

# UNFPA MALAWI

#### **ANNUAL REPORT 2024 RESULTS ACHIEVED IN MALAWI**

### **THREE ZEROS BY 2030**

ENDING UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING ENDING PREVENTABLE MATERNAL DEATH ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

Compiled and designed by:

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UNFPA is the United Nations Sexual and reproductive health agency.

Our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled





# UNFPA MALAWI

## ANNUAL REPORT 2024 RESULTS ACHIEVED IN MALAWI

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# FOREWORD

2024 was the first year of the 9th Country Programme implementation for the country office. It's been quite a revelation as we implemented this ambitious plan that seeks to holistically tackle issues faced by young people—with a special focus on the adolescent girl. The lessons learnt in this first year of implementation will be invaluable as we forge ahead with our work to transform countless lives of young people in Malawi. The 9th CP is firmly grounded in, and aligned with, Malawi's Vision 2063 and its first 10-year implementation plan (MIP-1). It is also fully aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), supporting both national development priorities and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2024, Malawi witnessed remarkable progress in advancing maternal and neonatal health, strengthening family planning services, and addressing gender-based violence. Through strategic investments in training, equipment, and mentorship programmes, we enhanced the capacity of health facilities and frontline workers to deliver high-quality, respectful maternity care. Our focus on youth-friendly health services enabled thousands of young people to access vital information and resources—equipping them with the knowledge and choices to shape their futures.

Gender equality remains at the heart of our interventions. Over the year, we expanded safe spaces for adolescent girls and young women, scaled up male engagement initiatives, and reinforced our commitment to ending harmful practices such as child marriage and gender-based violence. By working closely with policymakers, civil society, and community leaders, we advanced key policies that will protect and empower vulnerable populations for years to come.

The success of our work reflects the invaluable partnerships we have cultivated—with the Government of Malawi, donors, fellow UN agencies, civil society organizations, and most importantly, the communities we serve. These collaborations have been instrumental in driving positive change and ensuring that no one is left behind.

As we look to the future, we remain steadfast in our mission to achieve the three transformative results: ending the unmet need for family planning, ending preventable maternal deaths, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices, while contributing to ending HIV. The journey is not without challenges, but with continued dedication, innovation, and collaboration, I am confident that we will build a healthier, more equitable Malawi where every individual can thrive.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our partners, stakeholders, and the resilient people of Malawi for their commitment to this shared vision.

Ms. Nelida Rodrigues

**UNFPA Malawi Representative** 



# **STRENGTHENING QUALITY SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS**

In 2024, UNFPA Malawi intensified efforts to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) across the country. Through strategic investments in health systems, workforce development, and service delivery, UNFPA strengthened maternal and neonatal health outcomes, expanded access to emergency obstetric care, and promoted respectful, rights-based healthcare practices.



Ensuring reproductive rights for all



#### **IMPROVED MATERNAL AND NEONATAL HEALTH OUTCOMES**

Strengthening health infrastructure and building the capacity of healthcare providers are critical to reducing maternal and neonatal mortality. UNFPA's investments at Kamuzu Central Hospital and at the national level targeted these goals, ensuring that lifesaving care reaches those most in need.

obstetricians.

Although interim service data is still pending, early results show a downward trend in maternal and neonatal mortality, with more effective emergency responses in critical cases. The development and review of national maternal referral guidelines have further established a stronger, more coordinated lifesaving referral system across Malawi.

#### **ENHANCED EMERGENCY OBSTETRIC AND NEONATAL CARE (EMONC) SERVICE DELIVERY**

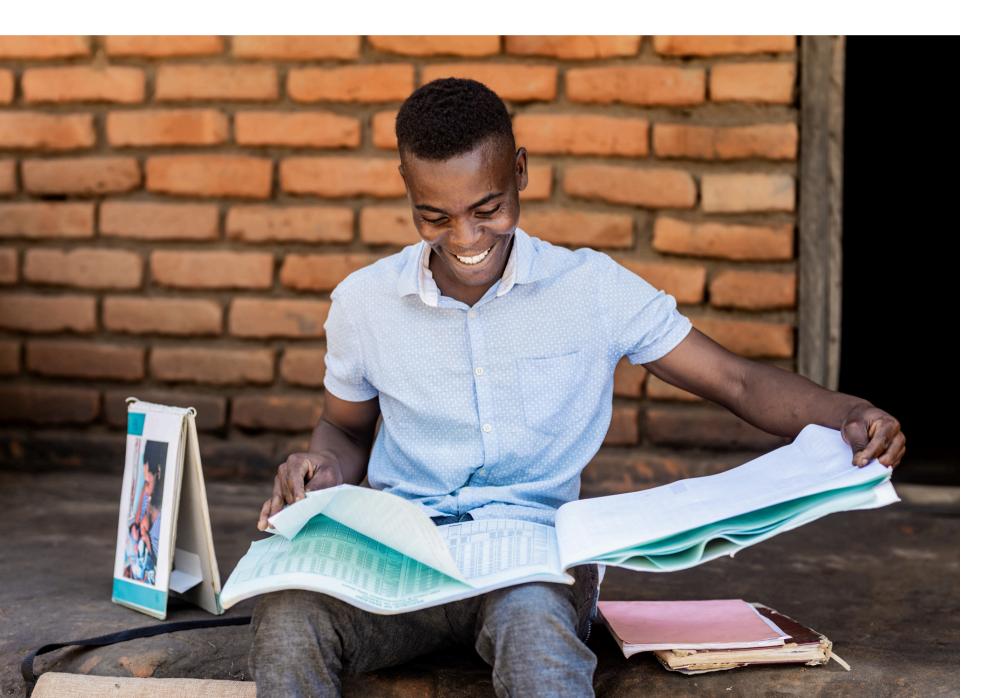
Access to EmONC can mean the difference between life and death. UNFPA prioritized facility upgrades and renovations to bring critical care closer to communities. Upgrades at Bulala Maternity Unit, located 46 kilometres from the district hospital, expanded access to lifesaving services for mothers and newborns.

