



# UNFPA MALAWI

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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**

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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





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# FOREWORD

As we reflect on the journey of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Malawi for the year 2023, we are inspired by the resilience, partnership, and progress that mark our collective efforts towards advancing sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and youth empowerment in the country.

The strides we have made together with the Government of Malawi, our development partners, civil society organizations, and the communities we serve, underscore a shared commitment to improving the lives of women, girls, and young people across the nation. This annual report captures the essence of our work in empowering individuals and communities, particularly focusing on the most vulnerable.

Through innovative solutions like the adaptation of the Safe Delivery App, increased use of digital technology, namely in safe spaces and capacity building in health care, UNFPA has endeavored to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled. Our efforts in combating gender-based violence and supporting the health and rights of women and girls have been pivotal in moving towards a more equitable society.

The achievements highlighted in this report are a testament to the power of collaboration and the impact of integrated approaches in addressing complex challenges. From enhancing the capacity of health workers to respond to emergencies, to facilitating access to modern family planning methods, and empowering young people with comprehensive sexuality education, our initiatives are designed to address the root causes of health and gender disparities.



In addressing the pressing needs of our time, including responding to humanitarian crises such as Tropical Cyclone Freddy and the cholera outbreak, UNFPA has remained agile and responsive. Our ability to mobilize resources and partners to provide immediate, life-saving support to affected communities exemplifies our commitment to leaving no one behind, even in the most challenging circumstances.

As we look to the future, the lessons learned and successes achieved provide a solid foundation for our next steps, when we start the 9th new country programme learning from those, to better addressing the adolescent girl-centered issues.

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to all our partners and stakeholders for their unwavering support and collaboration. Together, we are making a difference in the lives of millions, steering Malawi towards a brighter, more inclusive future where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

This annual report is a testament to what we can achieve when we unite for the common good. It is with pride and optimism that we present the UNFPA Malawi 2023 Annual Report.

Nelida Rodrigues



Resident Representative  
UNFPA Malawi









# INTEGRATED SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES AND INFORMATION

UNFPA supported the adaptation of the Safe delivery App to the Malawi context. The app provides evidence-based, step-by-step instructions and animated videos on essential childbirth procedures and emergency interventions, empowering healthcare workers with the knowledge and skills to effectively manage obstetric and neonatal emergencies.

The adaptation of the Safe Delivery App represents a promising initiative to address the pressing challenges in maternal and neonatal health in Malawi. By leveraging digital technologies and evidence-based interventions, this innovative solution has the potential to make significant strides towards improving maternal and neonatal health outcomes, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of achieving universal healthcare coverage and sustainable development in Malawi

## CAPACITY BUILDING IN INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF DISEASES

In 2023, UNFPA supported the development of expertise in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) with a focus on reinforcing medical certification for the cause of death. The latest ICD-11 coding framework aligns with the Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) guidelines.

During the training sessions, 88 individuals (41 males and 47 females) were educated in Ntchisi and Kasungu. Additionally, within the same reporting period, another 213 healthcare professionals (127 males and 86 females) received ICD-11 training in Chikwawa, Nsanje, Rumphi, and Mzimba South. To optimize cost-effectiveness, the program utilized a blend of virtual and face-to-face training methods.



**We are immensely grateful to the following development partners' for their unwavering support and generosity, which have been crucial in advancing the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Programme's success this past year.**





Specifically, 115 participants (32 males and 83 females), making up 72 percent, completed their training online, while 45 (20 males and 25 females), or 28 percent, received their training in-person. Adopting the ICD-11 standards for certifying causes of death promotes a shared understanding of the factors and documentation processes for maternal and perinatal deaths.

## STRATEGIC MENTORSHIP AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN EMERGENCY OBSTETRIC AND NEWBORN CARE

UNFPA supported an initiative to establish skills laboratories in three major hospitals in Blantyre, Lilongwe, and Mzuzu. The initiative represents a critical stride towards enhancing the capacity of healthcare professionals in Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC).

These laboratories serve not merely as training grounds but as key components in a comprehensive strategy aimed at advancing the health system's response to maternal and new-born emergencies. The creation of these facilities and the subsequent training and mentorship programs are integral to the broader commitment to strengthen health systems and eliminate preventable maternal and new-born mortality and morbidity.

The practical learning spaces enabled through these laboratories are complemented by a robust network of Maternal and Neonatal mentorship teams. These teams play an essential role in reinforcing district-based mentorship sessions on EmONC signal functions, engaging 302 healthcare professionals across six districts under the UN Joint Programme, and extending mentorship to an additional 336 healthcare workers in Chikwawa, Nsanje, Kasungu, and Mzimba South. This extensive mentorship effort embodies a strategic approach: to cultivate a well-informed, skilful workforce capable of navigating the complexities of maternal and new-born care within their local health ecosystems.

The mentorship program is designed with a dual objective: to enhance individual competencies in managing obstetric emergencies and to catalyse systemic improvements in the quality of care provided to mothers and newborns. By equipping healthcare workers with both knowledge and practical skills, and fostering a culture of supportive supervision and peer learning, there is an aim to make a tangible impact on the conditions of delivery.

This strategy is evident in initiatives, as exemplified in Mzimba South, where clinicians received advanced mentorship in surgical skills crucial for reducing mortality due to haemorrhage during childbirth. Through strategic planning, implementation, and evaluation, the aim is to ensure that these initiatives are integrated components of a resilient, responsive, and inclusive health system.



## OBSTETRIC FISTULA REPAIR **AND RE-ORIENTATION**

Obstetric fistula is a severe childbirth injury that occurs due to prolonged and obstructed labor, particularly in areas with limited access to skilled obstetric care. This condition leads to an abnormal opening between the vagina and the bladder or rectum, causing chronic incontinence and often resulting in social stigma and isolation for affected women. UNFPA in collaboration with the Freedom from Fistula Foundation, are among the few partners supporting the Ministry of Health to this challenge in Malawi, covering the entire continuum of care for fistula—from prevention and repair to socio-economic reintegration.

This collaboration achieved significant success, managing to repair a total of 289 obstetric fistula patients against a target of 200, representing a success rate of 145 percent. Such accomplishments not only signify the restoration of dignity for women and girls who suffered from birth complications but also enable them to regain their right to a satisfying sexual and reproductive life, thereby reducing the burden of obstetric fistula and promoting social integration in Malawi.

Moreover, UNFPA has supported the Ministry of Health in drafting Obstetric and Neonatal Emergencies Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Clinical Guidelines for an improved referral system. Developing these SOPs and Clinical Guidelines for obstetric and neonatal emergency referrals involved collaboration among various stakeholders, including obstetricians, midwives, and health policymakers. This multidisciplinary approach ensured the incorporation of perspectives and expertise from different healthcare professionals into the guidelines, further strengthening the fight against obstetric fistula and improving maternal health outcomes.





## HIV/AIDS OUTREACH THROUGH MOONLIGHT SERVICES

The HIV/AIDS Moonlight Services for Sex Workers project involves health staff visiting ‘hot spots’ where sex workers operate to provide a range of essential services. These services include voluntary counselling and testing, treatment for sexually transmitted infections, family planning services, and referrals for treatment for those who test HIV positive. Many sex workers are hesitant to seek services at hospitals due to potential loss of income from leaving their work area and the stigma associated with their profession. To mitigate these barriers, health workers proactively bring these vital services directly to the sex workers, ensuring they receive necessary care without disrupting their livelihoods.

