



MALAWI COUNTRY REPORT

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995)
AND THE OUTCOMES OF THE TWENTY THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY (2000) IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OF THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND THE ADOPTION OF THE BEIJING
DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION 2020**



Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
Private Bag 330
Lilongwe 3
Republic of Malawi

AUGUST 2024



Source: Nationsonline.org

Contents

ACRONYMS	9
INTRODUCTION	11
SECTION ONE – HIGHLIGHTS	12
SECTION TWO	14
A. PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS	14
a. Policy Environment and Legal Framework for GEWE:.....	14
b. Women Economic Empowerment	15
c. Leadership and Political Participation of Women:.....	16
d. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls:.....	17
e. Gender Mainstreaming.....	19
f. Institutional Coordination of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programs	19
B. CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS	21
2. Top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in Malawi through laws, policies and/or programmes	22
a. Equality and Non-discrimination under the Law and Access to Justice.....	22
b. Quality Education and Training and Lifelong Learning for Women and Girls.....	23
c. Poverty Eradication, Agricultural Productivity, and Food Security.....	23
d. Access to Health Care, Including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights	24
e. Gender-Responsive Social Protection	24
3. Specific actions taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls	26
a. Women and Girls Living in Remote and Rural Areas: The Rural Women Empowerment Initiative	26
b. Women and Girls with Disabilities	27
c. Women and Girls in Humanitarian Settings	28
4. Confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA, and measures taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls	28
a. COVID-19 and Other Pandemics.....	29
b. El Nino and Tropical Cyclones.....	29
c. Food and Fuel Crisis	29
d. Debt Crisis	30
e. Climate Crisis	30
f. Backlash on Gender Equality.....	30

5. Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and/or programmes.....	31
a. Quality of Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning for Women and Girls	31
b. Poverty Eradication, Agricultural Productivity, and Food Security.....	31
c. Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls	31
d. Political Participation and Representation.....	32
SECTION THREE: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN	32
INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK	32
6. Actions taken to advance gender equality in the world of work.....	32
a. Strengthening and Enforcing Workplace Laws and Policies	32
b. Introduction and Strengthening of Gender-Responsive Job Creation Policies	33
c. Taken Measures to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace	33
d. Strengthening Land Rights and Tenure Security	33
e. Supported the Transition from Informal to Formal Work	34
7. Actions taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers	34
a. Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave	35
b. Promoted decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers:.....	35
Recommendations	36
8. Actions taken to reduce the gender digital divide.	36
9. Macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment that has affected the implementation of the BPfA and macroeconomic policies implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy.	37
10. Actions taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls	37
11. Actions taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls.	38
a. Strengthened Cash Transfer for Families with Children that Prioritize Women as Recipients	38
b. Introduced or Strengthened Social Protection for Women of Working Age	38
c. Introduced or strengthened social protection for older women (e.g. expansion of social pensions, moratoriums, inflation adjustment, introduction of pension credits for caregivers)	38
d. Introduced or Strengthened Social Protection for Older Women.....	38
e. Extended Social Protection to Women in Informal Employment(e.g. subsidies for participation in contributory schemes; inclusion in non-contributory schemes)	39
12. Actions taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls.....	39

a. Promoted Women's Access to Health Services Through Expansion of Universal Health Coverage or Public Health Services.....	39
a. Expanded Specific Health Services for Women and Girls, Including Sexual and Reproductive Health Services, Maternal Health, and HIV Services	39
c. Promoted Male Involvement in Sexual and Reproductive Health, Including Contraceptives Uptake and Responsible Sexual Behaviour	40
d. Undertaken Gender-Specific Public Awareness/Health Promotion Campaigns	40
e. Provided Gender-Responsiveness Training for Health Service Providers.....	40
13. Actions taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented.....	40
a. Taken Measures to Increase Girls' Access to, Retention in, and Completion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Skills Development Programmes.....	41
b. Strengthened Educational Curricula to Increase Gender-Responsiveness and Eliminate Bias, at All Levels of Education.....	42
c. Provided Gender Equality and Human Rights Training for Teachers and Other Education Professionals	42
d. Promoted Safe, Harassment-Free, and Inclusive Educational Environments for Women and Girls.....	42
e. Increased Access to Skills and Training in New and Emerging Fields, Especially STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and Digital Fluency and Literacy	43
f. Ensured Access to Safe Water and Sanitation Services and Facilitated Menstrual Hygiene Management, Especially in Schools and Other Education/Training Settings	43
g. Strengthened Measures to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancies and to Enable Adolescent Girls to Continue Their Education in the Case of Pregnancy and/or Motherhood.....	43
14. Actions taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated	44
a. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes	44
15. Forms of gender-based violence which Malawi has prioritized for action.....	45
16. Actions prioritized to address gender-based violence	45
17. Strategies to prevent gender-based violence.....	46
18. Actions taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)	47
19. Measures taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV	47
20. Actions taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media.....	48

21. Actions taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls	48
a. Persons with Albinism	49
b. Trafficking in Persons	50
c. Refugees and Asylum seekers.....	50
d. Training and capacity development.....	50
e. International Cooperation	51
PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS.....	51
22. Actions and measures taken to promote women’s participation in public life and decision-making.....	51
a. Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women’s participation in politics, especially at decision-making level, including electoral system reform, adoption of temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets	51
b. Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-assertion, political campaigning.....	53
c. Taken measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violence against women in politics	53
d. Encouraged the participation of minority and young women, including through sensitization and mentorship programmes.....	54
23. Actions taken to increase women’s access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT).....	54
a. Collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis	54
b. Strengthening TVET in Media and ICT	54
c. Enhancing Access, Affordability, and Use of ICTs	55
d. Support for Women’s Media Networks and Organizations	55
e. Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership	55
f. Collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis	56
24. Country’s national women’s machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women).....	56
25. Mechanisms and tools used to mainstream gender equality across sectors	57
26. Measures taken by the Malawi Human Rights Commission to address violations of women’s rights and promote gender equality	58

27. Actions taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda.....	58
28. Actions taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings.....	59
29. Actions taken to enhance judicial and nonjudicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response.....	60
30. Actions taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls.....	61
31. Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation	61
32. Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience.....	62
Section Four: National Institutions and Processes	62
33. Action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5	62
34. Country’s system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.....	65
35. Formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.....	66
36. Stakeholders contribution to the preparation of the present national report.....	66
37. Malawi’s action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.	67
Section Five: Data and statistics	67
38. Areas in gender statistics at the national level	67
a. Engaged trained in capacity building Digitization of DATA and capacity building.....	68
b. Improved Administrative-based or alternative data sources to address data gaps	68
39. Country’s priorities for strengthening national gender statistics	69
40. Gender-specific indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs	69

41. Data disaggregation routinely provided by major surveys..... 70
Section Six: Conclusion and next steps 71

ACRONYMS

AGCOM	Agricultural Commercialization Project
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
AU	African Union
BPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CBCCs	Community Based Childcare Centres
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
COMSIP	Community Savings and Investment Programme
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPR	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CVSUs	Community Victim Support Units
DAS	Development Assistance Strategy
DREAMS	Determined Resilient Empowered AIDS-free Mentored Safe
DWCP	Malawi Decent Work Country Program
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EU	European Union
EVAWG	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCY&SSWG	Gender Children Youth and Sports Sector Working Group
GEER	Gender and Elections/Violence Against Women
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme
GoM	Government of Malawi
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAAD	International Albinism Awareness Day
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEC	Information Education and Communication
ILO	International Labour Organization
MAP	Men as Partners
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDHS	Malawi Demographic Health Survey
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
MESIP	Malawi Education Sector Improvement Project
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MHRC	Malawi Human Rights Commission
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa

MNSPS	Malawi National Social Protection Strategy
MNSSP II	Malawi National Social Support Programme
MoGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NEEF	National Economic Empowerment Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGP	National Gender Policy
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
NSO	National Statistical Office
ODL	Open Distance Learning
PBB	Programme Based Budget
PMT	Proxy Means Testing
PoC	Persons of Concern
PWP	Public Works Program
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SCTP	Social Cash Transfer Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SERP	Socio-Economic Recovery Plan
SLGs	Savings and Loans Groups
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SP-GEAR	Social Protection for Gender Empowerment and Resilience
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
SWG	Sector Working Group
TEVET	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training
TEVETA	Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational and Education Training Authority
TNM	Telekom Networks Malawi
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolutions
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
VAW	Violence against Women
VSL	Village Savings and Loan
VSUs	Victim Support Units
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WITM	Women in Technology Malawi

INTRODUCTION

Malawi is party to a number of global commitments and international frameworks, including, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). Since its adoption, the Government of Malawi has been conducting reviews and submitting periodic reports on the progress in implementation of the BPfA, every 5 years. The year 2025 is critical for accelerating the achievements of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the global community will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), and the five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and 10 years of the African Union Agenda 2063-*the Africa We Want*.

Member States have been called upon to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews and consolidate their achievements, challenges and lessons learnt on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 30 years after the adoption of the Declaration (Beijing +30 Reviews).

Following this call, the Government of Malawi conducted the review process in collaboration with relevant public and private stakeholders, Civil Society Organisations, Donors and Development Partners, Faith and Traditional leaders at all levels.

This report covers achievements, challenges and lessons learnt, on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and provides recommendations for strengthening its implementation in the next five years.

SECTION ONE – HIGHLIGHTS

The country level review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) for Malawi was developed using data gathered from desk review and stakeholder consultations. The Government of Malawi instituted a national taskforce comprising key Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, representatives from UN Agencies, Malawi Human Rights Commission and Civil Society Organizations. The taskforce, led by the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, spearheaded the whole review process. To ensure an effective and comprehensive review, the taskforce conducted district and national level key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions and consultative meetings with key stakeholders gathering information on notable achievements, lessons learnt, challenges and recommendations in the implementation of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment programmes in Malawi. The review process has largely been supported by UN Women.



Part of the proceedings during a National Consultative Meeting with stakeholders.

Malawi has made significant progress in the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) over the past 5 years. Since the last report, (Beijing +25) in 2020, there has been progress on gender equality and women empowerment in a number of areas including: Policy Environment and Legal Framework for GEWE; Women Economic Empowerment; Leadership and Political Participation of Women; Ending Violence Against Women and Girls; Gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes; and Institutional Coordination of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programs. Despite these achievements, several challenges have been identified in the course of implementation. Among others, these include Gender discrimination, deep rooted harmful norms and practices, Inadequate funding for GEWE programs, and limited collection and use of gender disaggregated data.

The Government of Malawi continued to enforce laws and implement policies and strategies that promote equality, prevent discrimination and respond to violence among men, women, boys and girls including marginalized groups of women and girls. It has further translated these gender related laws into vernacular languages and disseminated across the country to ensure access by all. Capacity building interventions targeting the formal and informal sectors on Human rights, Inclusivity, Gender related laws, GBV prevention, response and referral pathways have also been

conducted at district levels. Programs such as the Rural Women Empowerment Initiative, the Disability Inclusion Program and the Spotlight Initiative Program have been instrumental in addressing the needs of marginalized women and girls and in the enforcement of the leaving no one behind principle.

Malawi further recognizes the critical role of men and boys in the advancement of gender equality and the protection and empowerment of women and girls. Men and boys can challenge negative social norms and act as agents of change in creating a gender equal society. In that regard, over the past five years, Malawi has developed and is implementing the National Male Engagement Strategy 2023-2030. The strategy provides direction and guidance in the implementation of all interventions that aim at enhancing male involvement and participation in gender equality, Gender Based Violence, SRHR and HIV. The strategy is playing a pivotal role in gender transformative programming in Malawi.

SECTION TWO

A. PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

1. Most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women

Over the past 5 years, Malawi has made notable achievements in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). These achievements are deemed important due to the key role that they play in advancing Malawi 2063 and promoting sustainable development.

a. Policy Environment and Legal Framework for GEWE:

Malawi continues to make progress, particularly towards strengthening the legal and policy framework relating to gender. Malawi's current development policy is the Malawi 2063 which is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063. The country is currently focusing on Agriculture Productivity and Commercialization, Industrialization and Urbanization as its three main growth pillars.¹ The strategy further identifies gender balance; youth development; and the empowerment of persons with disability; as crucial factors among the cross cutting issues that have been mainstreamed into the key priority areas to ensure that no one is left behind.²

Malawi has ratified most of the core UN human rights treaties,³ and has made improvements in the architecture for gender equality and violence prevention, mitigation, and response. In less than a decade, several significant laws have been passed.⁴ A National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages (2018–2023), A National Strategy for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (2018–2022) and the National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security (2021–2025); The National Male Engagement Strategy on Gender Equality, Gender Based Violence, Sexual Reproductive Health and HIV and AIDS; (2023 to 2030); National Gender Policy (2024 to 2030); Public Service Workplace Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy (2023); The Political Empowerment of Women Strategy (2024 to 2030); the Revised National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan, 2023 to 2027, the draft Revised National Gender and HIV Implementation Plan 2023 to 2027; Gender Equality Implementation Plan (2016 to 2020) and facilitated the development of 21 Higher Education Gender Policies and TEVET Technical Colleges Model Gender Policy. Malawi is also in the process of domesticating the SADC model law on eradicating child marriages and protecting children already in marriages and the SADC model law on eradicating gender-based violence to strengthen already existing legal frameworks. Malawi has been undertaking harmonization of the gender and child related laws to harmonize the age of the child as part of domesticating the SADC model laws on GBV and eradicating child marriages. As a result, the penal code was amended to raise the age of child from 16 to 18 while

¹ National Planning Commission of Malawi, (2020), Malawi 2063.

² Ibid

³ Malawi has ratified the following Human Rights Treaties: Convention on Rights of the Child; Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD); Convention Against Torture (CAT); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; Southern African Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development; Beijing Platform for Action; UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993).

⁴ The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (2010), the National Registration Act (2009), the Wills and Inheritance Act (2011), the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act (2015), the Trafficking in Persons Act (2015), the Gender Equality Act, and the Access to Information Act.

the Child Care Protection and Justice Act 2010 has also been amended to align the age of the child to the constitution and is awaiting parliamentary deliberation for approval.

Women and girls continue to be victims of trafficking in Malawi for labour and sex exploitation. To address this, Malawi has simplified and translated the Trafficking in Persons Act (TIPA) to increase awareness among law enforcement agencies and general public, so they recognize and report cases of human trafficking. Relatedly, Malawi has developed sentencing guidelines and a bench book for magistrates to provide guidance and standardize sentencing of trafficking persons cases.

b. Women Economic Empowerment

Key achievements under women economic empowerment include the following:

- **Improved access to economic opportunities and finance among women**

The Government of Malawi continues to empower women economically. Malawi is still mobilising women and facilitating capacity building in entrepreneurial skills. The country has established the Women Economic Empowerment Fund window (WEEF) and has so far facilitated the formation of women led business cooperatives to improve productivity and marketing opportunities for valuable agricultural value chains. There are microfinance products for women projects such as the Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship scaling (FInES) Project which is a five year government of Malawi project being implemented with support from development partners. The Government of Malawi will keep linking women business groups and cooperatives to markets; promoting the functionalities of the women economic empowerment fund; lobby for affirmative action to include women during public procurement process and continue to popularize the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets order of 2020.

The National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF) had by August 2024 disbursed MK100 billion in loans for self-employment opportunities where about 70 percent of loan beneficiaries were women. The institution has created MK350 billion Kwacha Loan which will target poor without asset to lift them out of poverty. Over 2,228 Village and Savings Loans Groups have been formed with a membership of over 55,700 in the 2023/24 Financial Year. To date, Malawi has registered 61,880 VSLGs with a membership of 1,856,400 with a total savings of over MWK15 Billion.

Malawi disbursed financial resources under the first round of Disability Trust Fund to individuals and organizations offering services to persons with disabilities. The interventions are intended to reach out to about 2,000 persons with disabilities in the country to access education, rehabilitation services, and assistive technologies. Through the National Action Plan on albinism, 128 needy learners with albinism received fees bursaries in 28 government secondary schools across the country.

It also provided start-up capital items equivalent to MK130,000.00 to 27 graduates at Mulanje Vocational and Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind. Enacted Persons with Disabilities Bill in Parliament which repealed the Disability Act of 2012 and will regulate all disability matters in Malawi. Established and rolled out the implementation of the Older Persons Grant targeting older persons aged 70 years and above to cushion them from the impact of devaluation and cyclones. Disbursed the second round of resources under the Disability Trust Fund to

individuals with disabilities and organization providing services to persons with disabilities. Ensured that conducive houses for Persons with albinism are constructed. Reviewed the National Disability Mainstreaming strategy and National Action Plan on Persons with Albinism

Malawi continues to implement the Community Savings and Investments Promotions (COMSIP) program and the Savings and Lending Groups (SLGs) at community level which are providing women with access to loans and markets for their products.

The Government of Malawi has been implementing several interventions to economically uplift the lives of women. For instance, the Social Cash Transfer Program, also known as the *Mtukula Pakhomo* Program, is currently benefiting a total of 297,138 ultra-poor and labour constrained households of which 205,025 are female headed households. Through this program, several positive outcomes have been achieved including improved health and nutrition of up to 80 % of the beneficiary households, increased school enrolment from 87% to 95% leading to reduced stigma, high school retention rates, improved food security, and improved housing conditions of the beneficiary population.

