Highlights

- Under our GIZ-EnDev RBF project we distributed an additional 10,000 improved cookstoves to Social Cash Transfer beneficiaries living in Lilongwe district.
- With support from the Livelihoods Fund, UP has trained 57 Health Surveillance Assistants in TA Kawinga (Machinga) and TA Mlumbe (Zomba) on COVID-19 prevention and response and has provided them with hygiene kits.
- Last week, through support from UNICEF, WASH supplies were distributed to 465 returnees from South Africa in Machinga Teacher Training College (TTC).
- With funding from UNICEF, 11 new emergency prefabricated latrines (6M, 5F) have been installed at Thyolo Emergency Treatment Units (ETUs).
- With funding from UNICEF, UP supported Chikwawa, Nsanje, Thyolo, Chitipa and Mzuzu prisons with WASH supplies including HtH, hand washing buckets and soap, Menstrual Hygiene management kits and water quality test kits.
- At a global level we are in touch with a Welsh company that has developed a low-cost way of solidifying ethanol into a safer fuel branded as FireDragon. We are currently conducting tests to see if it has the potential to form part of the cooking mix for households in various countries. Given UP’s long experience with stoves in Malawi, a sample of FireDragon blocks was sent earlier this year. With funding from our Embassy of Ireland – funded ACCESS project, further testing will be conducted which includes surveying 50 urban and peri-urban households for 30 days of cooking with the new ethanol fuel.

The Situation

As of 11th August there are 4,714 (2,085 active) confirmed cases of COVID-19; 103 deaths, 2477 recoveries and 35,337 samples tested. All 28 districts affected.

The High Court suspension of enforcement of government measures to prevent the transmission remains in force.

Our Team and Operations

New Country Director: An external and internal recruitment process for the new Country Director of Malawi was recently completed and Kate Hartley-Louis was appointed.

Kate has been with UP since 2015, originally joining in our Bangladesh Country Programme. She rose to become Interim Country Director in Bangladesh before coming to Malawi, first joining in a regional position as Head of Programmes and Partnerships, then soon becoming Deputy Country Director Programmes. Since March 2020 she has covered as interim Country Director.

Office Closure: UP Malawi offices remain closed. This is reviewed bi-weekly by UP’s Senior Management Team.

INGO District Focal Points: UP is an active member in the INGO Humanitarian Sub-Committee and INGO Forum. Over the last few months UP has been working with other INGOs to identify and work with INGO District Focal Points (DFPs) in all districts. DFPs are INGO/NGO staff present in the districts who, in addition to their usual work, are playing an active role in strengthen coordination and communication during the pandemic. Our colleagues Alinafe Gama, Gift Munthali, Blessings Kambombo, Hilary Mnjemu, Chimwemwe Lungu, Chifundo Mandala, Henry Kalomba and Rose Harawa are representing INGOs as DFPs for Balaka, Dedza, Dowa, Chiradzulu, Thyolo and Mulanje.

DFPs meet virtually fortnightly by region with calls facilitated by CDs from UP, GOAL and CRS.

Great strides have been made by DFPs working alongside colleagues from LGAP (DAI’s national local governance programme) to contribute to the consolidation of District Response Plans, coordinate and convene partner meetings, support Government efforts to identify gaps and barriers, and facilitate information sharing up to the national level. Huge thanks to our colleagues are working tirelessly to ensure a coordinated national response.

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Livelings and food security

- Our Palladium-funded (via USAID) AgDiv project conducted food processing and utilization trainings in Dedza reaching 3,261 (441 male and 2,820 female) project participants. In Balaka 619 (142 male and 478 female) project participants are currently undergoing the training. Each session of the training comprised of 20 participants and all COVID-19 preventive measures were followed.

- Our Embassy of Ireland-funded ASPIRE programme, in collaboration with the Social Welfare Office and the Police, oriented two Community Victim Support Units in TAs Kaphuka and Chauma on COVID-19. The programme also provided 14 irrigation groups, 20 REFLECT circles and two Community Resource Centres with handwashing buckets and masks and oriented them on COVID-19.

