overall, the pilot has shown that people with disabilities are not mere welfare recipients, but can participate in the development of their communities.

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