

**MALAWI SDG ACCELERATION FUND
FINAL REPORT
REPORTING PERIOD: 30 JUNE 2020 – 31 MARCH 2021**

<p style="text-align: center;">Programme Title</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme Title: Improved accountability for Malawi's Covid-19 social protection response through Grievance and Redress Mechanisms and monitoring. MPTF Office Project Reference Number: 00122513 	<p style="text-align: center;">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country: Malawi. Nation-wide, with a focus on Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba. UNDAF Pillar Three: Inclusive and Resilient Growth. <i>Outcome 7: Households have increased food and nutrition security, equitable access to WASH and healthy ecosystems and resilient livelihoods.</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF Malawi Country Office 	<p style="text-align: center;">Implementing Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government of Malawi: Ministry of Gender, Community Development & Social Welfare (MoGCDSW); Ministry of Economic Planning & Development and Public Sector Reforms (MoEPDPSR). Private Sector: Telekom Networks Malawi (TNM) and individual consultant.
<p style="text-align: center;">Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document:</p> <p>SDG-AF Contribution²: US\$ 50,000</p> <p>TOTAL: US\$ 50,000</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Programme Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration: 9 months</p> <p>Start Date³: 30.06.2020</p> <p>Original End Date⁴: 31.03.2021</p> <p>Current End date⁵: 31.03.2021</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Programme Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</p> <p>Assessment/Review - if applicable <i>please attach</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i></p> <p>Mid-Term Evaluation Report – <i>if applicable please attach</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Report Submitted By</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Beatrice Targa Title: Chief of Social Policy Participating Organization (Lead): UNICEF Email address: btarga@unicef.org

¹ Strategic Results, as formulated in the Strategic UN Planning Framework (e.g. UNDAF) or project document;
² The SDG-AF Contribution, refers to the amount transferred to the Participating UN Organizations, which is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)
³ The start date is the date of the first transfer of the funds from the MPTF Office as Administrative Agent. Transfer date is available on the [MPTF Office GATEWAY](#)
⁴ As per approval of the original project document by the relevant decision-making body/Steering Committee.
⁵ If there has been an extension, then the revised, approved end date should be reflected here. If there has been no extension approved, then the current end date is the same as the original end date. The end date is the same as the operational closure date which is when all activities for which a Participating Organization is responsible under an approved MPTF / JP have been completed. As per the MOU, agencies are to notify the MPTF Office when a programme completes its operational activities.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

COVID-19	COrona Virus Disease 2019
CUCI	COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention
DoDMA	Department of Disaster Management Affairs
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
MoEPDPSR	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and Public Sector Reforms
GIZ.....	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GRM	Grievance and Redress Mechanism
MIS	Management Information System
MMO	Mobile Money Operator
MNSSP II	Malawi National Social Support Programme II
MoGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction & Social Protection Division of the Ministry of Economic Planning & Development & Public Sector Reforms
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TOR	Terms of Reference
TNM	Telekom Networks Malawi
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

NARRATIVE REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNICEF, alongside UN sister agencies and development partners, has supported the Government of Malawi in conceptualising and preparing for the COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI), a national programme which aims to address the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 in urban areas. UNICEF is, among other efforts, contributing through setting up a remote platform for the effective management of grievances, and the effective monitoring of the intervention. The objective of this support has been to ensure that the Government of Malawi receives the required technical and operational assistance to effectively address grievances and monitoring needs arising from the CUCI. Ultimately, the project aims at ensuring that right holders have access to safe and effective complaint mechanisms and at strengthening the regular social protection system by laying out the foundations for a smooth transition from a call centre created for the emergency response to a more permanent structure part of the national social protection system.

The COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI) is an emergency programme to address the urgent needs of the urban poor, who are being affected by the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic. CUCI was designed to provide monthly cash grants through Mobile Money Operators (MMOs) for a period of three months to a total number of 199,413 households located in selected vulnerable hotspots of the four cities of Malawi: Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba. Following initial delays, partially caused by the Presidential Elections and difficulties in firming up commitments by financing partners, the CUCI transfers commenced with disbursement to 63,624 beneficiaries from late February 2021, and a group of 42,148 beneficiaries receiving their transfers from March 2021, while the remaining 93,641 households are expected to receive their payments in June 2021. An increase of the total caseload, as well a potential 3 to 6 months extension of the ongoing CUCI support is currently being discussed between the Government and development partners.

