

Out of  
poverty

United  
Purpose 

Formerly known  
as Concern Universal



**Malawi 2017-2020 Country Strategy**

# 2017 marks a significant year in our history

In Concern Universal's 40<sup>th</sup> year, we are welcoming a new era, and are now known as **United Purpose (UP)**. The new name is accompanied by a new strategy, which marks a step-change in our approach to bring lasting, tangible change to millions of Malawi's poorest and most vulnerable communities.

It's ambitious, as it needs to be. But it's also realistic.

We are confident that our nearly 30 years of programming in Malawi has made significant, lasting improvement to hundreds of thousands of people's lives across rural communities in the country. We have a catalogue of achievements to be proud of. But we know we can't stop there, we need to strive for better and wider impact and more people lifted up out of poverty.

**Our vision remains unchanged:** a world where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all.

**Our purpose is more relevant than ever:** to work in partnership to tackle poverty and inequality.

Our new strategy is built on our passion, expertise and unrelenting determination to bring about ever-greater sustained visible change to many of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in the country. We will enable them to break free from the current vicious cycle of poverty and insecurity, and to leverage wider change nationally.

We want to achieve our country goal of seeing empowered and resilient women, men and children across Malawi determining their own futures.

Underpinning everything, we want our organisational culture and our values of integrity, dignity and environmental respect to shine through.

This strategy capitalises on our extensive experience of working in some of the most marginalised people in the country; partnering and collaborating with different stakeholders; maximising the scope and potential of our innovative and decentralised, relationship-based approach. It also aligns with our global UP strategic priorities.

We want to increase the scale and impact of our work – to reach more people. We have set an ambitious target of reaching 2 million people directly by 2020, up from 1.2 million currently. But we also want to better leverage others (be it the government, private sector or our civil society partners) to bring about wider, deeper, and longer lasting systemic change.

We have developed this strategy through an extensive and inclusive process over the past year. We critically assessed how well we have delivered against our 2011-16 strategy and associated programmes. We consulted around 50 external key informants (national, district, sub-district government counterparts, academics, private sector players, NGOs, donors, networks) and held grassroots community consultations. We sought the views of all of our 360+ staff working across all 16 offices before finally consolidating and agreeing our new strategy. We are delighted with the final outcome and feel that it strongly reflects UP's culture, passion and vision over the next four years.

**Our four programmatic pillars are:**

**Livelihoods  
and food security**

**WASH and healthier lives**

**Sustainable energy**

**Gender equality**

We believe these marry our strengths and experience, and that of our partners, to address key drivers of Malawian poverty and vulnerability. It is also where we feel we can make the greatest contribution to significant and sustainable change in the country.

We have clarified our three approaches so when you work with UP you know what to expect. We call them the 3 'I's.

We will continue to focus on **Intelligent Development** – UP's decentralised approach means we can respond effectively to local needs and ensure no one is left behind. We follow a community-led approach that is holistic, systematic and respectful – combining our interventions to better suit communities. We will be placing a stronger emphasis on gender equality than ever before. We will continue to work in partnership with others, and be a conveyor of networks, academia, local organisations and private sector actors.

We will develop **Disruptive Innovation**. UP's wealth of experience and our trusted reputation allows us to develop truly innovative development approaches that have the power to fundamentally change the face of development. We will share our disruptive innovations and then use this to influence others – sparking sustainable systemic change.

And ultimately our work is **Enabling Independence** – by ensuring that the balance of power remains with the communities that we work with, we are challenging the dependency culture and creating self-sustaining entities that carry on beyond our interventions. We are empowering communities to advocate for their rights and improve their own lives.

Our collective strengths are now mobilised to meet our obligations and deliver real change to those who need it most over the next four years.

**Join us in this challenge.**



Heather Marie Campbell  
Country Director



## Who We Are

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United Purpose (UP) is an international development charity with an innovative community-led approach to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and eradicating global poverty and inequality. We began working in Malawi in 1988, initially supporting refugees from the Mozambican civil war and their hosts in the Dedza area.

Today we are one of Malawi's largest NGOs, working in partnership with local government and communities across fourteen districts mainly in central and southern Malawi. Over the years we have developed a trusted reputation with most of the established institutional and non-institutional donors and organisations in the country.

Over the past 29 years we have gained significant experience in sustainable agriculture and food security; climate change and disaster risk management; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); nutrition; malaria prevention and control; community mobilisation and capacity building; sustainable energy; microfinance; and emergency response work.

Our spin-off social enterprise, CUMO Microfinance bank, has been an incredible success story, and has grown to be the largest provider of rural microfinance in the country – providing savings and loans, entrepreneurship and financial literacy support to over 84,000 clients, 82% of whom are women. CUMO will continue to be an integral partner and co-implementer across a range of programmes.

We have a very hands-on, vibrant and skilled team of over 360 dedicated employees.

In partnership with others we have directly reached over 1.2 million rural people in 2016.



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# Our Impact and Innovations: 2011-2016 Strategy Review

We are proud that we have made significant innovations and impacts against our three strategic objectives of our last strategy (2011-16) as witnessed by our impact reports:

## 1. SERVICE DELIVERY: Increased quality and coverage of community-focused service provision

- We are the biggest non-government provider of sustainable and quality rural WASH in Malawi. We have constructed or repaired over 2,000 water points – increasing access for nearly half a million people and reducing diarrhoea cases by an average of 30% in target areas.
- We are the most successful champions of Open Defecation Free (ODF) status in the country, having supported 2,500 villages to achieve ODF status (35% of the national ODF achievement), reducing vulnerability to sanitation-related illnesses for 900,000 people.
- We distributed 3.2m insecticide-treated nets, reducing reported malaria cases, and influencing national strategy to reflect our best practices.
- We contributed to a 38% reduction in moderate child stunting among under-twos in Dedza and Balaka.
- We have supported communities to successfully lobby for vital health clinics, secondary schools, and road constructions or repairs.