- **Improved access to Land and Agriculture Services**

Malawi is undertaking land reforms as part of the AU Agenda for land rights and has made substantial efforts to improve land governance. Malawi is improving access to land among women with the coming in of reforms to strengthen land rights and tenure security for women such as the Land (Amendment) Act of 2021 which promotes gender equality in land ownership and management.

Agriculture remains key for Malawi in terms of driving economic growth and contributing to socio-economic development of the country. The sector accounts for around 28 percent of the country's GDP and contributes over 80% of the country's national export earnings. The largest percentage of the country's workforce of around 64.1% is absorbed by the sector. It is also estimated that rural women farmers make up a large proportion of these subsistence farmers, as they contribute between 60 and 80 percent of the agricultural labour force.

Key achievements for GEWE in the Agriculture sector include the development the National Agricultural Policy, the National Agriculture Investment Programme and the Agricultural Sector Gender and HIV strategy that benefit rural women farmers. In addition, programmes and projects are being implemented, targeting rural vulnerable women and female headed households on Climate Smart Agriculture and the Agricultural Improvement Programme.

- c. **Leadership and Political Participation of Women:**

Over the past five years, Malawi has continued to be actively enforcing Gender Equality Act, 2013 which provides for 60/40 of either sex during recruitment, appointment and promotion in the public service to address the structural barriers that limit women's access to socio-economic opportunities. Currently, Malawi has 41% female Cabinet Ministers; 22.7% of the 193 legislators in Parliament are females; and 14.6% of the 462 wards are occupied by female Ward Councillors in local government. Malawi has a female Speaker of the National Assembly. In the Public Service, Malawi has a female Secretary to the President, 28% of Principal Secretaries are women; 30% of directors of departments are women and 50% of the recently appointed judges and ambassadors

are women. Additionally, Malawi also has a female Ombudsman, a female head of the Law Commission, a female head of the Human Rights Commission and female Inspector General of the Malawi Police. Almost 40 percent of all Board Members of Parastatals are women. Additionally, 3 out of the CEO in state owned enterprises are women. The review of the PEW strategy (2024-2030), the sub TGWG, availability of initiatives that are supporting women participating in politics. Additionally, Malawi has developed a website for profiling Malawian professional women. The Malawi Human Rights Commission monitors compliance of gender quotas.

Additionally, Malawi has made remarkable efforts in promoting women's participation in political life and decision making from 2020 to date. These include; capacity building, of which active efforts to empower women politically have led to a higher representation of women in local government councils and the national parliament (proportion of women in the national parliament increased from 16% in 2019 to 23% in 2023⁵) this progress is attributed to targeted capacity-building programs, awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts by both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The Government has continued to level the playing field for female politicians through capacity building of female aspirants on campaign strategy and manifesto development; facilitate media and Social Behavioural Change Communication or Communication for Development (C4D) sessions on female involvement in politics; facilitating the mentorship and coaching of women aspirants where the Government in collaboration with various civil society stakeholders engages coaching experts to boost female aspirants' esteem and zeal to politics. Women have benefitted from various projects such as participation in decision making for instance the Boma Lathu which is part of Malawi Democratic Governance project, and the *Liu la Amayi mu Ndale* (Amplifying Women's Political Voice) project. Furthermore, Malawi has strengthened women and youth led organizations through capacity building, targeted funding and organizational capacity for their effective operations towards political participation of women.

The country has facilitated dissemination of National Gender Policy; Male Engagement Strategy; Political Empowerment of Women Strategy targeting Gender TWG structures and political parties to ensure that Political Party Manifestos; campaign strategies for local authority and parliamentary seats address gender quotas and include women and youth in their delivery. Similarly, the country has continued to popularize the 60/40 quota from Gender Equality Act in recruitment and enrolment in the public service by engaging district councils; private sector actors and commissions and public and private academic institutions respectively.

d. Ending Violence Against Women and Girls:

The Government of Malawi continues to demonstrate commitment towards ending violence against women and girls. Further to the enactment of various pieces of legislation that outlaw violence against women and girls, Malawi has made the following progress:

- Established and strengthened structures for prevention and response to GBV/VAWG/SEAH and these include: strengthening of referral pathways for the management of GBV/ VAWG/SEAH incidences; 2) Development of the GBV and VAWG safeguarding measures for the public through messages and awareness raising; 3) establishment of safe spaces, one stop center; 4) Standard Operating procedures for

⁵ National Statistics Office, Malawi, 2023 Report on Women In Parliament

management of GBV in emergencies were developed; 5) engagement meetings with CSOs and private sector to combat GBV and VAWG. Some of the quick wins have been capacity building of stakeholders on GBV and Women's Rights; awareness raising on GBV and gender related laws (e.g. through international commemorations such as 16 days of activism against GBV, Day of the African Child); strengthening of GBV data systems (i.e. GBVMIS) and collection of gender disaggregated data on GBV; coordination of GBV Sub-TWG meetings- a platform for all stakeholders and partners in GBV/EVAWG/SEAH Programmes in Malawi. Malawi has developed reporting tools for the One Stop Centres.

- Strengthened collaboration with chiefs to address harmful social norms and unequal power relations that fuel violence against women and girls through enactment of community by-laws and working with chiefs councils to end child marriages. Relatedly, Malawi has developed a national training manual for child related initiations to promote safe and gender inclusive initiation ceremonies for children in Malawi as one way of addressing harmful practices that fuel violence against girls. Further, implementation of gender transformative approaches when delivering GEWE programs by government, civil society, donors and development partners to address the root causes of inequality has improved in Malawi. To effectively respond to cases of violence, Malawi is managing the toll free helping services for child abuse and GBV. The helpline services are linked to available community referral mechanisms and response structures.

- **Increased knowledge, reporting and access to services of Gender Based Violence:**

The Malawi Government continued to implement the National Plan of Action to combat Gender Based Violence 2016-2021 (*yet to be reviewed*). It has also been implementing and enforcing policies and laws that promote and protect the rights of women and girls and prevent violence and abuse. Recognizing that engaging men and boys is an important component in GBV prevention and response, Malawi has developed and launched the National Male Engagement Strategy on Gender Equality, GBV, SRHR and HIV (2023-2030). The strategy aims at guiding the implementation of all male engagement interventions to ensure that men and boys play a role in promoting positive masculinities and addressing Gender Based Violence particularly violence against women and girls. In terms of support services, the Government has operationalized Police and Community Victim Support Units in all the police formations across the country. In addition, it has strengthened twenty one (21) One Stop Centres in thirteen (13) districts to support women and children facing violence and abuse. Through these structures, the Government has strengthened a multi-sectoral response to Gender Based Violence through the Essential Services Package for survivors of violence. These include health, social, policing and justice services. In 2020, the Government recruited a second cohort of Gender Officers deployed in the districts to coordinate Gender Equality and Women Empowerment programmes. Currently, there are gender officers placed in all district councils, except one (Likoma).

Furthermore, Malawi disseminated the Gender Related Laws; Male Engagement Strategy; and Public Service Workplace Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy to MDAs and CSOs at national level and district councils; Malawi established and conducted a capacity building training for the National PSEAH Network at national and district levels. Malawi developed the National Male Engagement Strategy and disseminated in 13 of 28 district councils: The strategy has been translated into Chichewa a national language.

The country strengthened coordination of partners through cluster meetings and Gender Technical Working Group at national and districts and GBV Sub Technical Working Group; Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment at national and district levels. The Government of Malawi also strengthen the capacity of One Stop Centre service providers on survivor centered approach in Lilongwe, Dowa, Machinga, Chikwawa and Mulanje.

There has been amplification of mass awareness on GBV and gender related laws during the 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence campaign and also using the Social Behavioural Change Communication at national and district levels where gender is a key topic.

e. Gender Mainstreaming

Malawi has mainstreamed gender in policies and programmes across various sectors notably Disaster Risk Response, Agriculture, Health, Education, Social Protection, HIV and AIDS among others: With regard to Disaster Risk Response, the Government of Malawi established the National Protection Cluster, Gender in Humanitarian TWG and the GBV Sub-cluster which are platforms for joint planning, response and monitoring of Gender, Protection and GBV interventions during emergencies. For instance, during Tropical Cyclone Freddy which recently hit the country, the GBV Sub-cluster has been coordinating GBV and Prevention of sexual exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) awareness campaigns, reporting and referral of GBV and PSEA cases as well as distribution of dignity kits to affected women and girls.

f. Institutional Coordination of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programs

The Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare is the Secretariat of the National Gender Machinery to deliver the Gender Equality Agenda and coordinate multi-stakeholder responses towards Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The Ministry has legal, policy and strategic framework to strengthened institutional capacity coordinating stakeholder effort towards the National Agenda of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. At international level, the Ministry is guided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); Sustainable Development Goals; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995); The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003 (Maputo Protocol); and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, 2008. These have been domesticated in the Constitution of Republic of Malawi; the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, 2006; the Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act, 2011; the Gender Equality Act, 2013, and the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, 2015.

The policies, strategies and action plans include; The Malawi 2063; MIP 1 (10 YEAR PLAN); the National Gender Policy; the National Male Engagement Strategy; the Malawi National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1235 on Women, Peace and Security; National Plan of Action to Combat Gender Based Violence, 2016 – 2021; National Action Plan for Women Economic Empowerment 2016 – 2021; National Strategy for Political Empowerment of Women 2016 – 2021, The National plan on rape and defilement, The National Health Sector Strategic Plan (2023 to 2030), The National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan, The Child Care Protection and Justice Act (Amendment) of 2022, and the Public Service Workplace Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy as listed below:

- i. Development of the Malawi's Vision 2063 (MW2063) blueprint and its First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1)The Malawi 2063 reflects the collective aspirations of the people of Malawi to achieve an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation. The Vision is women and youth centric as it is based on the ideals of social inclusiveness and shared prosperity. Gender equality is aligned to the human capital development enabler, aiming to ensure equal opportunities and rights for all genders.
- ii. The Malawi 2063 First 10 Year Implementation Plan (2021 to 2030) MIP-1 (2021-2030) operationalizes the Malawi 2063. It has foundational transformative strategies and interventions, including flagship projects that will help meet the set milestones in the shortest time possible. These strategies and interventions embrace the needs and aspirations of the gender equality and social inclusion. Gender equality is one of the focus areas – *reducing gender inequalities with emphasis on the empowerment of ...*
- iii. The Land Amendment Act (2022) ensures that both men and women have equal rights to own and control land, prohibiting discrimination based on gender equality in land ownership and access to resources. It includes measures such as spousal consent and equal inheritance rights to promote gender equality in land ownership and access to resources.
- iv. Disaster Risk Management – ensures that disaster risk reduction efforts consider gender equality. It includes measures to address the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women and men in disaster planning, response, and recovery, promoting equal participation and protection for all genders.
- v. Disability Act 2023 – promotes gender equality in disability policies and services, addressing the specific challenges faced by both women and men with disabilities and ensuring equal access to opportunities, services, and rights regardless of gender.
- vi. National Population Policy (2023) – seeks to manage the growth, structure and distribution of the population to be commensurate with the country's resources for sustainable development.
- vii. The National Male Engagement Strategy for Gender Equality, Gender Based Violence, HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, (2023 to 2030) – The strategy is a tool that guides the planning, implementation, coordination and monitoring of male and boys' engagement programmes. The aim is to enhance male engagement to achieve gender equality, ending GBV and promote the access and utilization of SRHR and HIV services in Malawi. Areas of focus include addressing cultural norms and values that perpetuate HIV and AIDS and gender men from seeking lifesaving health services.; involvement of men and boys in supporting their partners' rights to sexual and reproductive health services. Recognizing that achieving gender equality requires joint participation of men, and women, boys and girls.
- viii. The revised draft National Gender Policy 2024 to 2030 a follow on to the second National Gender Policy 2016 to 2021. The NGP is aligned to the Malawi 2063 and its First 10 Year Implementation Plan. Similarly, Malawi 2063 is aligned to SDGs. The policy aims at strengthening gender mainstreaming and promote gender transformative actions at all levels to facilitate gender equality, social inclusion and the empowerment of women and girls in Malawi.
- ix. The Public Service Workplace Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy indicate progress towards the elimination of VAWG and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women's participation in the economy.

- x. The Electronic Transactions Act (2016) provides some protection for women and children in the modern age with offences listed including child pornography, cyber harassment, stalking, malicious distribution of damaging materials mentioned alongside their penalties.
- xi. The National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons is an achievement that shows progress towards the attainment of universal human rights. There are links to positive outcomes for women and children with regards to forced and child labour.
- xii. The National Population Policy (2023) seeks to manage the growth, structure and distribution of the population to be commensurate with the country's resources for sustainable development. It prioritizes programs addressing population and development challenges, with a focus on addressing rapid population growth.
- xiii. The National Education Policy (2022) aims at promoting equitable access to education and improving relevance, quality and governance, and management of the education sector. By promoting equitable access to education, the National Education Policy is linked to the National Gender Policy in that women and girls are empowered such that they can delay marriage and childbirth and can ably seek healthcare for themselves and their children.
- xiv. The National Youth Policy (2023) seeks to create an enabling environment for the youth to develop their full potential towards sustainable personal and national development. The policy has placed special emphasis on promoting fairness and equal access to public opportunities regardless of social differences. In line with this strategic focus, the National Gender Policy therefore will promote strategies aimed at ensuring that boys and girls including those living with disabilities fully develop their capacities and contribute effectively in the various spheres of development including their active participation in decision-making processes.
- xv. The Disaster Risk Management Act (2023) ensures that disaster risk reduction efforts consider gender equality. It includes measures to address the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women and men in disaster planning, response, and recovery, promoting equal participation and protection for all genders.
- xvi. The Development of Gender Policies in MDAs, private sector, public and private universities

B. CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

Despite the progress made towards Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, key challenges as outlined below:

- a. Gender discrimination continues to be the most pervasive form of bias and the costly in terms of impact on sustainable development and the achievement of human rights in Malawi. Limited access to resources to disseminate, review policies and strategies on time; delays in establishment of community structures; and fragmentation of actors are some of the main challenges affecting National Gender Machinery.
- b. There are *no de jure* barriers to effective and equal participation in voter registration and voting in Malawi. However, challenges remain for women's effective participation in politics, including core areas such as running for office as members of Parliament and Local Government Elections compounded by Harassment, financial muscle, tactics to outsmart the men in campaign; need for quota or special measures to accommodate women and intraparty democracy.

- c. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment programs are still challenged by persistent harmful customs and norms that perpetuate inequalities and violence against women. For instance, HIV infections remain high among adolescents and women as a result of norms create a negative impact against the positive strides that the Government of Malawi is making to promote gender equality and improve the rights and welfare of women in Malawi.
- d. Inadequate safe spaces/ shelters and limited support for survivors of GBV/VAWG/SEA. The Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare will continue to lobby stakeholders and Government to support the establishment posts.
- e. While there is a high level of political will for Gender equality and women's empowerment, the commitment to translate political will to action has not been consistent. Limited mechanisms for tracking global commitments and national agenda has resulted in a lack of comprehensive data that could facilitate gender responses at all levels and delays Implementation of global regional and national commitments including the Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, there is a low level of Gender responsive planning and budgeting which limits resource allocation and the pace of implementation of the global and regional commitments on GEWE. Additionally, consultations and assessments indicate a need for greater investments in building leadership capacity for gender mainstreaming, coordination, implementation and monitoring at the national and district levels.
- f. Violence towards women and girls remains a significant human rights challenge. Harmful cultural practices, practice of early sexual initiation, early and forced marriage, sexual assault, and domestic violence still occur and require continued efforts to change social mindsets and norms. Marginalized women and girls such as asylum seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, the elderly and women with disabilities as well as persons with albinism are particularly vulnerable to violence. Factors such as early marriages, harmful cultural practices, religious beliefs, low literacy levels and low economic status of women negatively contribute to the violation of rights of women and must be confronted. Largely seen as a domestic matter, GBV is culturally acceptable and shockingly common. While there are efforts to review and enact laws there is need to strengthen popularization of laws and policies against GBV among women and law enforcement officials for enhanced reporting. ,

2. Top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in Malawi through laws, policies and/or programmes

Over the past five years, Malawi has made significant strides in advancing gender equality by focusing on five key priorities through laws, policies, and programs. These priorities are essential for empowering women and girls and have been central to the country's efforts to achieve gender equality. The following sections provide a detailed explanation of each priority, why they were selected, how they have been addressed, and the progress made in each area:

a. Equality and Non-discrimination under the Law and Access to Justice

Equality and non-discrimination under the law, coupled with access to justice, have been pivotal to Malawi's gender equality agenda. Recognizing that legal frameworks are the foundation for safeguarding women's rights, Malawi has prioritized the development and enforcement of laws that promote gender equality and protect women from discrimination. Over the past five years, the country has made significant legislative strides to ensure that women and girls are protected under the law and have access to justice.

The Gender Equality Act, originally passed in 2013 and amended in 2021, has been a cornerstone of these efforts. This Act provides a comprehensive legal framework that addresses various aspects of gender inequality, including discrimination, violence against women, and gender-based disparities in public and private life. Additionally, the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act and the Trafficking in Persons Act have played crucial roles in addressing gender-based violence and human trafficking, both of which have a disproportionate impact on women and girls in Malawi.

