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Recovering from the floods and strengthening resilience for the future

IN THIS ISSUE:

Recovering from the floods in
Malawi — page 3

Allaying anxiety among
pregnant women affected by the
floods through reproductive
health kits — page 6

Micronutrient powders power
future generations — page 10



UN deputy humanitarian chief visits Malawi

As flood-affected communities rebuild, Mueller urges for sustained action to address underlying causes of vulnerability

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ms. Ursula Mueller visited Malawi from 10th to 12th June, during which she met with government officials, humanitarian and development partners, and visited some of the people affected by the recent Cyclone Idai.

Mueller undertook a joint visit to Malawi with Mr. Omar Rabi, Minister Plenipotentiary/Political Coordinator for Morocco, representing the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to appreciate how UN and partners' assistance to Malawi Government flood response has helped save lives and put the affected populations on recovery path. She was joined by the Secretary and Commissioner for Disaster Management Affairs Mr. Wilson Moleni, UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Maria Jose Torres and the UN team during the mission.

During the three-day visit, Mueller went to Medrum and Mwalija villages in Chikwawa district to experience the aftermath of the floods first-hand and witness the transition to recovery for some of the affected people, which is being coordinated by the Malawi Government, in partnership with the UN and other partners.

"With the response transitioning from relief to recovery, and a good harvest expected, it is critical that the government and development partners take this opportunity to tackle the longer-term challenges which cause recurrent humanitarian crises in Malawi," said Mueller. "It is also critical to invest in resilience, both of the communities and the national systems."

While in Chikwawa, Torres said she was delighted that some of the flood-affected people have already relocated from flood-prone areas to higher grounds while others are growing drought resistant crops in some areas with moisture to still harvest some food.

"I am happy that we have had great discussions with Malawi Government officials and development partners on food security, recovery and resilience building needs of the people who were affected by the cyclone," said Torres. "Communities that were affected by floods this year need to build back better so that they have houses and livelihoods that cannot collapse should climate change impact hit them again in future."

On his part, Moleni commended the UN and partners for supporting the flood response, saying the swift response to government's funding appeal has seen USD38.3 million being mobilised for the flood response out of the required US\$ 45.2 million, leaving a funding gap of USD 6.9 million.

While acknowledging the US\$ 120 million already pledged by the World Bank following the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), Moleni said government now needs about US\$370



Mueller met with some of the flood-affected people in Chikwawa to appreciate how they are recovering from the floods disaster.

million to meet recovery and reconstruction needs of the affected populations.

In early March, heavy rains and flooding linked to Cyclone Idai killed 60 people, displaced nearly 87,000 people and affected around 870,000 persons in Malawi, necessitating life-saving humanitarian interventions in 15 affected districts. During the response, UN agencies, in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, national and international agencies, have provided immediate life-saving relief support including food, medicine, shelter, protection services and other non-food-items such as water, sanitation and hygiene supplies.

In the flood response, UN agencies are working under a coordinated approach as part of the UN reform, supporting the response in various ways that reflect their respective mandates and specialized expertise.

Phillip Pemba & Hanne Adriaensen | UNRCO





Recovering from the floods in Malawi

Joana from Nsanje district will never forget the day her village was flooded. Heavy rains fell non-stop for more than 3 days, with extreme winds being too much for her house to withstand.

There was no time to gather her household items as she and her six children rushed out into the darkness and through rising water, navigating to higher ground.

Cyclone Idai hit Malawi on the 5th of March 2019, causing severe flooding across 15 districts and two cities in the Southern Region of the country. Malawi's neighbouring countries, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, suffered even worse.

More than 868,900 people have been affected in Malawi, with an estimated 60 deaths and 672 injuries, with thousands of people displaced from their homes.

It has now been six weeks since the floods hit, and Joana speaks with an air of hope as flood waters have receded, roads and bridges are being repaired, traders are reopening their shops, and livestock are grazing the land again.

Still, the possibility of immediately recovering from the effects that Cyclone Idai are still out of reach for Joana and thousands of other people, especially for those whose houses have been destroyed. Many people in Nsanje are living in Bangula camp, one of the biggest displacement camps set up after the floods.

Joana shares, "I cannot wait to go back home. I miss the daily activities from having my own house and waking up early in the morning to sweep around my home and cook for my family. I miss my relatives and my community. We still go out to visit some of our relatives who did not lose their homes. But this is still not our home."

With six children ranging from the ages of 8 to 16 years old, the 36-year-old single mother no longer has a home to call her own. She lost her crops that were nearing harvest on her small farming land and most of her household items that took her years to purchase from many different odd jobs. While Bangula camp may provide a temporary haven, these settings are not ideal for Joana and her kids.

"I am not here because I choose to. Some people think we are here for the free items that they give us. But who would choose to live like this?", Joana says.



Joana, from Nsanje district, was displaced by the floods. Her family is now staying at Bangula camp until they can rebuild their lives.

"I sleep with my children on the same mat, my sons sleep in the men's camp away from me with other men that are older and are strangers to us. This worries me; and it is not our tradition for young boys to sleep in the same room with grown men. We have no bathrooms available here, so I wait until it is dark and hide behind a bush to bathe. It is not a dignified thing to do for a woman, and this also puts us women at risk. Since I came to the camp, it has been a challenge for me to find work and earn extra money to top up on what the camp doesn't provide for my kids," she explains.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as the coordinator for early recovery within the UN system, is working with the government of Malawi and other partners to reconstruct damaged houses and community infrastructure affected by the floods. Claire Medina, UNDP Resident Representative, stated that "Extreme weather events such as Cyclone Idai show the importance of investing in climate-smart infrastructure to protect people, property, and livelihoods".

While Joana and her family still face many challenges, early recovery efforts by UNDP and other UN partners are focusing on sustainable rebuilding by repairing damaged infrastructure such as irrigation schemes and water points, as well as restoring houses that can withstand future shocks.

By Madalitso Mbendera | UNDP



UN responds to humanitarian needs, gradual shift to recovery and strengthening resilience



One of the displacement camps that was set up after the floods caused by Cyclone Idai.

United Nations agencies, in collaboration with the government of Malawi, as well as national and international organisations, have reached over 730,000 persons affected by the impact of Cyclone Idai. The flood-affected populations have received immediate life-saving relief support, including food, clean water, medicine, shelter, protection services, and other non-food-items such as sanitation and hygiene supplies.

In early March, heavy rains and flooding killed 60, displaced nearly 87,000 and affected around 870,000 people. The government of Malawi declared a State of Disaster on the 8th of March and subsequently launched a Flood Response Plan and Appeal on the 28th of March to support life-saving humanitarian interventions in the 15 affected districts.