During the first months of implementation, the focus was on ensuring that all the critical elements were solidly established in preparation for the start of the CUCI response: preparatory meetings between the Government, UNICEF and other key stakeholders took place, and a Mobile Money Operator (MMO) and a consultant were contracted. The equipment was installed, a toll-free number was registered by the Ministry of Gender, Community Development & Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) and agreements were prepared for the provision of phone and internet services. The consultant supported the development of a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and software for the management of complaints, and also produced training manuals for the operators. Trainings took place on the second half of February 2021, just before the deployment of CUCI payments. The CUCI Call Centre was operational on 10th March 2021, in line with the timelines of the overall response. Meetings with updates on the CUCI Call Centre and for the management of cases have been taking place regularly.

Consultations and planning meetings for less immediate action areas have also taken place, including the development of monitoring tools and the planning of the handover process for the CUCI GRM and Call Centre. The emergency social support systems initially created for the COVID-19 response, have been developed with the potential to be transformed into permanent features of the national social protection system, in line with the humanitarian-development nexus. The CUCI GRM and Call Centre are being gradually adapted so that in future they can provide GRM services for additional programmes and functionalities (e.g. Social Cash Transfers Programme, humanitarian responses, Monitoring & Evaluation activities, broadcasting of awareness messages via SMS, Child Helpline counselling services...).

Human Interest Stories have been collected and visibility activities linked to the innovative and strategic support provided are being published. The focus of the stories has been placed on the protection of the rights of beneficiaries, and on the CUCI Call Centre and its transition from an emergency mode to a permanent feature of the national social protection system.

Whilst the project's absorption rate was low during the first reporting period due to delays on the overall response, all the balance has now been fully utilised following the commencement of direct payments to beneficiaries and the opening of the call centre.

NARRATIVE REPORT

I. Purpose

The **Overall Objective** of this project is to ensure that the Government of Malawi receives the required technical and operational assistance to effectively address grievances and monitoring needs arising from the COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI) whilst strengthening the regular social protection system.

The project was articulated around the following **Project Areas**:

- Action area 1: Finalise specifications and contract a service provider to operate the CUCI Call Centre;
- Action area 2: Set-up and operate a help-line to address grievances and redresses linked to the Government COVID-19 social protection response;
- Action area 3: Design gender-sensitive monitoring tools and conduct a baseline survey, process, output, and outcome monitoring;
- Action area 4: Design and operationalise a handover process for the call centre to continue rendering GRM, case management and monitoring services for regular social protection programs.

II. Results

i) Narrative reporting on results:

- **Action area 1: Finalise specifications and contract a service provider to operate the CUCI Call Centre;**
UNICEF developed the TORs for contracting the service provider to set up and operate the call centre jointly with Poverty Reduction & Social Protection Division of the Ministry of Economic Planning & Development & Public Sector Reforms (PRSP) and the Ministry of Gender, Community Development & Social Welfare (MoGCDSW). An initial procurement process was not successful in identifying a suitable service provider. In order to ensure the timely delivery of all critical outputs, and in consultation with the Government, UNICEF secured the required services and equipment on time for the call centre to be operational in alignment with the start of CUCI payments:
 - The operation of the call centre was awarded to TNM via an addendum to the contract that the MoGCDSW holds with this company as one of the Mobile Money Operators (MMOs) delivering CUCI payments to beneficiaries.
 - As a way to fast-track the process, UNICEF hired equipment under the above contract with TNM. This measure was put in place to ensure that technical support would be provided, and items would be replaced if they were not compatible or not running adequately. Thanks to these measures, equipment-related issues during the initial months of CUCI implementation were swiftly dealt with, thus avoiding the disruption of operations.
 - An individual consultant was recruited to i) develop new functionalities in the CUCI MIS to support a call centre and operational protocols to deal with complaints and ii) provide support and maintenance of the CUCI MIS.
 - UNICEF has continuously supported the Ministry with bi-weekly CUCI coordination meetings, also covering the call centre and broader GRM, by providing secretariat support to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the progress being made and expedite the processes were necessary.
 - UNICEF also contributed to ensure that MoGCDSW and PRSP would call for meetings with relevant stakeholders to discuss the potential plans for expansion of the programmes and functionalities of the call centre and its transition to a permanent structure, providing key information on the background, opportunities and challenges ahead.
- **Action area 2: Set-up and operate a help-line to address grievances and redresses linked to the Government COVID-19 social protection response;**

The harmonisation of GRMs is aligned with the systems strengthening pillar of the Malawi National Social Protection Programme II (MNSSP II), which speaks to the harmonisation of core processes and calls for a rights-based approach to implementing social support programmes by providing a feedback loop for beneficiaries and programme participants. Based on the “*Harmonised Grievances and Redress Mechanism (GRM) Handbook for Social Support Programmes*” which had been developed by the Government of Malawi in June 2020, and the existing Committee structures at local level, UNICEF provided technical assistance for the development of a remote GRM system for the COVID-19 Urban Cash Response, thus also contributing to advance the process of operationalisation of social protection GRM systems in Malawi.