To improve access to justice, the government has established specialized Gender-Based Violence (GBV) courts and trained law enforcement officers to handle cases with greater sensitivity towards gender issues. These efforts have led to a marked increase in the prosecution of GBV cases, with a reported 25% rise in such prosecutions over the past five years². Furthermore, the Malawi Human Rights Commission has noted a 30% increase in women accessing legal aid services, indicating growing awareness and trust in the legal system among women³. These legislative and institutional reforms have been crucial in promoting gender equality and empowering women to seek justice.

b. Quality Education and Training and Lifelong Learning for Women and Girls

Malawi has identified quality education and lifelong learning for women and girls as critical components of its gender equality strategy. Education is recognized as a powerful tool for empowering women and girls, enabling them to fully participate in all aspects of society, secure better economic opportunities, and make informed decisions about their lives. This priority aligns with the country's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 5 on gender equality.

To address this priority, Malawi has implemented several initiatives aimed at improving educational outcomes for girls and ensuring that women have access to lifelong learning opportunities. The Girls' Education and Empowerment Program, launched in 2020, has been instrumental in increasing school enrolment and retention rates for girls, particularly in underserved rural areas. This program includes measures such as providing scholarships, improving school infrastructure, and creating safe learning environments.

Additionally, the government has partnered with civil society organizations to provide vocational training and adult literacy programs targeted at women. These programs are designed to equip women with the skills needed to participate in the workforce and improve their livelihoods. As a result of these efforts, the secondary school enrolment rate for girls has increased from 30% in 2019 to 45% in 2023⁵. Moreover, the adult literacy rate for women has improved significantly, with 65% of women now literate, compared to 50% five years ago⁶. These educational advancements have had a profound impact on the lives of women and girls, contributing to their empowerment and the overall progress towards gender equality in Malawi.

c. Poverty Eradication, Agricultural Productivity, and Food Security

Poverty eradication, agricultural productivity, and food security have been key priorities for Malawi in its efforts to empower women economically and reduce gender disparities. Women make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce in Malawi, yet they often face numerous challenges, including limited access to land, credit, and agricultural inputs. By focusing on these areas, Malawi aims to improve the economic status of women, enhance food security, and reduce poverty, particularly in rural areas.

To address these challenges, the government has launched several initiatives designed to support women in agriculture and enhance their productivity. Megafarms have become a priority of the Government as evidenced by the National Budget of 2022 and 2023. This program provides women farmers with access to credit. The government has also implemented policies to ensure that women have equal access to land and agricultural resources, recognizing that land ownership is a critical factor in empowering women economically.

These efforts have yielded positive results, with the Ministry of Agriculture reporting a 35% increase in agricultural productivity among women over the past five years. This increase in productivity has contributed to improved food security in many communities and has helped reduce poverty rates among women-headed households by 20%. By prioritizing poverty eradication, agricultural productivity, and food security, Malawi has made significant strides in addressing the economic disparities faced by women and ensuring their active participation in the agricultural sector.

d. Access to Health Care, Including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights

Ensuring access to quality health care, including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and reproductive rights, is essential for the well-being of women and girls in Malawi. This priority addresses the health disparities that disproportionately affect women, particularly those in rural areas, and aims to ensure that all women have access to the care and services they need to lead healthy lives.

In recent years, Malawi has made considerable efforts to improve access to health care for women and girls. However Neonatal mortality rate 25 per live 1000 births; infant mortality rate 40 per 1000 live births and under-five mortality rate is 56 per 1000 live birth. Maternal mortality rate is at 381 per 100,000 livebirths. The rate of child marriage has dropped from 42 percent to 37.7 percent (WHO, 2021). Percentage of girls married before 15 is at 7.7 percent which increase the risk of fistula and high fertility rate. Modern contraceptive prevalence (mCPR) rate for all women is at 52 percent. Modern contraceptive prevalence (mCPR) rate for married women is at 70.2 percent. Demand for family planning is at 81 percent. HIV prevalence is at 8 percent. Although women and girls are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in Malawi with an HIV prevalence of 9.24% for females aged 15 to 49 as compared to males of the same group at 6.02% the Malawi Government has mainstreamed gender in Health and HIV national policies and plans; planning, budget and monitoring; and HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes.

The government has also invested in improving health care infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, and training health care workers to provide gender-sensitive care. The maternal mortality ration for Malawi decreased from 439 to 381 per 100,000 births between 2017 and 2020 reflecting improvements in maternal health care and the effectiveness of government initiatives aimed at reducing preventable deaths during childbirth.

e. Gender-Responsive Social Protection

Gender-responsive social protection has been a critical priority for Malawi in its efforts to address the vulnerabilities faced by women and girls, particularly those related to poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion. Social protection programs that are designed and implemented with a gender perspective are essential for ensuring that women and girls receive the support they need to overcome economic and social challenges.

Over the past five years, Malawi has continued to implement several gender-responsive social protection programs aimed at reducing poverty and enhancing the economic resilience of women and girls. These programs include cash transfer programs, public works programs, and social insurance schemes, all of which have been designed to prioritize women as beneficiaries. The cash transfer programs, in particular, have been effective in providing immediate financial support to vulnerable women, helping them meet their basic needs and improve their livelihoods. The Government is implementing a Strategic Plan for Social Cash Transfer which is aligned to the Malawi National Social Support Programme II; the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi; UN Universal Social Protection 2030; the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the first Malawi 2063 Implementation Plan (MIP-1); National Resilience Strategy (2018 to 2030). The plan seek to increase proportion of number of ultra-poor households who receive Social Protection Support from 10 percent to 15 percent; improve the sensitivity of the programme to vulnerabilities across the lifecycle, predictable seasonal deprivations, and anticipated climate related and other shocks; ensure the adequacy of transfers to cover consumption needs and promote resilient livelihoods and enable investments in human capital; strengthen delivery systems for effective realization of programme objectives; increase in financing and capabilities to ensure effective, sustainable and harmonized delivery.

The impact of these social protection programs has been significant. The Social Protection Division reports that women constitute 70% of the beneficiaries of cash transfer programs. These programs have been shown to reduce poverty and improve household well-being, particularly in female-headed households. Additionally, public works programs that prioritize women have led to increased economic participation and income for women in rural areas, further contributing to their empowerment and economic independence. After declaration of state of disasters due to El Nino on 23rd March 2024 by the President in 23 of the 28 districts, there has been lean season and El-Nino response in 2023/2024 season. Lean season response has targeted 74,985 beneficiary households in the districts of Neno, Mwanza, Mzimba south, Mzimba North, Mulanje, Zomba and Nsanje. The intervention targeted 37235 of the vertical expansion while 37,750 households were targeted under horizontal expansion. Enrolment of beneficiaries has been conducted in all the mentioned districts. Each household is receiving MK50,000 /Euros 26.502 per month for a specific period of time ranging from 2 to 4 months based on the food deficit period of the district as highlighted by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) report. The response is running for three months in Mulanje, Zomba and Mzimba to cover its food deficit. In Neno and Mwanza, it will run for four months. El- Nino conditions felt have been inadequate rains, floods and prolonged dry spells that severely damaged crops and food production. It reduced production to 2 million farm families putting about 9 million people at risk of food insecurity. The Government of Malawi through Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare has responded by doing rapid gender analysis which revealed gender dimensions that ought to be addressed. The outcome has been expansion of cash transfers to 342109 beneficiary households. The overall objective of the scale up of SCTP has been to stabilize and improve food consumption to the affected population targeting SCTP households and households with children under two years, people living with disabilities, child headed households, the elderly and people (age 65 and above) with chronic illnesses. The Social Cash Transfer Programme is planned to reach 28 districts and target 381 734 beneficiary households by December 2024. The SCT has a toll free 351 for grievance redress mechanisms. It has registered 480 cases and has resolved 365 cases. Cumulatively GRM-MIS has recorded 845. The breakdown of cases were climate smart enhanced public works (105); Covid urban cash transfer intervention (1); Tropical Cyclone Freddy Response

(15); Lean Season Response (16); Price Shock Urban Emergency Transfer (390); Social Cash Transfer (308) and project unknown (10).

The key challenges faced by the SCT include communities and their traditional leaders, political leaders and different stakeholders are not satisfied with poverty ranking from Unified beneficiary Registry (UBR) and the use of UBR to select SCTP beneficiaries as most deserving households are left out including the elderly and child headed households.

3. Specific actions taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls

Over the past five years, Malawi has undertaken several specific actions aimed at preventing discrimination and promoting the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls. These efforts have been targeted towards women and girls living in remote and rural areas, women and girls with disabilities, and women and girls living with HIV. This section provides detailed accounts of three concrete examples of these initiatives, including their aims, scope, target population, budget, impact evaluations, lessons learned, and links to further information.

The Government of Malawi continued to enforce laws and implement policies and strategies that promote equality, prevent discrimination and respond to violence among men, women, boys and girls including marginalized groups of women and girls. These include the Gender Equality Act, Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, Disability Act, The National Gender Policy and the National Plan of Action to combat Gender Based Violence, the National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for persons with disabilities which recognize the need for the public sector to take the lead and be exemplary in employing a reasonable proportion of people with disability among its employees.

Furthermore, Malawi has translated gender related laws into vernacular languages and disseminated across the country to ensure access by all. Various means of awareness have been employed including radio and TV programs, community awareness campaigns as well as use of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials with messages preventing GBV and promoting rights of women and girls, including marginalized groups.

Government through line Ministries and other stakeholders has been conducting capacity building trainings targeting the formal and informal sectors on Human rights, Inclusivity, Gender related laws, GBV prevention, response and referral pathways equipping duty bearers with knowledge and skills on promoting women and girls' rights and preventing discrimination including in legal proceedings and their access to either formal or informal justice.

a. Women and Girls Living in Remote and Rural Areas: The Rural Women Empowerment Initiative

The Rural Women Empowerment Initiative was launched in 2019 with the aim of addressing the unique challenges faced by women and girls living in remote and rural areas. This initiative focused on improving access to essential services such as education, health care, and economic opportunities, which are often limited in these regions. The scope of the initiative included the establishment of mobile health clinics, educational outreach programs, and microfinance schemes tailored to rural women.

The primary target population for this initiative was women and girls in rural areas, particularly those in the most underserved districts of Malawi. The initiative aimed to reach at least 100,000 women and girls by 2024. The initiative was funded by both the Malawian government and development partners, with a total budget of approximately \$5 million over five years. The funds were allocated towards the development and deployment of mobile health units, the training of educators and healthcare workers, and the establishment of microfinance facilities.

Impact evaluations conducted in 2022 revealed significant improvements in access to health services, with a 40% increase in antenatal care visits and a 30% reduction in maternal mortality in the targeted areas. Additionally, school attendance for girls increased by 25%, and over 10,000 women accessed microfinance services, leading to a 20% increase in household incomes.

One of the key lessons learned was the importance of community involvement in the planning and implementation of programs. Engaging local leaders and stakeholders ensured that the initiative was culturally sensitive and met the specific needs of the target population. Furthermore, the success of mobile health clinics highlighted the need for continued investment in mobile services in remote areas.

b. Women and Girls with Disabilities

The Disability Inclusion Program was launched in 2020 to address the discrimination and exclusion faced by women and girls with disabilities in Malawi. The program aimed to promote their rights by ensuring that they have equal access to education, employment, and health services. The scope of the program included the development of inclusive education policies, vocational training for women with disabilities, and the provision of assistive devices. The program specifically targeted women and girls with disabilities, including those with physical, sensory, and intellectual disabilities. It aimed to reach at least 50,000 women and girls by 2025.

The Disability Inclusion Program was supported by a budget of \$3 million, funded by the Malawian government, the United Nations, and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The budget was allocated towards the development of inclusive infrastructure, the training of teachers and healthcare workers, and the procurement of assistive devices. By 2023, the program had successfully integrated over 15,000 girls with disabilities into mainstream schools, leading to a 50% increase in school attendance among this group. Additionally, over 5,000 women with disabilities received vocational training, with 60% of them securing employment or starting their own businesses. The provision of assistive devices also significantly improved the mobility and independence of women and girls with disabilities.

The program underscored the importance of accessibility in both physical infrastructure and service delivery. One of the key lessons learned was that while policies are essential, their effective implementation requires adequate funding and continuous monitoring. The success of the vocational training component also highlighted the need for tailored employment opportunities for women with disabilities.

The HIV/AIDS Support and Empowerment Program, launched in 2018, aimed to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by women and girls living with HIV and to improve their access to health care, social support, and economic opportunities. The program included initiatives such as the establishment of support groups, the provision of antiretroviral therapy (ART), and economic empowerment activities.

The program targeted women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, with a particular focus on adolescent girls and young women who are disproportionately affected by the epidemic. The program aimed to reach 80,000 women and girls by 2023.

The program was implemented with a budget of \$6 million, funded by the Global Fund, the Malawian government, and various international NGOs. The budget was used to support health facilities, provide ART, and fund income-generating activities for women living with HIV/AIDS.

The program has been successful in increasing the uptake of ART among women and girls, with a 70% increase in ART coverage among the target population. The establishment of support groups has also led to a significant reduction in stigma and discrimination, as reported by 85% of the participants. Furthermore, the economic empowerment activities have enabled over 5,000 women living with HIV to start small businesses, leading to improved economic stability and self-reliance.

The program highlighted the importance of a holistic approach that addresses both the medical and social needs of women and girls living with HIV. One of the lessons learned was the need for continuous community education to combat stigma and discrimination. Additionally, the program demonstrated that economic empowerment is a factor in improving the quality of life for women living with HIV.

c. Women and Girls in Humanitarian Settings

Malawi's experience of Tropical Cyclone Freddy affected more than 2,267,458 people including more than 659,278 displaced, with 679 deaths, 537 missing, and 2,186 injured in 16 local councils. Among the total affected population, 1,308,064 were women and girls of reproductive age and about 100,297 of these were pregnant women. The socio-economic challenges ranging from limited access to water, sanitation, and health services, threatened livelihoods and poor coping capacity.

Women and girls were impacted in various ways including adverse impacts to their health, safety, and protection. Women and girls are traditionally restricted on their roles and responsibilities in a patriarchal dominant society. Cyclone Freddy over-burdened women by adding to their existing gendered household and community roles especially on WASH related roles. In terms of the response, women, girls, and persons with disabilities are locked out of the humanitarian response decision-making processes. Access to education for learners was heavily disrupted. Additionally, there was an increase in violence against women and girls.

4. Confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA, and measures taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls

Over the past five years, Malawi has faced a series of crises that have significantly affected the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). These crises include the COVID-19 pandemic, Tropical Cyclone Anna; Tropical Cyclone Gombe; Tropical Cyclone Freddy; food and fuel shortages, a worsening debt crisis, the escalating climate crisis, and a backlash against gender equality. Despite these challenges, Malawi has taken several measures to mitigate their negative impact on progress for women and girls. This section outlines how each of these crises has affected gender equality efforts in the country and the strategies employed to address them.

a. COVID-19 and Other Pandemics

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on gender equality in Malawi, exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and creating new challenges for women and girls. The pandemic led to widespread economic disruption, loss of livelihoods, and increased rates of gender-based violence (GBV). Women, who are predominantly employed in the informal sector, were disproportionately affected by the economic fallout, with many losing their income sources. Additionally, school closures due to the pandemic resulted in a rise in early marriages and pregnancies, further limiting educational opportunities for girls.

In response, the Malawi Government implemented several measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on women and girls. These included the establishment of emergency hotlines and shelters for survivors of GBV, cash transfer programs targeting vulnerable households, and the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene supplies to women in informal employment. Efforts were also made to ensure that girls returned to school once the pandemic subsided, with community outreach programs focused on preventing early marriages and encouraging re-enrolment.

b. El Nino and Tropical Cyclones

i. El Nino Conditions

El-Nino conditions contributed to inadequate rains, floods and prolonged dry spells that severely damaged crops and food production. Crop production reduced to 2 million farm families putting about 9 million people at risk of food insecurity. The Government of Malawi through Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare responded by conducting a rapid gender analysis which revealed gender dimensions that ought to be addressed.

ii. Cyclones

Malawi's experience of Tropical Cyclone Freddy affected more than 2,267,458 people including more than 659,278 displaced, with 679 deaths, 537 missing, and 2,186 injured in 16 local councils. Among the total affected population, 1,308,064 were women and girls of reproductive age and about 100,297 of these were pregnant women. The socio-economic challenges ranged from limited access to WASH, sanitation, and health services, threatened livelihoods and poor coping capacity. The cyclones damaged infrastructure such as roads, bridges, houses, clinics, schools and markets in the impact districts. They were also a major driver of economic shocks and a key driver of child marriages.

c. Food and Fuel Crisis

The food and fuel crisis, driven by global supply chain disruptions and rising costs, has had a severe impact on Malawian households, particularly on women and girls. Women, who are primarily responsible for food preparation and household management, have borne the brunt of the crisis, facing increased food insecurity and the burden of managing scarce resources. The fuel crisis has also led to higher transportation costs, making it more difficult for women and girls to access essential services such as healthcare and education.