In response to the challenges posed by stigma, sex workers have actively participated as partners in these programs. Their involvement includes peer-to-peer referrals to increase the availability of services, condom distribution, and sharing the importance of accessing sexual and reproductive health services for self-protection. Notably, the health workers' efforts are complemented by the collaboration with sex workers as peers, who play a crucial role in sensitising their peers about the available services. They support the distribution of condoms and educational materials, thereby enhancing the outreach and impact of the program.

In 2023, with support from UNFPA, the Mulanje District Health Office reached out to 857 sex workers with various services. Through these initiatives, sex workers not only receive health services but also contribute significantly to the program's success by supporting their peers and challenging the stigma that often hinders access to care.



## POST ABORTION CARE (PAC) TRAINING

With support from UNFPA, national training of Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) and Post-Abortion Care (PAC) coordinators was approved by the Ministry of Health in October 2023. The PAC training targeted coordinators who oversee the implementation of PAC protocols within healthcare facilities for the effective delivery of PAC services.



The successful integration of PAC into existing healthcare systems often relies on the effective utilization of Health Management Information Systems to monitor service delivery, track outcomes, and inform decision-making. The HMIS training, therefore, equipped healthcare professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage HMIS data related to PAC services and coordinate the provision of quality care to individuals seeking post-abortion services.

Furthermore, in alignment with the objectives of UN Joint Programme, also known as Umoyo Wathu, specific attention was given to ensuring that PAC training reaches districts where the programme is being implemented. This targeted approach aims to enhance the capacity of healthcare facilities in these districts to provide comprehensive PAC services, thereby improving access to essential reproductive health care for populations in need.



## ACCESS TO MODERN FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES

UNFPA significantly bolstered the delivery of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights services via mobile outreach clinics, door-to-door provision facilitated by community-based distribution agents (CBDAs), and specialised outreach clinics tailored for youth. A cohort of 120 CBDAs underwent training, resulting in reaching 4,825 clients, distributing 359,870 male condoms and 560 female condoms, and facilitating 304,584 additional/new users (comprising all women of reproductive age) of modern family planning methods through health facilities.

### KEY RESULTS

- 289 obstetric fistula patients underwent repair.
- 120 Community-Based Distribution Agents received training, leading to 4,825 clients served and the distribution of 359,870 male condoms and 560 female condoms.
- 304,584 new users from all women of reproductive age started using modern family planning methods.
- 590 individuals were screened for cervical cancer.
- 487 individuals were screened and treated for sexually transmitted infections
- 1,569 individuals accessed HIV Testing and Counselling in 20 hot spots in Mulanje.









# STORY

## From Survival to Leadership - Mary's Journey of Triumph

"I started working as a sex worker in 2019," reveals Mary\*, a mother of three from Mulanje, reflecting on her tumultuous past. "By then, my marriage had broken down. I didn't have anyone to support me or my kids."

For five harrowing years, Mary endured an abusive marriage marked by alcoholism and violence. "Every day my husband would come home drunk and he would beat me as well as the kids," Mary recounts, her voice tinged with pain. "He didn't even leave money for food. Sometimes we would go for two days without eating."

Faced with relentless abuse, Mary summoned the courage to break free. She sought refuge in her village, only to encounter a lukewarm reception from her own family.

"I faced stigma even in my own family," she recalls bitterly. "I was treated as if I was the one who was wrong as I had deserted my husband. This was the most difficult time I had ever faced as no one was ready to support me."

Determined to provide for her children, Mary made the difficult decision to return to town and engage in sex work. Despite the initial challenges and the stark contrast to her previous life, she persevered.



Life wasn't easy at all," she admits. "I had no choice but to persevere as I had a family to feed."

In the midst of adversity, Mary found a glimmer of hope through health talks provided by Mulanje District Hospital. These sessions, held at the brothel where she worked, equipped Mary with crucial knowledge and resources to safeguard her health. "I took advantage of their presence to get information on how to protect myself from diseases," she explains.

Mary's dedication did not go unnoticed. Impressed by her commitment, the health workers appointed her as a peer educator and a focal person for the hot spot. Her responsibilities include ensuring her peers attend health sessions, supporting those on medication, and liaising with health workers on key issues affecting sex workers.

Mulanje District Health Office, in collaboration with UNFPA, has been pivotal in extending essential services to sex workers. Through targeted outreach efforts, they reached 1578 sex workers last year alone.

Monica Katuli, HIV Testing and Counselling (HTC) Services Coordinator at Mulanje District Health Office, underscores the importance of these initiatives in combating HIV/AIDS, particularly in Mulanje, where prevalence rates remain alarming.

"Most of these sex workers don't come to the hospital to seek services due to the nature of their work," Monica explains. "That's why we decided to take the services to them. These proactive health visits have facilitated voluntary HIV testing and linkage to care, significantly reducing dropouts from antiretroviral therapy."

\*Mary's real name has been changed to protect her identity





# EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

## STRENGTHENED PROGRAMMING OF OUT OF SCHOOL (OOS) COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE) AND PARENT CHILD COMMUNICATION (PCC)

In 2023, UNFPA collaborated with the Ministry of Youth to develop parent-child communication guidelines and toolkits. This saw 42,500 parents and adolescents being reached through the Parent- Child Sexuality Communication sessions. UNFPA further supported the Ministry to align the Malawi Out-of-School Comprehensive Sexuality Education (OOS CSE) guidance book with the International Technical and Programmatic Guidance on Out-of-School CSE.

Through UNFPA's coordination efforts, the Ministry of Education has been working hand in hand with the Ministry of Health on school health programming, thereby enhancing coordination and facilitating the provision of SRHR information and referral of Adolescents for services . 199 tents were distributed and mounted in targeted schools for privacy and 54 motorcycles were distributed in Health facilities to ease mobility for health workers. Notably, 106 CSE facilitators from UNFPA focus districts were empowered to foster inclusive and open dialogues on sensitive issues, leading to a notable demand for CSE refresher sessions



## IMPROVING ACCESS TO YOUTH FRIENDLY HEALTH SERVICES

UNFPA supported the Ministry of Health in finalizing the revision of the Youth Health Friendly Services Strategy and Standards of Quality of Care in line with the World Health Organisation standards of care for adolescents. In 2023, a total of 1,526,681 people aged 10–24 in targeted districts accessed youth health friendly services through static and outreach clinics. 23,460 were reached through outreach clinics in Chikwawa at the flood victim's camps.

We are immensely grateful to the following development partners' for their unwavering support and generosity, which have been crucial in advancing the Youth Programme's success this past year.



## INCREASING ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES BY YOUTH

UNFPA facilitated the procurement and placement of youth-friendly health services' signposts in Kasungu district, contributing to heightened accessibility of reproductive health services among youth. These signposts offer clear information on available services, locations, and operating hours, enhancing awareness and utilization. During the same reporting period, UNFPA trained 120 health workers, encompassing nurses, midwives and health surveillance assistants (HSAs) to enhance their proficiency in delivering comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services.

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO ADDRESS GBV and HARMFUL PRACTICES

UNFPA continued to empower community members to address gender based violence and harmful practices. Through the support, communities are now taking a proactive role in addressing and responding to issues that affect youth, especially adolescent girls and teen mothers. In 2023, there was a 34.38 percent increase in the number of GBV, child marriage, and sexual abuse cases reported by community members through various structures that are available in their designated areas.