The Flood Response Plan appeal has so far received US\$ 25.6 million contributions and pledges out of a total requirement of US\$ 45.2 million. Based on lessons learnt from the 2015 flood response, early recovery efforts have been integrated in the response plan to reduce further risks and mitigate the impact of future shocks.

UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, said the UN and partners triggered their support to the response almost immediately after the floods had hit, using prepositioned relief supplies. Additional support to the government of Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA) includes facilitating coordination and information management to enhance the response operations. An Emergency Operations Centre has been established in the Ministry of Homeland Security to facilitate coordination of field operations.

"We assisted the government to rapidly assess the immediate needs to inform the humanitarian response," said Torres. "Beyond addressing the immediate needs, we are also supporting the government to assess post-disaster recovery needs that will inform early- to long-term recovery interventions in the affected areas."

A Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) has been undertaken by the Malawi government, the UN, World Bank and European Union to assess damages, losses and priority recovery needs and costs. The data and information collected will inform the government's flood recovery plan.

"In tandem with the emergency response, we are also working with all sectors to support the affected communities' gradual transition to recovery. This includes UN support for DODMA's decision to provide a return home package to displaced populations who have expressed interest to return to their homes. This move aligns well with the country's national resilience building," said Torres.

Within the framework of One UN, several UN offices, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), and World Health Organisation (WHO), are supporting

...story continues on p. 5



UN responds to humanitarian needs - gradual shift to recovery and strengthening resilience

...story continues from p. 4

the response in various ways that reflect their respective mandates and specialized expertise.

Below are more details on UN support to the response:

As of 20th May, over 731,879 people were provided with food or cash. The food basket comprises of a 50kg bag of maize, 10kgs of pulses and 2 litres of vegetable oil, while cash transfers of MK 18,000, equivalent to the value of the food basket, was provided to 25 percent of the total people reached.

As of the 11th of April, with UN support, the number of people reached with integrated health services in flood affected districts is 82,394. Other assistance includes screening, immunisation, reproductive health services and treatment of people in internally displacement sites through mobile clinics.

Across the country, a total of 51,081 children (23,009 boys and 28,072 girls) have been screened for malnutrition. 1,811 children (942 boys and 869 girls) with Severe Acute Malnutrition were admitted and treated through the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition programme (CMAM). Of these, 121 children were admitted from the various camps. Mass screening and active case findings are on-going focussing on eight prioritised flood-affected districts (Balaka, Chikwawa, Machinga, Mangochi, Mulanje, Nsanje, Phalombe, and Zomba).

10,000 dignity kits have been distributed, targeting vulnerable pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and adolescent girls in displacement camps in the affected districts. The kit contains soaps, underwear, sanitary pads, sanitary cloth, wrapping cloth, tooth paste, razors, plastic bucket and plastic cups. An additional 4,200 dignity kits have also been procured and will be distributed in the coming days.

Reproductive Health (RH) kits to prevent maternal and neonatal deaths have been distributed to nine flood affected districts. The RH kits include individual clean delivery kits, equipment and medicines for assisted delivery and management of unsafe abortion among others.

Messages on prevention and reporting of sexual and gender-based violence are being disseminated through the community and national radio stations.

A total of 54,209 people in 17 sites were reached with safe water, as per agreed standards, through provision of water containers, treatment chemicals, and water trucking.

A total of 51,691 people in 19 sites were reached with sanitation services, as per agreed standards, through

the installation of emergency latrines and bath shelters separate for men and women. In addition, hygiene messages have reached more than 45,000 people.

About 47,000 displaced people were reached with shelter and non-food items in four districts.

About 180,000 people are to be targeted with early recovery interventions in six districts, with interventions including removal of debris and solid waste management, support for reconstruction of homes, provision of agricultural kits including farm implements to enable winter cropping, distribution of small livestock to increase the asset base of farmers and cash-based interventions to enhance the provision of basic household needs of the affected population.

A total of 28,812 learners (15,149 girls and 13,663 boys) in 143 schools in six districts were provided with education supplies, temporary learning spaces and teachers, school meals and sanitation facilities. In addition, 2,731 Early Childhood Development (ECD) children (1458 girls and 1273 boys) were supported with ECD kits and tent classrooms in 19 camps in five districts.

In line with the 'Leave No One Behind' principle, the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) tool was used to engender the humanitarian response through the clusters to ensure that life-saving support indeed reached the most disadvantaged first.

The Humanitarian Country Team, comprising humanitarian and development actors, continues to monitor the situation, in addition to supporting the government of Malawi in addressing the current emergency through coherent planning for short-term interventions that meet basic needs, and medium -and long- term programming that increases the coping capabilities of communities and households. These joint efforts reaffirm the shared commitment by the UN to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus to achieve collective outcomes, improve community resilience, and ensure that no one is left behind.

By Phillip Pemba | UNRCO



Allaying anxiety among pregnant women affected by floods through reproductive health kits

Fasileni Kanyenga was in her eighth month of pregnancy when the floods struck. Before, she was looking forward to a safe delivery at Chitekese Health Centre in Phalombe district. Being her fourth pregnancy, she was aware of all the requirements for delivery and made sure they would be available come the day.

Three days of heavy rains destroyed and washed away everything she kept for hospital delivery. Their house collapsed and all she could carry as she ran away were a few clothes. She was not even able to rescue her blanket. With her husband and kids, she sought refuge at Mileme camp where they found their neighbours who had faced a similar ordeal.

Fasileni is a mother of three and lives at Mileme camp in Phalombe district. Just like other camps with people displaced by floods, the life of a pregnant woman is very stressful and inconvenient. “We sleep in a tent that is congested and it has been common among many of us to have a cough and sometimes feel restless” says Fasileni.

Having lost almost all her belongings, she feels empty. Her hopes of safe delivery are no longer there. She is anxious as to how her delivery will go this time. Even though her husband will take her on a bicycle to a health facility ten kilometres away from the camp, her anxiety lingers.

Sexual and reproductive health response

Phalombe district safe motherhood coordinator, Alex Kamanga, is aware that due to the floods, most pregnant women lost their birth preparedness kit which includes a basin and wrappers (Chitenje), among other items. Additionally, nearby health facilities are under pressure because they see an increase in the numbers of people seeking services. “Due to the floods, health facilities close to camps have recorded an increase in the number of people seeking services, including pregnant women” he says.

In response to ensure safe deliveries and prevent maternal deaths, UNFPA Malawi procured Reproductive Health kits which were distributed to nine of the fifteen flood-affected districts. The RH kits include individual clean delivery kits, equipment and medicines for assisted delivery, and management of unsafe abortion.

