Highlights

- With UK Aid funding through UNICEF, United Purpose (UP) is implementing an Emergency Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Preparedness and Response project at Emergency Treatment Units (ETUs) in Blantyre, Mwanza, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, and Mchinji hospitals ensuring that the 5 ETUs and surrounding communities have adequate WASH services reaching approximately 200,000 people.

- Over 900,000 people have received COVID-19 prevention messages through radio, mobile vans PA system and SMS.

- Inclusive posters designed by UP have been distributed to over 2,500 people across 18 districts and UP partnered with FUKO newspaper (a newspaper in Chichewa distributed in rural areas for free).

- Approximately 550 community leaders have been oriented on disseminating COVID-19 prevention and response messages to communities.

- Prison guards at Mulanje Prison have been trained on COVID-19 prevention and response which has been disseminated to approximately 450 at-risk prisoners.

- 9,591 community members have received Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags and winter seeds under the existing DFID funding.

- UP has procured supplies valued at $45,000 from local markets including critical WASH supplies such as buckets, soap, and chlorine and has provided financial and technical support to the District Public Health Emergency Management Committee (PHEMC) in Dedza, Balaka and Dowa.

The Situation

Malawi is in a declared State of Disaster. As of 6th May there are currently 43 confirmed cases of COVID-19; three deaths, seven recoveries and 1032 samples tested.

On 8th April, the Government’s Ministry of Disaster Management Affairs and Public Events, formally launched the National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan budgeted at $213 million.

Government restrictions were introduced at the start of April including a ban on large social gatherings and the suspension of international flights. On the 14th April, the President and the Minister of Health announced a 21 day nationwide lockdown that was blocked by a High Court injunction.

Our Team and Operations

Task Force: UP is committed to the health and well-being of our staff, partners and communities in which we operate. An internal taskforce was set up on 10th March and a number of precautionary measures put in place in response to the outbreak with the aim of preventing and containing transmission.

Remote working: The team moved to remote working on 26th March reducing implementation to essential/critical programmes while scaling up our COVID-19 response. Only field work that is COVID-19 preparedness/response or falls within UP COVID-19 restrictions is permitted.

Operational Access: Implementing activities during this period requires that all staff have signed a code of conduct committing them to the principles of social distancing, strong hygiene and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Furthermore all staff must have an ID and written approval from the District in line Department of Disaster Management Affairs guidance.

Cluster Engagement: UP is an active member of the WASH, Protection, C4D (Communication for Development), Logistics, Coordination, Nutrition and Food Security Clusters. We are the informal INGO Forum focal point for the WASH cluster. Our timely submissions of the ‘4Ws’ and the uploading of our communications materials have been appreciated by Cluster Leads for WASH and C4D.

INGO Humanitarian Committee: UP is one of nine INGOs in Malawi that form the INGO Humanitarian Committee and has been engaged in driving a number of advocacy points forward at national level. UP has fed into the Global Flash Appeal, UN INGO prioritisation plan and INGO Framework. UP has been selected as the focal point agency in Dedza, Dowa, Balaka, Chiradzulu, Mulanje and Thyolo through the INGO forum.

Resources: UP has developed a communications pack for programmes and a number of internal resources which have been shared widely with other organisations including remote working guidance, myth busting and how to prepare your family.

For more information contact: UP Malawi Country Director (Acting): Kate.Hartley-Louis@united-purpose.org
Our Programmes
In March UP adapted 26 projects working in 18 districts in light of a three month (April-June) COVID 19 contingency window. Changes include activities suspended, adapted and funds pivoted or redirected (with donor approval) towards COVID-19 preparedness and early recovery.

We have redirected £180,000 to COVID-19 specific activities across WASH, nutrition, energy, livelihood and resilience building programmes, as well as delivering our ETU WASH preparedness project with UNICEF (£110,000) and leveraged a further £290,000 of investment in ongoing activities to support COVID-19 preparedness through mainstreaming hygiene promotion. Programme highlights across our four strategic pillars are as follows:

Livelihoods and food security

- Under our EU funded Pro-Resilience Action project (Pro-ACT) prison guards at Mulanje Prison have been trained on COVID-19 prevention and response which has been disseminated to approximately 450 prisoners who are considered high risk.
- 9,591 community members have received Purdue Improved Crop Storage (PICS) bags and winter seeds under existing DFID funded Promoting Sustainable Partnerships for Empowered Resilience Programme (PROSPER), to support farmers during the period when market disruptions may reduce prices or limit sales options.

WASH and healthier lives

- Our three-month Emergency WASH Preparedness for COVID-19 Project with funding from UK aid through UNICEF is progressing well, ensuring the 5 pre-selected Emergency Treatment Units (ETU) at Mchinji, Mwanza, Mzuzu, Lilongwe and Blantyre hospitals have adequate WASH services. To date, we have: installed 31 emergency latrines and hand washing stations with soap; installed water tanks in 4 ETUs; enhanced DHO capacity to respond to COVID-19 with essential WASH supplies and adequately equipped staff; increased knowledge and awareness about COVID-19 through community radio jingles and mobile vans reaching over 200,000 people at and around the 4 ETUs; oriented government staff on safeguarding issues and ensured safeguarding feedback mechanisms are in place.
- Under our GIZ/BMZ funded Food Security and Nutrition programme in Dedza 366 caregroup promoters and volunteers were trained in COVID-19 preparedness and 326 were provided with radios to ensure access to information.

Sustainable energy

- Due to social distancing requirements the University of Strathclyde and Scottish Government funded Rural Energy Access through Social Enterprise and Decentralisation (EASE) project has accelerated discussions with Airtel about integrating mobile money with its smart metering platform. This will allow micro-grid customers to purchase electricity using their phones, thereby reducing the number of essential trips required.
- Our Irish Aid funded Accelerating Commercial and Community Energy Supply Sustainability (ACCESS) project is combining COVID-19 messages with promotions for stoves and solar lamps. The team have developed two radio adverts, integrating messages on symptoms and what to do if someone becomes ill. Alongside this, the project has developed a series of short SMS messages covering hygiene, social distancing and understanding COVID-19.

Gender equality

- Many of the measures necessary to control the spread of COVID-19, including school closures, not only increase GBV-related risks and violence against women and girls, but also limit survivors’ ability to distance themselves from their abusers as well as reducing access to external support. Our Irish Aid funded resilience programme ASPIRE is using Anti-GBV messaging to be communicated to communities in Dedza with the aim to reduce increased risks around intimate partner violence and gender based violence.

Communications: Building upon the trusted reputation UP has developed with communities, we have a crucial role to play in raising awareness about COVID-19 prevention and ensuring accurate information reaches communities in remote areas. Responding to communication gaps, UP has developed a communications pack and three inclusive posters (see one below) which have been approved by the Ministry of Health and shared widely amongst the teams and with other organisations. This includes erecting a billboard on the M1 road and printing in the free community newspaper FUKO to reach 400,000 people with our messages.