UNICEF supported the Government in the drafting of the workflow for the Grievance and Redress Mechanisms (GRM) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for CUCI, including the design of a Referrals Map. The GRM procedures embed the list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) as a repository that will not only help call centre operators to promptly provide information to those seeking through the call centre; but can also be used to provide briefings to referral points for CUCI (e.g. Police, Financial Service Providers, GRM Committees, etc.). Through this process, Government has provided relevant inputs to these draft pieces, adapting work to reflect Government

plans. UNICEF will continue to support with the training for the call centre operators and linking of the data to the CUCI MIS.

Furthermore, UNICEF supported the Government of Malawi in the application processes of a short-code. The Government managed to acquire the short-code number of 351, which was then activated through the contract with the mobile service provider. With technical assistance from this grant, UNICEF contributed to ensure that the Government was the official owner of the short-code/toll-free line, that this number would be accessible free of charge from phones operated by different companies (interoperability) and that the contract with the MMO was fully catering for the specific needs of the programme. An additional functionality was added to the call centre, which now allows for the automatic broadcasting of information and awareness messages via SMS. The SMS broadcast service facilitated the communication with beneficiaries to inform them about transfer delivery schedules, raising awareness about the existence of the toll-free line for reporting of grievances and claims.

UNICEF has also supported the Government with the drafting of a Communications Plan and relevant communication messages (both in English and in Chichewa) to improve the awareness of and access to the call centre. Government has endorsed the plans and the messages were aired through different platforms.

- **Action area 3: Design gender sensitive monitoring tools and conduct a baseline survey, process, output, and outcome monitoring;**

The CUCI Call Centre is the main centralised hub for receiving queries, claims and grievances under the CUCI response. Between 10th March – April 30th 2021, a total of 3,295 calls were received, of which 61% were by men, 39% by women. The majority of callers (69%) are beneficiaries, while also rejected (13%), ineligible (10%) and non-registered households (8%) made inquiries through the CUCI Call Centre.⁶

Most of the calls (over 95%) were informational calls. Out of these, 77% corresponded to inquiries about when transfers were going to be paid. These calls were made both from men (61%) and women (39%). These figures pointed at gaps in the information provided to beneficiaries about transfer delivery schedules, which was rather complex due to the varying disbursement schedules depending on the funding source of the transfers.

A significant number of calls from non-registered households, 62%, claimed that they had been interviewed during the data collection processes. However, no information of these households was found in the Management Information System. This finding led to further investigation of the cases.

Between March & April 2021, a total of 16 claims, 37.5% submitted by men and 62.5% submitted by women, were presented. All claims were subjected to an internal investigation, whereby the information in the MIS was checked. In all cases, the MIS showed that the beneficiaries were on the transfer lists and reported as “paid out” according to the reconciliation files. Fourteen (14) claims were deemed necessary to be double-checked and were forwarded to the MMOs with the request to provide movement details of these accounts. Following the details from the MMOs (withdrawal dates, transactions on the e-wallet and cash-out points/ agents), the beneficiaries were contacted to explain the movements on the accounts and to get confirmation of this information.

Despite the fact that GRM Committees are present at the local level, a number of challenges has resulted in a less active involvement than desirable. So far, the presentation of cases under the CUCI programme has been exclusively done through the call centre. This means that there is no backlog of manually collected cases that need to be entered into the MIS, and it is therefore possible to have a full overview of all the cases and its status.

The CUCI Call Centre was also utilised to conduct spot checks, further investigate emerging issues and address operational challenges of the COVID-19 Urban Cash Response. For instance, the Call Centre was utilised to identify the actual recipients of cash transfers in cases of duplicated e-wallet accounts. The call centre created claims in the MIS on behalf of the 729 beneficiaries who did not receive their cash transfers. These claims were presented to the MMOs for their immediate action. Simultaneously, the list of beneficiaries was sent to the relevant local GRM Committees so they could identify these households and collect their correct mobile numbers, thus showing how the current remote system complements local GRM Committee structures.