Completion of renovations at Nsanje Theatre will similarly enhance the quality and accessibility of maternal and neonatal care, ensuring critical interventions can be delivered when most needed. This facility will also serve as a centre for mentorship and capacity-building of healthcare professionals.

At Kamuzu Central Hospital, UNFPA's targeted investments — including advanced childbirth and neonatal simulation equipment — have strengthened the clinical skills of midwives and

#### **RESPECTFUL AND RIGHTS-BASED MATERNITY CARE**

Promoting dignity and respect in maternity care is key to improving service quality and client satisfaction. UNFPA worked to change healthcare facility culture through targeted training. Training 40 health workers in Respectful Maternity Care (RMC) has fostered a shift toward dignity-centred service provision in facilities. This cultural transformation is expected to increase client satisfaction and significantly reduce incidents of abuse and neglect during maternity care.



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# EXPANDING YOUTH ACCESS TO QUALITY Sexual and reproductive health and Rights services

#### **YOUTH-FRIENDLY HEALTH CORNERS**

Youth-Friendly Health Corners (YFHCs) provide safe spaces where adolescents can access essential services without fear of judgment. UNFPA worked to expand and enhance these services across multiple districts. The accreditation of 63 Youth-Friendly Health Corners (YFHCs) across six districts enabled adolescents and youth to access age-appropriate, non-judgmental SRHR services.

Recreational materials boosted client engagement, contributing to increased service use and satisfaction. Through static, mobile, and outreach platforms, 383,002 adolescents accessed SRHR services, bringing lifesaving support to even the most remote areas.

#### **COMMUNITY-BASED DISTRIBUTION AGENTS (CBDAS)**

Expanding family planning services into rural communities required empowering frontline workers with mobility and resources. To strengthen rural outreach, 316 CBDAs were equipped with bicycles, backpacks, and capacity-building training across four districts. Their expanded mobility and reach directly improved the uptake of modern contraceptives and reduced unmet needs for family planning services.



Mayi akagona limodzi ndi mwana wake amamva msanga kulira kwa mwana ndipo amaya-



#### **COMPREHENSIVE ABORTION CARE**

Safe post-abortion care is essential for protecting women's health and rights. UNFPA expanded access through procurement and training initiatives.UNFPA's procurement of 1,000 Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA) kits and 20,000 misoprostol tablets significantly expanded access to safe post-abortion care. Integrating informed consent tools and job aids improved service quality and rights protection, while inclusion in the DHIS2 reporting system in 30% of facilities enhanced data visibility and accountability.

#### **STRENGTHENED HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE**

Skilled healthcare workers are central to improving service delivery. UNFPA invested in structured mentorship and standardized training. Structured mentorship and training for 198 health workers across six districts enhanced clinical competencies, particularly in managing maternal and newborn complications. A standardized mentorship manual institutionalized quality improvements and bolstered confidence among mentees.

#### **FISTULA TREATMENT AND SURVIVOR EMPOWERMENT**

Restoring dignity to women affected by obstetric fistula involved both surgical repair and economic reintegration. UNFPA supported surgical repair for 424 women living with obstetric fistula. Economic reintegration initiatives, including sewing machine grants and mobile business kits, empowered survivors to rebuild livelihoods. Media-supported awareness campaigns also improved early identification and referral for fistula treatment.





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# Key UNFPA Supported Results in 2024

40 health workers trained in Respectful Maternity Care (RMC).

198 health workers benefited from structured mentorship.

Accreditation of 63 Youth-Friendly Health facilities.

**316** CBDAs and supervisors mentored through structured review sessions.

**1,000** Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA) kits procured.

20,000 misoprostol tablets distributed.

CAC integrated into approximately 30 % of health facilities (DHIS2 system).

424 women successfully repaired for obstetric fistula.



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# Lighting the way for fistula survivors

Along the lakeshore of Nkhotakota lies Phikaphika Village, a community nestled among rolling hills and dense bushland. Despite its natural beauty, some parts of Phikaphika remain inaccessible, with footpaths being the only means of reaching them due to the rugged terrain.

This is home to Estere Nguluwe, 31, who has lived here with her husband for the past 15 years. Her parents also reside in the same village, having moved from another district in search of fertile land.

"My parents settled here because of the rich soil," she shares. "The valley is good for farming, and that's why we love it here."

For many in Phikaphika, the promise of a good harvest outweighs the challenges of living in isolation. Over the years, the village has grown as more families have relocated to the area seeking better yields.

However, this remoteness comes at a price—especially when medical care is needed. "The nearest health centre is by the main road, quite a distance from where we live," says Estere. "It becomes particularly difficult when someone is seriously ill or when a woman is in labour."

Estere knows this struggle all too well. In 2024, during her fourth pregnancy, she faced a life threatening situation. With no transport available, she struggled to reach the health facility in time.



When she finally arrived, medical staff noticed that she had obstructed labour.

"The health centre couldn't manage my case, so they referred me to the district hospital," she recalls.

Doctors at the district hospital performed an emergency caesarean section to save her life. Tragically, her baby did not survive.

"I was in such a bad state—I'm just grateful I made it out alive," she said.

Two days after the surgery, Estere noticed she was leaking urine uncontrollably. When she alerted the medical staff, they reassured her that it was a temporary side effect of the procedure and inserted a catheter. But after a week, the condition persisted, worsening each day.

"I had to sleep on a plastic sheet to avoid soiling the hospital bed," she remembers.

Doctors eventually diagnosed her with obstetric fistula—a childbirth injury that creates an abnormal opening between the birth canal and the bladder, causing continuous leakage of urine. With no immediate solution at the district hospital, Estere decided to return home.

Back in Phikaphika, her life took a drastic turn. She withdrew from daily activities, confined to her house by shame and discomfort. As a farmer, her inability to work meant reduced food for the family.

"My husband was supportive, but I could see he was struggling to provide for us while also caring for me," she reflects.



To make matters worse, a rumour spread in the village about another woman who had suffered from fistula for years and eventually passed away. Despite doctors assuring her that fistula was not life-threatening, fear and despair consumed her.

"I became depressed," she admits. "I started believing the worst."