## 2. REDUCING VULNERABILITY: Targeted interventions to enhance community resilience to climate change and increase agricultural production

- We have supported 334,000 people with agricultural development programmes to increase their yields, including irrigating 6,500 hectares of land, distributing 12,000 livestock to over 24,000 people, and 300,000 people now using climate-smart agricultural methods.
- Community-managed afforestation initiatives resulted in over 3m trees planted and cared for.
- Our work on cleaner cookstoves has won international praise. We have supported the formation of 65 stove production groups, and they have gone on to sell over 110,000 cleaner cookstoves (generating over £65,000) of which 75,000 have been sold to communities and 35,000 distributed to social cash transfer beneficiaries.
- Since 2012, we have distributed emergency food and cash assistance to 583,934 people making us one of the key emergency response players in the country. This includes reaching over 200,000 people after the devastating 2015 floods with immediate supplies, coordinating WASH in 10 evacuation camps, and recovery support across five districts.



### 3. PRO-POOR GROWTH: Stimulating local economic development and pro-poor growth

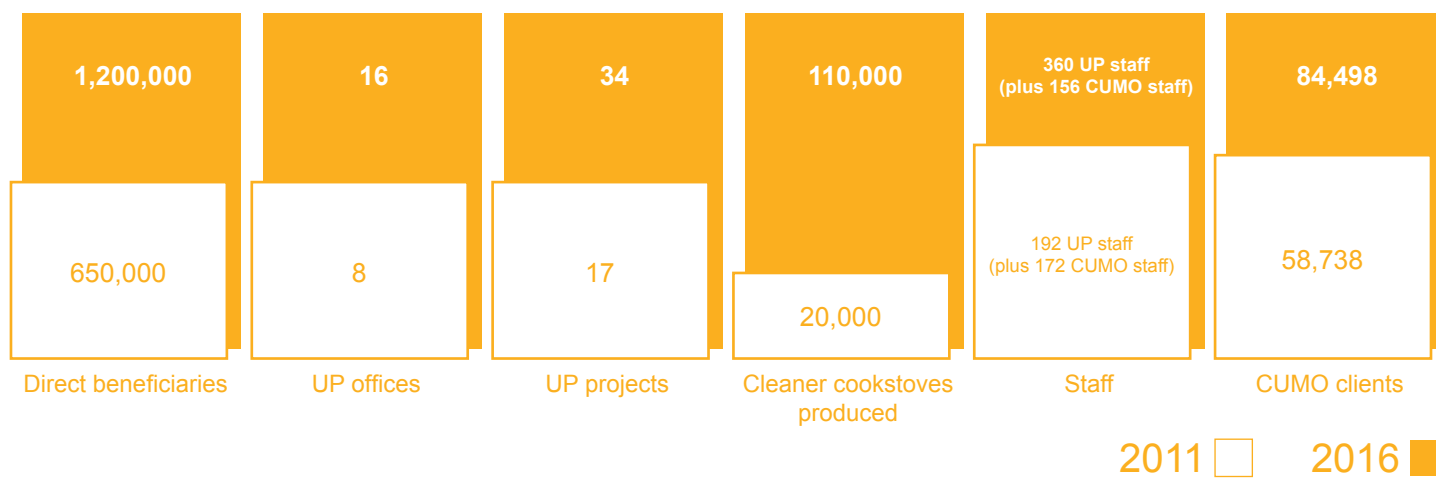
- CUMO is now the leading rural microfinance institution in the country with 84,498 clients (52,490 borrowers) across 4,725 groups, more than quadrupling from 2008 levels. 82% of CUMO's clients are female and the repayment rate is 99.8%. Since 2011, over £8.09m of loans have been disbursed, and it has facilitated over £4.22m in client savings.
- 334,818 members of village savings and loans groups have been mobilised and supported. They have so far accumulated savings totalling £3m which have been invested into small enterprises.
- We have supported over 3,400 sugar cane outgrower farmers in 13 associations who have sold more than 1.4m MT of cane between 2011-14, worth more than an impressive £43.7 million.
- We have supported 2,885 sugar cane farmers to achieve Fairtrade status and with these premiums they have developed maternity clinics, water supply, roads, and bridges.
- In Dedza and Ntcheu, we have helped organise 4,721 farmers (58% female) into eight farmers' associations and cooperatives, and they have so far aggregated and sold over 630 MT of soya, groundnuts, maize, beans and sunflower to large-scale buyers and into markets.
- We have supported the formation of two regional associations and the national association of sugar cane growers (SUGAM) to provide outgrowers with a platform from which they can raise their collective voices and influence the wider industry.
- In 2015 CUMO was awarded the highest compliance rating by Reserve Bank of Malawi, the only non-deposit taking institution to do so.
- Over 75,000 people have been trained at the mobile CUMO entrepreneurship centre. An independent evaluation found that this entrepreneurship training increased the average monthly sales of clients by 73%; that profitability grew by 29%; clients' savings rose from US\$4.91 to \$20.79; and the proportion of clients engaged in more profitable and environmentally-friendly enterprises jumped from 20% to 48%.