“We brought in the RH kits to address preventable maternal neonatal deaths and support clinical management of gender based violence” says Won Young Hong, UNFPA Representative. “Women and girls are more vulnerable in emergencies and their specific needs are often ignored in crises. They need services for safe pregnancy and childbirth, and protection from gender violence. Securing their safety



Emergency SRH Coordinator Eluby Maganga engages Fasileni Kanyenga in Phalombe.

and ensuring their dignity and health promotes the well-being of families and communities”

Orientation of the services providers on the use and placements of the kits was done alongside the distribution. Joe Nkhonjera, Phalombe Nursing Officer was not aware of the contents of the RH kits before the training. “Actually, this is my first time to see reproductive health kits and their contents, I find them very appropriate for outreach clinics and managing deliveries at every level of health care” he says.

The RH kits were also delivered at Chitekese Health Centre where Fasileni and her colleagues from Mileme camp will deliver their babies.

The flooding situation and response in Malawi was declared a state of disaster on 8th March, 2019. According to the recently launched Malawi Floods Response Plan, close to USD25.6million has been mobilized for the flood response, leaving a gap of USD19.6 million. It is estimated that 868,900 people have been affected by the floods where about 217,224 are women of reproductive age, 56,650 adolescent girls and about 7000 deliveries were expected from March to May 2019.

Increased health needs and disease burden resulting from an influx of patients from camps and affected communities requiring care have been reported creating an impact on the district level limited resources thereby depleting the normal medical supplies and therefore creating shortage. Throughout the flood response period, one maternal death was reported in Nsanje district.

By Henry Chimballi | UNFPA





New desks for learners at Nankhali Primary School

Whistles, bustles, singing, and dancing. This was the atmosphere at Nankhali Primary School on 29th March 2019 when learners saw a truck loaded with desks arriving at the school. The primary school is located in rural Lilongwe.

An area where many households struggle to make ends meet. The school itself had been disadvantaged for a very long time. It only had five classrooms for a population of nearly 2000 students. The classrooms were run down, with many learners sitting on the floor during lessons, with about 750 children having lessons outside.

Shakira Kazembe, a 15-year-old standard seven student at the school was part of the group of learners who ran to the trucks that delivered the desks on that joyous day in March.

“The day the desks were brought to the school, all the children were excited. The moment they saw the truck driving in, they all ran to the truck and helped carry the desks to the classrooms. There was much joy, and everybody was thrilled for the new face of Nankhali,” Shakira reveals. “I also joined the crowd to help them put the desks in the classrooms.”

Shakira is the first born in a family of three children. Her mother sells samosas for a living at a nearby market. The family lives an hour’s walk away from the school.

“I usually leave the house at 6 am for school, and I arrive there at 7. My mother is a single mother and struggles to buy my school materials, such as notebooks and a school uniform. My father left for South Africa when I was very young, I was only 6 months old. He has never helped me with any of my school needs,” Shakira explains.

In the face of the challenges at home, Shakira works hard in school. For the past three terms, she has finished in the top 3 of her class. She accomplished this despite having to learn in harsh conditions, outside, under a tree with no desk.

“Before we received desks, it was difficult for us girls to participate in class. We were shy to stand up in class to ask questions. Learning outside was also distracting. We would look at people walking by instead of focusing on learning,” Shakira describes.

Support from UNICEF

Nankhali Primary School has 1,752 children. There were previously five classrooms at the school, but thanks to UNICEF Germany, the school now has an additional six classrooms. A library, an administration block and toilet blocks for girls, boys and teachers were also constructed at the school. Money to build the new school blocks was raised from a TV special hosted by football star Mats Hummels on German TV. UNICEF has also supported the school with 2,800 story books and 2,300 text books.

In complementing the efforts to bring quality education in a conducive learning environment, the KIND Fund provided 240 desks to Nankhali Primary School in late March. MSNBC’s Lawrence O’Donnell created the ground-breaking KIND Fund with UNICEF in 2010 to support education in Malawi. Since then, the program has provided desks to over 900,000 learners across Malawi, contributing to 10% of the desks in the country. It has raised over \$21 million for desks and girls’ scholarships thanks to MSNBC TV station and viewers of ‘The Last Word with Lawrence O’Donnell.’

A better learning experience

The new classrooms and desks have entirely changed the learning experience for female students like Shakira, who says: “Now our classrooms look smart with the desks, and we’re able



Shakira, a 15-year-old learner, is happy with the new desks.

to write better in class, compared to before when we would put our exercise books on our laps.”

“Learning outside was difficult when it was rainy and windy. Every time it rained we were told to go home. It was a big obstacle to our learning. Now we no longer experience this since we are in classrooms. When it rains we’re able to proceed with our work normally.”

The school has also received an influx of new learners since receiving the desks. Shakira explains that her class got three new learners who transferred to her school after they heard about the developments at Nankhali.

Deputy Headteacher, Mr. Gwedere, also explains that close to 100 children have come to the school since the desks were delivered to Nankhali.

“Prior to receiving the desks, many children would also transfer to other schools with desks by the time they were in standard 5. Since receiving the desks, we have had no children transferring out to other schools, instead we have had children enroll in our school. We would receive 5 to 6 children wanting to enroll out our school”, Mr. Gwedere explains.

“Absenteeism has also reduced, now we have had children attending class more. Teaching has become easier for the teachers too. It is easier for them to attend to learners who need assistance because they’re sitting in organized rows that make them easily reachable”.

Mr. Gwedere believes that the desks can help improve the learner’s performance too.

“The learning environment is better for both teachers and students. This can influence students’ performance and encourage more involvement in class. The children are happy and motivated,” he says.

The school also previously had very few toilets. Children would go to the bushes to relieve themselves. As a result, some would get ill, since it was unhygienic. The recent construction of new toilets has eliminated these problems.

In the meantime, the new face of Nankhali Primary School is a big step forward towards making it an ideal child-friendly school. Children like Shakira no longer need to worry about learning outside, on the dust infested ground with rocks.

“I like the design of the desks because they have a chair attached. Learning is so much better, and I told my mom about it too. Now everybody in our area is admiring our school”, Shakira utters. “When I grow up I want to be a nurse, I know that I am in charge of my future. I always tell myself to work hard in school, so I can have a bright future”.

By Lulutani Tembo | UNICEF



Monica, a fistula survivor and a future scientist

Like many Malawian children, Monica Kaleso was excelling in school. Her dream to be a medical doctor was on course. At the age of 17, she started a relationship with John, a boy from the same village. Later the same year, Monica was pregnant. Her world crumbled. John refused responsibility and she eventually had to drop out of school. She waited for delivery at home.

When the time for delivery came, not only did she lose her child, she was also injured herself due to delayed treatment. She developed an obstetric fistula. “The morning after being discharged from the hospital, I realized my beddings were wet and I thought it was normal but this occurred for almost a year” she says.