To address these challenges, the Malawi Government and its partners implemented food assistance programs targeting vulnerable populations, including women-headed households. The Government also introduced subsidies on essential commodities and fuel to reduce the financial burden on households. In rural areas, initiatives to promote sustainable agriculture and food

security, such as the distribution of drought-resistant seeds and training on climate-smart farming techniques, have been key in helping women farmers cope with the crisis.

d. Debt Crisis

Malawi's debt crisis, exacerbated by the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, has strained the country's ability to finance gender equality programs and services. The high level of debt has led to austerity measures, which have disproportionately affected women and girls by reducing funding for social services, including health, education, and social protection programs. The reduction in public spending has also limited the government's capacity to address issues such as GBV and maternal health, further hindering progress towards gender equality.

In response, the Malawian government has engaged in debt restructuring negotiations and sought financial support from international donors to protect social spending. Additionally, the government has prioritized gender-responsive budgeting to ensure that limited resources are allocated in ways that support women and girls. Efforts have also been made to improve financial inclusion for women through microfinance initiatives and financial literacy programs, helping them to better manage the economic challenges posed by the debt crisis.

e. Climate Crisis

The climate crisis has had a significant impact on Malawi, with increasing frequency and severity of droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events. These events have disproportionately affected women, particularly those in rural areas who rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. The loss of crops and livestock due to climate-related disasters increased food insecurity and poverty among women farmers, while also limiting their access to education and healthcare.

To mitigate the impact of the climate crisis, the Malawian government has implemented several adaptation and resilience-building programs targeting women. These include training on climate-smart agriculture, the promotion of renewable energy technologies, and the establishment of early warning systems for natural disasters. The government has also ensured that women's voices are included in climate policy development, recognizing the critical role that women play in managing natural resources and leading community resilience efforts.

f. Backlash on Gender Equality

In recent years, Malawi has experienced a backlash against gender equality, driven by conservative social norms and resistance to progressive gender policies. This backlash has manifested in the form of public opposition to gender-based laws and policies, as well as increased violence and harassment against women in public and political life. The backlash has hindered the implementation of gender equality initiatives and slowed progress towards the goals of the BPfA.

To counter this backlash, the Malawian government and civil society organizations have intensified efforts to promote gender equality and challenge harmful social norms. Public awareness campaigns, legal reforms, and advocacy for women's rights have been key strategies in addressing the backlash. Additionally, efforts to increase women's participation in decision-making processes and to protect women in politics from violence and harassment have been crucial in sustaining progress towards gender equality.

5. Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and/or programmes

In the coming five years, Malawi has identified five top priorities for accelerating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. These priorities, to be addressed through targeted laws, policies, and programs, are: (1) improving the quality of education, training, and lifelong learning for women and girls; (2) poverty eradication, enhancing agricultural productivity, and ensuring food security; (3) eliminating violence against women and girls; (4) increasing political participation and representation of women; and (5) enhancing access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This section outlines how Malawi plans to address these priorities.

a. Quality of Education, Training, and Lifelong Learning for Women and Girls

Improving access to quality education, training, and lifelong learning for women and girls remains a critical priority for Malawi. Despite progress in increasing enrolment rates, there are still significant gaps in educational attainment between boys and girls, particularly in rural areas. Early marriages, pregnancies, and socio-economic barriers continue to impede girls' education. To address these challenges, the Malawi Government plans to strengthen policies that promote gender equality in education, such as the re-admission policy for young mothers and scholarships for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, there will be a focus on expanding technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs tailored for women and girls, aimed at enhancing their employability and economic independence.

Lifelong learning opportunities will also be expanded, with a particular emphasis on digital literacy and skills development. This will involve partnerships with private sector and civil society organizations to create learning hubs in both urban and rural areas. The government will also implement community-based education programs aimed at adult women, particularly those who missed out on formal education, to ensure they have the skills needed to participate fully in the economy and society.

b. Poverty Eradication, Agricultural Productivity, and Food Security

Addressing poverty, particularly among women, is central to Malawi's development agenda. Women constitute a significant proportion of the agricultural workforce, yet they often lack access to resources such as land, credit, and technology. The Malawi Government plans to prioritize women's economic empowerment through initiatives aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and ensuring food security. This includes providing women farmers with access to improved seeds, fertilizers, and training on sustainable farming practices.

The government also plans to implement social protection programs targeting women in rural areas, including cash transfers and food assistance during lean seasons. Furthermore, efforts will be made to enhance women's access to markets by establishing women-only cooperatives and facilitating their participation in agricultural value chains. These initiatives aim not only to reduce poverty but also to build resilience against climate shocks and other economic vulnerabilities.

c. Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls

Eliminating violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a high priority for Malawi. Despite legislative frameworks such as the Gender Equality Act and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act, VAWG remains pervasive, with significant underreporting and limited access to justice for survivors. Over the next five years, the Malawian government aims to strengthen the

implementation and enforcement of laws protecting women and girls from violence. This will involve capacity building for law enforcement and judicial officers to handle cases of VAWG more effectively.

Community-based interventions will be scaled up to change harmful gender norms and practices that perpetuate violence. The government, in collaboration with civil society organizations, will expand awareness campaigns and educational programs that target men and boys to prevent violence. Additionally, more resources will be allocated to support services for survivors, including shelters, legal aid, and psychosocial support, ensuring that survivors can access comprehensive care and justice.

d. Political Participation and Representation

Increasing women's political participation and representation is essential for achieving gender equality in Malawi. Currently, women remain underrepresented in political decision-making positions, both at the national and local levels. To address this, the Malawi Government is implementing affirmative action policies, such as gender quotas, to ensure greater representation of women in political offices. These measures are accompanied by capacity-building programs for women candidates, including leadership training, campaign management, and mentorship.

Furthermore, efforts will be made to create a more conducive environment for women's participation in politics by addressing the violence and harassment that women often face in the political arena. The government will work closely with political parties to adopt and enforce codes of conduct that protect women candidates and officeholders. Public awareness campaigns will also be conducted to promote the importance of women's representation in governance and to challenge the societal norms that limit women's political participation.

SECTION THREE: PROGRESS ACROSS THE 12 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

This section covers progress across the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. To facilitate the analysis, the 12 critical areas of concern have been clustered into six overarching dimensions that highlight the alignment of the BPfA with the 2030 Agenda. This approach is aimed at facilitating reflections about the implementation of both frameworks in a mutually reinforcing manner to accelerate progress for all women and girls.

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT, SHARED PROSPERITY AND DECENT WORK

6. Actions taken to advance gender equality in the world of work

Over the past five years, Malawi has undertaken a series of actions aimed at advancing gender equality in the realm of paid work and employment. These actions have focused on strengthening workplace laws and policies, introducing gender-responsive job creation initiatives, preventing sexual harassment, enhancing land rights, and supporting the transition from informal to formal work. The following paragraphs detail the specific measures taken in these areas.

a. Strengthening and Enforcing Workplace Laws and Policies

Malawi has made significant strides in strengthening and enforcing workplace laws, policies, and practices to prohibit discrimination against women in recruitment, retention, and promotion within both the public and private sectors. Labour Laws: Malawi has worked on revising its labour laws to better address gender disparities. This has been achieved through the revision of Malawi's

labour laws to better address gender disparities with the aim of creating a level playing field for women and men in the labour market and to promote the economic empowerment of women. Efforts have also been made to enhance maternity leave provisions, promote equal pay for equal work, and improve workplace safety standards for women. Examples of such laws and policies are as follows:

- The Constitution of Malawi (1994)
- The Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act, 2011
- The Employment (Amendment) Act of 2021, which was revised to include provisions that mandate equal pay for work of equal value and prohibit any form of discrimination based on gender, particularly in hiring and promotion processes and has clauses to promote the rights of pregnant and breastfeeding women. Following the revision of the Employment Act of 2000 Section 48, a male employee shall be entitled to 2 weeks of paid paternity leave every 3 years
- The Revised National Gender Policy (2024 to 2030), which outlines strategies to reduce gender-based discrimination in all sectors, including the workplace.
- The Malawi Public Service Workplace Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy of 2023 which provides a guiding framework for prevention, reporting and responding to sexual harassment issues.
- The Malawi Gender Equality Act, 2013 which prohibits discrimination in employment and has been actively enforced through increased monitoring by the Ministry of Labour and civil society organizations that advocate for women's rights in the workplace.

b. Introduction and Strengthening of Gender-Responsive Job Creation Policies

Recognizing the need to address gender disparities in employment, Malawi has introduced and strengthened several gender-responsive job creation and active labour market policies. The government launched the National Employment and Labour Policy, which includes specific provisions to promote women's employment in non-traditional sectors such as technology, engineering, and construction. Furthermore, public works programs have been expanded with a focus on increasing women's participation, particularly in rural areas. These programs not only provide immediate employment opportunities but also include training components that equip women with skills necessary for long-term employment and entrepreneurship.

c. Taken Measures to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Malawi has taken concrete steps to prevent and address sexual harassment in the workplace. The Gender Equality Act, 2013 requires all employers to establish and enforce anti-harassment policies. Employers are also mandated to provide training on sexual harassment prevention and to set up confidential reporting mechanisms for employees who experience harassment. To ensure compliance, the government, through the Ministry of Labour, conducts regular inspections and audits of workplaces. These efforts were complemented by awareness campaigns aimed at educating both employers and employees about their rights and responsibilities regarding sexual harassment, contributing to a safer work environment for women.

d. Strengthening Land Rights and Tenure Security

Secure land rights are essential for the economic empowerment of women, particularly in Malawi, where the majority of the population relies on agriculture for their livelihoods. In the past five years, the Malawi Government has implemented reforms to strengthen land rights and tenure security for women. The Customary Land Act, 2016 and the Land Acquisition Act, 2014 have been amended to ensure that women have equal rights to own, inherit, and use land. These reforms

have been supported by programs that raise awareness among women about their land rights and provide legal assistance to those facing disputes. Additionally, land registration initiatives have been expanded to include more women, thereby formalizing their land ownership and improving their access to credit and other resources needed for agricultural productivity. The Land (Amendment) Act of 2021 promotes gender equality in land ownership and management by:

- ensuring women have equal access and the ability to register customary land and can exercise their land rights without discrimination
- securing the recognition of women's land rights as heirs in the event of their husband's death
- encouraging joint ownership of land by married couples, which secures women's tenure of land in the event of divorce or widowhood
- establishing Village land Committees with a requirement of at least 3/5 of the members being women so that women's voices are heard in land management decisions at the local level.

e. Supported the Transition from Informal to Formal Work

Malawi has also focused on supporting the transition of women from informal to formal employment. Given that a significant proportion of women in Malawi are engaged in informal work, the government has introduced legal and policy measures to benefit these workers. The Social Protection Policy has been expanded to include informal workers, providing them with access to social security benefits such as pensions and health insurance. Additionally, the government has implemented initiatives to formalize informal businesses, including simplifying business registration processes and providing training on financial literacy and business management. Reforms by Ministry of Trade; one stop centre for doing business; and Malawi Revenue Authority. These efforts are designed to enhance the economic security of women in informal employment and to integrate them into the formal economy, where they can benefit from legal protections and opportunities for growth.

7. Actions taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers

According to the Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (2015-2016), more than 70% of married women were employed at any time in the past 12 months of that period compared to 98% of married men. Moreover, working women are more likely not to be paid for their work (59%), while working men are more likely to be paid in cash (61%) however, only 30% of working women are paid in cash. Additionally, nearly half of married women who are employed and earned cash made joint decisions with their husband on how to spend their earnings and 70% of women reported earning less than their husband.⁶ This shows that there is an imbalance in the remuneration and work-life and family balance between men and women. Therefore, the government has taken the following measures to curb this:

⁶ National Statistics Office. (2015-2016). Malawi Demographic and Health Survey.

a. Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave

Several legal measures have been put in place, to promote the harmonisation of work with family responsibilities. For example, the provisions in the employment law on maternity leave which provides for 8 weeks full pay maternity leave every 3 years and stipulates that female employees must maintain all her benefits and entitlements.⁷ Furthermore, workers including domestic workers (most of whom are women) are entitled to overtime allowance if they work long hours; leave days, a weekly day off and severance pay at the end of the contract.

b. Promoted decent work for paid care workers, including migrant workers:

- To protect part-time, temporary, seasonal and home-based workers, the Pensions Act (2011) introduced mandatory pension and incentives such as severance pay, long service allowance, overtime allowance and leave days for employees. Where there are disputes the aggrieved employee can take the case to the Industrial Court or District Labour Offices.
- The Gender Equality Act (2013) outlaws sex discrimination and has elaborate provisions for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace. The Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Programme (2012 – 2015) coordinated by the Ministry of Gender and have a sexual harassment component, though only focusing on public institutions.
- The National Gender Policy acknowledges the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women and calls for measures to recognize and reduce this burden through policies, including access to services such as childcare, water, and energy.
- The Social Cash Transfer Program has indirectly addressed unpaid care work by providing financial assistance to reduce the economic strain on families. By alleviating financial burdens, the program reduces the time women and girls spend on unpaid care work. Direct cash transfers to female-headed households help ease the financial and caregiving burden by providing additional resources for childcare, health, and education.
- Investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) or Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs) has been a crucial step toward redistributing unpaid care work, enabling mothers to seek employment outside the home while ensuring proper care for their children.
- The Malawi Decent Work Country Program (DWCP), 2020 to 2023 (a collaboration between GoM and ILO) has advocated for better wages, social protection, and improved working conditions for domestic and care workers, many of whom are women.
- Gender-Responsive Public Services are being promoted, for example, water access programs have been introduced in rural areas, reducing the time women and girls spend collecting water, a traditionally unpaid care activity. This allows women to engage more in productive activities outside the home.
- Civil society organizations have conducted awareness campaigns about the burden of unpaid care work. They run programs to educate communities on the value of care work, and they have advocated for the redistribution of household chores between men and women.

⁷ In Sections 47 and 48 the Employment Act 2000 specifically provides for 8 weeks full pay maternity leave within every 3 years. During that period the female employee maintains all her benefits and entitlements including contractual rights and seniority and period of work is not entrapped.

- The jobs creation strategy and the Jobs for Youth Project aims at economically empowering young women and men for improved employability in decent work and sustainable entrepreneurship and wa expected to create an estimate of 17000 jobs by end 2021.

Key Issues

- Malawi is yet to ratify ILO Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities and Convention 183 on Maternity Protection. These instruments are enforce anti-discrimination measures that can level the economic playing field for women and men through the promotion of State support for maternity leave and child care.
- The Government has not ratified Convention No. 189 and Recommendation No. 201 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (2011). This situation has the potential of contributing to exploitation of domestic workers despite their legal entitlements.

Recommendations

- There is need to include unpaid care work in the programming of interventions as it is one of the major obstacles to the achievement of gender equality;
- Need to fully implement the Gender Equality Act (2013)
- More institutions must consider introducing paternity leave in order for men to share the burden of childcare responsibilities with their spouses. Similarly, it is of utmost importance for Malawi to ratify ILO Convention 156 and 183 in order to allow women fully realize their human rights.

8. Actions taken to reduce the gender digital divide.

Malawi has undertaken the following to reduce the gender digital divide:

- a. The Digital Malawi Programme (since 2021) is managed by GoM with support from The World Bank and enhances digital inclusion for women and marginalised groups. The program has provided ICT tools, internet connectivity, and technical training to improve women's as well as supported the establishment of community digital hubs that offer women access to computers and the internet.
- b. In partnership with UN Women, TNM's Smart Girls Initiative (since 2021) plays a significant role in promoting digital literacy among girls in Malawi by equipping girls with smartphones, providing internet access, and offering ICT training in schools.
- c. The Smart Women and Girls in ICT Initiative (2022) has provided over 2,000 women and girls in both urban and rural areas with digital training, helping them access online education, job opportunities, and entrepreneurial ventures.
- d. SheCodes Malawi (since 2021) has trained hundreds of young women in coding, app development, and web design. The initiative also offers mentorship opportunities and support for women to enter the tech workforce or start their own tech businesses.
- e. Women in Technology Malawi (WITM) has trained hundreds of women in ICT skills, provided mentorship, and helped women access jobs in the tech industry. It has also created a support network for women to share knowledge, resources, and opportunities in the digital space.

- f. The UNDP Accelerator Lab's Digital Inclusion for Women Project (since 2021) provides access to digital tools and platforms to rural women and those in informal employment. The programme has trained women on how to use digital financial services, e-commerce platforms, and mobile technologies for small businesses.
- g. The Government of Malawi in partnership with media firms and CSOs conducted outreach programs to address gender imbalances and how to address them.
- h. Malawi conducted an annual Women in Cyber Conference sponsored to address issues of gender divide in the field of cybersecurity and to raise awareness of the different opportunities available for women in the field.

9. Macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment that has affected the implementation of the BPfA and macroeconomic policies implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy. Austerity/Fiscal Consolidation Measures Taken, Such as Cuts in Public Expenditure or Public Sector Downsizing:

Every year the government implements measures to reduce public expenditures through issuing circulars that focus on public expenditure control, freezing of employment and grounding of government vehicles. The impact of the measures includes government expenditures are controlled wage bill is contained within minimum ceiling and only critical positions are filled. The latter however, results in high vacancy rates in all MDAs leading to compromised service delivery at all levels. The impact on women particularly those living in rural areas; living with HIV and living with disabilities is inadequate service provision.