### Notable Innovations

- We are the first organisation in Malawi to implement rural community carbon reinvestment – so far, 254,511 carbon credits have been generated – which enabled, among others, the construction of an under-fives clinic, and reinvestment for borehole sustainability funds.
- We were the first to introduce 'Banki Pa Mjigo' village savings and loans to water point committees to generate income for borehole operations and maintenance to reduce downtimes, leading to other organisations adopting this approach.
- We took a pro-poor, market development approach to promoting the chitetezo mbaula cleaner cookstove through the Social Cash Transfer Programme in rural areas. This was commended by former Irish President, Mary Robinson at the Big Ideas Distinguished Speaker Series held by the International Energy Agency in November 2015.
- We have worked with Trinity College Dublin to trial Thermo-Electric Generator technologies that can be fitted to cleaner cookstoves and produce electricity for phone charging and radios. This innovation was covered by the BBC ahead of the Paris Climate talks in 2015; the resulting video was viewed over 20m times on YouTube.
- CUMO digitalised its loan application process by equipping its financial service officers with GPS/GIS-enabled tablets to collect application details (client photos, signatures and fingerprints), reducing loan processing from 35 to 13 days. CUMO was also the first to include funeral and health insurance for its borrowers.

#### Did you also know?

- We were so successful at promoting red kidney beans and Lady Rosetta potatoes across Dedza, Ntcheu and Thyolo that they are locally known in the markets as 'Concern potatoes and Concern beans', and even fetch a premium!
- Over 12,000 of CUMO's green chitenjes (cloth wraps) have been bought by clients as a symbol of pride and affinity to the institution.
- One client, Elemina Mandala in Kanyama village, Dedza even now goes by the name of NaCUMO, such is her pride in being a CUMO client!



# The Context

## Livelihoods and food security

Securing access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round for everyone is a prerequisite to achieving sustainable livelihoods and breaking the cycle of poverty. Agriculture is the foundation of the national economy, with over 80% of the population dependent on agriculture-based livelihoods. The majority of agricultural production is smallholder-focused, with women responsible for approximately 70% of food production. Agricultural growth and gender equality are therefore critical to food security, economic growth, and human development in the country.

Yet food security remains a significant challenge, with 6.5 million people (39% of the Malawi population) facing extreme food insecurity in 2016. Almost half of all Malawians are food energy deficient and have inadequate food consumption due to a heavy reliance on maize as a primary food source. The toll of food insecurity in Malawi manifests itself most significantly in the poor nutritional status of children. Dependence on rain-fed farming and high vulnerability to climate shocks have reduced yields in recent years, and poor agricultural practices and limited opportunities to access markets have further constrained agricultural production. This is compounded by unbridled population growth, lack of crop diversification, and severe environmental degradation, leaving millions extremely vulnerable to shocks. Smallholders largely sell raw products, and therefore missing out on opportunities to grow their income through value-addition or processing their agricultural produce. Poor handling knowledge leads to reduced yields and low quality diminishes the likelihood of private sector engagement. Added to this, under-resourced extension services limit adoption of improved practices. The FAO estimates that if women had the same access to productive resources (land, farm inputs, education) as men, they could increase the yields on their farms by 20% to 30%.

## Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and healthier lives

Diarrhoea, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and malnutrition continue to affect a large population of Malawians, yet health is critical for development. While Malawi has made substantial progress on water supply coverage which currently stands at around 86% access, there are still issues of non-functionality of water points, putting lives of many at risk, whilst adding a significant burden to women's workloads, requiring them to walk longer distances to fetch water. Progress in sanitation is less evident, with only 53% of the population accessing adequate sanitation, and 6% practicing open defecation. Worse still, very few wash hands with soap at critical times. These factors are a catalyst for diarrhoeal diseases, which are one of the leading cause of death for under-five children.

Malawi still has one of the highest stunting rates (i.e. low height-for-age) in the world, estimated at 47% prevalence. Over 16% of children in the country are underweight and 3.8% are wasted (i.e. low weight-for-height). Poor infant and young child feeding practices further compound the impact of food insecurity and low dietary diversity on children's health. The impact of children's poor nutrition on the adult population's health educational attainment and labour force productivity is said to cost Malawi \$597m, or 10.3% of GDP, annually. Malaria continues to be a major public health problem, with an estimated six million cases occurring annually despite a decline in malaria prevalence from 43% in 2010 to 33% in 2014, which is attributed to increased net ownership. Approximately 9% of the population is HIV-positive; however only half a million Malawians are on HIV treatment, representing a significant gap in access to life-saving medicines. Teenage pregnancy has increased and whilst the average number of births per woman has decreased slightly, Malawi's population is expected to more than double to 40m by 2040. Rapid population growth is putting increasing pressure on already densely populated and limited land and resources, pushing cultivation onto marginal areas, causing land degradation, and reflected in growing youth unemployment.



## Sustainable energy

Access to basic, clean and modern energy is critical to sustainable, equitable development. This realisation has resulted in the creation of the global Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) initiative and the inclusion of energy in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG #7). In Malawi, only 9% of the population have access to the national grid, which falls to under 1% in rural areas. The household sector is the dominant energy user, accounting for about 84% of total consumption, and this is provided predominantly by biomass (firewood and charcoal), with rural households accounting for 58% of wood-fuel consumption. Largely due to this, forests are depleting at a terrifying rate, with 32% reduction in forest cover in less than 40 years and a current deforestation rate of 2.3%. While the Government recognises these issues, its focus over the last decade has been on rural electrification through national grid extension. Although understandable, this approach does not deliver to the majority of the population in the short to medium term. Therefore, 'energy poverty' condemns millions of people to absolute poverty and drudgery, stifling economic activity, hampering provision of basic services such as health care and education, which directly impacts on infant mortality, access to communication, and quality of life. It also adds a disproportionate burden on women who are responsible for collecting firewood, which is physically straining and very time-consuming.