Like many fistula patients, Monica suffered stigma and isolation. Her hopes of going back to school after delivery were fading. She had to endure the life of being a fistula patient at such a young age. Life became unbearable. “I did not even know if this condition could be treated or not, I was so young to live this kind of life” she says. She was rendered a despondent girl.

Treatment

Her father is a small scale tobacco farmer from Kasungu district, which is about 140 kilometres from the capital city Lilongwe. When tobacco leaves are mature, they get plucked from the field and put in a constructed barn for drying. Usually, this work is done by all family members. Children assist their parents after they get back from school and during weekends. Monica was spared from this work because of her condition.

One day, as they were sorting the green tobacco leaves, her father heard the availability of the fistula treatment on the radio. He paid attention and kept note of the name of the facility, Bwaila Repair Fistula Centre in Lilongwe.

After nearly one year of suffering, Monica finally received fistula repair treatment at the specialized facility. “I consider myself very lucky because I have heard that some women have lived with this condition for more than 40 years and others even 50 years or more” she says.

Human rights violation

The Executive Director, Dr. Natalia Kanem acknowledges that fistula should be ended because it is a human rights violation. “The girls and women afflicted by the condition, which is preventable and largely treatable, are often plagued by chronic incontinence. As a result, they face devastating social stigma” she says. “The majority of women and girls who suffer from fistula are poor. Their inability to



Monica Kaleso finally received fistula repair treatment at Bwaila Centre in Lilongwe.

receive prompt medical treatment not only deprives them of their health and dignity, but is a violation of their human rights”.

Lifetime consequences of one pregnancy

The opportunities of a good education lost due to the pregnancy have been devastating for Monica. However, she was selected to pursue her degree in education specializing in mathematics at Chancellor College.

Won Young Hong, UNFPA Malawi Representative, says that the potential of one pregnancy in making a young girl lose her lifetime opportunities should not be underestimated. “One pregnancy can have life threatening consequences such as HIV and STI infection, birth injuries including fistula, more children, school dropout and has potential to perpetuate poverty” she says. “It is encouraging to see that Monica will be back in school and pursue her dreams”.

“It is time for the world to heed the call made by United Nations Member States in the 2018 United Nations Resolution on Ending Fistula in which they committed to eradicating the condition within a decade. Yet, achieving this goal requires increased investments, innovations and partnerships. Failure to take action will undermine our chances of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, meeting the commitments of the International Conference on Population and Development, and ensuring no one is left behind” says UNFPA.

No woman or girl should be deprived of her dignity, hopes and dreams. Fistula is a human rights violation – end it now!

By Henry Chimballi | UNFPA





Helping children cope with life at Bangula Camp

Christina Stafford, 17, stands with a group of friends outside a warehouse at Bangula camp in Nsanje. She holds a netball ball in one hand and picks out who will go in which team. She is one of the best netball players in the camp and everyone wants to be on her team.

Christina has been living at Bangula camp for over a month now. Before, she lived at Makhanga village with her mother and sister. Unfortunately, the village was flooded when Cyclone Idai hit Malawi in early March. "We left home in a haste. A boat rescued us from our flooded house to higher ground. From there we came to Bangula camp," says Christina.

Life at the camp is not easy. The camp is not the best place for a child. It is a small settlement where more than 5000 people have been squeezed into a place that used to be a government agriculture market. There is no proper shelter, except for a few tents that cater to women, children and the elderly. There is firewood, pots, plastic pales, plates and crying babies everywhere. Rubbish litters the ground. Children run around on bare feet. There is a make-shift market on one side, while different government-supported service providers are in other corners.

Christina shares a tent with 14 people, including her mom and younger sister. To pass the time, she chats with friends or goes out to fetch firewood. Food is a very big issue for her family of three. On a good day, they eat twice but otherwise she has only one meal a day.

"I miss home. I miss the privacy there. Here everything is out in the open. We cook and eat in the open. Toilets are also in the open. I only go to the toilet in the evenings when it is dark to avoid being seen by people," she says.

"I miss home, school and my friends. I feel sad when I remember home," she adds while holding back tears.

During the afternoon, Christina spends her time at Bangula Children's Corner (CC). Facilitators at Bangula camp were trained with UNICEF funding. The trained CC facilitators give talks on the importance of education, career aspirations, protection, sexual and reproductive health, sanitation and hygiene, as well as play games with the children.

Through activities such as healing through art, children are able to share their experiences on the issues affecting their lives. "I love spending time at the children's corner, I play with my friends and talk about issues that I cannot discuss with my mother," says Christina.

"The Facilitators teach us a lot of things. They teach us how to keep the camp clean, keep ourselves clean and safe; they also talk about how we can prevent pregnancy, how to ask for help when we need it", she adds. I also come to this place to play. It is a good place to come and forget about the floods and just relax for a few hours," she concludes.

"About half the children in the camp come regularly to the children's corner," Stalla Davis, a Facilitator at the



Christina Stafford playing netball with other children at Bangula camp.

children's corner says. "When they come here, we get to know them first, build trust and find out about their situations. We address any issues of concern, refer to appropriate service providers for those issues that we cannot address ourselves, and have fun with the children."

UNICEF Malawi is working to ensure that all children in the camps are protected from violence, abuse and exploitation by providing recreation kits to children between the ages of 6-18 years. A Children's Corner (CC) is a safe space created to allow children that experienced trauma and other violence-related issues to get the necessary support.

In addition, CCs also serve as a protective environment for children, as it does not only draw children affected by violence but also all other children. In these spaces the children receive psychosocial support, life skills education and rights empowerment.

"Children have the right to protection even in situations like these where they are away from home due to disasters," UNICEF child protection officer Alexander Mwale explains.

Together with the government and local partners, UNICEF is working with trained volunteers to keep children safe from harm. The organization works with the community volunteers to run activities that provide education, life skills and a place to play. Younger children sing, dance and draw while older children hold discussions before breaking out into groups to play.

"Children's corners are a place for children to forget their worries and enjoy being children. It is also a place where children can relax and talk about their fears and concerns without feeling like someone will judge them for it, and report any abuse , says Alexander.

With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare has established children's corners in 34 out of the 173 camps where children who were displaced by the recent floods are currently residing.

By Naomi Kalemba | UNICEF





Micronutrient powders power future generations



Felia Samson feeding baby Eliza.

At 7 months old, Felia Samson’s third-born child, Eliza, was diagnosed as underweight.

Eliza often suffered from severe diarrhoea, and her weight dropped to 4.2 kilograms. Eliza was taken to Mua Health Centre in Dedza, and she was found to be too small for her age.

According to the 2014 Malawi MDG Endline Survey, 15.3 percent of children in Dedza district are underweight, 4 out of every 10 children are stunted, and one in every 20 children are overweight. Although nutrient deficiencies affect people of all ages, children between the ages of one and three years are of great concern.