A turning point came when a fellow church member heard a radio announcement about free fistula treatment at Bwaila Fistula Centre in Lilongwe. She immediately informed Estere's husband, who wasted no time. The next day, the couple boarded a bus to Lilongwe, clinging to the hope of a cure.

"I had lost faith in treatment because my neighbour had lived with the condition for 15 years," Estere says. "But when we heard that there was a solution, we didn't hesitate."

At Bwaila, doctors confirmed her diagnosis and scheduled her for surgery. Due to the high demand for treatment, she had to wait a week for her operation—but for the first time in months, she had hope. "I didn't mind waiting," she says. "I just wanted my life back."

Estere's surgery was supported by UNFPA through the Bridging Hope project funded by the Government of Iceland. When she was discharged, UNFPA also provided her with a solar power set. The solar set, which can charge phones and power small electrical devices, is part of a social reintegration program aimed at economically empowering fistula survivors.

"I had to avoid strenuous work for six months after the surgery," she explains. "The solar set helped me generate income by charging phones. My husband also started a small barbershop at home, which provided additional support."

Beyond business, the solar set brought another unexpected benefit—education for her children.

"They can now study at night," she says. "Their grades have improved, and for that, I am truly grateful."

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# **ADDRESSING HARMFUL SOCIAL AND GENDER NORMS**

#### **SAFE SPACES AND MENTORSHIP**

Providing safe spaces where young women can learn, grow, and seek support is key to shifting social norms. In 2024, the Safe Space Mentorship Programme reached 1,980 mentees — 10% above the target — while integrating digital tools for comprehensive sexuality education.

A 35% increase in GBV reporting in Lilongwe reflected growing community trust in available support systems. Engagement with 120 community leaders (50% above the original target) and 189 community members strengthened grassroots ownership and deepened the program's influence.

#### **MALE ENGAGEMENT IN GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) PREVENTION**

Engaging men and boys in GBV prevention fosters community-wide transformation. UNFPA trained male champions and expanded outreach to reshape gender relations. Training 280 male champions and engaging 7,279 men and boys fostered an environment supportive of GBV prevention. The Male Engagement Symposium, which brought together 5,000 participants, provided a platform for knowledge-sharing and building capacity for gender-transformative change.

UNFPA's outreach also empowered 23,452 young people with life skills, SRHR knowledge, and conflict resolution tools. Youth-led mediation of 372 cases reinforced community-based peacebuilding.

#### **ENHANCING GBV SERVICES**

Survivors of GBV need timely, coordinated support. UNFPA enhanced services and referral pathways to ensure holistic care. Training 35 district service providers improved GBV service coordination and quality. In turn, 200 community service providers were trained, extending survivor-centred support at both district and community levels. Enhanced referral pathways resulted in faster response times and increased survivor satisfaction. GBV case reporting in Lilongwe rose from 200 to 270 cases, a sign of improved trust and access.



#### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF GBV SURVIVORS**

Financial independence strengthens survivors' recovery and resilience. UNFPA supported economic empowerment initiatives targeting survivors of GBV. Empowering 240 GBV survivors across two districts with business management skills and village savings and loan training enabled them to regain financial independence. Economic empowerment fostered not only personal recovery but also more inclusive and resilient communities.



#### Key UNFPA Supported Results in 2024

1,980 mentees reached.

**36** additional mentors recruited.

35 % increase in GBV reporting (from 200 to 270 cases) reflecting improved trust in support systems.

1,231 community members engaged in mental health dialogues.

120 community leaders mobilized.

280 male champions trained.

7,279 men and boys actively involved in promoting positive masculinities and gender equality.

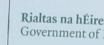
5,000+ men participated in Annual Male Engagement Symposium.

23,452 young people (aged 10-24) reached with SRHR education, GBV prevention strategies, and life skills.

372 mediation cases actively supported by youth for peacebuilding.

**35** district service providers trained in Essential GBV Service Provision.









# **Turning Pain into Power**

At just 13, Linda's\* childhood was abruptly interrupted. She dropped out of school and eloped with her 20-year-old boyfriend, a man admired in their village for his small but thriving business. In a community marked by poverty, his financial stability granted him influence—and Linda became one of its casualties.

"My family is very poor," Linda recalls from Mwenelupembe village in Karonga. "When he approached me, promising to help, I felt I had no choice but to accept his love proposal."

Their marriage was a secret, sealed by their relocation to a distant village near the Tanzanian border. The new environment offered them anonymity and freedom from interference.

"I wasn't ready for marriage," reflects Linda, now 15. "But he told me that if I refused, he'd marry someone else. He had many admirers, and I was scared of losing his support."

For a brief moment, it seemed Linda's decision had paid off. Their love flourished in the early days of marriage.

"Those first days were bliss," Linda says. "He was caring, and I started to believe I'd made the right decision."

But her parents and community thought otherwise. They had witnessed the devastating impact of child marriages and were determined to intervene. With the help of community leaders, the local Mother's Group, the Women's Forum, and community police, a search began to bring Linda back.



# A Community United Against Child Marriage

Mwenelupembe, like many border communities in Malawi, faces significant challenges with child marriage and teenage pregnancies. The allure of fast money from cross-border trade often traps young girls in cycles of exploitation.



"Young girls are drawn to the promise of money, but they end up in early marriages or pregnancies," says Moshi Fundi, a member of the Mwenelupembe Women's Forum. "Many believe life across the border will be better, but the reality is often harsh."

Thanks to the UNFPA-supported Peacebuilding Project funded by the UN Secretary General Fund, dormant community structures like the Women's Forum, Police Forum, and Mother's Group have been revitalized. Capacity-building initiatives have empowered these groups to tackle pressing issues effectively. In 2024 alone, they dissolved 39 child marriages across two Traditional Authorities. Now, Linda's case was their next mission.

"Before the training, we weren't as active," recalls Ms. Fundi. "It wasn't that the problems didn't exist—we simply didn't know how to address them."

# **Linda's Turning Point**

While the community searched for her, Linda's marriage began to unravel. Her husband grew distant, neglecting her basic needs.

Linda explains: "He started leaving me without food. I had no one to turn to. My village was far, and even if it weren't, I was too ashamed to face my parents."

The search team eventually found Linda, who was more than ready to leave the hardship behind. But returning home came with its challenges.