⁶ Beneficiaries: households successfully registered and enrolled into the CUCI Programme; Rejected: households that had their information collected but were not residing in the selected hotspot areas or were marked as duplicated by the UBR; Ineligible: households that are not meeting the eligibility criteria (i.e. households with formal employment); Non-registered households: Households whose information has not been collected.

The call centre has also been used to investigate suspected fraudulent accounts reported by the MMOs. Six (6) out of the nine (9) cases, corresponding to 3 men and 6 women, were successfully reached and were found to be genuine beneficiaries with no indication of fraud. Following these findings their accounts were no longer suspended. More recently, the call centre has been utilised to investigate 114 cases where no cash movements were made after 80 days. While some beneficiaries were reached via phone calls, others are suspected of having passed away, and thus their information was transferred to local GRM Committees for further verifications.

Thanks to the establishment of the CUCI Call Centre through the SDG Acceleration Fund, Post-Distribution Monitoring Surveys and other CUCI evaluation exercises are now being conducted remotely with additional resources. Delays on the implementation schedule of the overall CUCI programme, increased needs on other action areas, and the necessity to coordinate with other grants and partners for the efficient use of resources meant that the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) activities financed under this grant were mostly focused on the functioning of the CUCI, rather than on the evaluation of the overall performance of this national programme which is still ongoing. Nonetheless, UNICEF has been actively contributing to overall CUCI M&E efforts and is leading on the exploration of the use of the call centre for M&E purposes.

- **Action area 4: Design and operationalise a handover process for the Call Centre to continue rendering GRM, case management and monitoring services for regular social protection programs;**

UNICEF has been working closely with GIZ to support the Government with the operationalisation of the call centre to complement GRM, case management and monitoring of regular social protection programmes. Joint coordination meetings with the Government, UNICEF, GIZ, the consultant hired by UNICEF and the mobile service provider, as well as bilateral meetings have regularly taken place. Synergies and a clear delimitation of roles and responsibilities have been agreed by all parties.

A suitable location was identified by the Government, in consultation with UNICEF and GIZ, and with technical support from the consulting firm and the mobile service operator. The CUCI Call Centre will be located at the premises of the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) in Capital Hill (Lilongwe). UNICEF and GIZ have been engaging the Government to increase the rooms of operation and also engage full time call centre operators who will be dedicated and available in the long run to support the processes.

Similarly, the Government of Malawi, UNICEF, GIZ and TNM have worked together to identify the equipment, software and other elements required for the establishment of a permanent call centre, and for its transition to a longer-term system that can accommodate increased needs. Discussions on the handover processes are ongoing. The aim is to ensure Government uptakes the responsibility to build the required capacity to ensure that the Call Centre is adequately maintained and utilised to its full potential, including the areas of GRM, case management and monitoring of regular social protection programmes. Plans for the integration of additional programmes and functionalities are being prepared in consultation with relevant actors. Further, to ensure a smooth transition, UNICEF is extending its support to the operations of the Call Centre until the end of 2021.

- **Qualitative assessment:**

Overall, the project has managed to make significant progress despite COVID-19 restrictions and other limitations.

Relations with key actors:

Government:

- The partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare has been overall positive. Nonetheless, some challenges have been faced in terms of availability to actively engage in processes required for the advancement of the project, and decisions required for its long-term sustainability.
- The Ministry of Economic Planning & Development and Public Sector Reform has also been quite engaged in accompanying the processes led by MoGCDSW, despite being also responsible for the whole CUCI Response.
- The Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) was engaged only when necessary, as this Department is in charge of coordinating the whole COVID-19 Emergency Response.

Private sector:

- Relationship with TNM, the national phone company in charge of technical aspects related to the response has been overall positive. TNM have been available for a number of joint meetings with the Government, the firm in charge of the soft component and UNICEF. Quick to inform about limitations and warn about potential bottlenecks.

Cross-cutting issues: Underlying capacity challenges on the Government side, exacerbated by growing demands on the CUCI response and other fronts, resulted in limited availability which was remedied through follow-up on the achievement of key results.

UN coordination highly contributed to place the Call Centre high on the agenda for the response, which positively affected the progress on the achievement of results.