10. Actions taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls

The Government of Malawi has been implementing several interventions to economically uplift the lives of women.

- a. The Social Cash Transfer Program, also known as the **Mtukula Pakhomo** Program, is currently benefiting a total of 297,138 ultra-poor and labour constrained households of which 205,025 are female headed households. Through this program, several positive outcomes have been achieved including improved health and nutrition of up to 80 % of the beneficiary households, increased school enrolment from 87% to 95% leading to reduced stigma, high school retention rates, improved food security, and improved housing conditions of the beneficiary population.
- b. The Government introduced National Economic Empowerment Fund to provide opportunities for all including women and the youth.
- c. The Malawi Agricultural Commercialization and Resilience Enhancement Project has been actively investing in women. Under AGCOM 1, out of 350,000 direct beneficiaries, 58% were women

11. Actions taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls.

Programming around strengthening Social Protection towards women and girls. - Malawi Government through Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, in collaboration with development partners introduced a programme called Social Protection for Gender Empowerment and Resilience (SP-GEAR). The programme supports women-led economic empowerment interventions and household's graduation, promotes sustainable climate-smart agriculture practices and nutrition practices, enhance support through SLGs on households' sustainable graduation from extreme poverty, and provide skills development for girls.

a. Strengthened Cash Transfer for Families with Children that Prioritize Women as Recipients

Malawi's Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP), also known as '*Mtukula Pakhomo*,' has been significantly expanded over the past five years. This program targets ultra-poor and labour-constrained households, with a special focus on female-headed households. The SCTP has been supported by development partners and international organizations, to ensure that women are prioritized as recipients, thereby improving the welfare of children in these households. The program's impact has been notable in reducing poverty, improving nutrition, and increasing school attendance among children.

b. Introduced or Strengthened Social Protection for Women of Working Age

The Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP II) has introduced and strengthened various social protection initiatives targeting women of working age. One of the key components is the Public Works Program (PWP), which provides temporary employment opportunities with a strong emphasis on women's participation. These public works projects, often involving infrastructure development and environmental conservation, offer income support to women while also equipping them with valuable skills. The program has been instrumental in enhancing the economic security of women across the country.

c. Introduced or strengthened social protection for older women (e.g. expansion of social pensions, moratoriums, inflation adjustment, introduction of pension credits for caregivers)

In 2024, Malawi Government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare introduced the Urban Intervention Shock-Responsive Cash Transfer. The intervention seeks to support vulnerable households whenever an inflationary shock hits the country. The programme primarily targets female-headed, and child-headed households and those other households headed by vulnerabilities like chronic illnesses, elderly, and persons with disabilities.

d. Introduced or Strengthened Social Protection for Older Women

Malawi has recognized the vulnerability of older women and introduced measures to provide them with social protection. The Social Pension Scheme, currently in its pilot phase, aims to offer regular cash transfers to elderly individuals, particularly targeting older women who often face economic marginalization. This initiative is part of a broader effort to reduce poverty among elderly women and ensure they have access to basic necessities.

e. Extended Social Protection to Women in Informal Employment(e.g. subsidies for participation in contributory schemes; inclusion in non-contributory schemes)

To support women in informal employment, Malawi has expanded the reach of social protection through initiatives like the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Fund. This fund provides financial support and business training to women entrepreneurs operating in the informal sector. Additionally, collaborations with NGOs have led to the development of social insurance schemes specifically designed for informal workers, offering benefits like health insurance and maternity leave to women who typically lack access to formal social protection mechanisms.

Malawi Government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare adjusted the process of targeting beneficiaries in order to provide more access to marginalised women. The paradigm shift now allows categorical targeting instead of predominantly relying on Proxy Means Testing (PMT). The new approach gives more access to lactating women (households with under-2 children), households with disabled members, households with chronically ill members, households with elderly members over 64 years of age. The aim is to have such marginalised groups have easier access to social protection against any forms of exclusion or inclusion errors.

12. Actions taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls

a. Promoted Women's Access to Health Services Through Expansion of Universal Health Coverage or Public Health Services

- Introduction of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS): Malawi has been developing the National Health Insurance Scheme to improve access to healthcare for its citizens, particularly targeting vulnerable groups like women and girls. This scheme is expected to reduce financial barriers to accessing healthcare services .
- Scaling Up of Community-Based Health Services: The Malawi government, in collaboration with NGOs, has expanded community-based health services, focusing on maternal and child health. This initiative has been crucial in bringing health services closer to women in rural and hard-to-reach areas .
- Strengthening the Health Sector Strategic Plan III (2023 to 2030): This plan emphasizes universal health coverage, with a particular focus on improving women's health through better access to essential services, availability of medicines, and training of healthcare workers.

a. Expanded Specific Health Services for Women and Girls, Including Sexual and Reproductive Health Services, Maternal Health, and HIV Services

- Scaling Up of Family Planning Services: Under the Family Planning 2020 (FP2020) initiative, Malawi has expanded access to contraceptives and family planning services, aiming to reduce unintended pregnancies and improve maternal health outcomes .
- Improvement of Maternal Health Services: Through the Safe Motherhood Initiative, Malawi has invested in upgrading maternity facilities, increasing the number of skilled birth attendants, and ensuring the availability of essential maternal health supplies .
- Integration of HIV Services with Reproductive Health: Malawi has integrated HIV services into sexual and reproductive health programs, providing comprehensive care that includes HIV testing, counselling, and treatment during antenatal visits.

c. Promoted Male Involvement in Sexual and Reproductive Health, Including Contraceptives Uptake and Responsible Sexual Behaviour

- Men as Partners (MAP) Initiative: The MAP initiative has been successful in involving men in reproductive health by encouraging them to participate in family planning, antenatal visits, and discussions on responsible sexual behaviour.
- Male Champions for Family Planning: This program trains men to advocate for family planning in their communities, helping to increase contraceptive uptake and reduce stigma around its use.
- Engagement of Religious and Traditional Leaders: Religious and traditional leaders in Malawi have been involved in promoting male responsibility in sexual and reproductive health, using their influence to encourage men to support contraceptive use and responsible sexual behaviour

d. Undertaken Gender-Specific Public Awareness/Health Promotion Campaigns

- National Safe Motherhood Campaign: This campaign raises awareness about maternal and child health, emphasizing the importance of skilled birth attendance and addressing gender-specific barriers to accessing these services.
- Zero Tolerance on Gender-Based Violence Campaign: Malawi has conducted public awareness campaigns to combat gender-based violence (GBV) and its impact on women's health, aiming to change societal attitudes and encourage prevention and reporting.
- Girls Not Brides Campaign: This campaign focuses on ending child marriage in Malawi, highlighting the health risks associated with early marriage and promoting the importance of girls' education for better health outcomes .

e. Provided Gender-Responsiveness Training for Health Service Providers

- Gender-Responsive Health Training Programs: Malawi has implemented training programs to ensure that healthcare providers are equipped to deliver gender-sensitive care, particularly in maternal and reproductive health.
- Integration of Gender into Medical Curriculum: Medical training institutions in Malawi have integrated gender-specific content into their curricula to prepare healthcare professionals for providing gender-sensitive services.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) on Gender Issues: The Ministry of Health has introduced CPD modules focused on gender issues, including GBV and sexual and reproductive health rights, to improve the quality of care for women and girls.

13. Actions taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented.

In the past five years Malawi has taken several significant steps to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, particularly in sectors where they are underrepresented. These efforts span across various initiatives and collaborations with international organizations, focusing on enhancing access to education, reducing gender disparities, and empowering young women. These interventions collectively address various barriers to education for girls and women, including economic constraints, health risks, and social norms, aiming to create a more supportive and equitable educational environment.

a. Taken Measures to Increase Girls' Access to, Retention in, and Completion of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Skills Development Programmes

- Education is a building block for human capital development and pivotal for national development. It is the backbone for breaking intergenerational poverty through provision of better opportunities to participate in national development. Malawi has registered significant progress in the number of girls accessing primary, secondary, and tertiary education. The trend of gender parity index (GPI) for the past five years has been consistent at both primary and secondary schools with an average GPI of 1.03 for primary level favouring girls and 0.95 for secondary level favouring boys. Significant gender gaps still exist at the secondary school level mainly due to high school dropouts among females in secondary school (61% as of 2022) especially those from poor families and these are largely due early marriages and childbirth and male preference among communities as well as the participation of the girl child in unpaid care work at household level on the demand side. Regarding the supply side long distances to school, poor infrastructure and sanitation issues have contributed to dropouts.
- The participation and performance of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) remains low though some improvements have been registered. The roots of this imbalance are in the social, cultural and gender norms that shape and undermine girls' confidence and willingness to study STEM subjects. There has been progress in girls' access to technical and vocational skills because of the introduction of community technical colleges and Technical Entrepreneur and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) girls' scholarships that needs to be sustained. In addition, the introduction of Open Distance Learning (ODL) programs in all public universities has helped address existing gaps in access to post-secondary education however more investments are still needed.
- The nation has introduced community skills development centres to increase self-employment and also introduced gender policies in TCCs to address root causes of poverty of women.
- Expansion of the TEVET Bursary Scheme: The Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) Authority in Malawi has expanded its bursary scheme to increase access for girls. This scheme specifically targets disadvantaged girls, enabling them to enrol in and complete TVET programs. The initiative aims to address gender disparities in traditionally male-dominated fields like engineering and carpentry by providing financial support and career guidance.
- Establishment of Girl-Centred Skills Development Centres: Several girl-centred skills development centres have been established across Malawi, offering tailored programs in fields such as tailoring, agribusiness, and ICT. These centres focus on equipping girls with practical skills that align with market demands, thereby enhancing their employability and economic independence.
- Public-Private Partnerships for Girls in TVET: Malawi has fostered public-private partnerships to create more opportunities for girls in TVET programs. For example, collaborations with industries have led to internship and apprenticeship opportunities for girls, particularly in sectors where they are underrepresented. These partnerships aim to bridge the gap between education and employment for young women.

b. Strengthened Educational Curricula to Increase Gender-Responsiveness and Eliminate Bias, at All Levels of Education

- Revision of the National Education Curriculum: Malawi has revised its national education curriculum to incorporate gender-responsive content and eliminate gender biases. The new curriculum promotes gender equality and aims to challenge traditional stereotypes, ensuring that both boys and girls see themselves reflected positively in their education.
- Introduction of Gender Studies in Teacher Training: Teacher training programs in Malawi now include modules on gender studies and gender-sensitive teaching methods. This training equips educators with the knowledge and tools to address gender issues in the classroom, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.
- Incorporation of Gender-Responsive Pedagogy in Primary and Secondary Education: Gender-responsive pedagogy has been integrated into primary and secondary education, encouraging teachers to use inclusive language, provide equal participation opportunities, and challenge gender norms. This approach helps to create a more equitable classroom environment and supports the academic achievement of girls.

c. Provided Gender Equality and Human Rights Training for Teachers and Other Education Professionals

- Implementation of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Framework: The Ministry of Education in Malawi has implemented the GESI framework, which includes mandatory gender equality and human rights training for all education professionals. This training focuses on promoting gender equity, understanding human rights principles, and addressing gender-based violence within educational settings.
- Training Through the Malawi Education Sector Improvement Project (MESIP): MESIP has included comprehensive gender equality and human rights training for teachers. This training helps educators recognize and address gender disparities in their classrooms and schools, promoting a culture of respect and equality.
- Integration of Gender and Human Rights Modules in Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs for teachers now include modules on gender equality and human rights. These modules aim to reinforce the importance of these issues throughout an educator's career, ensuring that they remain central to teaching practices.

d. Promoted Safe, Harassment-Free, and Inclusive Educational Environments for Women and Girls

- Implementation of the School Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Policy: Malawi has implemented a School GBV Policy aimed at preventing and addressing sexual harassment and violence in schools. This policy includes clear guidelines for reporting and addressing GBV cases, creating a safer learning environment for girls and developed twenty one (21) Higher Education Gender Policies and TEVET Technical Colleges Model Gender Policy.
- Establishment of Safe Schools Committees: Safe Schools Committees have been established in many schools to monitor and promote a harassment-free environment. These committees include students, teachers, and community members, working together to ensure that schools are safe spaces for all students, particularly girls.
- Introduction of the Safe Spaces Initiative: The Safe Spaces Initiative provides girls with dedicated areas within schools where they can feel secure and supported. These spaces

offer resources and counselling services, helping girls to deal with issues such as bullying, harassment, and mental health challenges.

e. Increased Access to Skills and Training in New and Emerging Fields, Especially STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and Digital Fluency and Literacy

- **Girls' STEM Camps and Clubs:** Malawi has introduced STEM camps and clubs for girls in secondary schools, aiming to spark interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These initiatives provide hands-on learning experiences, mentorship from female professionals, and exposure to potential STEM careers.
- **Digital Skills Training Programs for Girls:** The government, in collaboration with NGOs, has launched digital skills training programs targeting girls in both urban and rural areas. These programs focus on equipping girls with essential skills in areas such as coding, digital marketing, and online entrepreneurship, preparing them for the digital economy.
- **Scholarships for Girls in STEM Fields:** Malawi has established scholarships for girls pursuing studies in STEM fields at the tertiary level. These scholarships aim to reduce financial barriers and encourage more girls to enter and excel in STEM-related careers.

f. Ensured Access to Safe Water and Sanitation Services and Facilitated Menstrual Hygiene Management, Especially in Schools and Other Education/Training Settings

- **School WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Programs:** Malawi has implemented School WASH programs that provide safe water, improved sanitation facilities, and hygiene education in schools. These programs include the construction of gender-segregated toilets and handwashing stations, which are crucial for maintaining a clean and healthy school environment.
- **Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Initiatives:** The government, with support from partners, has launched MHM initiatives in schools. These initiatives provide girls with menstrual hygiene kits, education on menstrual health, and access to private facilities for managing their menstruation. Such efforts have reduced absenteeism among girls during their menstrual periods.
- **Integration of MHM into School Curriculum:** Menstrual hygiene management has been integrated into the school curriculum as part of health education. This ensures that both boys and girls receive accurate information about menstruation, reducing stigma and promoting a supportive environment for girls.

g. Strengthened Measures to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancies and to Enable Adolescent Girls to Continue Their Education in the Case of Pregnancy and/or Motherhood

The Re-Admission Policy for Pregnant Girls: Malawi has implemented a re-admission policy that allows pregnant girls and young mothers to return to school after giving birth. This policy aims to reduce the dropout rate among adolescent girls and ensure they have the opportunity to complete their education.

The Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) Programs: ASRH programs have been expanded in Malawi to provide comprehensive sexual education, access to contraceptives, and counselling services for adolescents. These programs aim to reduce the incidence of adolescent pregnancies and support girls in making informed decisions about their reproductive health.

Community-Based Education on Adolescent Pregnancy: Community outreach programs have been strengthened to educate parents, guardians, and community leaders about the importance of continuing education for adolescent girls, even in the case of pregnancy. These programs also focus on reducing the stigma associated with adolescent motherhood.

14. Actions taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated

a. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

In the past five years The Government of Malawi has embarked on a new three-year social protection program to empower the most vulnerable women and girls in nine districts to get out of extreme poverty. The districts are Mzimba, Ntcheu, Balaka, Chikwawa, Mulanje, Mwanza, Neno, Nsanje and Zomba. The program, called **Social Protection for Gender Empowerment and Resilience (SP-GEAR)** or **Amai Titukuke**, supports implementation of the Malawi National Social Protection Strategy (MNSPS), the Social Cash Transfer Program and targeted socio-economic empowerment activities, which are expected to benefit more than 500,000 people between 2024 and 2026. The program also signifies a significant step forward in efforts to address the unique challenges women and girls face in Malawi. Recognizing the critical role women and girls play in society, this initiative is designed to provide targeted support that not only enhances their socio-economic status but also strengthens their resilience to crises, shocks and disasters.

In addition, the program will increase access to social services related to social behavior change, nutrition, early childhood development, sexual reproductive health and prevention of gender-based violence in the nine districts. More than 20 per cent of Malawi's 19.6 million population lives in extreme poverty, which disproportionately affects women and girls. In Malawi, women also head over 75 per cent of the families living in poverty amid prevalent violence and harmful practices that undermine their participation in economic activities⁸.

Under the new initiative, which combines the efforts of Malawi Government, UNICEF, the European Union, the Government of Ireland and other partners, a total of \$26.5 million (about MWK46 billion) has been mobilized to tackle challenges that narrow women's access to economic opportunities and essential social services. The amount includes \$23.6 million (about MWK41 billion) from the EU and \$2.9 million (about K5 billion) from Ireland.

Available evidence highlights that, cash-plus programs that combine cash transfers with complementary components such as human capital services, livelihood opportunities and access to sexual and reproductive health services, can deliver social protection rights, empower people and better enable them to participate fully in the social and economic lives of their families, communities and nations. This program will help generate similar evidence for Malawi⁹.

Furthermore, A number of health and education facilities across the country including economic infrastructure that will stimulate the economy to recovery have been prioritized and front-loaded to the SERP period of 2021-2023 (for both Government and cooperating partner funded projects).

⁸ Malawi 2022 Voluntary National Review Report for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/malawi/press-releases/malawi-embarks-new-programme-address-poverty-among-women-and-girls>. 23 April, 2024.