From January to December of 2022, a total of 131 cases were reported in both Mchinji and Dedza districts. However, in 2023, there was a significant increase in reported cases, with a total of 402 cases recorded within the first nine months alone. This substantial rise of 271 cases compared to the previous year highlights an escalation in reported incidents. These cases, spanning both years, received essential legal assistance and counselling through the established referral pathway.

Prior to the project's implementation, survivors faced challenges in reporting cases, often due to a lack of awareness regarding reporting channels and support resources. However, with the awareness generated and the streamlined reporting process, survivors now have increased access to reporting mechanisms, resulting in a notable rise in reported cases.

In 2023, UNFPA significantly enhanced the capabilities of key sectors including health, justice, police, and social welfare, facilitating the delivery of the Essential Service Package (ESP) through a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach. This empowerment initiative employed the ESP model within Dowa and Mchinji districts, focusing on six traditional authorities. The program successfully oriented 56 Gender-Based Violence (GBV) service providers and 80 members of the Gender Technical Working Group on the ESP framework.

Furthermore, UNFPA supported the establishment of six GBV referral pathways—three in Dedza's traditional authorities and three in Mchinji—initiating the validation of these referral pathways at the traditional authority level, thereby strengthening the support network for GBV survivors.





# STORY

## Breaking Barriers: Men Stand United Against Gender-Based Violence

In Mchinji, a quiet transformation is taking place, reshaping age-old societal norms. Men, traditionally seen as guardians of a conservative masculinity, are now actively encouraging each other to lead the charge against gender-based violence (GBV).

This positive shift is a direct outcome of the Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent Girls project, a beacon of change implemented by UNFPA with the generous support of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Douglas Mbewe, a 27-year-old father of three from Miliyoti Village is one of the men at the forefront of this movement. Douglas is not just a man; he is a male champion, dedicating himself to the noble cause of eradicating gender-based violence in his community. His commitment goes beyond mere words, as he actively engages in campaigns and initiatives aimed at raising awareness and equipping the community to address and report GBV incidents promptly.

"As a male champion, I always emphasize the importance of us men taking the leading role in fighting gender-based violence," Douglas proudly asserts. "Most cases reported in our communities point to men as perpetrators. So, we have to take them on board and educate them on the need to end this vice."



In a community where traditional masculinity is deeply ingrained, Douglas's role as a male champion carries significant weight. Despite facing the challenge of changing deeply rooted behaviors, he remains confident that, in the coming years, both women and men in his community will enjoy equal rights.

"The Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent Girls project equipped us with the tools to bring about the changes we require in our communities," explains Douglas. "In the past, we didn't know how to work with influential local leaders such as chiefs, but now we have managed to make them our allies. With custodians of local cultures on our side, the battle is half won."



However, Douglas acknowledges that their successes have not come without challenges.

"It's not always easy to be a male champion," he admits. "We still face resistance from men who frown upon our work. But I always try to explain to them that GBV may happen to their sisters or mothers. This means it's our collective responsibility to stop gender-based violence."

Mzondeni Sandram, another male champion trained under the project, echoes this sentiment. From Wandikani village, Mzondeni actively engages with fellow men and youths through local youth networks. Every weekend, they gather to discuss issues affecting their lives and, crucially, the lives of women and girls.

"In our discussions, we look at gender-based violence from both perspectives," Mzondeni shares. "Although we emphasize its impact on women and girls, we also talk about its impact on men. Since most men are told not to complain, we have seen a lot of them committing suicide over issues that could have been resolved through counseling."

So far, 57,906 men and boys in Mchinji have been reached with various topics such as gender based violence, human rights and sexual and reproductive health including family planning.





## DIGITALISATION AND INNOVATION

UNFPA launched innovative solutions for program implementation by digitalizing data collection tools. Utilizing the Kobo Toolbox on smartphones and tablets, UNFPA equipped focal persons with the necessary technology to streamline the accessibility and analysis of safe space data monthly. This forward-thinking approach ensures more efficient and accurate data handling, significantly enhancing program effectiveness.

In Salima district, youth-driven radio programs covered crucial topics such as disability inclusion, mental health care, educational re-engagement, gender-based violence, one-stop centers, and substance use, reaching an impressive audience of 13,500 listeners. These programs not only provided vital information on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights but also facilitated live interactions to address listeners' questions. Additionally, the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Digital application successfully reached 3,500 learners across 28 primary schools, enhancing their access to essential education on sexuality and reproductive health.

UNFPA Malawi is collaborating with youth innovators who won the UNFPA ESARO Hacklab, through a 'Mental Lab Application' which digitally links young people with psychologists and integrates mental health into adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender based violence. The winning project, 'TILITONSE' concept, a digital one-stop centre empowering youth in Dzaleka refugees camp on mental health and adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights' choices.

## YOUTH ADVOCACY INITIATIVES FOR INCLUSIVE DECISION MAKING

In Mchinji district, youth advocacy initiatives have assisted in incorporating youth in developing community plans. Communities have agreed to ensure the youth are engaged in all community structures, including village development committees, which will be elected soon.







## KEY RESULTS

- A zero dropout rate for learners on the bursary program in three traditional authorities supported in Dedza district.
- Over 30 Health Facility Improvement Plans developed based on the assessment report
- District-based mentorship programme for health workers rolled-out in 60 health facilities
- 13,500 listeners of youth radio programs on disability inclusion, mental health care, back to school, GBV, a one-stop centre, and drug and substance recording and production in Salima.
- 381 cases reported within the first nine months of 2023 as compared to 131 of January to December 2022 in Mchinji and Dedza



# STORY

## Journey from unemployed Teacher to Entrepreneur

Maureen Mwale, a 23-year-old primary school teacher graduate, faced the harsh reality of unemployment after months of job hunting. Determined to make the most of her time, she stumbled upon a local safe space for women and girls, part of the UN Joint Programme of Girls Education funded by Norway.

Intrigued by the vibrant sessions drawing young women from the village, Maureen decided to explore what the safe space had to offer. Little did she know that this decision would be the catalyst for a transformative journey.

“I was used to being in the front teaching students, but this time around, I had to be the one learning,” Maureen reflects. Growing up in a patriarchal society, she realized she had internalized norms that infringed upon her rights. The safe space became a classroom where she learned to question and challenge these ingrained customs.

The sessions on sexual and reproductive health proved to be particularly empowering for Maureen, a young mother concerned about balancing family life and career aspirations. Connecting with a mentor from the safe space, trained as a community-based distribution agent of family planning commodities, Maureen received invaluable advice that changed her perspective on family planning.



But Maureen's journey didn't stop there. Inspired by her peers, she joined a village savings group formed within the safe space, Tikondane, with 20 members. Through the group, Maureen was able to save and borrow money, kickstarting her entrepreneurial dream.

Using her savings, Maureen opened a kindergarten school in a rented structure, starting with 15 kids. With determination and a vision, she expanded, offering formal and remedial classes for primary school children. Borrowing more funds from the village savings group, she invested in textbooks and chinks, elevating the quality of education she provided.





Maureen's dream of having her own school seemed ambitious, but with each success, it became more attainable. Her infectious smile reveals a newfound hope and confidence.