- **Lessons learnt:**

Lessons learnt include the importance of clear communications on the COVID-19 response, and the need to ensure that the Government is able to dedicate the sufficient time and resources to GRM processes at all levels, given current limitations and competing priorities. It is also important to ensure that the Government is fully briefed about the challenges and limitations, as well as of the opportunities for expansion of the new structures. A more dynamic approach to data quality assurance should be undertaken, ensuring that 'spot-checks' and other verifications take place as close as possible to data collection, in order to reduce potential discrepancies and to fast-track overall data validation processes. Lastly, increased efforts should be directed towards analysing all contractual requirements at the start of the project to avoid delays in implementation.

- **Future workplans:**

Building on the work, achievements and partnerships strengthened throughout the implementation of this programme, UNICEF will continue contributing to ensure that the Government of Malawi receives the required technical and operational assistance to effectively address grievances and monitoring needs arising from the COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI) whilst contributing to strengthen the national social protection system. In addition, UNICEF will continue to support the Government of Malawi to plan and navigate discussions with stakeholders for the effective integration of other programmes and functionalities into the call centre, with a sustainability perspective.

The CUCI Call Centre – handling calls for the people

By Maria Thundu



Operator Grace Banda responding to a call at the workstation © UNICEF Malawi/2021/Thundu

A buzzing four-desk operation, the centre that handles all enquiries under the COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI) programme is alive with calls and beeps from the various apparatus. The operators are ready with responses and referrals to provide to the callers, most of whom are potential beneficiaries of the cash transfer programme.

Grace Banda, the supervisor of the centre, is a social worker and former Principal Social Welfare Officer at the Ministry of Labour. She is also leading a team of graduates working at the centre.

“This is an excellent initiative that works and should have started long ago. The callers are satisfied with the responses they receive, and we get more and more calls, which means we are doing a good job,” she states.

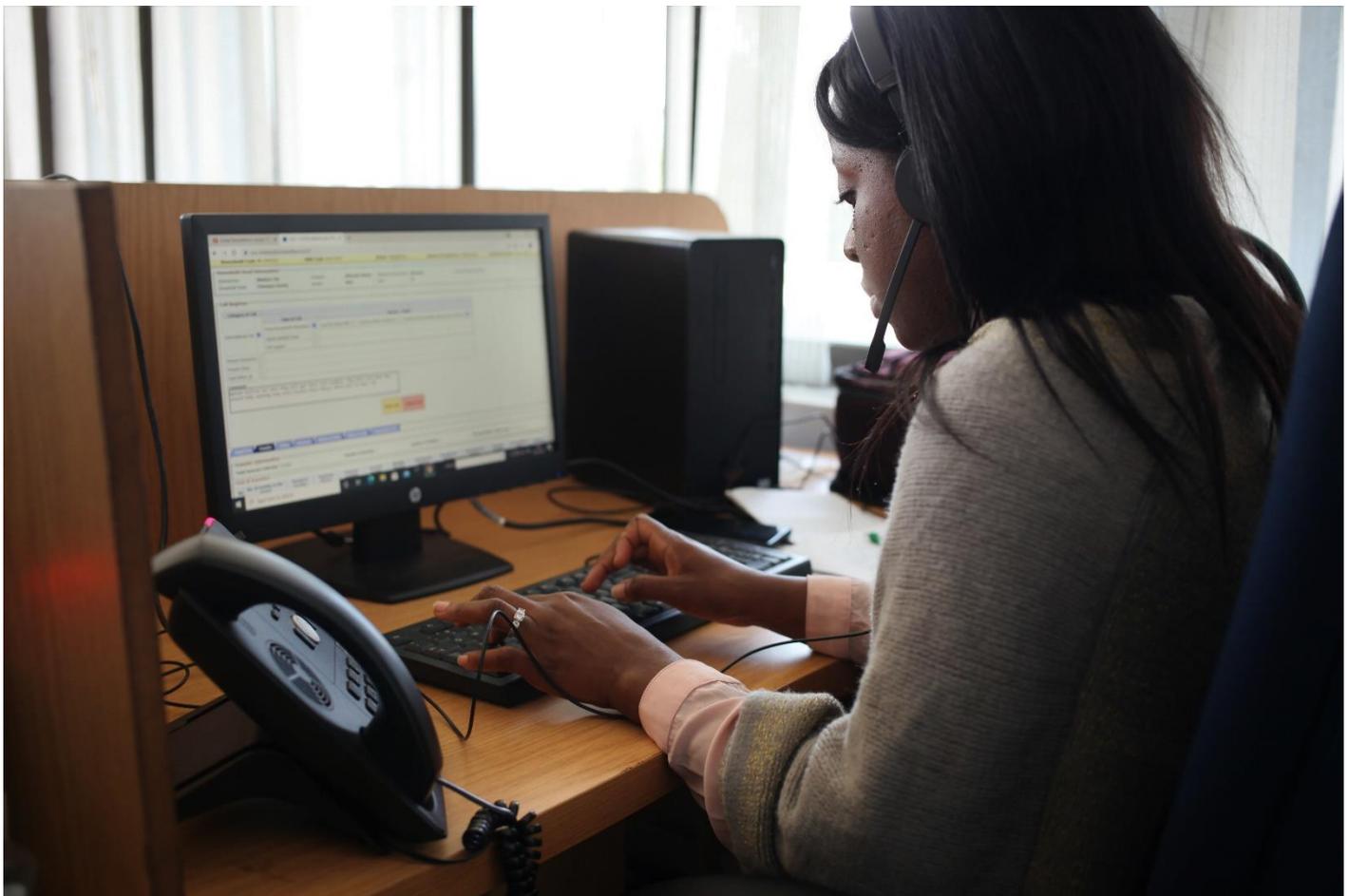
CUCI was created by the Malawi Government to alleviate the financial effects of the pandemic by providing the equivalent of a three-month minimum salary to vulnerable households across the four major cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba, with an initial estimated target of 200,000 households.