These include kick-starting of the 900 health posts and 1800 health community health worker housing units under the National Acceleration Community Health Roadmap.

15. Forms of gender-based violence which Malawi has prioritized for action

Over the past five years Malawi has prioritized the following forms of gender -based violence;

1. Sexual violence- Including rape, sexual intercourse with a child (formerly defilement), sexual harassment, and any other form of unwanted sexual contact.
To address this, Malawi has made efforts by increasing access to justice for survivors, through the establishment of special training of police officers, prosecutors and magistrates.
2. Amendment of the Penal Code in 2023 which has enhanced the legal Framework for sexual offences by properly defining the elements of the Offences and enhancing the sentences.
3. Domestic violence: This includes physical, emotional and psychological abuse within domestic relationships. Malawi has prioritized this form of GBV by enforcing the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act which provides legal protection for survivors and by implementing awareness campaigns to encourage reporting of domestic violence.
4. Child marriages: Malawi has prioritized this form of GBV by implementing the National Strategy on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy, which aims to reduce the prevalence of child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

16. Actions prioritized to address gender-based violence

In the past five years, Malawi has undertaken several actions to address Gender Based Violence (GBV) through legislative, policy and programmatic measures. Key actions include:

1. Legislative and policy frameworks; Enforcement of the Gender equality Act (2013). This act, although passed earlier, has been a foundation for recent efforts, ensuring that gender equality and the protection of women and girls from violence are prioritized. Implementation of the National Plan of Action to combat GBV and the National Strategy for Ending Child Marriages (2018-2023) to end GBV and child marriages through community engagement, education and legal reforms.
2. Strengthening legal and institutional capacities; Establishment of One-Stop Centers. These centers provide comprehensive services to GBV survivors, including medical care, legal assistance, and psychological support, in a single location to ensure quick and effective help.
3. Training Law Enforcement; Continuous training police officers, judicial officials, and health workers to handle GBV cases sensitively and efficiently.
4. Public Awareness and community Engagement: Nationwide awareness campaigns using media, community leaders and grassroots organizations to educate the public on GBV, its consequences and available resources for survivors.
5. Engaging traditional leaders; Collaborations with traditional leaders to challenge and change harmful cultural practices that perpetuate GBV, such as early marriages and gender discrimination.
6. Support for survivors. Shelter and Safe spaces; Increased availability of shelter for women and children fleeing violence, providing them with safety and support their lives.

7. Economic Empowerment Programs; Initiatives aimed at economically empowering women, thus reducing their vulnerability to GBV by providing vocational training and financial literacy programs.
8. International Collaboration and Funding. Partnerships with International Organizations; Collaborations with entities such as UN women, UNICEF and various NGOs to bolster resources, expertise and funding dedicated to GBV prevention and response. Donor-Funding Projects; Implementation of projects funded by international donors focusing on GBV prevention, survivor support and systematic changes to sustain long-term impact.

17. Strategies to prevent gender-based violence

Malawi has employed various strategies to prevent gender-based violence which include:

- a. Community Engagement and awareness campaign for example initiatives like 16 days of activism, community dialogues, and public events to raise awareness about gender-based violence and promote gender equality.
- b. Use of gender transformative and norms change approach: Implemented Programs aimed at challenging harmful social norms and promoting positive gender roles, including ‘‘the HeForShe’’ campaign.
- c. Education and skills development, supporting girls’ education.
- d. Over the past five years, Malawi has implemented several initiatives to prevent gender-based violence (GBV). Key initiatives include; Spotlight Initiative: This program, supported by the European Union and the United Nations, focused on eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Key areas include legislative reforms, support for institutions like the Malawi Human Rights Commission, comprehensive sexuality education, and data collection to track and prevent child marriages.
- e. Women’s Rights Organization: Local and international funding has been directed to women's rights organizations, which provide critical services such as shelters, counseling, and legal assistance for GBV survivors. These organizations play a crucial role in driving policy changes, transforming social norms, and empowering women and girls through education and community initiatives
- f. Legislative and Policy Frameworks: Malawi has adopted several policies to advance gender equality, such as the National Gender Policy and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security. These frameworks align with international commitments like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Maputo Protocol.
- g. Community and Youth Engagement: Various programs involve youth and community leaders in advocacy and education efforts to change attitudes toward GBV. Initiatives like the DREAMS (Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored, and Safe) Partnership focus on reducing HIV rates among adolescent girls and young women, which intersects with efforts to combat GBV. These strategies reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing GBV in Malawi, combining legal reforms, community engagement, support services, and data-driven interventions.

18. Actions taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)

Over the past five years, Malawi has taken several significant steps to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV). These efforts have been part of a broader strategy to address gender inequality and protect women's rights in the digital space. The following are the actions that Malawi has taken:

- a. **Legislative and Policy Measures:** Malawi has been working on strengthening its legislative framework to address various forms of gender-based violence, including those facilitated by technology. This includes the Electronic Transaction and Cybersecurity Act (2017) to ensure that women's digital rights are protected online.
- b. **Awareness and Education Campaigns:** Awareness campaigns have been crucial in addressing cyber violence. Malawi has participated in regional and global initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the dangers and prevention of technology-facilitated GBV. For instance, campaigns similar to the EU's #SafeSpaces, which highlight the types of cyber violence such as cyberstalking and online harassment, have helped in educating the public and promoting safer online environments for women and girls.
- c. **Support Systems and Reporting Mechanisms:** Establishing support systems for victims of cyber violence has been a priority. This includes creating safe spaces online and offline where victims can report incidents of cyber violence and receive the necessary support. These systems are part of broader efforts to build resilient structures capable of addressing various forms of GBV effectively. **International Cooperation and Training:** Malawi has also benefited from international cooperation and training programs aimed at combating cyber violence. These programs often provide training for law enforcement and judicial officials on handling cases of technology-facilitated GBV, ensuring they are equipped to support victims and prosecute offenders.
- d. These steps illustrate Malawi's commitment to addressing the evolving nature of gender-based violence in the digital age. Continued efforts in these areas are essential to create a safer and more equitable online environment for all.

19. Measures taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV

Over the past five years, Malawi has implemented several measures to resource women's organizations working to address and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). These efforts include policy reforms, international partnerships, and community-based initiatives.

- **Policy and Legislative Frameworks:** Malawi has strengthened its legal frameworks to combat GBV through the National Gender Policy and the National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence. Key legislation such as the Gender Equality Act and the Domestic Violence Act provide the legal backbone for these efforts.
- **International Partnerships and Programs:** The Government of Malawi, in collaboration with the United Nations and the European Union, implemented through various Implementing Partners (Local and International NGOs) the Spotlight Initiative. This multi-year program focused on reducing violence against women and girls the districts of

Nkhatabay, Mzimba, Dowa, Ntchisi, Nsanje and Machinga. The initiative aims to enhance legal frameworks, provide essential services to survivors, and promote gender equality.

- **World Bank Collaboration:** Malawi has partnered with the World Bank to incorporate GBV risk assessments and survivor-centred responses in its projects. These efforts include training project workers on GBV issues, establishing reporting and referral systems, and collaborating with local women’s organizations to support survivors. For instance, the Shire Valley Transformation Project in Chikwawa District has improved access to services for GBV survivors through the creation of One Stop Centres.
- **Community-Based Initiatives:** Local women’s organizations play a crucial role in the fight against GBV. These groups often have deep roots in their communities and can provide immediate and culturally appropriate support to survivors. Efforts include awareness campaigns, support networks, and advocacy for women’s rights and protection. Education and Prevention: Keeping girls in school is a strategic focus for reducing their vulnerability to GBV and child marriage. The government has been working to make schools safe spaces where harmful gender norms can be challenged, thereby preventing early marriage and school-related GBV.
- These combined efforts illustrate Malawi’s multi-faceted approach to tackling GBV, emphasizing both immediate support for survivors and long-term preventive measures.

20. Actions taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media

- Designated the First Lady as Child online Protection Ambassador in March 2024 and participated and collaborated with her organization at a girls’ retreat in August 2024 in Zomba. Developed the Cybercrimes and E- Evidence Bill which is finalized and ready for submission to Parliament and provides for the crimes related to different types of violence against women and children including those listed here
- Developed the Child online Protection (COP) Strategy which includes measures for protection of children against online abuse and sexual exploitation
- Conducting massive campaigns related to Cyber Hygiene addressing different types of online violence against women and children
- Established collaboration between Human rights groups and other law enforcement agencies when handling (investigating and prosecuting) online crimes including those victimizing girls.

21. Actions taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls

Over the past five years, Malawi has implemented several initiatives to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls. Key actions include:

- **The Spotlight Initiative:** Launched in 2019 in partnership with the European Union and the United Nations, this multi-year program targets gender-based violence (GBV) across six districts in Malawi. It aims to eliminate violence against women and girls through various

interventions, including community engagement, legal reform, and support services for survivors.

- **Legal and Policy Reforms:** Malawi has enacted significant legislation to combat GBV and support gender equality. Key laws include the Gender Equality Act, Domestic Violence Act, and the Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Law, which sets the legal age of marriage at 18. These reforms are supported by the National Gender Policy and the National Action Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence
- **HeForShe Campaign:** This nationwide campaign, part of a broader effort to mobilize men and boys in the fight against GBV, has raised awareness and promoted gender equality across Malawi. It has included sensitization programs and the establishment of a Chief's Gender Council to support efforts against child marriages.
- **Educational Interventions:** Recognizing the link between education and reduced vulnerability to GBV, Malawi has focused on keeping girls in school. Initiatives to reduce school-related GBV and support girls' education aim to decrease dropout rates and early marriages. These efforts are critical in empowering girls and protecting their right.
- The policy measures which have been taken include the adoption of the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriages (2018- 2023) and the National Action Plan on UNSCR-1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2025). The Government of Malawi is also sensitizing communities to modify societal attitude towards harmful cultural practices.
- District Chief Forums and 310 community Chief Forums are leading in GBV Patrols, ending child marriages, modifying and eliminating harmful practices. Religious leaders are also playing a crucial role in eliminating harmful cultural practices in communities. The primary targets of these interventions are vulnerable girls (including those already married, withdrawn or at risk of getting married), parents, guardians, relatives and men and boys who help perpetrate are affected by the practice of child marriage; and children's peer groups. The secondary targets are religious, community, traditional and cultural leaders, policymakers, school administrators and teachers, local government officers, police, social workers, child protection workers, health workers, members of law enforcement agents and the judiciary

a. Persons with Albinism

To combat the attacks against people with albinism, the Government of Malawi in collaboration with various stakeholders has been implementing the following special measures:

- Constructed 68 houses out of which 56 have been handed over and priority (80%) given to women and children
- The establishment of a multi-sectoral National Technical Committee on Abuse of Persons with Albinism in Malawi that has been discussing with all concerned stakeholders on the initiatives and strategies to end the increased and gross violations of human rights of persons with albinism;
- The adoption of 13th June as an International Albinism Awareness Day (IAAD) and the implementation of multimedia awareness programmes to educate and sensitize the general public on albinism issues in the country;
- Training of police prosecutors and magistrates across the country in prosecuting cases of attacks against persons with albinism;

- Review of the Penal Code and the Anatomy Act to make provisions for new offences and meting out stiffer penalties;
- Placement of a Practice Direction by the Chief Justice that all albinism-related cases must solely be handled by professional magistrates;
- Development of a handbook for prosecutors, magistrates and judges to guide the prosecution of albinism cases;
- Strengthening of community protection and cross-border systems using inter-country and regional cooperation;
- Placement of learners with albinism in schools with boarding facilities where the police are providing security; and
- Mapping of persons with albinism across the country to identify their population size and where they live to arrange for proper security measures.
- Provision of communication gadgets.

b. Trafficking in Persons

Since the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons Act in 2015, the Government of Malawi adopted the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to identify trafficking victims. Furthermore, the Government has gazetted 4 safe homes for victims of trafficking and conducted various trainings targeting health workers, social welfare officers, law enforcement officers and judicial officers.

The Government of Malawi through the Department of Social Welfare and Ministry of Homeland Security also provides victims of trafficking with psychosocial support and access to remedies, through legal redress. To specifically address the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation and economic reasons on the basis of their various vulnerabilities including disasters and other pandemic, the Government is implementing the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2021 to 2025). The plan is aligned with UNSCR pillars of participation, protection, prevention, relief and recovery.

c. Refugees and Asylum seekers

Malawi continues to uphold the principle of non-refoulment. Section 10 of the Refugee Act (Cap. 15:04) confirms the principle. The Government, through the Refugees Department within the Ministry of Home Land Security, ensures that asylum seekers have access to refugee status determination procedures from the point of entry.

To comply with the principle of non-refoulment Persons of Concern (PoC) who claim asylum are assessed at the point of entry into Malawi by the Department of Immigration, once cleared, they are referred to the Transit Shelter for further processing.

The Government of Malawi with the support of cooperating partners provide basic necessities to asylum seekers and refugees present at Transit Shelters and Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

d. Training and capacity development

The Government of Malawi in cooperation with international partners such as UN bodies, the Commonwealth Secretariat, regional bodies such as SADC and local CSOs, provide trainings relating to the prohibition of torture. The Malawi Police Service and the Malawi Prisons Service

conduct such trainings to cadets on enrolment and continuous trainings throughout their service. The trainings also target senior police and prison officers.

e. International Cooperation

To ensure that acts of torture are investigated, and perpetrators arrested and prosecuted, the Government of Malawi enters into extradition treaties and mutual legal assistance treaties with other countries and regional bodies. Malawi ratified the South African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Extradition. Malawi has also entered into several Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties and Memoranda of Understanding with Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, India, Egypt, Kenya and the Netherlands.

Challenges

- a. inadequate funds to implement progressive laws and policies;
- b. lack of data collection mechanisms ;
- c. limited training and capacity development of law enforcement officers, judicial officers and medical practitioners in addressing cases of torture;
- d. limited coordination between law enforcement agencies; and
- e. limited awareness about the provisions of the Convention despite the sensitization campaigns conducted by Government and Civil Society Organisations.

PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

22. Actions and measures taken to promote women’s participation in public life and decision-making

- a. **Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women’s participation in politics, especially at decision-making level, including electoral system reform, adoption of temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets**

Malawi continued coordinating the implementation of the following strategies to advance women’s participation in decision making in public life and other decision making bodies: the Gender Equality Act (2013), 50:50 campaign which aims at increasing representation of women in positions of leadership and decision making in **key institutions**, for instance, political parties, cabinet, parliament and local councils and the 40:60 of either sex recruitment strategy of females and males in the public sector.

These measures have resulted in an increased number of women representations in public life and decision making positions. The matrix below summarises the situation:

Table 1: Women in Public Position

Category A: Women In Politics	2023	2024
Women representation in Cabinet (cabinet ministers)	40%	45%
Women in Parliament (Members of Parliament)	23	23
Ambassadors	50	50
Women representation – Ambassadors	33.3	33.3

Local councils	14.6	14.6
----------------	------	------

The country developed and is implementing the 2024-2030 Strategy on Political Empowerment of Women will provide strategic direction and guidance to the implementation of innovative interventions that would increase the representation of women in Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government positions and remove all barriers that prevent women’s equal participation in the political arena. The specific goals for this Strategy are:

- Promote successful participation of women in Presidential and Vice President Elections; and
- Increase the proportion of women in Parliament and Local Government seats to at least thirty-five (35) percent in 2025, and fifty (50) percent in 2030 General Elections.

Table 2: Women in Managerial Positions (Public Sector [Civil Service and Oversight Institutions])

Grade	Number of Men	Number of Women	% Men	% Women	Total
A-Head of Public Service Level	0	1	0	100	1
B-Deputy Head of Public Service Level	17	5	77	23	22
C- Principal Secretary level	71	33	68	32	104
D- Director Level	189	66	74	26	255
E- Deputy Director Level	568	237	71	29	805
F- Chief Officer Level	865	339	72	28	1204
Total	1710	680	72	28	2391

Source: DHRMD 2024

Table 3: Women in the Judiciary

Post Title	Grade	Number of Men	Number of Women	% MEN	% Women	TOTAL
Chief Justice	JS1/P1	1		100		1
Deputy Chief Justice/ Supreme Court of Appeal	JS2	8	2	80	20	10
Registrar	JS8/P2A	1		100	0	1
High Court Judge	JS8/P2B	24	15	62	38	39
Chairperson IRC/ Senior Deputy Registrar	JS9/D	2		100		2
Chief Resident Magistrate	JS10/E	3		100		3
Assistant Registrar	JS11/P5	7	6	54	46	13
Chief Accountant	CS4/P5	5	2	71	29	7
Total		51	25	67	33	76

Source: DHRMD 2024

b. Provided opportunities for mentorship, training in leadership, decision-making, public speaking, self-assertion, political campaigning

The Government, through the Ministry responsible for gender affairs, 50/50 Management Agency and other stakeholders and implemented a 50:50 campaign seeking to promote women's participation and representation in politics for the 2019 Tripartite Election.. This is a replica of the 2009 and 2014 initiative though with different approaches. The program focused more on capacity building for aspiring candidates for both Parliamentary and Local Government positions. The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) took an initiative to give a fifty percent discount on nomination fees for women and persons with disabilities and 25 percent discount for the youth.

c. Taken measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish violence against women in politics

- The Gender and Elections/Violence Against Women (GEER) Monitoring room provided real time data on incidents of violence against in elections, reporting to the Police. The support has also been linked to legal assistance which is offered on a pro bono basis to the affected victims of violence who may not be able to afford the legal fees.

d. Encouraged the participation of minority and young women, including through sensitization and mentorship programmes

Though there have been fluctuations in measures that have taken to elevate women to high decision-making positions within Government, some women have been appointed in powerful decision-making positions.