“I never thought I would be my own employer,” she says, “Who knows, if the school grows, I will even hire more hands to help me. I couldn’t have been this hopeful if I had not joined the safe space as it introduced me to the village savings group.”



# GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

## SUSTAINABLE SAFE SPACES: CONTINUED SUCCESS AND GROWTH

One of the successes of the year 2023 was the sustainability of safe spaces in the Spotlight Initiative implementing districts. Almost all the safe spaces are still functional, and new recruitment of mentors and mentees is ongoing. For example, in Dowa, 27 new mentors have been recruited by the community and have started their self-initiated safe spaces.

All safe spaces received seed funding for initiating small business ventures or village savings and loan (VSL) groups as a strategy for sustainability, in addition to being connected with existing youth groups and other initiatives. For instance, in Machinga's Traditional Authority Sitola, the VSL initiative launched by safe space mentees expanded across the entire traditional authority, benefiting all villages. This expansion was facilitated by mentors who extended VSL training to additional groups throughout the area.

Originally starting with MK20,000 contributed by each of its 25 members, the Safe Space VSL group's funds have impressively grown to over MK14 million. Moreover, safe spaces in Nsanje and Machinga are proactively engaging new cohorts, driven by their own motivation and supported by community leaders, underscoring the programs' positive impact and self-sustaining momentum.

We are immensely grateful to the following development partners' for their unwavering support and generosity, which have been crucial in advancing the Gender Programme's success this past year.



Ireland



## EMPOWERING SURVIVORS AND FOSTERING ECONOMIC GROWTH

UNFPA working with the District Councils and local communities, has ensured that the revolving funds from the Spotlight Initiative are functional and continue to serve the needs of gender-based violence survivors. The funds have economically empowered 7869 adolescent girls and young women to access various services and improve their livelihoods.

Thus far, the funds have revolved around and benefited 2789 new survivors through livestock pass-on, village savings and loans, and small businesses being conducted. For example, in Traditional Authority Chimombo, the village savings and loans members have started a cooperative and ventured into the bakery business by using sweet potatoes that they grow as a group, which are to be used as a raw material in their baking business.



# EXPANDING THE REFERRAL PROGRAM FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SUPPORT

Increase in referral points, demonstrating effective strategies in expanding the referral program and driving engagement, as 2555 adolescent girls and young women have been referred to the police, Child Protection Workers (CPWs), and health centres for support on gender-based violence/HP cases by their mentors. A total of 9241 adolescent girls and young women accessed services from the trained community psychosocial counsellors alone, with a higher uptake than from the community victim support units in some traditional authorities. As part of the humanitarian response in Chikwawa and Nsanje districts, 19 cases were reported and followed up due to strengthened existing monitoring and gender-based violence referral mechanisms in the communities and camps

# Building digital capacity of SAFE SPACE MENTORS

UNFPA supported Technology and Empowerment Enhancing Networks in Safe Spaces (TEENS) project has been scaled out to Balaka district, ensuring widespread access to digital technology, and now 120 new mentors have been recruited, bringing the total to 202. The digital capacity of mentors to conduct safe space sessions using tablets has led to 5371 adolescent and young women accessing digital services, business growth, and improvements in the academic performance of mentors and mentees, bridging the digital divide and fostering inclusivity.

A total of 105 girls have been referred to the police and health centres for support on gender based violence cases by their mentors. A total of 2,700 girls have attended group therapy and 574 girls have been referred by mentors for individual psychosocial counselling

Through the safe space mentorship programme, 10145 girls were encouraged and supported to access various gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights services, thus mitigating their chances of teenage pregnancy and improving their reproductive health. Additionally, male champions played a pivotal role by ensuring men and boys embrace positive masculinities that promote women and girls’ access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services, as 29189 of them championed this in 2023.







## BRINGING BACK GIRLS TO SCHOOL

UNFPA, through the TEENS project, supported safe space mentors to bring back to school girls who dropped out due to teenage pregnancies and neglect. In Balaka district, 45 mentees and 14 adolescent and young women from the community have returned to school through the safe space mentorship programme.

## IMPROVED MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

UNFPA facilitated the enhancement of menstrual and personal hygiene among adolescent girls, lactating, and pregnant women through the distribution of 4,514 dignity kits, with 3,058 distributed in Nsanje and 1,456 in Chikwawa. The distribution was done as part of the Tropical Cyclone Freddy response. This initiative was crucial to ensure that vulnerable populations can maintain their health and dignity. Access to improved menstrual and personal hygiene resources not only safeguards the well-being of these individuals but also empowers them to participate fully in daily activities, thus promoting their overall health and socio-economic development.

## INCLUSIVITY IN GBV FIGHT

UNFPA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, facilitated the rollout of the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) across seven districts. The Ministry procured a server and information, communication, and technology (ICT) equipment for hosting the GBVIMS.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Gender, in partnership with various stakeholders such as the Malawi National Association for the Deaf (MANAD), disseminated messages advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. These messages, addressing activism against gender-based violence and the promotion of sign languages, reached over 1 million individuals through media engagement and an open-day event commemorating the 2023 International Days.





## KEY RESULTS

- 7869 AGYW economically empowered through revolving funds
- 2789 new survivors benefitted from revolving funds
- 27 new safe space mentors recruited in Dowa
- 45 mentees and 14 AGYW from Balaka have gone back to School through Safe Space
- 10145 girls encouraged and supported to access various GBV and SRHR services
- 29189 male championed the promotion of women and girls' access to SRHR service
- 29189 male champions promoted women and girls' access to SRHR service



# STORY

## From Discrimination to Empowerment

Princess Dinala's life was marred by discrimination from the very start. Born with albinism, she faced rejection not just on the netball court but in every facet of her daily existence.

“Every time I asked my friends to play netball with them, they declined saying that since my eyesight was bad, I would make them lose the game as I would be passing the ball to the opposing team,” says Princess.

Her unique skin tone was perceived as a curse, a stigma that left her isolated and grappling with depression.

But in June of this year, Princess discovered a glimmer of hope in an unexpected place — a safe space established under the TEENS project, generously funded by the Government of Ireland. The project aimed to create a haven for young women and girls like Princess who felt marginalized due to factors beyond their control.

Upon joining, Princess faced initial resistance from her peers who were hesitant to embrace her differences. However, the safe space mentor, Gladys Enock, recognized the need for a broader conversation. She kicked off a session on human rights, using smart phone tablets to showcase videos depicting communities that celebrated individuals with albinism.



“For many, it was the first time to use a tablet for learning,” explained Gladys. “Later, the discussions were lively as the videos had attracted their attention.”

The tablets, a novel addition to the safe spaces, not only simplified learning but also broadened the girls' horizons, exposing them to ideas beyond their immediate communities. The interactive session proved transformative, shifting the girls' perspectives on albinism and fostering a deep understanding of the importance of respecting human rights.



For Princess, the safe space became a catalyst for change. Empowered and emboldened, she found her voice and the strength to confront the discrimination that had plagued her for years.

"I now realize that I have the power to change things by speaking against such behaviors," she declared.

The impact extended beyond combating discrimination. The tablets facilitated knowledge exchange on running small businesses and managing village savings and loans. Linley Rahman, a 19-year-old mentee, admitted to never having used a smartphone before. The newfound digital knowledge, coupled with mentor-guided internet searches, transformed their village savings bank, turning losses into profits.