## Gender equality

There is pronounced economic, political and social inequality between men and women. Although a complex and diverse society, including both matrilineal and patrilineal traditions, Malawi is highly patriarchal. Women's rights are weak and women score low on all development indicators. For instance, Malawi ranks 173/188 on the UNDP Gender Inequality Index 2015. Household-level decision-making is dominated by men, with 68% of women whose husbands have cash earnings reporting that their husbands alone decide on how to use the money and 45% of women stating that they do not have any decision-making power regarding their own health care. Women are particularly labour and time constrained due to their disproportionate workloads and care responsibilities. While on average, more girls than boys enrol in school they less are likely to complete it, leaving with only 3.4 years of schooling (compared to 5.2 for boys), contributing to increasing female illiteracy levels. These factors limit women's potential to climb out of poverty, leaving them especially vulnerable to shocks which perpetuates and increases inequality. Cultural factors constrain women and girls more than men and boys. Child marriage is widespread with over 50% of girls married before the age of 18, and 10% married before 15. Violence against women is a serious problem, with 41% of women reporting having experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lives. More women than men are HIV-positive and almost one third of all new infections occur in women under the age of 30, mostly attributable to coming of age ceremonies that introduce young girls to sex. All of this has been further exacerbated by low levels of citizen activism and poor governance structures that fail to either properly involve or represent women and other marginalised groups to adequately respond to these challenges and support the promotion of transparency and accountability.



## DELIVERING IMPACT WHERE IT'S NEEDED MOST

This is by no means a definitive list of the drivers of poverty in the country. But we want to maximise our strengths, partnerships and experience so we're better able to deliver lasting change to millions of Malawians. To do that, we need to focus on areas where we can have the most impact.



# Our 2017-2020 Objectives

## Pillar 1: Livelihoods and food security

United Purpose will work to **achieve greater food and nutrition security**. This will be through promoting diversified agricultural production (crop and livestock including fish farming), irrigation farming to enable multi-season cultivation, and the consumption of diverse, nutritious foods to reduce malnutrition rates. We will focus on promoting the adoption of sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices such as conservation agriculture, agroforestry, manure application, and link this to our work on sanitation by promoting eco-san latrines. Among others, we will enhance access to agricultural inputs, such as early-maturing, drought-tolerant, and disease-resistant varieties, and also support improvements in post-harvest handling, such as preservation and storage to minimise food loss.

We will be focussing on achieving **increased incomes and assets** within our target communities. We will encourage households to diversify their livelihood options, both on- and off-farm, as a platform for growth. We will continue to support the development of small and medium enterprises, through improving functional and financial literacy, enhancing access to information and technology, and promoting village savings & loans (VSL) schemes and linking them to microfinance institutions. This involves continued strong collaboration with CUMO to support rural entrepreneurship, savings and lending. We want to help to develop stronger pro-poor rural enterprises, value chains and markets. We will be supporting more farmers to work together, for instance, in groups, associations or cooperatives, to exploit agri-business, value addition and processing opportunities; to tap into better, more reliable urban and export markets; and to access financial services and technology to expand. We will be taking a more comprehensive value chain approach, aiming to develop commercially viable, nutrition-sensitive agribusiness value chains that work for small-scale farmers, particularly women. We will use ICT to increase access to market information including commodity prices and electronic extension messages.

We are committed to **increasing our own organisational and community capacity to prepare, mitigate and respond to shocks and disasters**. We will support targeted humanitarian responses (non-food items, food and cash transfers, WASH) in districts where we are operational, and when need be, where we have no prior presence. We will also strengthen district and community capacities, including supporting participatory contingency planning and the adoption of early warning systems.

We want to see **more sustainable land use and management** in our target areas. We will pursue cross-sectoral policy coherence (encompassing energy, land use, forest management, water and climate) through adopting an integrated watershed management approach, supporting land use planning, and enabling the formation of strong water users' associations.

## Pillar 2: WASH and healthier lives

We will be adopting an integrated approach to tackling underlying key causes of ill health, primarily focussing our attention on WASH, malaria, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) including HIV/AIDS programmes, and integrating health within our other programme pillar activities. We aim to increase the adoption of positive health behaviours and uptake of health products and services through innovative, sustainable direct support and broad-based behavioural change and communication initiatives.

A key focus will be on **increasing equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation** to end open defecation. We will continue to focus on rural communities, while seeking to support underserved peri-urban or small town communities and market centres with sanitation, safe water provision, hygiene messaging, and systems-based approaches. We will also support health facilities, schools, Community Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs), and community institutions to ensure the most in-need are reached. This includes ensuring WASH facilities are accessible to people with disabilities, and promoting safe menstrual hygiene facilities and practices for adolescent girls.

Working with partners, we will **reduce the number of malaria-related cases and deaths** primarily through supporting universal access to bed nets and other vector control interventions, and promoting behaviour change. We will improve data collection and reporting systems at district level to promote the use of evidence-based planning and decision-making.

We will strive to ensure **sustainably managed water and sanitation services and facilities**. After building the capacity of communities and districts to determine priorities and maintain solutions, we will promote market-based approaches through entrepreneurship. Environmental management, including catchment protection, will be mainstreamed to ensure that improved health is not at the expense of environment. For example, we will promote the use of recycled bathing water and water used for washing plates to irrigate backyard gardens. We will also scale up carbon financing as the last defence to ensuring borehole functionality.

We will **promote positive health behaviours and practices, particularly in terms of hygiene and sanitation, nutrition, and sexual reproductive health (including HIV/AIDS)**. This will be through social mobilisation, advocacy, and a number of communication channels such as sport and technology. We will identify and build the capacity of change agents to reinforce health messaging and become role models for adopting practices. We will promote and reinforce positive nutrition behaviour change with a focus on the prevention, and community management, of moderate malnutrition. Through partnering with others, we will integrate sexual and reproductive health, family planning and HIV/AIDS into all of our programmes, to enable people to have access to the information, products, services and care they need.