With support from Irish Aid, the World Food Programme (WFP) provides specialised nutritious food products through its Supplementary Feeding Programme to 4,500 children aged 6 to 24 months in Dedza district to prevent acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

“Eliza started eating micronutrient powders at 7 months. Since then, her body weight has steadily improved,” says Felia proudly with a glowing smile. “Now at 21 months, she weighs 9 kilograms.”

WFP recognises that the first 1,000 days are a critical window of opportunity to give a child the best possible start in life. Good nutrition during these first days is a foundation for cognitive and physical development. To achieve Zero Hunger by 2030, WFP is combating stunting and promoting healthy development for all

children by providing these nutritious meals to children in the first 1,000 days of their life.

“Children in this area often suffer from malaria and dysentery,” says Violet Kamchembere, a Health Surveillance Assistant in Chikomba village in Dedza. “Coupled with a lack of nutritious meals, there are high incidences of underweight children, stunting and wasting among children. The provision of these micronutrient powders has improved the nutrition status of children, including Eliza’s.”

Eliza’s two older brothers, Manuel and Wilekisi, never had the opportunity to receive meals this nutritious, and they struggled with diseases like malaria, diarrhoea, and dysentery. “Eliza is lucky to receive micronutrient powders because ever since she started eating this, she has never fallen sick again. She’s been growing healthy and energetic,” says Felia.

In addition to micronutrient powders, WFP also provides Corn-Soya Blend to treat moderate malnutrition in children and adolescents up to age of 14, as well as 1,380 pregnant and lactating women in Dedza.

To treat adult malnutrition, WFP provides food supplements of Corn-Soya Blend Plus, ready-to-use therapeutic foods, and cooking oil, depending on the severity of their problems. Through the life-cycle approach to treatment of malnutrition, WFP is contributing to achieving Zero Hunger by 2030.

By WFP





Farmer field schools proving effective in reaching more of Malawi's farmers with agricultural technologies



Community based facilitator of Tanyadira FFS, Justin Phiri, presenting findings from the FFS's study.

United Nations (FAO) is implementing in collaboration with the government of Malawi.

On the communities' response to FFS so far, she said that local leaders have been asking for the establishment of more of them, having seen the impact that existing ones have had.

"Local leaders have observed and agree that there is a difference in field performance of community members' agricultural enterprises in areas where FFS exist versus where there are none," Ngowe continued.

Explaining how farmers practice Agro Ecosystem Analysis (AESA), observing their crops and field conditions to make logical decisions, lead farmer and community based facilitator of Tanyadira FFS Justin Phiri presented findings from a study of the effects of plant population on rosette virus disease in groundnuts, which the FFS is conducting in their field.

The aim of the study is to determine which, between the single and double row planting on ridges is the better planting procedure for reducing spread of the disease.

"We planted groundnuts on ridges in single rows on one plot and double rows on the other. Through AESA, which we conduct weekly, we note, record and discuss progress on both plots as a group. So far, indications are that double row planting is better for prevention of groundnut rosette disease," Phiri said explaining recorded results from the study.

The Tanyadira FFS showcase aimed to highlight how the FFS model links with sustainable production and diversification, nutrition-sensitive agriculture, market linkages as well as income generation.

Having appreciated the FFS methodology, and in particular, the practical and interactive format of these 'schools without walls', Lise Albrechtsen, Senior Advisor, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs commended the methodology stating, "Hands on learning is the best way to ensure knowledge that improves food security is taken on and retained."

The KULIMA programme is being implemented in 10 districts of Chitipa, Karonga, Mzimba, Nkhata-Bay, Nkhotakota, Kasungu, Salima, Chiradzulu, Thyolo, and Mulanje.

The European Union-funded KULIMA programme is proving effective in reaching farmers widely and faster with skills and knowledge transfer through experiential learning, thus helping farmers to cope with the various challenges they face in their farming enterprises and enhancing both productivity and sustainable agriculture.

This was confirmed during a presentation of activities of Tanyadira Farmer Field School (FFS) in TA Ndindi, Chipoka EPA, Salima district, to a Norwegian delegation of eleven officials drawn from the respective Ministries of Environment and Agriculture and Food as well as the Norway Agency for International Development (NORAD) and from the Royal Norwegian Embassy. The group visited the FFS's study plot where they sought to gain insights into FFSs as part of their learning visit in Malawi.

Mary Ngowe, an Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator (AEDC) who is also an FFS Master Trainer confirmed the value of FFS to the area, saying:

"This programme is helping us close the gap in the ratio of the Agricultural Extension Development Officers (AEDO) and farmers, reaching out to them faster and to more households with technologies that help to improve their production and productivity, which is necessary to uplift livelihoods. We have established 62 FFS already between two Master Trainers, reaching 1680 farm families."

Ngowe is part of the first cohort of Master Trainers who were trained and graduated under the European Union funded KULIMA programme, at Lisasadzi Residential Training Centre (RTC) in Kasungu, in 2018.

This was under the KULIMA programme component, which the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

By Towela Munthali | FAO





EU, Belgian support flood-affected households

In May 2019, FAO Malawi and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Water Development joined forces to support flood-affected households with essential inputs, like assorted seeds, fertilizers, vegetative materials (sweet potato vines). This assistance aims at enabling the target households to resume agriculture production through supporting farm activities in areas in which residual moisture or small irrigation infrastructure was available. This intervention was made possible with financial assistance of US\$0.8 million from the Belgian Government and the European Union.

The flooding, which took place in March 2019 resulting from Cyclone Idai, caused much damage, displacing some 174,000 people and submerging up to 91,000 hectares of farm land under water as well as sweeping away livestock, thus affecting food, nutrition and income security for families in the affected districts. This support therefore aims to ensure that affected households are able to regain their productive capacity in order to avert food insecurity.

A total of 14,500 households in six districts—Phalombe, Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre, Neno and Zomba—have received this support. Overall, the national agriculture cluster has targeted around 100,000 households to receive immediate support in 15 districts that were severely impacted by the floods disaster.

In terms of further assistance, vegetable seeds and small irrigation equipment such as treadle pumps and watering cans, will be provided in June to support particular sites. FAO is presently advocating for support towards recovery activities related with livestock production and diversification of agriculture livelihoods in the affected districts as a strategy to foster more resilient coping mechanisms for future shocks.

Voices from the Field

Christina Alfred, a member of Matiti Irrigation Scheme recalls the floods saying, “The rains in March brought with it floods that affected a lot of people and caused loss of food and hunger. She was confident about getting back on track with the inputs provided. “We are very happy with the inputs, because this means that we will be able to get food from the seed that we have received.” Christina Alfred, 44, is married with one child and lives in T/A Jenala, Phalombe.