As a result, Linley, a single mother, utilized her earnings to buy onions for resale, turning a profit that fueled her ambition to return to school.

"I got pregnant when I dropped out of school as my parents couldn't afford paying school fees. Now that I have a small business, thanks to the support I got from the safe space, I plan to use my profits to pay for my school fees next year."







# DEMOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE | POPULATION CHANGE AND DATA

## STRENGTHENING THE DATA INFRASTRUCTURE

UNFPA facilitated upskilling of the National Statistical Office, National Registration Bureau and Ministry of health through technical training sessions held in Ghana and learning visits conducted in South Africa. These initiatives have significantly bolstered the expertise of the technical teams, enabling them to proficiently craft a technical note on Civil Registration Vital Statistics (CRVS) production. Equipped with these skills, the technical team is now adept at evaluating the completeness and quality of birth and death data and computing pertinent indicators. Notably, efforts are underway to develop Malawi's inaugural CRVS report.

In collaboration with UNFPA, the Malawi Demographic Health Survey (MDHS) Core Team orchestrated steering and technical meetings to shape the study's design and define the key indicators to be generated. Furthermore, the technical team secured substantial technical assistance and nearly 90 percent of the requisite financial resources for the survey's execution. The training of household listing teams has been completed, with the deployment of survey staff scheduled for late 2024. Additionally, comprehensive training for the MDHS pretest has been conducted.

UNFPA provided financial support to the Government of Malawi through the Department of Economic Planning and Development in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs and technical assistance through the Africa Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) to undertake the review of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development at 10 (AADPD10) Review and produce a national Report. The AADPD Report will inform the Global ICPD at 30 (ICPD30) Report.



Following UNFPA's advocacy efforts and the Malawi Government's approval of the National Population Policy in January 2023, UNFPA supported the policy's dissemination to all 28 districts of the country.

## **KEY RESULTS**

- **Capacity building of the CRVS technical team**
- **Technical support and 90% of financial resources for the Malawi Demographic and Health Survey have been mobilised**
- **The Government has produced a national report on the review of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development for ten years.**
- **The National Population Policy was disseminated to all 28 districts of Malawi.**





# STORY

## Options and choices: Family Planning services helping fight against early parenthood and dropout rates

At just 19, Daudi Saidi found himself at a crossroads, his future veering off course. "I didn't want anything to do with school," he reflects on his decision to drop out during his second year of secondary education.

Aimless and adrift in his village, Daudi watched as his peers pursued education and opportunities, leaving him isolated. But a pivotal moment sparked a change within him. "Many of my friends moved away, leaving me alone to reconsider my path," Daudi recalls.

It was then that he made a bold choice: to join the local youth club in 2012. Determined to forge a new direction, he sought knowledge not just for survival, but for a fulfilling life.

His dedication didn't go unnoticed. Recognizing his potential, youth facilitators at the Chowe Youth Friendly Centre mentored him, ultimately training him as a facilitator. Since then, Daudi has embraced his role wholeheartedly. Recently, he was trained as a Youth Community-Based Distribution Agent (YCBDA) under the Norway-funded UN Joint Programme of Girls Education.

In his new capacity, Daudi ensures young people in his community have access to vital family planning resources and information.



## Breaking the Cycle

"Lack of access contributes to school dropout due to unplanned pregnancies," he explains passionately, drawing from his own experiences.

As a father of three, he's determined to break this cycle, aspiring for his children to grow up in an educated community.

"My past fuels my commitment," Daudi shares. "If I can steer youth away from early parenthood and toward education, we can build a brighter future."

His daily routine involves visiting seven villages, providing crucial sexual and reproductive health guidance, and distributing contraceptives.

## Youth Empowerment in Action

Daudi's impact hasn't gone unnoticed. This year, he's among two YCBDAs recognized by Chowe Health Centre for their exceptional service. His counterpart, Hanif Saidi, echoes his dedication, driven by a desire to see youth thrive.

In Mangochi, UNFPA with support from the Governments of Iceland and Norway has trained 100 YCBDAs in the district. The presence of the YCBDAs in the community has improved uptake of family planning commodities among the youth, which has also helped address issues of unplanned pregnancies, school dropout and sexually transmitted diseases.









# HUMANITARIAN

## UNFPA'S RAPID RESPONSE TO TROPICAL STORM FREDDY

In 2023, Tropical Cyclone Freddy ravaged Malawi, resulting in widespread devastation and significant loss of life across 12 districts. The onslaught of floods and powerful winds inflicted severe damage on critical infrastructure, including roads and electricity lines. Moreover, rising water levels led to the closure of numerous health centres, severely restricting women's and girls' access to essential sexual and reproductive health services.

Responding swiftly to the crisis, UNFPA reallocated resources from its Emergency Fund and regular budget to prioritise life-saving interventions in the hardest-hit regions. These efforts primarily entailed the procurement and distribution of dignity kits, along with essential supplies such as buckets and chlorine, to mitigate the risk of cholera outbreaks. UNFPA procured 10,800 dignity kits, which were distributed to adolescent girls and women affected by the cyclone and cholera disaster in the districts. The dignity kits were utilised as an entry point for the provision of GBV prevention messages and SRHR services to adolescent girls and women. This approach was facilitated through social workers and health surveillance assistants executing the distribution process.

Furthermore, UNFPA strategically deployed staff to Emergency Operating Centers (EOCs) and camps, leveraging the dignity kit distribution as a critical entry point for extending comprehensive services, including GBV prevention and SRHR services. This deployment significantly enhanced the reach and impact of UNFPA's intervention efforts, ensuring that affected communities had immediate access to critical services and support. In addition, some mother groups working in the district's safe spaces were also able to assist adolescent girls with information and required protection messages during the dignity kit distribution period.



Moreover, UNFPA promptly deployed two SURGE personnel to bolster prevention and response measures against gender-based violence (GBV) and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Furthermore, two key staff were dispatched to support the Emergency Operating Centre in Blantyre, enhancing coordination efforts on the ground.

Utilising data from the MISP calculator, the country office strategically informed humanitarian aid distribution, alongside advocacy and fundraising initiatives aimed at addressing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and GBV challenges.

We are immensely grateful to the following development partners' for their unwavering support and generosity, which have been crucial in advancing UNFPA's Humanitarian response this past year.



United Nations  
**CERF**

Central  
Emergency  
Response  
Fund



외교부  
Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs







UNFPA further extended support to its partners, allocating funding to facilitate outreach programs targeting women and girls in severely affected districts such as Nsanje, Chikwawa, Mulanje, and Blantyre. These partnerships culminated in the establishment of safe spaces designed to prevent GBV incidents, disseminate messages promoting protection against sexual abuse (PSEA), and intensify GBV prevention efforts within displaced populations.

Furthermore, referral pathways were meticulously mapped and reinforced to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of GBV and SRHR services to survivors. The mapping helped make the referral pathways fully functional, resulting in a well-coordinated GBV response among service providers, including case management and case follow-ups for survivors.

## RESOURCE MOBILIZATION FOR THE RESPONSE

In order to scale up the response to the crisis induced by Tropical Cyclone Freddy, the country office mobilised resources USD 1,780,900 (\$1,100,000 from the Central Emergency Response Fund - CERF, \$277,900 UNFPA Emergency Fund, Government of Korea USD200,000 and \$203,000 by re-programming regular resources). The financial assistance facilitated a comprehensive humanitarian response targeting the most affected areas and vulnerable populations in Malawi, specifically addressing the sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender-based violence prevention and response needs.