### Pillar 3: Sustainable energy

We will work to provide poor and marginalised communities with increased access to sustainable energy as a route to improved service provision, mitigating climate change, and promoting wealth creation.

Our initiatives will contribute towards the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) agenda, and in particular, **increasing access to modern energy services**. We will build on our position as a leading implementer by continuing to develop innovative projects that meet the needs of the communities we work with and serve. While our primary focus will be at the household level, we will also work to improve energy access at institutions (schools and health centres) and for productive uses. We will continue to advocate for energy access for those trapped in energy poverty. Recognising the inherent link between energy supply and access, we will address the driving causes of deforestation to ensure that there is continuous, sustainable supply of biomass. Participatory forest management will be promoted to ensure forest areas are protected and equitably accessed by their users.

We believe that rural value chains are fundamental for economic development. We will therefore design interventions that are income-generating and support broader market development leading to **enhanced markets for sustainable energy**. To kick-start commercial energy markets that create strong links between local production groups and consumers, we will continue our incorporation of energy into the National Social Support Programme, by scaling up our successful pilots of mainstreaming stoves in the Social Cash Transfer and Public Works programmes. This will create demand for energy products while also increasing the number of promoters on the ground, building stronger energy value chains.

Addressing energy access requires innovative solutions, particularly with regard to financing. We will therefore **develop our own innovative carbon finance and reinvestment models**, which we will make available to other organisations in Malawi. Revenues generated will be reinvested back into increasing rural energy access and ensuring water point functionality. Our Sustainable Energy Management Unit (SEMU) will act as a focal point for UP's energy work globally and will identify strategic partnerships to maximise our impact.



### Pillar 4: Gender equality

We believe that gender equality is an integral part of sustainable, inclusive development and therefore an important aim in itself. An equal society where men, women, girls and boys live freely and are able to fulfil their potential is a critical part of our vision for Malawi. Gender equality is also critical to achieving all our other programme pillars and outcomes. We will be implementing a two-pronged strategy that aims to first, comprehensively mainstream gender across all our pillars. To this end a new gender strategy and a gender equality toolkit are being developed. This will support comprehensive gender responsive work along the entire programme cycle and include accountability structures for partners and staff for progress towards gender equality. Second, we will focus on three outcomes that are fundamental to achieving gender equality.

We want to see **more economically empowered women**, and will do this through increasing economic opportunities, especially in agriculture, by helping women to increase the quantity and quality of their crops and improving their market and financial service access. This also involves supporting labour- and time-saving technologies and approaches that reduce women's time poverty and allow them greater opportunities to engage in remunerative, productive work.

We will enable **increased female leadership, decision making power, and voice** at household and community levels. We want to see more women participating and holding leadership positions, as this way their views and needs will be better represented and their needs are more likely to be met. Having women in leadership positions will empower them to gain both the economic and social power to move out of poverty, and work to redress the unequal gender attitudes and beliefs that subordinate women. This involves using a very culturally sensitive approach of slowly creating an open and enabling environment for women's empowerment and also wider acceptance. Role models, both male and female, will be promoted so that they can drive changes in mindsets. Since women carry the greatest burden of domestic responsibilities, including family food security, increasing women's income and decision-making power is likely to lead to improvements in child nutrition and health.

We will also strive to end violence against women and children by supporting **shifts in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours about gender-based violence among men and women**, and tackling issues of harmful cultural practices within our target areas, such as initiation rites, early marriage, school drop-outs.

# Our Approach

Our strategy is underpinned by the following three approaches, known as our 3 'I's

## 1. Intelligent Development

Historically, we have always taken a **community-focused participatory programming approach**, and we will continue to do this. We do this because we believe that people lead their own development. It also ensures that we can support context-specific interventions, that build off individual and community strengths, resources and opportunities rather than imposing inappropriate generic external 'solutions'. We believe that genuine empowerment puts communities and beneficiaries in the driving seat in all stages of our work (planning and designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).

Integral to our participatory approach is **ensuring that all voices within a community are heard**, and actively working to make sure that those particularly marginalised and vulnerable – whether it is the elderly, sick, people with disabilities, or the young – within a community are not only involved in our work, but benefit meaningfully. We will work towards equalising power imbalances through our inclusive approach.

We will continue to **focus on integrated multi-layered programmes** – taking more than one sectoral approach in the same target area – which we know have a practical and meaningful impact on rural people's lives. A holistic approach is vital. The problems that people face – such as the lack of clean water, poor health, uncertain livelihoods prospects, gender-based violence, and a denial of rights – are interrelated. Our experience shows that the most sustainable and cost-effective interventions are generally those that take an integrated multi-sector approach to effectively address diverse community needs. We see a multiplier effect where the overall outcome of our various interventions is greater than the sum of their parts. So we will try to do more multi-layering of different sectoral programmes in the same geographical areas.

Embedded in all of these, it is imperative we have a focus on **restoring and protecting the environment and ensuring environmental sustainability**.

**Partnerships and inspiring collaborations** will remain pivotal for us, and we can achieve significant change if we effectively harness the collective knowledge, skills, resources, and energies of a wide range of actors to increase the scale and impact of our work, and bring about wider change at a systems level. We will continue to work in strong partnership with districts and marginalised communities through a transparent and consultative approach. We will continue to work through decentralised structures (district, sub-district and community structures) to enable the effective development and delivery of inclusive district plans. We will develop the capacity of community structures and CBOs as an essential step in enhancing people's choices, opportunities and capacity to participate effectively in society. We also want to promote role models who can bring others with them.