19-year-old Fanny Fadwick and her 3-year old baby boy Stephano are operating from a camp after losing her home, property and field crops in Mandala Village, TA Jenala, Phalombe. “One side of my house fell after 3 days of nonstop raining. I lost my

property in the floods, such as pots, our clothing, everything. I will use the seed and fertilizer that we have received and the knowledge I have learnt through Farmer Field Schools to make sure that I have food. I am not going to give up.” The Farmer Field School that Fanny belongs to is supported by the Strengthening Community Resilience to Climate Change in Blantyre, Zomba, Phalombe and Neno project, which is funded by the European Union and is jointly implemented by FAO and the government of Malawi.

The story is the same for Manginesi Antonio in Chikwawa who lost all her property in the floods caused by Cyclone Idai. I am thankful for the inputs that we have received, maize, beans, fertilizer. If we work hard and look after our crops we will not go hungry. May God bless you for helping us to change our situation.



Fanny Fadwick, one of the beneficiaries from the EU and Belgian Government support after the floods.

By Towela Munthali | FAO





How beef is transforming lives of farmers in Northern Malawi



Bonsmara and Zebu Crossbred calves.



Ms Marie B Khongolo, a project beneficiary.



A smallholder group part of the programme

Despite being home to nearly 80% of the nation's cattle, tobacco farming is the main source of income in northern Malawi. Marie, is one of a small group of smallholder cattle farmers, living in Rumphidistrict, whose life has been transformed by the Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund's (MICF) support towards an initiative to develop a robust, commercialized smallholder-led supply chain with scope for export of beef to the international market.

Until now, over 70% of rural dwellers owned indigenous livestock breeds (Malawian Zebu). Due to the time that it takes for the zebu to reach full size, its small mass, and its tendency to succumb to disease, this has led to poor quality and inconsistent supply of cattle. In addition, there was no infrastructure in place to produce quality-assured, local beef products. In fact, with significant capacity gaps amongst farmers, a lack of knowledge around disease and disease control, and limited processing facilities; it had long been assumed that smallholder-led supply chains are doomed to fail in these parts.

The MICF funded project has set up a sustainable supply chain by introducing the Bonsmara breed through a cross breeding program with the local Zebu. Increasing the weight of the offspring by 40% allows the farmer to earn a higher income from the new cross bred animal and ensure that the company has a steady supply of high-quality raw material for processing. This combined with investments in a world class halaal abattoir and feedlot for fattening the smallholder reared cattle has allowed the establishment of a high value beef supply chain. The introduction of a traceability system, which allows the company to track the cattle from the field to the abattoir and on to the retail market, is integral part to this ambitious project.

With a focus on increasing the technical capacity of smallholder livestock farmers, Afrisphere, in association with Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Division and the Department for Animal Health and Livestock Development (DAHLD), provides the farmers training and animal husbandry services including vaccinations. The project has increased the technical capacity of over 10,250 smallholder livestock farmers in the northern region, including Marie, whose farming methods have dramatically changed since she received training. 'Afrisphere Provided Two Trainings for our Farmer Group. One was how to check if our animals were free of disease, and who to contact if they were not, and one about the best way to feed our animals.'

Four years on, and it is clear to see that the project is flourishing. The successful introduction of the Bonsmara bulls, via an intensive cross-breeding programme, has resulted in the production of high quality, immunized beef cattle and small-stock. Across the value chain more than 200 jobs have been created: at the extensive feedlot in Bolero, at the state of the art abattoir in Mzuzu which was officially opened in November 2018, and in the 10 retail shops across Malawi.

With improved breeding practices, standards and facilities, and a commitment to reduce wastage, every part of the cattle will be put to good use, and the potential for export is significant. The company-wide initiatives to engage and empower women and youth across the clubs are also having tangible social impact; challenging traditional gender roles within these communities, encouraging youth to favor staying in Malawi over emigration and allowing families to share both financial and labor burdens.

The story of Afrisphere and these cattle farmers is just the beginning, and the smallholder remains at the centre stage. Over the coming

years, the company has ambitious targets to include additional 20,000 farmers with the intention of integrating them into their ever-growing network of partners. The company actively encourages self-sufficiency within the farmer clubs and hope for the farmers to one day have the means available to purchase their own Bonsmara bulls of the highest quality. The MICF is a platform to create partnerships with the poor, provide opportunities to explore the commercial viability of a new business model and/or innovation that could change the face of the private sector in Malawi and the lives of its people.

UN Resident Coordinator, Maria Jose Torres, said: "This is the first time that a highly productive breed of beef cattle – the Bonsmara, has been introduced in Malawi and we are very pleased to note that integrating small farmers into this supply chain has resulted in a 100% increase in income to farmers through the supply of high quality cross bred calves to the company's feedlot."

Hussein Jakhura, CEO Afrisphere Ltd – 'Without MICF funding we could not have ventured into this highly innovative project that has multiple components which are highly risky. The supply chain is 100% smallholder led, we are confident that with proper support and trainings to smallholder farmers they can raise high quality cattle that can meet international standards'

The Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund (MICF) is a USD 24m competitive mechanism that provides matching-grant finance across Malawi's agricultural, manufacturing and logistics sectors. It is aimed at stimulating growth in the private sector through projects where, as in the case of Afrisphere, commercial viability may be unclear but demonstrate clear potential for scalability and the delivery of significant social impact. And, as the name suggests, whether through a new business model or technology, or a new approach to environmental sustainability; innovation is at the heart of every MICF project.

The MICF is supported by UNDP, UK Aid, IFAD and the Federal Republic of Germany through KfW.

By UNDP





Ending gender-based violence in technical colleges



Sharon Kalima receiving SDG Action Award on behalf of ArtGlo.

Skills and Technical Education Programme (STEP) in partnership with award winning Art and Global Health Centre Africa (ArtGlo) will be working with technical colleges across the country to raise awareness about Gender Based Violence (GBV) at colleges and for each college to create and implement effective GBV reporting systems. STEP is an initiative funded by the European Union and partially implemented through UNESCO.

Selected teachers and students will learn about participatory, arts-based techniques and use those skills to develop awareness campaigns about GBV on their college campuses.

Some of the activities they will use include music, poetry, and participatory theatre, which have been successful tools for engaging with people in an open and collaborative way.

Art and Global Health Africa recently won the Sustainable Development Goal Action Award in the creative category for their Make Art / Stop AIDS: Youth Project, at the SDG Global Festival of Action. This award recognizes efforts by those who are advancing the global movement for the Sustainable Development Goals in the most transformative, impactful and innovative way.

ArtGlo was one of the seven successful winners out of more than 2000 applications received from 142 countries. The award recognises the contributions the project made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of “Good Health & Well-being” and “Gender Equality.”