CERF funding was instrumental in enabling UNFPA Malawi to provide integrated life-saving sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and GBV prevention and response initiatives across affected districts. The CERF contribution also bolstered coordination mechanisms at the district level, improving the delivery and access to sexual and gender based violence services. Funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea significantly supplemented UNFPA's humanitarian efforts in Mulanje and Phalombe districts. The focus was on procuring contextualized Winterized Dignity Kits and solar-powered torches for women and girls affected by Cyclone Freddy. These kits, containing essential items for hygiene, comfort, and safety, were crucial in promoting GBV prevention and enhancing psychosocial and physical wellbeing.

## MINIMUM PREPAREDNESS IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS AND CRISIS

UNFPA coordinated a training on the Minimum Initial Package Services (MIPS), which saw a total of 225 participants from various districts, including Chiradzulu, Phalombe, Blantyre, Salima, Mangochi, Balaka, and Machinga. Notably, a deliberate effort ensured a gender-balanced representation, with a data disaggregation of 75:25 for female versus male participants in each district. This comprehensive training equipped officers with the necessary expertise to effectively assess and refer survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to appropriate services, particularly within disaster-prone districts.



The participants comprised essential healthcare providers such as doctors, nurses, and clinicians, alongside representatives from the protection cluster, notably those specializing in gender-based violence (including social welfare officers, health sector personnel, gender officers, one CSO member, and officials from the Department of Disaster Management Affairs at both national and district levels). These diverse stakeholders play a crucial role in facilitating linkages and referrals, underscoring the importance of coordinated services for both MIPS and gender-based violence provision.

In collaboration with the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AOR), efforts were made to fortify gender-based violence preparedness. This involved the development and dissemination of a comprehensive toolkit comprising focus group discussion (FGD) and key informant interview (KII) guides, technical capacity building assessments, as well as MISP-readiness evaluation tools for gender-based violence prevention and response services.



## PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA)

UNFPA led the implementation of life-saving interventions to internally displaced community members, funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Emergency Fund (EF). These initiatives focused on critical areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as well as prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Swift action included the rapid re-training of emergency workers and local gatekeepers, along with camp committees, on GBV/SEA prevention and response protocols, bolstering the coordination of GBV service provision.

A total of 320 gatekeepers and frontline workers benefited from this program. UNFPA, leveraging resources from various funding sources including CERF, EF, the Korea government fund, and the UNFPA Core fund under FPA90, distributed 10,800 dignity kits. Furthermore, UNFPA's outreach clinics effectively reached beneficiaries with SRHR services, thanks to improved accessibility for clients.

## PROVIDING LIFE SAVING AID TO AFFECTED ADOLESCENTS

In 2023, UNFPA implemented life-saving interventions that reached 10,403 adolescent girls and 3,330 boys, delivering essential sexual and reproductive health services such as family planning, HIV prevention, treatment, and care. As part of this initiative, 155 safe spaces were established for adolescent girls and young women. Furthermore, UNFPA expanded its outreach to 9,473 women and girls with gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) prevention services, including psychosocial support and counselling. These comprehensive services were provided across 155 safe spaces and maintained within one-stop centres throughout the districts in 2023.



## KEY RESULTS

- 10,800 dignity kits procured and distributed to internally displaced community members
- 10,403 girls and 3330 boys reached by lifesaving intervention
- 9,473 women and girls reached with the GBV and SEA prevention services
- 155 safe spaces were established for the adolescent girls and young women





# STORY

## A warm winter for women and girls displaced by Tropical Cyclone Freddy

As heavy dark clouds rolled over Ng’omba village in Mulanje, Daliso Simon quickly gathered her harvest as she didn’t want to get caught in the impending storm. All week, her village had been battered by strong winds and heavy rains induced by the devastating Tropical Cyclone Freddy.

“I couldn’t go out as it was raining heavily,” said Daliso who is seven months pregnant. “So when I saw a bit of sunshine, I decided to go out to my garden to collect some fresh maize. But as soon as I arrived at the garden, the weather changed again.”

The incessant rains descending on Mulanje district had already caused damages to infrastructure in many communities. In Ng’omba village for instance, a majority of the mud-built houses were starting to develop cracks and many more had had their roofs blown off.

However, Daliso’s house was still standing strong. But not for long. The same evening strong winds ripped off her roof letting in sheets of water. In no time, all the rooms were flooded leaving her with no option but to seek for shelter somewhere.

### Suffering and destruction as cyclone descends on district.

Daliso grabbed a few belongings and strapped her two-year old baby on her back.

“I had seen many houses in the village collapsing and didn’t want to wait for that to happen before I moved to safety,” she said.





Drenched, and feeling cold, Daliso joined hundreds others from her village who had sought refuge at a nearby school.

“When I reached the school, all my body was pain,” she recalled. “I needed a place to rest but the classrooms were overcrowded. I just sat in a corner and someone was kind enough to give me a dry blanket.”

Mulanje is one the 15 districts that was heavily hit by Tropical Cyclone Freddy. The disaster displaced 131,830 people who were spread across 128 camps in the district. However, almost all of the camps have now been decommissioned and people have returned to their communities to rebuild.

“When I returned back home, I found my house completely destroyed,” said Daliso. “My husband had to put together a make shit structure made of plastic sheets as our new home.”

In Malawi, the winter season starts in June. And in Mulanje it can be very cold. With many of the displaced people having lost all their household goods, including blankets, the approaching winter presented another challenge especially to pregnant women like Daliso.

## A warm winter for cyclone survivors

However, with the generous support from the Republic of Korea, Daliso and many other women and girls in Mulanje and Phalombe can now dream of a warm winter. The Republic of Korea supported UNFPA to procure 3,800 winterised dignity kits and 650 torches, which were distributed to pregnant women and adolescent girls in the two districts.



By providing these kits, UNFPA and its partners engage with communities, creating opportunities to discuss the risks of gender based violence and sexual gender based violence, educate about consent and rights, and promote non-violent norms. The act of distributing the kits is coupled with awareness sessions where information on gender based violence and sexual gender based violence prevention and response services is shared, making it a crucial entry point for addressing these issues.





Moreover, the distribution of dignity kits provides an opportunity for health workers and partners to offer information on sexual and reproductive health services available in the area, including access to contraceptives, maternal health services, and services for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This ensures that women and girls' sexual and reproductive health needs are not overlooked during emergencies.

The support from the Republic of Korea supplemented UNFPA's ongoing tropical cyclone Freddy response in Mulanje and Phalombe, which ensured that adolescent girls and young women have access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health and rights services and commodities. The support also helped mitigate risks of public health and protection issues, especially gender based violence prevention and response.

"I am very grateful for having received this kit," said Daliso who recently recovered from pneumonia due continuous exposure to cold weather. "It will help me in many ways, particularly the blanket as it will keep me warm during the winter."



## KEY PARTNERS 2023

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, National Planning Commission, Malawi Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change, National Statistical Office, District Councils and Govern Departments, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences, African Institute For Development Policy, Amref Health, Ntchisi Organisation for Youth Development, Foundation for Civic Education, Girls Empowerment Network, Family Planning Association of Malawi, Banja La Mtsogolo, Malawi Girls Guides Association and Youth Net and Counselling.