"I was happy to go k Linda shares.

"I was happy to go back to school, but I feared my friends would mock me for my mistakes,"



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"I was happy to go back to school, but I feared my friends would mock me for my mistakes," Linda shares. 23

Her fears materialized as classmates shunned her, seeing her as a bad influence. Yet, with the unwavering support of the Mother's Group, Linda persevered.

The group advocated for her at school, educating her peers on the importance of welcoming and supporting girls returning to education. Slowly, attitudes shifted, and Linda was accepted again.

# A New Chapter

Today, Linda is in Form Three, just one year away from completing secondary school. Her dream is to become a soldier—a goal she is determined to achieve despite ongoing financial struggles.

"I've been married before, and I know the hardships that come with it," she says with resolve. "Now, nothing will stop me. My only wish is for support with school fees so I can keep pursuing my education."

\*Name changed for privacy

# EMPOWERING ADOLESCENTS AND Young People

#### **ACCESS TO INTEGRATED SRHR INFORMATION**

Technology-based learning platforms were leveraged to improve young people's understanding of SRHR. In 199 schools, 3,480 learners accessed SRHR information through the CSE Digital application. Encouragingly, 63% of participants demonstrated positive shifts in their attitudes toward SRHR.

#### **LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND**

UNFPA ensured inclusion by targeting marginalized youth, including those living with disabilities and HIV. UNFPA reached 412 youth with disabilities and 6,182 youth living with HIV. Training 125 peer educators using the iCAN manual built sustainable, peer-led learning structures in Chikwawa and Dedza Districts, ensuring that SRHR education is inclusive and far-reaching.

#### **SCHOOL HEALTH AND MENSTRUAL HYGIENE SUPPORT**

Keeping girls in school is closely tied to health and menstrual hygiene support. Weekly school health visits and the distribution of 32,500 sanitary pads supported girls' health and education, improving school retention. New service delivery tents, installed on permanent slubs, strengthened SRHR delivery points within schools.



#### **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH SAFE SPACES**

Vocational and financial training helped youth transition from education to self-sufficiency. A total of 36,304 youth graduated from Safe Space Mentorship Programmes, with 1,643 directly benefiting from economic empowerment initiatives. VSL groups facilitated access to seed capital, and vocational training provided vital skills for self-reliance. The FAO's matching grant program reached 3,769 adolescents, enabling them to launch agri-business ventures.

#### **PARENT-CHILD COMMUNICATION**

Strengthening family communication around SRHR topics builds lasting support systems. The programme reached 31,093 families, benefiting 183,931 individuals by strengthening skills for open, supportive dialogue around SRHR, gender equality, and life skills. These improved family communication pathways are crucial to adolescent development and resilience.

#### **ENHANCING HIV SERVICES THROUGH MENTORSHIP**

Improving healthcare providers' skills ensures that young people receive quality HIV and SRHR services. Training 360 health workers from 60 health facilities enhanced the quality of Youth-Friendly Health Services. Refresher courses for 40 Youth Community Based Distribution Agents and the iCAN peer education initiative further boosted the capacity and quality of youth-focused HIV and SRHR services.



#### Key UNFPA Supported Results in 2024

1,980 mentees reached.

36 additional mentors recruited.

35 % increase in GBV reporting (from 200 to 270 cases) reflecting improved trust in support systems.

**1,231** community members engaged in mental health dialogues.

120 community leaders mobilized.

280 male champions trained.

7,279 men and boys actively involved in promoting positive masculinities and gender equality.

5,000+ men participated in Annual Male Engagement Symposium.

**23,452** young people (aged 10-24) reached with SRHR education, GBV prevention strategies, and life skills.

**372** mediation cases actively supported by youth for peacebuilding.

35 district service providers trained in Essential GBV Service Provision.





**36,304** adolescents and youth graduated from Safe Space mentorship sessions.

1,643 mentees and mentors benefited from economic empowerment.



37 youth business groups supported with \$173,767.85 in matching grants (JFFLS initiative). 3,769 beneficiaries (3,081 girls, 688 boys)

**31,093** families reached through integrated parent-child communication.

183,931 individuals benefited 31,093 parents, 152,838 children

360 health professionals received mentorship in Salima, Dedza, Mangochi, Kasungu, Mchinji

# Empowering Students: Digital App Revolutionizes Life Skills Education

At a rural school in Mangochi, students are discovering a new way to learn with a digital app that makes accessing age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) both fun and engaging. This innovative approach not only enhances understanding but also transforms life skills education into an interactive and enjoyable experience.

In the past, students could only access information on life skills through formal class lessons. However, some topics were difficult to address, particularly in the local language, which made it challenging for students to fully grasp the material.

"In English, it's easier, but in the local language, you have to be descriptive for students to understand. This meant using words that weren't permissible in our culture as they depicted nudity," explains Mr. Evans Kandaya, Deputy Learning Centre Coordinator at Nakhumba Primary School.

Now, with the digital app, students are guided through each module with the support of visuals and engaging videos. The CSE module contains 14 chapters, each requiring a pass mark above 50 percent.



Mr. Kandaya tells UNFPA:

"If students do not achieve this pass mark, they retake the module with the teacher's support."

Under the UN joint programmes on girls' education, UNFPA is implementing comprehensive sexuality education through a digital app in 10 schools in Mangochi. The initiative is aimed at empowering young people with critical knowledge about their sexual and reproductive healthand to address challenges faced by many adolescents in accessing accurate and age-appropriate sexual education.

"Beyond academic success, we've seen a positive change in behaviour among the students taking the CSE classes," Mr. Kandaya notes. "The app has helped students learn much more than just about their bodies. Unlike in previous years, we've significantly reduced dropouts due to teenage pregnancies."

The CSE app has been praised for lowering school dropout rates, especially among girls. Last year, Mkanda Primary School had only one dropout.

"We worked with the mother group and the parents to bring the girl back to class after she delivered," says Mr. Kandaya. "We aim for zero dropouts in the future as we increase enrolment of girls in the CSE sessions."