WASH and healthier lives

- With funding from ECHO UP joins 9 of Malawi’s leading INGOs (Save the Children, GOAL, CARE, Trócaire, COOPI, CRS, Concern Worldwide and Oxfam) across two consortia (South and Central / North regions) in a COVID-19 response programme. Targeting seven high risk districts the programme takes a health systems strengthening and integrated WASH approach working with 50 targeted primary and secondary health facilities and their surrounding communities. UP is the technical lead in WASH and leading implementation in Dedza. The project will use mWater data from recently completed national evaluation to review WASH access levels.

- With support from the Livelihoods Fund UP has trained 57 Health Surveillance Assistants in TA Kawinga (Machinga) and TA Mlumbe (Zomba). Training covered: understanding COVID-19; prevention and control; diagnosis and testing; self-isolation; use of PPE; contact tracing; and health facility preparation. In addition to training, each HSA was provided with a village level hygiene kit, including: bucket with tap, chlorine and soap. Finally, community awareness was raised through posters and broadcasts on local radio stations.

- With funding from UNICEF, 11 new emergency prefabricated latrines (6M, 5F) have been installed at Thyolo Emergency Treatment Units (ETUs). To date, 101 gender responsive emergency prefabricated latrines have been installed at 11 ETUs, Mwanza and Mchinji boarder post, Machinga TTC; Mwanza Border Post; Mchinji Border Post and Machinga TTC. Each set of latrine has functional hand washing facility with soap.

- In partnership with UNICEF, UP continues to support those returning to Malawi from South Africa by ensuring access to WASH facilities at screening venues. Last week, WASH supplies were distributed to 465 returnees in Machinga TTC.

- Through support from UNICEF, UP conducted repeat rapid water quality tests for the 4 contaminated water points in Nsanje. The results came out positive again meaning the water points are contaminated and flush chlorination will be done in order to treat the contaminated water points.

- Again with funding from UNICEF, UP supported Chikwawa, Nsanje, Thyolo, Chitipa and Mzuzu prisons with WASH supplies including HHH, hand washing buckets and soap, Menstrual Hygiene management kits and water quality test kits. Those prisons have a total of 1,451 prisoners.

Sustainable energy

- Under our Giz-EnDev RBF project we distributed an additional 10,000 improved cookstoves to Social Cash Transfer beneficiaries living in Lilongwe district, taking the total to 30,000 households reached over the last six weeks.

PILOTTING A CLEANER COOKING FUEL

Globally three billion people depend on polluting, open fires or inefficient stoves to cook their food. In Malawi 98% of all households still use biomass (firewood and charcoal) for cooking. Accessibility and affordability of modern alternative cooking fuels remain low and limited to urban areas. UP’s response over the years has been to promote appropriate fuel-efficient cookstoves for the rural poor in each of our regional ‘cluster’ countries. These stoves use less firewood and give off less smoke. However, we accept that these are just an initial step, because they still consume biomass from the local environment and we are exploring the prospects for alternative cleaner fuels.

A Welsh company BCB working with Cardiff University has developed a low-cost way of solidifying ethanol into a safer fuel. This new fuel is branded as FireDragon. UP UK has been talking to BCB to see if it has the potential to form part of the cooking mix for households in the countries where UP works. If it looks promising the long-term objective is to design local efficient cookers to use the fuel, and to establish in-country production of FireDragon. Given UP’s long experience with stoves in Malawi, a sample of FireDragon blocks was sent earlier this year for testing. We tested it in both our clay Chitetezo Mbaula firewood stove and the metal Jico charcoal stove. We made modifications to the fuel container, rather than re-design the stoves. We found that it boiled a pan of water in less time and using less fuel than BCB’s own tests. So we decided it would be worth doing further more robust testing. With funding from the research component of our Embassy of Ireland-funded ACCESS project, we shall survey 50 urban and peri-urban households for 30 days of cooking with the new ethanol fuel. BCB have donated 250kg of fuel for this trial. We will assess the technical, social and economic viability of FireDragon as an alternative to charcoal. Our thinking is this will be the best initial prospect, to replace a paid-for fuel that already has established supply chains.

We plan to trial FireDragon in another region, so we are now preparing a funding bid for a similar test with households in Bangladesh.