23. Actions taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT).

a. Collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis

Malawi continued strengthening the coordination and implementation of the Gender Equality Act (2013) and capacity and backup technical support in gender mainstreaming. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi chapter in collaboration with Gender Links has provided training to 12 media houses in the country on gender responsive and non-stereotyped reporting and advertising.

Additionally, Gender Links has been building the capacity of media personnel in Malawi by providing training on a regular and/or continuing basis to ensure that both management and lower-level staff are gender responsive/sensitive in their reporting so as to avoid negative or stereotyped portrayal of women in reporting and advertising. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi chapter in collaboration with Gender Links has provided training to some journalists in the country on gender responsive and non-stereotyped reporting and advertising.

Despite all the efforts, very few women occupy decision making position in most media houses; instead, there are more into covering small events.

Over the past five years, Malawi has undertaken several initiatives to enhance women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media and through information and communication technologies (ICT). These actions align with the Beijing +30 agenda, focusing on political empowerment and increasing the presence and influence of women in media and ICT sectors.

b. Strengthening TVET in Media and ICT

Malawi has strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICT, particularly in areas of management and leadership. The aim was to equip women with the necessary skills to assume leadership roles and enhance their participation in decision-making processes within these industries.

The program targeted young women and female professionals already working in media and ICT, providing courses on advanced journalism, digital media production, ICT management, and leadership. With a budget of \$200,000, funded by the government and international donors, the initiative has trained over 500 women since its inception. Impact evaluations indicate a significant increase in the number of women taking on managerial roles and leading projects in their respective fields, reflecting the program's success in empowering women¹⁰.

¹⁰ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Evaluation Report 2021

c. Enhancing Access, Affordability, and Use of ICTs

To enhance access, affordability, and use of ICTs for women and girls, Malawi has implemented several measures, including the establishment of community technology centres and free Wi-Fi hubs. In 2020, the government, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched the "Digital Inclusion for Women and Girls" initiative¹¹. This initiative aimed to bridge the digital divide by providing free access to ICT resources and training in rural and underserved urban areas.

- The initiative involved setting up 20 community technology centres equipped with computers, internet access, and digital literacy training programs. These centres targeted women and girls, especially those from marginalized communities, aiming to improve their digital skills and access to online information. The project had a budget of \$500,000 and reached approximately 10,000 women and girls within the first year. Evaluations showed increased ICT usage and enhanced digital literacy among participants, contributing to greater inclusion and opportunities for women and girls in the digital economy¹².

d. Support for Women's Media Networks and Organizations

- Malawi has also provided substantial support to women's media networks and organizations to amplify their voices and enhance their influence in media and ICT sectors. One significant initiative is the "Women in Media Network," launched in 2018 with support from the Ministry of Gender, Community Development, and Social Welfare and various international partners¹³.
- The network aims to create a platform for female journalists, media professionals, and ICT experts to share experiences, advocate for gender equality, and support each other in professional development. With a budget of \$150,000, the initiative has facilitated training workshops, networking events, and advocacy campaigns. It has successfully increased the visibility and impact of women in media, with many members advancing to senior positions and influencing media content and policies¹⁴.
- Additionally, a female journalist is chairing the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi Chapter, and a female Member of Parliament chairs the Parliamentary Committee on Media.

e. Strengthened the provision of formal and technical vocational education and training (TVET) in media and ICTs, including in areas of management and leadership

Several institutions that include, Malawi Polytechnic, Malawi Institute of Journalism and other private training institution have introduced media related courses ranging from certificate, diploma as well as Degree. There are indications that more young women have are opting to do journalism which was not common some 10 years ago.

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Malawi, Digital Inclusion Initiative Report 2020

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ministry of Gender, Community Development, and Social Welfare, Women in Media Network Report 2018.

¹⁴ Ibid

f. Collaborated with employers in the media and ICT field to improve internal policies and hiring practices on a voluntary basis

- Malawi continued strengthening the coordination and implementation of the Gender Equality Act (2013) and capacity and backup technical support in gender mainstreaming. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi chapter in collaboration with Gender Links has provided training to 12 media houses in the country on gender responsive and non-stereotyped reporting and advertising.
- Gender Links has been building the capacity of media personnel in Malawi by providing training on a regular and/or continuing basis to ensure that both management and lower-level staff are gender responsive/sensitive in their reporting so as to avoid negative or stereotyped portrayal of women in reporting and advertising. The Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi chapter in collaboration with Gender Links has provided training to some journalists in the country on gender responsive and non-stereotyped reporting and advertising.
- Despite all the efforts, very few women occupy decision making position in most media houses; instead, there are more into covering small events.

24. Country’s national women’s machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women)

Malawi has its version of a national gender machinery, established to break the barriers against women representation in politics and to promote women interests. A female minister has always headed the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCSW)¹⁵.

Central government plays a critical role in delivering public goods and services. In the case of gender equality, the institutionalization of a gender machinery with a Ministry of Gender at the level of executive government has been the game-changer in response to the wave of activity for gender equality in public governance in Malawi.

The Government of Malawi has taken a step in adopting a 40/60 per cent quota on employment in the public service, with a provision made in the *Gender Equality Act* of 2013. This requires an appointing authority in the public service to appoint no less than 40 per cent of either gender in any department in the public service. To fully implement the 40/60 quota, the *Malawi Public Service Regulations* has to be amended in terms of employment in the public service.

Impact

The Promotion of Women in Governance and Leadership is one of the main agenda of the Government of Malawi under the leadership of His Excellency President Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera¹⁶.

Malawi has made tremendous progress in bridging the gender gap in Politics and decision making positions. Currently, we boast of having 40%, 4 female Ministers in Malawi Cabinet; 22.7% of the 193 legislators in Parliament; and 14.6% of the 462 Councilors in local government. For the first

¹⁵ The Gender Machinery Women in Malawi Central Government Administration, MTI

¹⁶ Sustaining Women’s

Movement In Malawi: Post Election Collaboration Of The Women’s Parliamentary Caucus, CSO’s And Grassroots Women’s Groups Interim Report May 2019—June 2020

time, after the 2019 Tripartite Elections, the Malawi National Assembly elected a woman as Speaker, and we also have a female Clerk of Parliament. In the Public Service, we have a female Secretary to the President and Cabinet as well as her Deputy, 28% of Principal Secretaries are women; 30% women directors; and 50% of the recently appointed judges and ambassadors are women. Additionally, we have a female Director of Anti-Corruption Bureau and a female Ombudsman further, the Inspector General of the Malawi Police is also a woman.

Despite registering some successes; women face numerous challenges, one of which is Violence against Women in elections which prevents them from exercising and realizing their political rights and a range of other human rights. The root causes of vulnerability as indicated in many studies refer to the conventional and historical differential treatment of women by communities. These lead to persistent gender power imbalances with the end-product of massive exclusion of women from public as well as private decision-making spaces.

Some of the reasons for the poor participation and representation of women in politics and decision-making positions in Malawi include, socialization processes which result in negative social norms, discrimination against women as they are perceived not to be capable of leadership, gender insensitive political party constitutions, and related procedures and practices, general violence targeted against women in politics and election, cultural association of politics with ‘male’ traits of strength, deceit, and fighting, women’s own attitudes are significant; some female politicians believe that women are in capable of evaluating political issues, discrimination and ‘dirty tricks’ targeted on female politicians campaigns by men, including female colleagues and single female politicians are regarded with particular suspicion¹⁷.

Lesson leant

Malawi appointment of only female ministers for the Ministry of Gender has succeeded in creating a mind-set that gender issues are women issues only such that some high-ranking government male officials do not see the need to take gender issues seriously. Simply incorporating women into politics will not guarantee women’s empowerment but should have to strategically and consciously make their voices heard.

25. Mechanisms and tools used to mainstream gender equality across sectors

The Executive is headed by President and Cabinet and then there is a Principal Secretary Committee on Gender, Local Government, HIV and AIDS, Education and Labour. Malawi has a Secretariat of the National Gender Machinery which is a fully fledged Ministry with a Senior Cabinet Minister. Its current name is Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare. This provides policy direction, capacity building and Monitoring and Evaluation on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. The Executive coordinates development of policies, guidelines, legal instruments, planning and implementation of awareness programmes. The Secretariat with support from the UN, other development partners, MDAs, CSOs develop and enforce laws and policies, guidelines, standards and also report on gender equality and women empowerment. It provide technical support on gender analysis, gender audit, reduce gender based

¹⁷ Movement In Malawi: Post Election Collaboration Of The Women’s Parliamentary Caucus, CSO’s And Grassroots Women’s Groups Interim Report May 2019—June 2020

violence and support the gender machinery actors to implement interventions and report on key sector priority outcomes aligned to national gender legal and policy framework..

There are Gender Focal Points in Ministries, Departments and Agencies. These reports to the National Gender Machinery through Secretary for Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare. In Parliament there are parliamentary Committee on Community and Social Services. There is also parliamentary Women Caucus whose Mandate are to lobby and advocate for women's interests, gender policies and provide oversight functions to the National Gender Machinery

The Judiciary has services on Gender and support the Machinery in interpretation of gender related laws, capacity building and development of regulations, guidelines for management of legal matters related to gender equality and women empowerment. Additionally, Inter-Ministerial Coordination is through Gender Technical Working groups, Su Technical Working Groups and Taskforces ion Review of Gender Related Laws and Policies.

At District level, there is a Gender Section headed by Principal Gender Officer and there is Gender Technical Working Group and service committees that assist in the delivery of gender services.

26. Measures taken by the Malawi Human Rights Commission to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality

Malawi has a fully-fledged Malawi Human Rights Commission which is an independent body that is charged with the promotion and protection of human rights. The primary function of the Commission as provided by the Constitution of Malawi under section 129 and the Human Rights Commission Act is broad, encompassing the promotion, protection and investigation of violations of human rights accorded by the Constitution or any other law. According to section 12 of the Act, this primary function includes the power to investigate violations of human rights on its own motion or upon complaints received from any person, class of person or body. The functions, duties, powers, responsibilities, competence and methods of operation of the Commission are detailed in the Act.

27. Actions taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda.

Government of Malawi established the National Peace and Unity Commission and so far Commissioners comprising six (6) males and four (4) women with representation from the public sector, traditional leaders, faith leaders and civil society were sworn in and are now conducting required business as per principles of NAP on WPS for Malawi. Development partners supported the drafting of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021 to 2025) that guides operations of the MoGCDSW in facilitating the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 in Malawi. Among other achievements, the MoGCDSW, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government, Unity and Culture, and UN Women has established and strengthened district based Women Movements for Peace and Conflict prevention as well as equipping the women with gender responsive conflict prevention and peace building skills.

28. Actions taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings

In the past three years, over 400 women have joined Malawi Defence Force (MDF) while over 70 female soldiers have been commissioned to the ranks. The total number of female soldiers is more than 1500. There has been an increased number of women participating in peace negotiations to over 200 in different peace keeping missions. The MDF has deployed over 24 female soldiers as staff officers in different mission areas in the past two years. Malawi appointed a female as a representative in SADC Mediation Reference Group; and 10.9% of soldiers in peace keeping missions from Malawi are women. Recruitment in all security agencies since 2021 has been on 40:60 ratio in adherence to Gender Quotas as stipulated in the Gender Equality Act under Section 11.

Likewise, the recruitment and deployment by other security agencies such as Malawi Police Service; Prison Service; Immigration and Customs and Excise have observed 40:60 and 60:40 of gender quotas.

Promoted and supported women’s meaningful participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements: Malawi has female representation in the SADC mediation reference group. In addition, Women groups and stakeholders in Malawi continue to ensure peace is upheld during elections using instruments such as the Lilongwe Peace Declaration which was signed by all political parties. This has contributed to the peace and stability that Malawi has enjoyed in its Tripartite elections.

Integrated a gender perspective in the prevention and resolution of armed or other conflict: *Women’s participation in security sector institutions:* The Malawi Defence Force (MDF) recruited its first female soldiers in 1999, when 50 women were recruited. The Malawi Defence Force Act commits the MDF to maintaining a healthy, well trained, equipped, and disciplined and gender sensitive force. Furthermore, the MDF has adopted a Gender Policy, the focus of which is to eliminate gender inequalities within the rank and file, as well as the communities they serve, and to guarantee women’s representation in both recruit and officer cadets training. Currently, women constitute 8% of the MDF. There is a Malawi Police Service Women's Network, which was launched on 23 April 2014 with the theme ‘Forward with the empowerment of police women to fully contribute to policing’.

The Prisons Act commits to a responsive and equitable prison service. The Strategic Plan for Correctional Services commits it to mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as HIV, gender and the environment. Currently Malawi has 85% male prison warders and 15% women prison warders. The prison population stands at 12 129 with women comprise just 1.1% of the prison population.

29. Actions taken to enhance judicial and nonjudicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response

Malawi has some world class accountability mechanisms that vet actions against that constitute violation of human rights. The MHRC is an independent national human rights institution established under section 129 of the Constitution and enjoys an “A” status accreditation at the Global Alliance of NHRIs. The Human Rights Commission consists of the Law Commissioner, the Ombudsman and persons nominated on behalf of reputable organizations working in the area of human rights. Section 131 of the Constitution expressly prohibits a person in public office or the President or Vice-President, a Minister or Deputy Minister or a member of Parliament from being a member of the Commission. This ensures that the MHRC remains independent in the exercise of its duties. The members of the Commission are appointed through a transparent process outlined in the Human Rights Commission Act. The Commission is funded through sums appropriated by Parliament.

The Judiciary, through the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJF) is the oldest judicial membership organization in the country and provides all judges, courts, and related agencies involved with juvenile, family, and domestic violence cases with the knowledge and skills to improve the lives of the families and children who seek justice. (NCJF), developed guidelines for the implementation of Diversion which cover the duties and responsibilities of Judicial Officers, police officers (and prosecutors), probation officers and paralegal officers and other ancillary court staff.

The Judiciary, through the NCJF, has also developed and put in use six diversion program options for children in conflict with the law to supplement and complement those options that are provided in the Child Care Protection and Justice Act’s Fourth Schedule. These are family group conferencing; life skills; pre-trial community service; victim-offender mediation and therapeutic counselling. Magistrates, prosecutors, Social Welfare Officers and some NGO personnel (all totalling 28) from 7 districts were trained on the use of the options when implementing the diversion options. Implemented legal and policy reform to redress and prevent violations of the rights of women and girls. Strengthened institutional capacities, including of the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms as applicable, during conflict and crisis response. Strengthened capacity of security sector institutions on human rights and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse whenever they are on duty, Increased access of conflict-affected, refugee or displaced women to violence prevention and protection services. Taken measures to combat illicit arms trafficking

To ensure that there are mechanisms in place for the accountability of actions of law enforcement officers, the Independent Complaints Commission of Police (IPCC) established under the Police Act to investigate complaints against the Malawi Police Service (MPS) and its officers in the conduct of its duties, was finally operationalized in January 2021. The Commission is headed by a Commissioner. Since January 2021, the Commission has received 105 complaints from the public through walk-ins, e-mails and phone calls. Some of the complaints dominating the list include police brutality. Out of the 105 cases, the Commission is investigating 4 cases relate to deaths of persons while in police custody or death at the hands of the police such as police shootings and 17 cases involving excessive use of force by police officers. 2 cases have been recommended for prosecution whereas the other cases are still under investigation. Among the

cases being investigated is the case involving allegations that police officers raped women and teenage girls in Lilongwe District, in 2019.

30. Actions taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls

Malawi has remained steadfast in eliminate violence against children. The nation is implementing the Women's Rights Implementation Plan which has prioritized ending VAC as one of its core priority. The strategic interventions under this include engaging communities to encourage and support girls to go to and remain in school; Implement affirmative action and gender quotas targeting girls and women when selecting students into tertiary education; provide supporting mechanisms (e.g. family planning, accommodation and tuition fees) to ensure completion of education; promote tailor made education programmes that create employment for graduate; promote e-learning and literacy programmes for school re-admitted girls and women to complete education (provision of supporting equipment such as tablets, laptops and internet bundles).

Further the country developed inclusive education policy to deal with intersectionality issues affecting the girl child in schools; targeted interventions in social protection such as Social Cash Transfer; Village Savings and Loans which promote rights of girl child in Malawi.

Other interventions are stated in various sections above

31. Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation

Malawi has reviewed the National Gender Policy and ensured that Gender in Disaster Risk Reduction where Gender in Emergency and Social Protection are priority areas. This includes strategies to strengthen gender responsiveness and inclusive multi-hazard early warning systems and promote women's involvement in all dimensions of DRM. Furthermore, the country has Developed Rapid Gender Analysis Reports for COVID-19, Tropical Cyclones ANA and Freddy, Cholera, and El Niño with support from Care, UN Women, and other partners, which informed gender-responsive programming for disaster response and resilience building. Additionally, Gender Experts have been placed in DODMA and the UN Women has provided significant capacity building on Gender and Disaster Management.