Mkanda currently has 200 students, aged 10-15 years, attending the CSE lessons. To help teachers deliver these lessons better, UNFPA, through the UN Joint Programmes for Girls' Education (UNJPGE), provided capacity building on CSE lesson delivery.





"After the training, I became more comfortable handling topics I previously struggled with," says Mr. Kandaya.

The app is designed with user-friendly features, tailored to meet the needs of the youth, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their health and well-being, while also promoting gender equality and their rights.

"Since this initiative started, we've seen more students reporting issues ranging from gender based violence to general abuse," Mr. Kandaya explains. "Some cases occur within school premises, but most are from the communities. We work with the mother group to follow up, and if there's gross abuse, we hand the cases to the community police."

Shanil Sherika, a 10-year-old student, has greatly benefitted from the CSE digital app classes.

"I struggled with my life skills class, but since joining the CSE classes, I can now understand almost all the topics," she says. "Last term, I didn't do well, but this time I'm confident I'll score higher grades because the CSE sessions have helped me a lot."

Besides improving her knowledge, Shanil says the sessions have boosted her self confidence.

"I wasn't good at public speaking," she recalls. "But after learning about assertiveness, I've grown in confidence and even joined the debate club at school."

Bashil Dausi, 12, never misses a session of the CSE digital app because he enjoys the video tutorials.

"When I don't understand a topic, I replay the video until I'm satisfied I know the content," he says. "I also like how the characters in the videos explain the topic. They're so funny, and it makes learning enjoyable."





# HUMANITARIAN ACTION

#### **DIGNITY AND PROTECTION IN EMERGENCIES**

Maintaining dignity and safety during emergencies is critical for women and girls. UNFPA distributed 3,000 dignity kits, 1,000 solar lamps, and 371 blankets to protect the dignity, safety, and health of women and girls during emergencies, including Cyclone Freddy and cholera outbreaks.

#### **SUSTAINED SRHR SERVICES DURING DISASTERS**

Even during crises, life-saving SRHR services must continue. Despite challenging conditions, SRHR services reached 22,205 people across disaster-affected districts. Services included maternal care, STI and HIV prevention, and GBV support — protecting rights and health during crises.

#### **BUILDING EMERGENCY RESPONSE CAPACITY**

Strong emergency response systems require trained personnel and multisectoral collaboration. Training 154 frontline workers in the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) and multi-sectoral coordination strengthened emergency preparedness across crisis-prone districts. Partnerships with the Ministry of Health, Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA), and gender-focused ministries ensured cohesive and effective interventions.



Key UNFPA Supported Results in 2024

3,000 dignity kits procured at \$85,000

1,000 solar lamps procured at \$20,000

371 blankets purchased at \$5,300

22,205 individuals reached with integrated SRHR services

22

154 frontline workers trained in Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP)

154 personnel trained across sectors:

# ewa matenda ndi udindo wa





# Hope in the Midst of Devastation: The Power of Dignity Kits

Early one February morning in 2024, 21-year-old Atupele Nyamula and her twin sister Shanil from Nyanji village set out to visit friends in the flood-ravaged lower parts of their community, to offer help amid the devastation caused by prolonged heavy rains.

Little did the twins know that the waters would soon invade their own home as the water levels in the nearby lake swelled spilling over to their village.

Atupele recounts what happened," I was surprised to see that water has also hit our house; the water filled our house to the level of my waist."

displacement.

Between February 27 and March 1, 2024, the central and northern regions of Malawi region experienced prolonged heavy rains, causing severe flooding in the Nkhotakota and Karonga districts. The floodwaters affected 14,176 people, with 9,378 individuals displaced and living in evacuation camps. Tragically, the floods claimed six lives and injured four people.

With the floodwaters in their home, Atupele and Shanil found themselves in a tough spot, forced to abandon their belongings to the flooding water. The floods crisis resulted in significant damage and



"We did not expect such things to happen," Atupele lamented. "We sometimes experience localized flooding but this was something we never experienced. It was a terrible."

UNFPA, with support from the United Nations Central Emergency Fund (CERF), distributed dignity kits containing essential hygiene and personal care items to vulnerable adolescent girls and women in Nkhotakota.

This initiative aimed to ensure that the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls, which are at higher risk during natural disasters, are met.

In the course of distributing these kits, there is a room for interaction where issues of gender based violence, sexual gender-based violence and consent and rights are openly discussed. This is accomplished by educating and raising awareness on the prevention and response services relating to gender based violence.

Atupele and Shanil were among those who received the dignity kits.

"The dignity kits were of great help as we managed to keep ourselves clean during a time when we had nothing," recalls Atupele.

Shanil, echoed her sister saying that she thought her life had been shattered. But upon receiving the dignity kits, she regained her confidence to manage her periods without worry.

"Having those essentials, like sanitary pads and hygiene products, reminded me of the strength I have within myself. It was not just about the supplies - it was about feeling in control again," Shanil explains.

As they transitioned from temporary shelters to rented accommodations, the dignity kits remained a constant source of support and comfort. Today, the twins continue to use the commodities in the dignity kit pack.

"The items we were supported with are so durable that during all the times we have been between places, we carried them along in which they remained helpful as we still use them up to date," Shanil explains.

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### DEMOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT

#### **MAINSTREAMING POPULATION POLICY INTO LOCAL PLANNING**

Population policies guide development priorities and resource allocation. UNFPA guided the integration of the National Population Policy into District Development Plans, using data from the 2018 Census and MICS to promote evidence-based local planning.

#### **STRENGTHENING YOUTH AND GENDER POLICY FRAMEWORKS**

Robust policy frameworks provide a roadmap for advancing youth health and gender equality. UNFPA supported finalization of the Youth-Friendly Health Services Strategy, the End Child Marriage Strategy, and the National Gender Policy — critical frameworks for advancing gender equality and adolescent health.

#### **PARLIAMENTARY ENGAGEMENT FOR POPULATION ADVOCACY**

Political leadership is essential for advancing SRHR and demographic goals. Strategic engagement with Parliamentarians resulted in stronger advocacy for key population issues, including budget allocations for SRHR, prevention of early marriage, and inclusive education — signalling a new era of accountability and political will.