## PROGRAMMING LOCATIONS

In total, 14 programmes were operational in 15 districts and 152 traditional authorities. The implementing districts were as follows: Nsanje, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Machinga, Mangochi, Dedza, Salima, Dowa, Kasungu, Machinga, Mchinji, Mzimba South, Nkhata-Bay and Ntchisi.

## POLICY ENGAGEMENT

UNFPA supported the alignment of the National Youth Development Agenda to national strategies such as the Malawi Vision 2063 and the Malawi 2063 Implementation Plan (MIP-1). This was done through the revision, approval and launch of the National Youth Policy and the development of the Youth Investment Plan, which stipulates investment cases for Malawi towards the realization of the demographic dividend.

UNFPA also continued to work with the Ministry of Youths (MOYs) to enhance the inclusion of youth groups most left behind, particularly youth with disabilities (YWD) and young people living with HIV (YPLWHIV), in SRHR programming through the in-country leadership of the out of school (OOS) comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) Global Programme.

UNFPA established strategic partnerships with relevant institutions such as Y+ and the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA). Furthermore, support was given to the Ministry of Youth to establish the Youth Sector Working Groups to facilitate sectoral coordination in youth development.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health's (MoH), UNFPA finalised the Youth Friendly Health Strategy (YFHS) Strategy 2022–2030, which was approved by the Secretary for Health. The revised strategy incorporates young people's multi-sectoral needs, rights and relevant reproductive health-related health skills.

New Population Policy (NPP) has been mainstreamed in the district development plans, and population numbers are to be at the center of council-level budgeting processes. Policymakers and lawmakers have internalized the emerging issues in the New Population Policy, and there is currently political will in the implementation of this policy across the entire government structure.

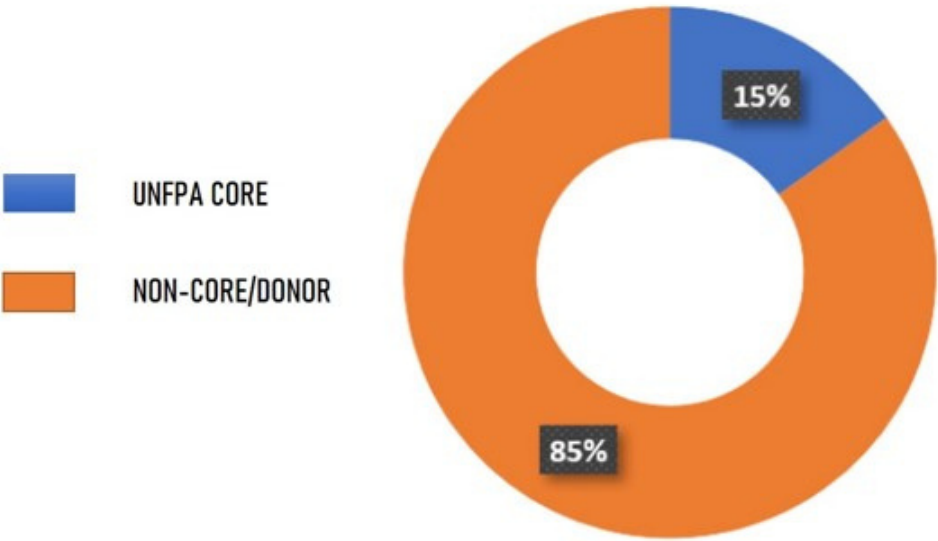


# MANAGEMENT SNAPSHOT

## DONORS AND PARTNERS 2023

UNFPA PROGRAMMES	DELIVERY 2023, \$US	FUNDING SOURCES/DONORS IN 2023
SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS	8,240,161	CANADA, EUROPEAN UNION, GERMAN,ICELAND,NORWAY,SWEDENSWITZERLAND,UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS,UNFPA,UNITED KINGDOM
GENDER EQUALITY	2,361,777	CANADA, EUROPEAN UNION,ICELAND, REPUBLIC OF KOREA,UNFPA
YOUNG PEOPLE	4,070,085	REPUBLIC OF KOREA,NORWAY,SWITZERLAND,UNFPA, UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT	296,660	GERMAN, ICELAND,NORWAY, UNITED KINGDOM,UNFPA
PROGRAMME COORDINATION AND SUPPORT	1,578,619	UNFPA

## RESOURCE DELIVERY 2023



SOURCE OF FUND	2023 USD
UNFPA CORE	2,503,008
NON CORE/DONOR	14,044,294
TOTAL	16,547,302





# STORY

## Empowering Communities: Combating Child Trafficking and Fostering Gender Equality

For the people of Iponga in Karonga, being a border community seemed to be a blessing but over the years, it has become more of a curse.

“Many young people are dropping out of school to seek jobs in Tanzania,” says Dorisa Mwangonde, chairperson of Mwakaboko safe space network committee. “And the majority are under the age of 18.”

What has made the situation worse is that some parents consent to this growing trend. Labour ‘agents’ from Tanzania come to the Malawi side to recruit minors for work. The parents are promised large amounts of money in return. And in most cases, it never comes.

“Poverty is the main driver of child trafficking in our community,” bemoans Dorisa. “But for some parents, it’s just greed. They only later realise that there is no money coming after months pass without hearing from the so-called agents, and that’s when they approach us for help.”



The most common jobs the minors do across the border is domestic work. There have also been reports that some girls were trafficked to work in bars.

UNFPA through the Strengthening Malawi's Peace Infrastructure for conflict prevention and sustaining peace in borderland districts project is working with Foundation for Civic Education and Social Empowerment (FOCESE) and a Karonga based local organisation Pamoza Tingakwaniska, to counter some of these challenges.

The project, funded by the Secretary General PeaceBuilding Fund aims to make national and local peace infrastructure stronger, focusing especially on communities near borders to prevent conflicts.

## Success in Rescuing Trafficked Girls

In Karonga, the focus has largely been on gender based violence and child trafficking. Barely a year after the project started, it has recorded some significant milestones.

“We have held more than 20 community awareness campaigns on child trafficking and gender based violence,” says Dorisa, adding, “These have helped so much as we are also getting tips when the labour agents are in our communities.”

Working with the police, Mwakaboko safe space network committee has this year managed to trace and bring back four girls who had been trafficked to Tanzania. The network is also disseminating messages through women and girls safe spaces.

“We discovered that many girls accept job offers from these agents because they don’t know what’s beyond the border. People only tell them the nice stories but deliberately leave out the gross abuses these youngsters go through at the hands of these agents and employers,” says Mary Phiri, a committee member and also mentor from Tulipampene safe space in Yamayolo village. “So we are using the safe space to teach them about the evils of child trafficking and gender based violence in general.”





## Fight for Gender Equality

The work of the committee also extends to helping the communities reform age old traditions that perpetuate inequality. In Iponga, and several other communities in Karonga, bride price is a key component of traditional marriages. Although this still has cultural relevance, the practice has been used to mute women's voices.

"In the past a bride price symbolised two families coming together," explains Mary. "But now it's all about money. Most parents are seeking to cash in on their daughters by charging many cows or money, which is usually a hefty amount."

To some men, paying the cows or the money is as good as they have 'bought' the woman.

"More and more women are now realising that they have rights despite cows having been paid for their bride price," remarks Josephine Msowoya, another member of Mwakaboko safe space network committee. "It will take time for the men folk to understand this but we will keep on fighting for change."