CUMO, our sister organisation which has been a great success story, will continue to be an integral partner for us as well as a co-implementer of a number of our key strategic programmes. We want to continue to work in consortium partnerships, like we have successfully done under DISCOVER, and the INGO cash-transfer consortium. But at the same time we want to broaden our partnerships and partner more systematically with higher learning and research institutions (collaborating on critical research, technology and innovations), private sector players, and local organisations. We also want to work more effectively through advocacy and sharing networks, such as CISANET, WES Network, and CISONICC, but also be a convener of others – like we have as the Secretariat of the National Cookstoves Steering Committee.





## 2. Disruptive Innovation: Business unusual

Our partnership with Trinity College Dublin has led to the development of a thermo-electric generating cookstove which charges phones, as was profiled on the BBC and received over 20 million views.

But **we want to further challenge ourselves, and continue to innovate and trial new technologies, programming approaches, and internal processes** to find new solutions and efficient ways of working and sparking wider change. Ideally this change would be game changing – true disruptive innovation, fundamentally altering the existing market system and norms.

If these innovations are demonstrated or proven, we want to take them to scale through replication within our own programmes (nationally and internationally) and advocating for others (government, other civil society players, private sector) to take them up too. We want to extend our learning beyond our own organisation, and be present and speak out more at national fora.

We will also try to **ensure that our programmes link closely to national social protection programmes**, such as social cash transfers, and public works schemes, as through this innovative approach we can reach more people in a cost-effective way.

To do this we must strive to keep abreast of technological developments and wider sectoral changes through partnering with research institutions, and we want to make more use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in our programmes – from early warning to monitoring and evaluation systems.

## 3. Enabling Independence

Fundamentally we want to deliver programmes that enable people to make sustainable improvements themselves, after the end of our involvement. We do not want to create communities that are reliant on us, but rather **adopt sustainable practices and technologies**.

This is why we want to, wherever possible, **use markets to deliver solutions and avoid handouts**, as ultimately market-based business approaches will ensure long term viability; be it sanitation marketing, cleaner cookstove production and marketing, or our work with producer groups and enterprise development. This includes engaging with the large-scale private sector as partners and stakeholders, looking beyond production to market pull, and obstacles and opportunities further along the chain of benefit to small-scale farmers. We also want to deliberately address barriers that deny women and marginalised people from engaging and benefiting from these systems. We will also be cautious about the risks. Since smallholders' limited assets are vulnerable to environmental changes, participating in agricultural markets can be a risky business if existing, or emerging, hazards are not adequately addressed (e.g. appropriate crop selection based on information about climate changes, or vulnerability to disasters).

We will continue to **emphasise capacity building** and developing local formal as well as informal structures to ensure to equip community members, as well as government, with the skills, knowledge and tools by which to drive their destinies and carry on beyond us. We also believe in **empowering people to take a stand and have their voices heard**, be it to demand services and rights, or to hold power holders to account.

We also will **apply the same principles of enabling independence to our own operations** at United Purpose. CUMO started as a small DFID-funded project in 2000 reaching 100 farmers; it has now established itself as its own independent social enterprise with its own Board and strategic plan, reaching over 84,000 clients in 17 districts. So similarly, we want to see over time our Sustainable Energy Management Unit (SEMU) transforming into a distinct social enterprise providing sustainable energy services, and delivering on a triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental measures of organisational success.

# Underpinning internal systems and structures

To deliver this ambitious strategy and be as effective as possible we will need to make a number of internal improvements. Just like with our programming outcomes and targets, we will develop a detailed and measurable operational plan to accompany this strategy.

## 1. Organisational culture

We will continue to emphasise our wholehearted organisational commitment to our values of integrity, dignity, and environmental respect, and communicate these more clearly internally and externally. We want to demonstrate the highest levels of internal integrity, and to lead by example. At the same time, we will continue to ask the same from others we work with. We will continue to refine our processes and systems and strengthen our whistleblowing policy to make sure that employees and communities flag concerns as soon as possible. We want to better celebrate employees who exemplify integrity.

## 2. Operations and systems

To respond to our growing scale and complexity as an organisation, we need to make further improvements to our finance, IT, fleet and asset management, a procurement systems and processes in order to improve our efficiency and effectiveness. We will continue to operate strong internal audit systems.

## 3. Investing in our staff

Our greatest asset is our staff. We must value and inspire every one of them, and help bring others behind our values. We must continue to attract, retain, and continuously develop the talent needed to deliver our strategy. We will continue to strive for ever greater diversity, improve our gender balance, and uphold ourselves as an equal opportunity employer. Staff safety and welfare is critical to us. To do this we will strengthen our human resource systems and processes; this includes performance management and appraisal, recognition, personal development processes, and health and safety.

## 4. Brand and resourcing the strategy

The launch of the new United Purpose brand, on our 40th year of operation, represents a significant opportunity to clearly communicate what we stand for, our direction, and our impacts to date on a wide scale with renewed vigour and fresh energy. Together with our stronger emphasis on developing and sharing best practice more systematically to influence the policies and practices of others, we hope to also increase the visibility of our work nationally and internationally.

We must match our ambitions to tackle poverty and inequality to the resources that are available. We recognise that the future funding context is increasingly uncertain and subject to significant change and greater competition. To mitigate this, we have put a strategic emphasis on adopting a diversified multi-donor approach and broad-based partnership approach.

## 5. Monitoring, evaluation, accountability & learning

To ensure that we constantly improve and continue to raise the bar of our work, we are committed to self-reflection (critical evidence-based research, analysis and learning), challenging our core assumptions, and building on learning to continue to improve. It also helps us to deliver ever greater value for money.