#### **LEADERSHIP AT THE AFRICAN POPULATION CONFERENCE**

The 9th African Population Conference marked a major milestone for Malawi and Africa's demographic agenda. Over 700 demographers, policymakers, researchers, and youth leaders gathered under the theme, "Road to 2030: Leveraging Africa's Population Dynamics for Sustainable Development."

UNFPA's leadership positioned SRHR, gender equality, and youth empowerment at the center of Africa's demographic transition discourse, emphasizing the vital roles of digital innovation, climate change, and migration. Country experiences showcased how strategic use of demographic data can inform health, education, and employment policies.

UNFPA's advocacy for stronger demographic intelligence and multisectoral collaboration continues to drive national strategies aligned with Agenda 2063 and the SDGs.



# Iceland Prime Minister hails partnership with UNFPA



The Prime Minister of Iceland Bjarni Benediktsson has extolled the fruitful partnership between Iceland and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) saying this has helped to improve maternal health and the fight against obstetric fistula in Malawi. Mr. Benediktsson was speaking during the 9th African Population Conference in Lilongwe.

"We are proud of the work we have done with UNFPA in Malawi to enhance maternal care, including our work to end obstetric fistula.' he remarked. "Our efforts here and in other partner countries have yielded impressive results for women and girls who have received treatment and social reintegration assistance."

The Prime Minister added that the partnership with UNFPA has played a critical role in advancing gender equality by ensuring access to reproductive health care services.

"By providing comprehensive solutions, we are not only working to eradicate obstetric fistula but also supporting the elimination of female genital mutilation and cutting, which remains a significant challenge for women and girls worldwide," he stated, expressing a sense of urgency for faster progress towards the 2030 elimination target.

Mr. Benediktsson highlighted the remarkable achievements in Malawi, particularly in the Mangochi District, where Iceland's investment of K20.7 billion over two decades has coincided with a 53 percent decrease in under-five mortality rate and a 31 percent decrease in maternal mortality since 2012.

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The Iceland-UNFPA partnership in Malawi has brought transformative changes in Mangochi, one of the districts the two partners collaborated in a sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) project. The collaboration focused on empowering adolescent girls and women with knowledge and skills on SRHR and gender-based violence (GBV), enabling informed decision-making and the exercise of their rights.

A key milestone of this partnership is the establishment of the Lilja Fistula and One Stop Center, which has revolutionized access to fistula care and GBV services by providing specialized facilities closer to the community.

Building on this success, the "Bridging Hope: Empowering Women with Obstetric Fistula in Nkhotakota" project was launched in October 2023. This initiative, funded by the Icelandic government and implemented by UNFPA, aims to ensure universal access to quality obstetric fistula care and social reintegration for affected women and girls. The project is expected to directly benefit over 2,000 individuals, including 459 fistula survivors, and indirectly support an estimated 117,391 people in the district.

"The impressive results achieved in Malawi through our partnership serve as a testament to the power of collaboration and the profound difference it can make in the lives of women and girls," affirmed the Prime Minister, inspiring hope for continued progress and strengthened partnerships with UNFPA.



#### Bridging hope: **IPOWERING OMEN WITH STETRIC STULA IN KHOTAKOTA**

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### **POLICY ENGAGEMENT**

UNFPA provided technical and financial support for the review and finalization of the Youth Friendly Health Services Strategy, set for launch in 2025.

Additionally, UNFPA played a key role in developing quality-of-care standards for adolescents and youth, ensuring alignment with WHO guidelines. The organization also supported the localization of international technical and programmatic guidance on Out-of School Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), aligning it with Malawi's Out-of-School Guide.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, UNFPA contributed to the implementation of the School Health Programme in schools. Furthermore, UNFPA successfully engaged the Ministry of Health to incorporate Menstrual Health Management into the revised Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) policy, strengthening policy frameworks for improved adolescent and youth health.

UNFPA played a key role in supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH) in developing the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Policy, which was officially validated in 2024. Additionally, UNFPA supported the review of the Midwifery Act, which led to the separation of powers between the executive board and the secretariat. This reform has strengthened governance and accountability within the association, enabling it to mobilize resources more effectively for advocacy initiatives.

#### **STRENGTHENING THE REFERRAL SYSTEMS**

As part of efforts to enhance maternal and neonatal health, UNFPA collaborated with the Ministry of Health to review the national referral guidelines, with a focus on strengthening the referral system. Key improvements include the integration of common danger signs checklists into maternity referral and admission forms, the enforcement of trained medical personnel escorting maternity referral cases, and the incorporation of standardized checklists for ambulance medical equipment. These measures will harmonize and standardize referral processes across the country.



#### **GUIDELINES FOR IMPROVED QUALITY OF MATERNAL AND NEONATAL CARE**

Furthermore, in line with its commitment to strengthening the healthcare workforce, UNFPA partnered with Kamuzu University of Health Sciences and the Ministry of Health to develop standardized mentorship guidelines aimed at improving the quality of maternal and neonatal care. These guidelines provide a structured framework for knowledge transfer, ensuring that less experienced healthcare providers receive consistent, evidence-based guidance from seasoned professionals. The initiative builds on lessons learned from an ongoing mentorship program implemented over the past two years in six selected districts. This program has fostered a supportive learning environment, enhancing clinical decision-making, strengthening teamwork, and improving problem-solving skills among healthcare providers.

#### **ENGAGEMENT WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE POPULATION CAUCUS**

Amid rising concerns over child marriages and teenage pregnancies, the Department of Economic Planning and Development (EP&D), with support from UNFPA, engaged parliamentarians, including members of the Population Caucus, to strengthen collective action against these challenges.

During an interface meeting facilitated by UNFPA, parliamentarians committed to playing a pivotal role in overseeing and guiding the national population programme. Their commitments include advocating for increased budgetary allocations for population coordination, promoting public awareness on population issues, and championing key population interventions within their constituencies. Additionally, they pledged to enforce the Marriage Act and support inclusive education programmes, track the implementation of population-related commitments, and ensure quality control in district council-level projects.