Gender and Education Specialist Jean Munro says the Skills and Technical Education Programme is looking forward to work with the award winning Art and Global Health Centre Africa in ending gender based violence in technical colleges.

“Winning the award shows that the organization has an effective approach to deal with challenges youth are facing in the country. It is exciting to note that ArtGlo is bringing their creative approach to tackle GBV in Malawi’s technical colleges,” she says.

Munro congratulated the organization for being recognized on an international stage.

Students, teachers, and administrators from 15 colleges across the country will learn how to address issues around GBV through participatory arts. The project participants, including principals, student council representatives, and heads of departments from each college will design comprehensive intervention that addresses the GBV that they see affecting their learning community.

Additionally, each college will create and implement a reporting and response system for incidences of GBV. The programme will run from May 2019 till February 2020.

By Theresa Kasawala | UNESCO





Malawi commemorates World Cancer Day



Young people also braved the light rain to commemorate World Cancer Day 2019 with their parents in Ntchisi.

Ministry of Health, in collaboration with UN partners led by the World Health Organization, commemorated World Cancer Day at a ceremony that was graced by the Chief of Health Services in the Ministry of Health and Population, Dr Charles Mwansambo, on 8 March 2019.

The commemoration function, that took place at Kanyenda Community Centre ground in Ntchisi, was also attended by the WHO Acting Representative, Dr Fabian Ndenzako, the Director of Clinical Services Dr George Chithope-Mwale and the Director of Reproductive Health, Mrs Fanny Kachali among others.

In his speech, the Chief of Health Services reminded the audience that cancer was still among the leading causes of illness and death in Malawi. In particular, he pointed out that every year 8,000 new cases of cancer are registered.

He went on to say that the top four cancers among women in Malawi are cancer of the cervix, Kaposi sarcoma, cancer of the esophagus and breast cancer while in men the top four cancers are Kaposi sarcoma, cancer of the esophagus, lymphoma, prostate cancer.

Cervical cancer which accounts for 45% of all cancers among women, close to 2,300 women develop this cancer and at least 1,600 die from it every year.

“The theme this year I am and I will is urging us all to take action because the known modifiable behaviours such as tobacco smoking, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity and unhealthy diets require ourselves to seriously do them, and not government, because it is not the government that suffers but it is us” Dr Charles Mwansambo said.

He went on to mention other risk factors such as the Human Papilloma Virus, Hepatitis and other carcinogenic infections and urban air pollution that cause cancer and said that the national cancer prevention has considered these factors as well.

On another note, the Acting World Health Organization Representative Dr Fabian Ndenzako commended the government of Malawi for the efforts towards instituting a cancer treatment centre in Lilongwe.

“This will be a significant milestone because many cancer patients will benefit. The WHO also recognizes the primary prevention initiatives such as the introduction of Human papilloma virus vaccine for prevention of cervical cancer and the high coverage of Hepatitis B vaccine in under 5 children as part routine immunization system,” Ndenzako said.

“The country should now focus more in having pathology



Acting WHO Representative (L) and Chief of Health Services listening to Population Services International officer elaborating on cancer services they offer.

laboratory services in the public sector ideally in all the three regions in addition to the College of Medicine in Blantyre and UNC in Lilongwe. There is also a need to strengthen the link between Anti-Retroviral Therapy and cervical cancer screening,” the Acting WHO Representative advised.

In Malawi cancer prevention, treatment and control are a major priority and have been included in the Health Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2022 and there is a strong political will to mobilize resources and create awareness in the fight against cancer.

The notable achievements so far are: development of the National Cancer Strategy; introduction of the Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine where girls aged 9 – 14 will be immunized with support from GAVI, WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA and other partners; screening and treatment of cancer of the cervix raising of public awareness availability of cancer specialists (Malawian Oncologists) who are managing patients accordingly and currently there are more Malawian Oncology trainee doctors at Kamuzu and Queen Elizabeth Central Hospitals, and; construction of the Cancer Center at Kamuzu Central Hospital that will shortly start giving radiotherapy treatment to cancer patients.

By Hudson Kubwalo | WHO





Campaign against violence against women during elections



Entertainment helped to disseminate messages during the campaign.

“When the police officers started explaining what violence against women during elections is, I realised that I have been doing this - I have started false rumours and called women candidates prostitutes”.

So reveals Ali Saidi, a confectionary vendor at the bus depot at the heart of Balaka town. Saidi and other vendors, market stall owners and commuters gather around a Police mobile van listening to police officers urging communities to refrain from violence against women during elections (VAWE).

It's a sunny Saturday morning in Balaka, a rural district in eastern Malawi. A group of people assemble around a Police mobile van as the Malawi Police Band play a song denouncing VAWE. As the music ends, the crowd grows silent as a policewoman bellows into the microphone “Musachitere nkhanza kapena ziwawa azimayi pa nthawi ya chisankho” (Don't commit violence against women candidates).

The police officer goes on to explain what VAWE is and where to report cases of violence against women. She warns perpetrators of violence against women contesting as councillors and members of parliament, that they risk being arrested if caught in acts of violence.

The Police band has been parading around Balaka town and its surrounding areas sensitizing communities on violence against women during the elections period. The van has been stopping in densely populated areas and engaging with people, stressing the importance of protecting female candidates from all forms of abuse. Women fuel attendant cheer in support as the police van passes a gas station blaring messages on political empowerment of women.

Before arriving in Balaka, the Malawi Police Service conducted outreach awareness campaigns with support from UN Women, in three other districts in the country, Karonga town in the northern region, Mulanje town in the southern region and Mangochi along the southern shores of Lake Malawi.

All the targeted districts have had VAWE incidences reported in the run up to the Malawi May 21 Tripartite elections as reported by the Gender Elections Engagement Room where Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN)'s monitors across Malawi were sending VAWE data.

In Balaka, an aspiring male parliament candidate uttered derogatory remarks ‘insulting the modesty of a woman’, against one of the female member of parliament candidate. Another female candidate was psychologically abused, and her supporters were branded HIV positive women because they were supporting a female candidate.

In nearby Mangochi, a woman was stripped naked of her party cloth by males from an opponent group. Police later arrested

the suspects and prosecuted them. Furthermore, Police was engaged and joined the drive against VAWE in a bid to strengthen response to incidences.

The awareness campaign has been stimulating discussions on preventive measures and response against VAWE through communities' leaders, community policing and other structures such as Multiparty Liaison Committees (MPLCs) at district level. UN Women is also mitigating violence against women in elections with its partners.

As the Police mobile van drives away from the bus depot, Saidi advises a fellow vendor to refrain from insulting women candidates and report abuse or harassment towards women the police.

A few hours later, the police mobile van parks at the Balaka town football stadium. Hundreds of people have gathered to watch a football match and a netball game organised as part of the VAWE awareness campaign.