The Government of Malawi established the CUCI Call Centre to handle enquiries from beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike. UNICEF played a key role in its creation through funding from the SDG Acceleration Fund, which was later complemented by the Joint SDG Fund (Social Protection for the SDGs Programme) and other resources.

The centre was established in February 2021 and started receiving calls in early March 2021, following system installation and the start of payments. It currently employs eight interns as operators, most of whom are Social Welfare graduates attached to the Social Cash Transfers Programme at the Ministry of Gender.

The operators work on a rotational basis. The trainings they received included how to present themselves as knowledgeable operators, how to relate and respond to callers, how to categorise and handle various types of calls, and how to monitor call patterns. They have daily meetings and receive feedback from Grace on their performance.

Chavi Botolo, 25, is the team leader of the call centre operators and takes a supervisory role as needed, ensuring that calls are adequately taken, problems within the unit are solved and reports are sent back to the supervisor accordingly. She lauds the efforts of the call centre, saying, "It acts as a connector between the beneficiaries and the system. It is something that people really needed, you can tell by the number of calls we receive. Without the call centre we would have no idea what is happening on the ground; it's proving more effective than interventions from chiefs, as the access is direct."



Team leader, Chavi Botolo on her desk © UNICEF Malawi/2021/Thundu

Aside from enquiries specifically regarding the cash transfer programme, there has been a rise in calls on other issues that the centre is not equipped to resolve. These are referred to case management officers in relevant ministries and feedback is given following referrals. This points towards a need to expand the centre to allow for a wider range of activities to take place.

This need was addressed by the Deputy Director of the Social Cash Transfers Unit, Mr. Laurent Kasinjiro, who emphasised the call centre requiring to migrate to a fully-fledged system.

“We want to be a hub for all cases,” he said, “however the system was narrowly designed; now we are seeing broader cases emerging, we need to move beyond what the initial purpose of the centre was and make it more inclusive.”

Although there are several challenges, he sees a plan for expanding the CUCI Call Centre to serve other programmes and include more functionalities coming to fruition as long as relevant entities can work together, including the involvement of government. “The growth should be in quantity as well as quality,” he added.

Within the centre, some of the challenges include minimal financial and human resources. As the interns are currently there on a short-term basis, they do not necessarily have the opportunity to develop in the job. Supervisor Grace Banda says she is ready to see the centre grow, “If possible, we would like to take learning visits to other call centres where we can get first-hand experience on how they handle their activities,” she utters.

As it stands, the centre provides a platform for wider dissemination of information, acts as a direct point of assistance for beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike, and is seen as much more effective than other reporting mechanisms.

Call centre helps Urban Cash Transfer beneficiaries

By Maria Thundu



Chrissy Maulidi, with her four-month old daughter, checks her phone for messages © UNICEF Malawi/2021/Thundu

Chrissy Maulidi, 24, is a beneficiary of the Malawi Government COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI) initiative to support vulnerable households with a three-month subsistence allowance. She reflects on her experience using the services of the CUCI Call Centre, which was established by the Government with support from UNICEF through the SDG Acceleration Fund to assist beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries with information on their eligibility, transfer of funds and additional enquiries.