## LESSONS LEARNED

The safe space mentorship programme's focus on increasing access to quality Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) highlights the critical intersection between safe environments and healthcare accessibility. By providing a nurturing and protected space, these programs play a pivotal role in advocating for comprehensive health education and services, ensuring that individuals are well-informed about their rights and the resources available to them. This approach not only promotes health and well-being but also empowers participants to make informed decisions about their bodies and lives.

The digitalization of safe spaces introduces innovative approaches to education and support, broadening the scope of opportunities for mentors and mentees. This digital access not only enriches the learning experience by providing a wealth of information on SRHR and GBV but also encourages continuous engagement and education. It is a key motivator for participants, highlighting the importance of integrating technology into educational and support frameworks

Involving men as champions in the fight against violence against women and girls (EVAWG) has proven to be a highly effective strategy in transforming societal attitudes towards gender and promoting positive expressions of masculinity. By engaging men and boys as allies, these initiatives foster a culture of respect and equality, demonstrating that gender-based violence is not only a women's issue but a societal one that requires collective action. This strategy is particularly impactful in humanitarian settings, where traditional gender roles and attitudes can be magnified.





The engagement of traditional leaders, chiefs, and religious leaders in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) signifies the importance of cultural and community-based approaches to social change. By leveraging their influence, these leaders can challenge and reshape harmful cultural norms, such as child marriage, that perpetuate violence and discrimination. Their active involvement exemplifies how community leadership can be a powerful force in advancing gender equality and protecting vulnerable populations.

Standardised reporting forms within referral networks and the training and orientation of health workers on new and underutilised commodities reflect an understanding of the importance of systematisation and capacity building in improving service delivery. These practices ensure consistency in data collection and enhance the competence of health workers, thereby facilitating the adoption of innovative health solutions and improving overall program effectiveness.

Collaboration with government stakeholders and local structures is fundamental to the success of initiatives aimed at combating GBV and promoting SRHR. This coordination ensures that efforts are aligned with national policies and strategies, facilitating a cohesive and comprehensive response. Moreover, it enables the leveraging of resources and expertise, enhancing the impact and sustainability of interventions.





The deployment of UNFPA-trained staff to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was crucial for a coordinated response. Trained personnel brought specialized skills in health, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, and reproductive health, which are critical in the aftermath of a disaster. UNFPA will continue investing in the training of staff in disaster response skills, with a focus on health, GBV, and other areas critical to post-disaster recovery. Further, UNFPA will also ensure rapid deployment capabilities for these trained personnel to EOCs or similar coordination centers in future crises.

UNFPA's prompt deployment of the MISP calculator underscored the pivotal role of swift data analysis tool utilization in disaster scenarios. This strategy empowered UNFPA to rapidly evaluate reproductive health requirements, leading to timely and efficient interventions. Leveraging the MISP calculator data for decision-making highlights the imperative of adopting evidence-based approaches in emergency contexts, ensuring interventions are both expedient and precisely aligned with the most critical needs identified through data scrutiny. Furthermore, UNFPA's data analysis contribution, particularly through the MISP Calculator, was instrumental in orchestrating coordinated efforts within the Emergency Operations Center. The dissemination of data insights among stakeholders significantly bolstered collaborative planning and optimized resource distribution.





# STORY

## Young mothers in Malawi find a space safe from Tropical Storm Freddy’s catastrophic consequences

“We are sleeping in the cold,” says 19-year-old Mirriam Karilito, who is seven months pregnant. “And when the rains come, it’s worse.”

Tropical Cyclone Freddy made landfall in Malawi on 14 March. In its wake, hundreds of thousands of buildings have been destroyed, at least one thousand people have been killed and more than 650,000 people have been displaced.

In recent weeks, the threat from the cyclone itself has abated. But rain continues to fall, causing weakened structures to cave and exacerbating already dire conditions in the Nsanje district – especially for women and girls like Ms. Karilito.

Driven from her home by the cyclone, Ms. Karilito now lives in one of the dozens of temporary camps that have sprung up to accommodate those displaced. But her shelter, made of grass and sticks, offers scant protection.

“I fear for my health and that of my baby,” she said.



### Shelter, but not safety

For women and girls, displacement presents particular challenges, including the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse.

Menstrual hygiene products are also in short supply at the camps, forcing women and girls to remain inside their shelters while menstruating.



Anne Benjamin, 15, is one of the more than 300 adolescent girls now taking refuge at a converted storage facility called Bangula camp. More than 13,000 people live there in total.

For Anne and the other girls at Bangula, it is a struggle to manage their menstrual health, as the camp offers few pit latrines and its bathrooms are in disrepair.

“We are now using the river for bathing,” she said. “But it’s difficult to wash and dry the cloth we use as pads, because the men are always loitering around.”



To combat these challenges, UNFPA is providing adolescent girls and pregnant women at Nsanje district’s camps with dignity kits containing supplies like menstrual pads, underwear, soap and sanitary napkins.

By providing these kits, UNFPA and its partners engage with communities, creating opportunities to discuss the risks of gender based violence and sexual gender based violence, educate about consent and rights, and promote non-violent norms. The act of distributing the kits is coupled with awareness sessions where information on gender based violence and sexual gender based violence prevention and response services is shared, making it a crucial entry point for addressing these issues.

Moreover, the distribution of dignity kits provides an opportunity for health workers and partners to offer information on sexual and reproductive health services available in the area, including access to contraceptives, maternal health services, and services for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This ensures that women and girls' sexual and reproductive health needs are not overlooked during emergencies





The agency has also set up a network of 68 safe spaces where women and girls can obtain mental health services and information related to sexual and reproductive health, menstrual hygiene and other life skills.

More than 11,000 women and girls, including Anne, have participated so far.

“The safe space has helped ease some of the hardships I face in the camp. During the sessions, we are encouraged to share our stories and to discuss how best we can handle the challenges we are facing,” Anne said.

The safe spaces also offer camp residents an avenue for disclosing incidents of violence or sexual exploitation. Eleven have been reported so far, and UNFPA and local government officials are following up.

“I now know my rights and where to report if someone takes advantage of me,” Anne said. “Through the safe space, I have learned so many things that have helped me to survive.”



# THE WAY FORWARD

## NEW 9TH COUNTRY PROGRAM: ADOLESCENT GIRLS CENTRED

The Malawi Country Office 9th Country Programme (2024-2028) is designed to be a transformative initiative that will align closely with Malawi's 2063 Vision and global frameworks, focusing on the health and empowerment of adolescent girls and young women. It aims to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights, reduce gender-based violence, and enhance the well-being of adolescents, especially those who are most vulnerable, such as individuals with disabilities and those in emergency-prone areas.

The programme outlines priorities, partnerships, and interventions across five key outputs, emphasizing the integration of SRHR and GBV prevention into national policies, strengthening of health and social services, addressing discriminatory norms, enhancing emergency preparedness, and empowering youth to play a significant role in their communities. This forward-looking approach seeks to build a resilient, inclusive, and healthy Malawi by ensuring equitable access to essential services and fostering an environment where young people can thrive.

The 9th Country Programme was developed in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) where all three transformative results were well positioned, adolescent and youth needs adequately highlighted. UNFPA co-chaired the Strategic area on Human Capital Development along with UNICEF, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor.





# UNFPA MALAWI

## Results Achieved 2023



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

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