The Commissioner for Police responsible for the Eastern Region, Arlene Baluwa cautions communities in Balaka against violating female candidates.

Speaking at the campaign, she emphasises that women are an integral for the country's development, hence should be protected.

“Female aspirants, just like men, should exercise their right to participate in politics without fear of being harassed by anybody” she says. Baluwa encourages community members and victims of political violence to report to the police.

Obed Mwalughali, the Balaka District Council Director of Planning and Development has been involved in the awareness campaign. “Most of the time women are discouraged from political participation by actions of some men. So, the awareness seeks to discourage and eliminate that” he says.

Awareness and dialogue are at the heart of preventing violence against women before, during and after the polling. Under the Malawi Electoral Cycle Support (MECS) basket fund, UN Women is leading the interventions aimed at enhancing women's political empowerment throughout the electoral cycle.

Among other things, activities seek to contribute to preventing and mitigation of VAWE while facilitating collaboration on response to incidences.

An estimated 1,600 (890 males and 710 females) were reached during the outreaches in Balaka.

By Faith Mvula | UN Women





2019 World Refugee Day unites refugees and host community

As part of the pre-World Refugee Day activities, on Saturday 15th June UNHCR in liaison with the Ministry of Homeland Security and all partners working in Dzaleka Refugee Camp organized a Sports Day involving Malawian teams and refugees.

The Sports Day was organized as part of pre-activities prior to the World Refugee Day which annually falls on 20th June.

By bringing in local teams to the camp, UNHCR and its partners used the event to promote peaceful co-existence between refugees and host community.

In football, Mitundu Strikers a team from the outskirts of Lilongwe travelled to the camp to play Dzaleka Football Select. The former won 4 - 2 on post-match penalties after the two teams were tied at 1 - 1 in regulation time. In netball, Dowa Veterans Netball Team also thumped Dzaleka Select Netball Team by 37 baskets to 9.

Before kickoff of the main games, Dzaleka Football Academy also played Play Football Academy from Lilongwe in a match which the youngsters from Dzaleka won by 3 goals to nil.

UNHCR Representative Monique Ekoko, and Senior Administration Officer in the Ministry of Homeland Security Mr. Samuel Malowa including implementing partners graced the event which attracted a huge crowd, refugees and host community alike.

The activities were also spiced up by various cultural performances by both the refugees and the host community.

The global theme for 2019 World Refugee Day is "Take A Step #WithRefugees". However, since the African Union (AU) declared 2019 as the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, the local theme was thus localized to "Take A Step #WithRefugees, Returnees and IDPs Towards Durable Solutions".

The main commemoration for the day takes place in Dzaleka Refugee Camp on Thursday 20th June to be followed by the Africa Day which will be hosted the following Day on 21st June 2019 in the capital Lilongwe.

2019 World Refugee Day Commemoration

Events to commemorate the 2019 World Refugee Day (WRD) which annually falls on 20 June took place in Dzaleka Refugee Camp under the global theme: *Take A Step #WithRefugees*.

Being an African Union Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa," in Malawi the 2019 World Refugee Day theme was localized to: *Take A Step #WithRefugees, Returnees and IDPs Towards Durable Solutions*.

The African Union theme demonstrates the acuteness of our challenges and the urgent and imperative need to work together

by ensuring all African citizens the inalienable right to live free, dignified and be productive.

Guest of Honour during this year's WRD was Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Homeland Security who is also Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Samuel Madula, was joined by UNHCR Representative Monique Ekoko and African Union Regional Delegate to Southern Africa Dr. Leopold Auguste Ngomo at the commemoration event. Several heads of diplomatic missions and heads of UN agencies also graced the event which took place at Dzaleka Football Ground.

By Rumbani Msiska | UNHCR



UNHCR Representative Monique Ekoko speaking at the event



Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Samuel Madula at the event





Dzaleka App Factory graduates its maiden cohort of refugee young developers



AppFactory Coordinator Pamela Msizi handing over a certificate of completion to Henriette Kiwele.

The 2018-2019 cohort of AppFactory students who completed their training in Computer Programming course graduated on Friday 07 June 2019 at a colourful ceremony that took place at Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

The course is spread over 08-12 months and supported by Microsoft. During the programme, the students were introduced to computer programming, learning fundamentals (storage/type/structures), Desktop Application Development, Web Application and Database.

The programme is designed to assist the refugee youths in Dzaleka to gain important ICT and business skills that will allow them to develop applications for both personal and professional use. A total of 40 students graduated during the function at a graduation ceremony which not only marked the completion of the course but also their commencement as educated Junior Developers.

Meanwhile, 4 AppFactory students who were recruited as Interns with MyBucks Banking Corporation (formerly New Finance Bank) for a period of three months are expected to wind up their internship at the end of June.

During the tenure of their internship, the AppFactory graduates who included one female student have been supporting the bank's ICT Department and in the process gaining hands on experience.

The App Factory in Dzaleka Refugee Camp was launched in June 2017 with support from Microsoft to become the first of its kind to be launched in a refugee camp.

In November 2018, the App factory was accredited as a Certiport Authorized Testing Center (CATC), the first in Malawi mandated to offer Microsoft examinations to the general public.

Women Business Network for UNHCR inspires refugee women and girls in Dzaleka

Women Business Network for UNHCR, a grouping of women business gurus from South Africa visited Dzaleka Refugee Camp from 13 – 14 June where they held discussions and inspiration talks with refugee women and girls.

The objective of the mission was to allow the network have a glimpse into the lifesaving work which UNHCR does while on the other hand allowing them to become advocates for the cause of forcibly displaced persons.

During the two-day mission, the network members had a 2 hour focus group discussions with secondary school girls and women involved in livelihood activities where a series of topics were covered on how they can economically empower themselves and overcome some of the challenges which they encounter in the refugee camp.

The mission also visited the App Factory, Salama Africa Creative Centre, Yetu Community Radio, the Dzaleka Health Centre's maternity ward and the camp's busiest market.

The visiting members of the network which comprised Ms. Edith Venter and Ms. Yajna Sewnarain said after the mission they were deeply impacted by the visit and are ready to already start working to ensure they can do their part to support and empower forcibly displaced persons in Dzaleka refugee camp, and adopt it as their priority.

UNHCR through its partner Churches Action in Relief and



UNHCR Representative admiring some of the handcraft products

Development (CARD) is implementing various livelihood interventions aimed at economically empowering refugees more especially women to attain self-reliance.

However, due to funding constraints, the interventions only reach out to a few people hence the need for various organizations and well-meaning individuals to join hands in improving the welfare of refugees like what the Women Business Network for UNHCR in South Africa have demonstrated.

Rumbani Msiska | UNHCR





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