We are also investing in improving our monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) systems and processes, using new technology, so we know better how we are faring against our strategic ambitions and understand our effectiveness in different contexts (successes, challenges and lessons) in order to constantly adjust our programmes along the way. This strategy is accompanied by a corresponding MEAL framework.

We will continue to prioritise and demonstrate our open and clear accountability: outward to programme stakeholders and our clients/beneficiaries, inward among partners, and upward to our donors. A key part of this is regular consultations with key stakeholders to gather their insights and assessments about our work. We also want to be better at documenting what we do and sharing externally, to influence the policies and practices of others.

### 2016 Partners

District and town councils	Other NGOs, agencies and companies	Learning and Research Institutions	Association, coalitions and networks
Balaka	Action Against Poverty	International Council for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF)	Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET)
Chikhwawa	Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA)	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT)	Civil Society Network on Climate Change (CISONECC)
Chitipa	Concern Worldwide	International Potato Centre (CIP)	Malawi Fair Trade Network
Dedza	co2balance	Trinity College Dublin, Ireland	National Cookstoves Steering Committee (NCSC)
Dowa	Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)	University of Strathclyde, Scotland	National Clusters (Food Security, Agriculture, Nutrition, WASH, Protection)
Kasungu	Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)		Water and Environmental Sanitation Network (WES Network)
Machinga	Foundation for Community Support Services (FOCUS)		
Mchinji	GOAL		
Mulanje	Imani Development		
Nkhotakhota	National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)		
Nsanje	Oxfam		
Ntcheu	Plan International		
Phalombe	Save the Children		
Thyolo	Self Help Africa		
Zomba	SolarAid		
	UNICEF		
	World Food Programme (WFP)		
	Women Legal Resource Centre (WOLREC)		

# Where we operate?

We will continue to focus our work in the central and southern regions of Malawi as highlighted in the map, as these remain areas of high poverty and vulnerability, and we feel that we can capitalise on our strong relations and experience and add value to other players operating.

## UP operations

- Balaka
- Chikhwawa
- Chiradzulu
- Dedza
- Dowa
- Kasungu
- Machinga
- Mchinji
- Mulanje
- Nkhotakhota
- Nsanje
- Ntcheu
- Phalombe
- Thyolo
- Zomba

## UP offices

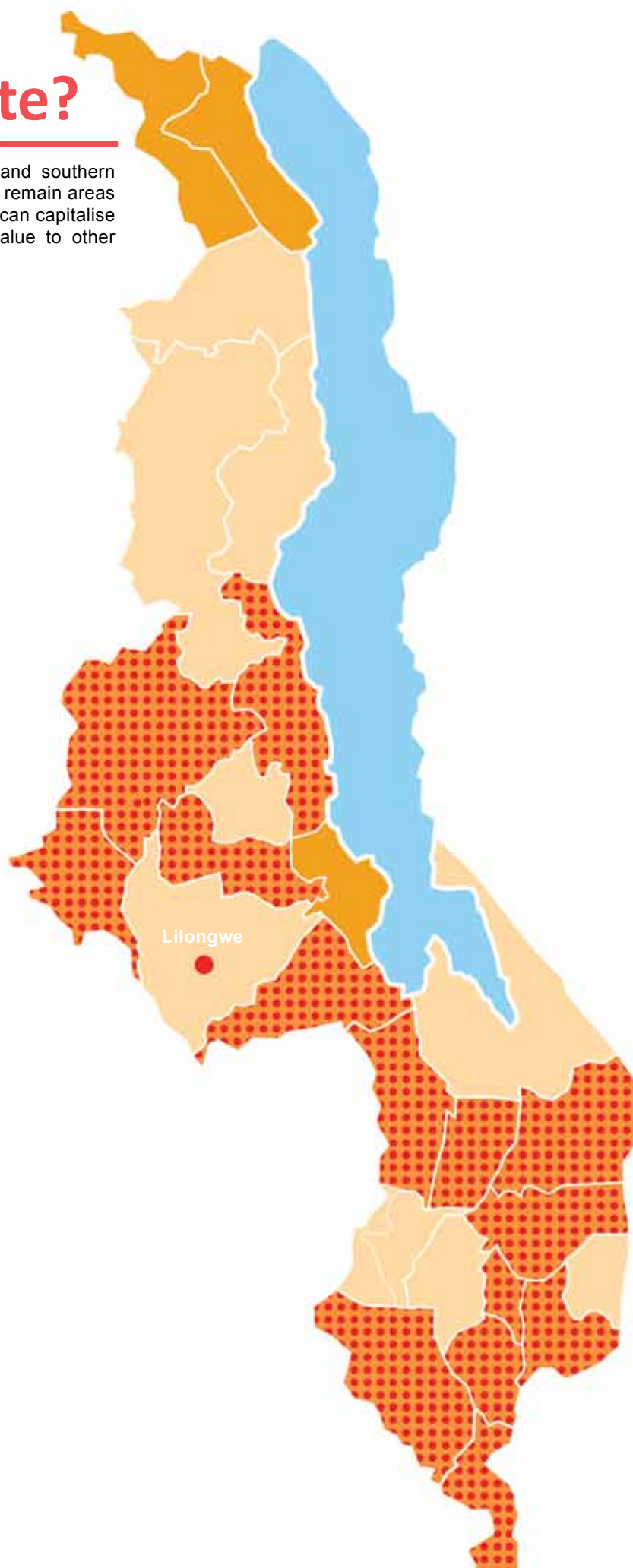
- UP Malawi Head Office

## Where UP works through partners

- Chitipa
- Karonga
- Salima

## CUMO operations

Balaka, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Dedza, Dowa, Lilongwe, Machinga, Mangochi, Mchinji, Mulanje, Nsanje, Ntcheu, Ntchisi, Phalombe, Salima, Thyolo, Zomba



# United Purpose's (UP) Malawi Country Strategy 2017-20

## Our global vision:

A world where justice, dignity and respect prevail for all.