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#### Population and Development Parliamentary and Policy Forum

#### 9th African Populat Conference

Lilongwe, Malav

#APC2024 #9thAPC #



#### **STRENGTHENING POLICY FRAMEWORKS TO END GBV AND CHILD MARRIAGE**

UNFPA played a key role in the finalization of three critical policy documents: the Gender Equality Act (GEA) Implementation and Monitoring Plan, the National Gender Policy, and the End Child Marriage (ECM) Strategy. These policies and strategies serve as foundational resources for orientation, training, and advocacy campaigns aimed at eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices. Their implementation is integral to strengthening service delivery for GBV survivors and advancing gender equality efforts across the country.



### **INNOVATIONS IN MALAWI**

In 2024, the UNFPA Malawi Country Office made bold strides in harnessing digital innovation to transform access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and strengthen genderbased violence (GBV) prevention and response. Partnering with youth led initiatives and techdriven platforms, the office introduced and scaled a range of groundbreaking programmes designed to empower young people, expand digital safe spaces, and enhance service delivery with life-saving impact.

#### **DIGITAL BREAKTHROUGHS IN COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION**

UNFPA Malawi advanced its digital approach to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) through the rollout of the CSE Digital App, reaching 3,500 learners across 28 schools. Implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the initiative equipped teachers with tablets to lead interactive and engaging lessons. To ensure long-term sustainability, computer labs were established in Salima, Dedza, and Mangochi, where 60 teachers completed certified online CSE training.

#### **TUNEME AND YOUTH-LED INNOVATION**

The TuneMe platform remained a vital resource for young people, offering health tips, expert Q&As, and interactive discussions on SRHR and CSE. Over 12,000 users accessed the platform, receiving accurate information and referrals for services. The Country Office also collaborated with young innovators from InspireLearn and the National Youth Council of Malawi, building their capacity while co-creating solutions tailored to youth needs.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH MEETS SRHR**

A significant milestone was the strengthened partnership with Caring Hands, creators of the youthled Mental Lab App—a digital platform integrating mental health support with SRHR services. The app provides virtual consultations, peer engagement, and educational content, making essential services more accessible. In parallel, the office supported TILITONSE, a youth-run one-stop digital GBV referral center, in refining its system. A pilot is set for Dzaleka Refugee Camp in 2025, with plans to scale across additional UNFPA-supported districts.



#### **SAFE SPACES GO DIGITAL**

The TEENS (Technology and Empowerment Enhancing Networks in Safe Spaces) Project delivered powerful results. Over 200 mentors were trained, and more than 168,710 people were reached with SRHR, GBV prevention, and youth empowerment content via digital safe spaces. A total of 9,420 mentees graduated from the programme, enhancing digital inclusion among adolescent girls and young women.

Innovative tools like the 3-2-1 platform enabled over 1,000 young women to access confidential, non-judgmental SRHR and GBV information. A WhatsApp chatbot featuring content on cyberbullying and safeguarding reached 198 trainees. Mentors and Community Victim Support Unit staff in Lilongwe and Balaka also received digital literacy training, bolstering their capacity for advocacy and safeguarding.

The project conducted a successful digital survey, surpassing its goal with 1,006 responses, and collected compelling impact stories to document how digital safe spaces are transforming lives.

#### **SMART DATA FOR SMARTER DECISIONS**

UNFPA Malawi continued its use of the KOBO Toolbox Monitoring Tool for real-time data collection, analysis, and reporting in safe space mentorship programmes. Inspired by the Myanmar Country Office, a South-South Monitoring and Reporting Dashboard is under development to streamline reporting and showcase disaggregated data aligned with the UNFPA QuantumPlus system.

In response to humanitarian needs following floods and cyclones, the MISP Calculator was used to anticipate SRHR and GBV service requirements for internally displaced populations. These projections enabled evidence-based decision-making and efficient resource allocation during crisis response.

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#### GLOBAL SYNERGY: MALAWI-INDIA DIGITAL Exchange

UNFPA Malawi and UNFPA India engaged in a dynamic South South knowledge exchange focused on digital innovation. Malawi drew inspiration from India's cutting-edge solutions, including the JustAsk! AI Chatbot for confidential SRHR information and a blockchain-powered GBV coordination platform. In return, Malawi showcased its digital portfolio including the Tilitonse Mental Lab App and the TEENS Project which have reached over 168,000 young people. This collaboration fueled the localization of digital solutions, enriched cross-country learning, and advanced UNFPA's broader digital transformation agenda.

### **KEY PARTNERS 2024**

Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Malawi Human Rights Commission, National Statistical Office, District Councils and Govern Departments, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, African Institute For Development Policy, Amref Health, Foundation for Civic Education, Girls Empowerment Network, Family Planning Association of Malawi, Banja La Mtsogolo, Malawi Girls Guides Association, Youth Net and Counselling, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Carve Africa, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Freedom from Fistula Foundation, SRHR Africa Trust (SAT) and Theater for a Change.

#### **PROGRAMMING LOCATIONS**

In total, 14 programmes were operational in 13 districts and 152 traditional authorities. The implementing districts were as follows: Nsanje, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Machinga, Mangochi, Dedza, Salima, Kasungu, Mchinji, Mzimba South, Nkhata-Bay and Nkhotakota.





#### CHIRADZULU DISTRICT

KEY INTERVENTIONS KEY RESULTS

(JANUARY 2022 - MAY 2023

- Installation of solar system at Malawi Health Center
- Capacity building on community MPDSR committees
- Support delivery of YFH:
- Comprehensive Sexuality Education for out of school youths & parent child communication (PCC)
- Capacity building for youth networks

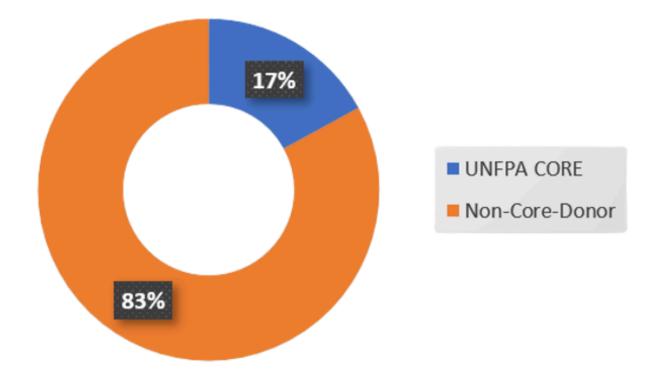
 Reduction of maternal deaths from 21 in 2021 to 8 in 2022