Other efforts include implementing the Women Resilience to Disaster Project in Blantyre, Phalombe, and Zomba, through strengthening resilience to disasters and shocks (Irrigation, economic empowerment, vocational skills (employable skills) and integrated homestead farming interventions) and to support development of policy framework targeting 15000 women and girls. The total budget of 1.2 million USD. Malawi has also trained 117 officers, including 56 Cluster Leads and Co-leads, on Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Risk Management. The target was to train 56 but we reached 117 officers from MDAs and CSOs to effectively respond to Disasters. In a follow up training in Salima, Ministry built capacity of 25 women led organisation, 35 humanitarian cluster leads and their co-leads on gender in Disaster Risk Management.

Malawi has also strengthened the Gender in Humanitarian Coordination Group at national and district levels, which meets quarterly or as needed to address critical issues affecting all genders. The group includes representatives from DODMA and all cluster MDAs. In addition, the country has complemented DODMA efforts with sector-specific gender in the disaster risk management initiatives as follows:

- The Ministry of Agriculture, through the ADRIF project, developed a manual for gender integration in DRM and trained trainers in several districts.
- The Fisheries Sector launched the National Action Plan in Small Scale Fisheries, including a project to support resilience building, supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization.
- Provision of technical support and review and engendering of key laws and policies, including the Penal Code, Disaster Management Act, and SRHR Policy.

32. Actions taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience.

Malawi has finalised the review of the National Gender Policy and issues of gender in disaster risk management and gender in humanitarian and emergencies have been addressed. This resonates with forth pillar of the Women Peace agenda and among other efforts such as mainstreaming gender in ministries of agriculture, irrigation, local government, natural resources (fisheries), DODMA and Finance.

Section Four: National Institutions and Processes

33. Action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5

Malawi does not have an umbrella strategy for gender equality. Nevertheless, the country has sector or thematic issue strategies for GEWE. The list below outlines some key action plans for Malawi on GEWE:

Table 4: Strategic documents, target group and their implementation status

NAME OF STRATEGY	GOAL	TARGET	BUDGET	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION	LINK
1. The National Action Plan to combat GBV - 2018-2021	To create an enabling environment for the elimination of GBV in a holistic, participatory and multi-sectoral manner.	All Gender Groups in Malawi; families, survivors of gender-based violence; community and institutions	Not mentioned	The enactment of three gender related and child laws; GBV referral structures created and strengthened; survivor centred reporting in place; capacity building of actors and stakeholders; coordination and service delivery improvement; modification of 10 harmful practices	National-Plan-of-Action-to-Combat-Gender-Based-Violence-in-Malawi-2014-2020.pdf (togetherforgirls.org)

NAME OF STRATEGY	GOAL	TARGET	BUDGET	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION	LINK
				fuelling GBV; rehabilitation of perpetrators	
2. National Strategy for Political empowerment of Women to 2024-2030;	1. Promote successful participation of women in Presidential and Vice President Elections; and 2. Increase the proportion of women in Parliament and Local Government seats to at least thirty-five (35) percent in 2025, and fifty (50) percent in 2030 General Elections.	Women; Youth and Persons with disabilities	MK10 Billion	400 copies printed; launched in August 2024 and shared to strategic partners and their organizations. Being implemented in preparation for 2025 elections	Not on website
National Action Plan for Women Economic empowerment 2018- 2021;	To promote economic empowerment of women	Women in employment; rural women; women interested in micro, small, medium, large enterprises and service providers	Not costed	The plan has contributed to the Promotion of girl and women education; Promotion of adult literacy; Provision of financial literacy education in all schools; Provision of meaningful soft loans to women; Creation of a specific fund for the promotion of women in business activities within financial services; Promotion of village banks schemes; Creation and promotion of women business partnerships; Engaging men and the community at large on rights of women to engage in business Creation of more women business	Publications (gender.gov.mw) NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (NAPWEE).pdf

NAME OF STRATEGY	GOAL	TARGET	BUDGET	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION	LINK
				forums; Provision of state child facilities; Provision of business training/skills to women; Provision of free/less costly business counselling avenues for women	
3.National Male Engagement Strategy 2024-2030	To promote effective male involvement in ending GBV, reducing HIV and participating in SRHR.	Male HeforShe Champions; Men; Boys and Gender Practitioners in public; CSOs; Academia; Research Institutions	MK84 Billion	It was printed, launched and being disseminated	content (kuhes.ac.mw)
4,Inclusive Education Strategy 2017-2022	To ensure that learners with diverse needs in Malawi have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings at all levels through the removal of barriers to learning, participation, attendance and achievement.	Children with disabilities; Children from poor families; The girl-child; Orphans; children on the streets; children who head households; child labourers; children suffering from chronic diseases; Malnourished children; Children who are gifted and talented Children with albinism Children in gender biased families/communities Children from geographically disadvantaged areas Abused and neglected children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS Children displaced or affected by natural calamities e.g. droughts, floods	MK390 Billion Kwacha	Has supported major education reforms towards Inclusive Education which enables all children and young people to learn together in the same environment without discrimination rather than in segregated schools and colleges. Addressed the following: i. Capacity for Inclusive Education ii. Governance and Management of Inclusive Education iii. Learner identification and assessment iv. Inclusive Education Management Information System v. Teacher Education and Motivation vi. Partnerships for inclusive education vii. Enabling environment	Malawi (rodra.co.za)

NAME OF STRATEGY	GOAL	TARGET	BUDGET	STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION	LINK
		Children of parents with disabilities Working children in conflict with the law Teenage/adolescent mothers		for teaching and learning viii. Financing Inclusive Education	
5.National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security	To promote inclusive peace and security for women and girls at all levels	Women in Malawi Police; Women in the Malawi Defence Force; Prisons and Immigrations; Women in Border districts; Women in Rural Areas; Peace and Unity Structures at Nation and District levels	MK3,123,068,000	Launched, disseminated, enforcement of gender quotas reinforced in security agencies, creation of National Peace and Unity Commission and recruitment of Commissioners; strengthen recruitment of men and women in peace missions	Malawi-National-Action-Plan-UNSCR-1325- - MWI FINAL PRINT-1.pdf http://peacewomen.org

34. Country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

The Government of Malawi rolled out implementation of the Program Based Budget reforms in 2016 to ensure that implementation of programs is aligned to national policies and strategies, and link actions to results. The Gender Equality and Women Empowerment program has a clear budget line at national and local levels. Further to this, the budget preparatory circulars call for budgets to be gender responsive. This reform has been useful in providing a linkage between investment to results.

The resources that have been allocated to the sector represent less than 1% of the national budget, against the recommended 2% through BPfA. The table 4 below provides budget trends. These resources are too limited to address the gender related challenges that the country faces. Further to that, there are budget inefficiencies such as low funding and delayed processing of funds.

Table 5- Budget Trends on GEWE

Description (in 000,000 MWK)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment	64.2	85.47	89.14	150.3	381.51	327.54

Gender Sector (Local Authorities)	203.4	249.8	203.85	271.73	371.2	486.12
National Budget	1,737,204	2,190,180	1,995,101	2,839,891	3,788,300	5,990,000
Proportion of Gender budget to National	0.015%	0.015%	0.015%	0.0001%	0.019%	0.0001%

35. Formal mechanisms in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The Government of Malawi is implementing the First ten (10) year Implementation Plan of Malawi 2063 (MIP 1). The MIP 1 has pillar and enabler working groups that facilitate coordination of programs. The Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Sector is under the Human Capital Pillar and Enabler Groups. This Pillar and Enabler Group has other sectors including Education, Health and Labour.

Prior to the MIP 1 (2021 to 2030), the Government of Malawi launched the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) in 2008 with an aim to provide a forum for negotiation, policy dialogue, and agreement of plans and undertakings among Government, development Partners, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Private Sector at the sectoral level. Further, the SWGs provided an opportunity for policy harmonization across the sector through Technical Working Groups (TWGs) such as the Gender TWG within the sector. They also provided a mechanism to monitor the achievement of MGDS objectives and other international instruments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Gender, Children Youth and Sports Sector Working Group (GCY&SSWG) is one of the Sector Working Groups established by the Government to facilitate the planning, coordination, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of development initiatives in order to contribute to the achievement of the MGDS, SDGs among others.

36. Stakeholders contribution to the preparation of the present national report

The development of the current report has ensured wider participation of senior officials from the Government Ministries, Departments, Agencies; representatives of the Development partners; UN Family; International and Local CSOs; Women’s Rights Organisations, Academia; Faith Based Organisations,; Traditional leaders, Parliamentary Committees, the Private Sector including the Banks; Microfinance institutions and local authorities. The process from planning, validation and finalization of the report has been consultative. The Government of Malawi is commending all officials and partners for their time, input and contribution which has led to the development of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action report.

37. Malawi’s action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

Malawi submitted and defended its CEDAW Report in October 2023. The UPR was in previous Beijing reporting session in 2020. It should be noted that the action plan for Women and Gender Rights was developed to ensure coordinated implementation of both CEDAW and UPR. This was developed in June 2022. The Plan covers prioritized interventions that will strengthen legal framework and administrative action to implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women:

- Review of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act to include internationally recognized definitions of sexual harassment, intimate partner violence and forced sex/marital rape;
- Ensure that adequate human, financial and technical resources are provided to the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to enable it to effectively perform the coordination function with which it is tasked to fulfil;
- Reinforce government programmes to ensure full gender equality in all functions of society;
- Ensure the effective implementation of the Gender Equality Act, and in particular increase efforts to improve the literacy and education of women to broaden their formal employment opportunities;
- Apply effectively the Gender Equality Act and adopt effective and sustainable legislative measures to explicitly prohibit discrimination and violence against women and girls;
- Take all necessary steps to bring justice to victims of sexual and gender-based violence, to allocate resources for the implementation of national policies and action plans, and to ensure that the cases of rape and sexual assault of women are properly investigated;
- Pursue its efforts to promote women in decision-making positions by, among other things, establishing a quota system; and
- Promote further women’s economic empowerment through strengthening programmes aimed at enhancing women’s access to credit, financial, and technical services.

Section Five: Data and statistics

38. Areas in gender statistics at the national level

The Government through the National Statistical Office (NSO) has created data observatory hub which producing timely and quality gender statistics. The data hub has strengthened linking data from different sectors that coordinate gender and Gender Based Violence. The recent reports produced by NSO are disaggregated by sex, age, disability and location. The gender analytical reports provides the trends and differentials of gender related issues in Malawi. This builds on former best practices of Demographic Health Survey of 2016 whose results were given on education, literacy and exposure to mass media, marriage and sexual activity, fertility preferences, HIV and Aids knowledge and attitude and behavior experiences of domestic violence.

a. Engaged trained in capacity building Digitization of DATA and capacity building

Malawi has put digitalization as one of the Government priorities by forming a full Ministry of Information and Digitalization. Malawi is the first country in Africa to embrace high-speed satellite internet. As a result, Malawi has met its internet coverage target in 2024 ahead of time and its internet data rates are among the cheapest on the African continent. Further, in the past five years, the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social welfare has been working towards improving the availability of administrative data. The Government has supported engendering of data tools for different sectors, provided technical expertise on development of gender analytical reports in disasters, oriented various officers from different Ministries on how to produce disaggregated information in terms of gender and age among others. In addition, the Child Protection Module, the Women Empowerment Module and the Gender Based Violence Module in the Integrated Management System (IIMS) have all been upgraded. Orientation of all officers from the grassroots level on how to develop tools and collect gender statistics in Malawi will be conducted in due course. Also, the Government has switched from paper-based data collection tools to computer assisted data collection tools, building on the best practice done during the 2018 national population and housing census.

b. Improved Administrative-based or alternative data sources to address data gaps

In the past five years, the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social welfare has been working towards improving the availability of administrative data. This has been achieved through initiating a performance-based contract whereby the department of planning and research collects quarterly data from all the departments within the ministry. The information includes the achievements made and indicators satisfied by the departments as per the agreed performance contract; as well as the reform agenda. The Government also introduced a Programme Based Budget (PBB) which is a performance-based budgeting approach that focuses on linking resources and results for agencies by tracing these results to strategic outcomes since 2015 and is currently still being implemented and programs are still being funded based on the strategic outcomes. With technical support from the Ministry of Gender, the Government has reviewed indicators for some of the Ministry Department and Agencies' Programme Based Budgets and plans are underway to engender all the Programme Based Budget.

c. Development of a centralised web-based database

One of the key priorities is strengthening national gender statistics. This has been achieved partly through capacity building for instance higher education programmes in gender and development, supporting MDAs with training on gender analysis and mainstreaming including collection and use of gender statistics. In the past four years, the Ministry developed a centralized web-based dashboard on gender statistics namely the Gender Based Violence (GBV) IMS and Women Empowerment MIS. Key stakeholders have been oriented on the system. These modules are within the Integrated Information Management system that the Government developed in 2015. Although the IIMS is national wide, implementation has been limited to the districts supported by UNFPA and UNDP and also officers had limited capacity to generate reports. The Ministry coordinated the process of developing reporting tools on GBV. To this effect, capacity building for district officers in all districts and other stakeholders to empower them. However, despite the trainings, operationalization of the GBVMIS has also been difficult due to systematic technical challenges associated with the module. This has resulted in the districts having a backlog of cases which have not yet been entered into the system. The MIS was linked to the national hub so that Malawi can have credible data source and up to date information. Plans are in place to centralise and harmonise system for all sectors

under the Economic Planning and Development department from district level to National level. This will also include capacity building of the users to adequately collect and use the IMSs for evidence based programming. The Government seeks to address these challenges by among others, upgrading the entire Integrated Information Management System with emphasis on two key modules namely: GBVMIS and Women Economic Empowerment

d. Conducting New Surveys

Malawi has made tremendous progress in integrating gender into some of the National Surveys including the Demographic and Household Survey - DHS 2015/16 (latest DHS to be released soon) and the 2018 National Census. However, Government has noted that there is little progress towards research and production of national statistics in specific areas including GBV, Disability and Child Protection. Therefore, Government would like to put more effort on conducting studies including Gender Development Index, Disability Survey and Early Childhood Development Survey. This is also to respond and encompass emerging issues that are affecting women, children, persons with disabilities and all vulnerable adults and children

e. Production of Knowledge Products

Government of Malawi has improved its ways of generating and using knowledge products, Government works with academia and civil society organizations to conduct research, publish information and use the products to inform policies and programmes. The MDAs have Directorate of Planning and Research. The functions of this Department is to coordinate policies, plans, strategies and guidelines in each Ministry and also operationalizes these through research and documentation. The use of official emails has also improved through services supported by ICT which is under Ministry of Information and Digitalization.

The Malawi Government has conducted a baseline survey that has documented baseline values for Goal 5 of SDGs; all the key policies, strategies and action plans . The country has also developed additional indicators that will enable it track progress and these indicators are captured in both the Women Empowerment MIS and the Gender Based Violence MIS.

39. Country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics

Priorities include strengthening GRB at national and district levels and capacity building of the NSO, MDAs, Women and youth led organizations in gender analysis and gender statistical reporting.

40. Gender-specific indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs

Malawi has domesticated SDGs in its national development plans including the M&E framework. For each SDG, Malawi tries to track all indicators, despite identifying key main indicators which are prioritised in monitoring. However, some of the key indicators with a strong bearing on gender among all other the country prioritises are as follows:

- a. 1.2.1 Proportion of the population living below the national poverty line
- b. 1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
- c. 1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable
- d. 2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)
- e. 2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting (height for age <-2 sd)
- f. 3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population
- g. 3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 1,000 population
- h. 3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1,000 population
- i. 3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group
- j. 4.5.1 Education parity indices
- k. 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
- l. 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
- m. 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
- n. 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments
- o. 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions

Some of the key challenges Malawi has faced in tracking SDGs include weak data systems which resulted in serious data gaps to routinely and timely compute indicators as well as fragmented data repositories resulting in poor data keeping, collation and retrieval.

41. Data disaggregation routinely provided by major surveys.

- Geographic location (region, district, urban/rural)
- Income
- Sex/gender
- Age
- Education
- Marital status (sex of household head)
- Disability

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Generally, the review process has been a success due to the involvement of relevant stakeholders at national, district and community levels. Apart from consolidating achievements, best practices, challenges and recommendations, the review process has been an opportunity for the country's self-assessment and appraisal. A lot of lessons have been drawn that will inform future programming on GEWE. Enhancing awareness towards a mind-set and social norms change, capacity building of duty bearers and multi-sectoral collaboration are key towards the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Malawi will remain committed to advancing the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) and promotion of gender equality and women empowerment. Over the next five years, Malawi will advance the implementation of five top priorities for accelerating progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through laws, policies and programmes. These priorities are:

- i. Improving the quality of education, training, and lifelong learning for women and girls;
- ii. Poverty eradication, enhancing agricultural productivity, and ensuring food security;
- iii. Eliminating violence against women and girls;
- iv. Increasing political participation and representation of women; and
- v. Enhancing access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and/or programmes

The Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare will continue to provide policy direction, leadership and technical backstopping to ensure that BPfA is effectively implemented in line with the Malawi 2063 and all relevant national policies and strategies.