## Our purpose:

To tackle poverty and inequality, by enabling people to improve their lives for the longer term.

## Our goal:

To see empowered and resilient women, men and children in Malawi determining their own futures.

## Our core values:

Integrity, dignity, and environmental respect.

## Our 4 strategic pillars & associated outcomes:

### 1. Livelihoods and food security

- Greater food and nutrition security
- Increased incomes and assets
- Stronger organisational and community capacity to prepare and respond to shocks and disasters
- More sustainable land use and management

### 2. WASH and healthier lives

- Increased equitable access to safe drinking water & sanitation
- Reduced number of malaria-related cases and deaths
- Sustainably managed water and sanitation services & facilities
- Better health behaviours and practice in terms of
  - i. Hygiene and sanitation
  - ii. Nutrition
  - iii. Sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS

### 3. Sustainable energy

- Increased access to sustainable energy (household, institutional and productive)
- Enhanced markets for sustainable energy
- Innovative carbon finance & reinvestment models developed

### 4. Gender equality

- More economically empowered women
- Increased female leadership, decision making power, & voice
- Shifts in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours about gender based violence among men and women

### Our Approach: the three 'I's

- Intelligent Development
- Disruptive Innovation
- Enabling Independence

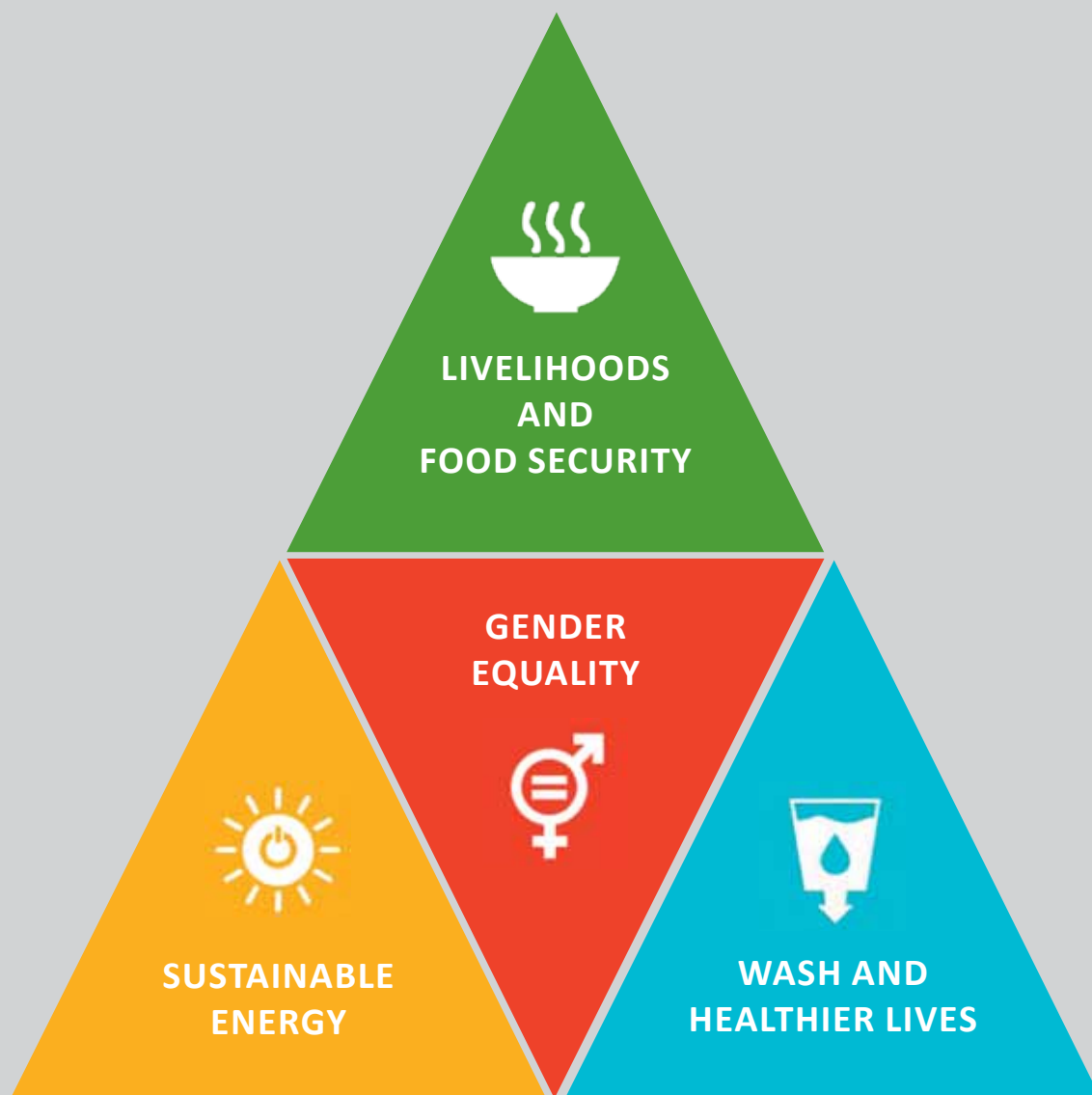
### Underpinning internal systems improvements

- Organisational culture
- Operations and systems
- People development / investing in staff
- Brand and resourcing the strategy
- Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning



# Our goal is to see empowered, resilient women, men and children in Malawi determining their own futures

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Underpinning internal structures and systems

**OUR APPROACH:** Intelligent Development  
Disruptive Innovation  
Enabling Independence

Out of  
poverty



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