- Scanning of ANC women is facilitating early referral to district hospital
- A total of 2,500 reached with SRHR information and YFRS

Norad

### **MANAGEMENT SNAPSHOT**

UNFPA PROGRAMMES	DELIVERY 2024, US\$	FUNDING SOURCES/DONORS in 2024
Quality of Care; Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	5,471,726.6	UNITED KINGDOM, IRELAND, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH KOREA, NORWAY, UNFPA,UNDP, SDG ACCELERATION FUND
Gender and Social Norms	744,137.0	IRELAND, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, NORWAY, UNFPA,UNDP, SDG ACCELERATION FUND
Adolescent Girls and Youth	2,264,455.2	IRELAND, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH KOREA, SWITZELAND, NORWAY, UNFPA, SDG ACCELERATION FUND
Policy, Accountability and Development	1,099,523.6	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH KOREA,NORWAY, UNFPA, SDG ACCELERATION FUND
Humanitarian Response	98,788.8	UNFPA, REPUBLIC OF SOUTH KOREA, OCHA
Programme Coordination and Support	1,299,789.0	UNFPA



SOURCE OF FUNDS	2024 US\$
UNFPA CORE	1,917, 040
NON-CORE-DONOR	9.331.347
TOTAL	11,248,387





overwhelmed.

Little did he know that this initial confusion would soon give way to a deep understanding of the work being done on the ground to support young people across Malawi.

Miyamoto, a member of the youth team at UNFPA Malawi, is based in Mchinji District, where he works closely with the district council's youth office. His placement has allowed him to bridge coordination between UNFPA and the district while actively engaging in initiatives that empower adolescents and young people.



Throughout 2024, Miyamoto has been involved in various youth-centered projects, including the Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent Girls in the Central Region of Malawi initiative, Youth Network Mapping, and the UNFPA Malawi Youth Advisory Panel (MYAP). These projects, designed to empower young people with knowledge and opportunities, provided him with invaluable insights into the challenges and aspirations of Malawian youth. 48

## **Bridging Cultures and Empowering**

When Takumi Miyamoto first arrived in Malawi as a Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) volunteer in December 2023, he was eager but admittedly

"I distinctly recall feeling lost in a sea of jargon and acronyms at my first Annual Review Meeting," he reflects.

### A Year of Learning and Growth



One of his biggest challenges early on was the language barrier.

"Most of the young people and community members I interacted with spoke Chichewa, which I could only partially understand. I realized I was missing out on the true essence of their stories, so I committed myself to learning the language."

Today, he proudly acknowledges his progress in Chichewa, crediting casual interactions and even a traditional board game, bawo, for helping him integrate into the community.

### **Mapping Youth Networks and Fostering Leadership**

In 2024, Miyamoto played a crucial role in the Youth Network Mapping initiative, a collaboration between UNFPA and the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM). The project aimed to document youth-led organizations across the country to create a structured database. While he missed the initial pilot due to scheduling conflicts, he was actively involved in the follow-up phase.

"By the end of the year, we had completed data collection and were transitioning to creating a dashboard for the database," he explains, expressing excitement about the impact this will have on youth advocacy efforts in Malawi.

Perhaps his most fulfilling role was with the UNFPA Malawi Youth Advisory Panel (MYAP). This panel, launched in June 2024, is a groundbreaking initiative that ensures young people are not just beneficiaries but key drivers of change.

emphasizes.

Following a competitive selection process, 16 young leaders were chosen from UNFPA's focus districts to form the firstever advisory panel. Miyamoto played a vital role in their induction, including leading digital literacy training sessions. As the panel members took on leadership roles in International Youth Day celebrations, the National Youth Summit, and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Miyamoto was there to provide logistical support and witness their growth firsthand.

"It was inspiring to see their leadership shine in their communities," he says.

"The idea behind MYAP is simple yet powerful—partnering with young people rather than working for them," he



### Looking Ahead with Gratitude and Determination

Reflecting on his year in Mchinji, Miyamoto is filled with gratitude.

"I am deeply thankful to my colleagues in both Mchinji and Lilongwe for their unwavering support," he says.

Looking ahead, he hopes to further strengthen coordination between the district and UNFPA, while continuing to immerse himself in Malawi's rich cultural landscape.

"I've learned that communication is not just about language—it's about connection. Whether through words, shared experiences, or even a game of bawo, we can build bridges that empower and uplift communities," he concludes.

As Miyamoto gears up for another year with UNFPA Malawi, one thing is certain —his journey of learning, adaptation, and impact is far from over.



### THE WAY FORWAD

Building on the progress made in 2024, UNFPA Malawi remains steadfast in advancing sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and youth empowerment. The implementation of the 9th Country Programme (CPD)—which prioritizes adolescent girls—will be central to our efforts, ensuring they have access to sexuality and reproductive health and rights services and information including family planning, quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities to unlock their full potential.

Strengthening health systems, expanding youth-friendly services, and deepening community engagement will remain key priorities. Greater investment in digital innovations, mentorship programs, and policy reforms will drive inclusivity and efficiency in service delivery. At the same time, addressing gender-based violence and harmful social norms through safe spaces, male engagement programs, and survivor-centred services will be scaled up to ensure no one is left behind.

To sustain impact, UNFPA will continue advocating for increased domestic financing, integrating population data into policy planning, and fostering strategic partnerships. Together with the Government of Malawi, donors, and civil society, we will accelerate efforts toward achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, building a more equitable future for all—especially adolescent girls, who remain at the heart of our interventions.



#### WE ARE IMMENSELY GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS' FOR THEIR UNWAVERING SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY, WHICH HAS BEEN CRUCIAL IN ADVANCING THE YOUTH PROGRAMME'S SUCCESS THIS PAST YEAR.





Embassy of Iceland Lilongwe



### **UNFPA MALAWI** Results Achieved 2024



#### Ensuring rights and choices for all **since 1969**

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