“The service was very good, and the operators were respectful and gave us the information we needed. Within a month of finding out that we were on the list, we received our money,” she recalls. The funds they have received since they became eligible have been a blessing to her family. They are set to receive MWK105,000 (USD\$130) in total.

Chrissy and her husband live in Lilongwe and both engage in piecework to make their respective incomes, she in laundry, water collection and harvesting, and her husband in barbering and trash collection. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, they both worked daily and had a steady income, but have since been struggling to make ends meet. They have two children, aged seven and four months, and an 18-year-old nephew staying with them.

The family initially heard from a friend that they may be selected as beneficiaries for the fund and were given the number for the call centre. They only had to enquire one time to find out they were eligible and the process was straightforward from that point onwards.

Chrissy says they received three quarters of the funds that they were allotted for them, about MWK70,000 (USD\$87).

“I really wanted to start a business with the money, but since we did not receive the full amount yet, I have to wait. Most of the money was used for food, rent and baby care. It came at the right time.” She has no hesitation in calling the centre again to enquire about the remaining funds, saying they received proper guidance on what the funds were for, when they would be received and how to go about the process.

She plans to start a business selling fish with the funds yet to be received, as her current work opportunities are unsustainable.

“I am so grateful for what we have received, as we were really struggling at the time, especially with a new baby. This will go a long way towards the plans that I have for the future,” says Chrissy.

The catalytic support from the SDG Acceleration Fund for the establishment of the CUCI Call Centre, is now being complemented by other resources including the Joint SDG Fund (Social Protection for SDGs Programme). The Government of Malawi is being supported by UNICEF to explore options to expand the functionalities and number of programmes of the call centre, so that Malawians registered in other programmes can benefit from the call centre like Chrissy.

Making meaningful investments with CUCI

Goodson Thawani, a CUCI beneficiary based in Blantyre, praised the ease of which the call centre is accessible and user-friendly.

“I called just to find out if I was a beneficiary, I was really hoping that I would be. The operator was very helpful and polite and she answered all my questions with no problem.”

Goodson owns a grocery shop and his wife sells fish, they have a child and his brother-in-law lives with them. The funds they received assisted with fees and school supplies for his child and in-law, as well as helped towards adding to their

businesses. The pandemic saw a decrease in customers spending on non-essential items, which greatly reduced his profits. People are now buying out of necessity and most of those items, such as bread, salt, sugar, cooking oil and other basics are at regulated prices.

“We are looking forward to receiving the rest of the money so that we can use it for ploughing our land, where we plan to grow maize. Now is the best time, so that we can be sure to have food next year,” he explains.

III. Other Assessments or Evaluations (if applicable)

The World Bank is conducting a Process Evaluation of the overall CUCI response, which will include a section on Grievance & Redress Mechanisms and the CUCI Call Centre. The report is expected to be available by December 2021.

IV. Programmatic Revisions (if applicable)

The project was envisaged as part of the National COVID-19 Response Plan, and it was therefore designed taking COVID-19 foreseeable restrictions into consideration. Nonetheless, despite all measures taken, there were some unavoidable impacts due to the timely implementation of activities.

The main challenges encountered during the implementation of the programme have been:

- i) Considerable delays in the deployment of the CUCI, which spilled over to the planning and deployment of CUCI Call Centre operations and training activities, as well as to the type of M&E activities that could be undertaken considering the given timeframe.
- ii) Modification of contracting arrangements. While the initial plan was to tender for a single company to deliver the call centre and all related trainings, the tendering process was not successful and UNICEF had to resort to two different contracts to secure the needed services and equipment and ensure a timely delivery of the outputs.
- iii) Sustainability. UNICEF dedicated considerable efforts to foster discussions with Government- and development partners regarding the sustainability of the call centre as well as emerging financing gaps and limitations.

V. Resources

- Despite constant efforts, support from donors has focused on the cash transfers only, neglecting critical support areas and associated costs for a timely, effective and rights-based response, including the call centre and related GRM trainings.
- Despite the initial delays on the overall response, once the CUCI was rolled out in Q1 of 2021 the call centre was made fully operational and resources started to be utilised. The full amount of the Grant has been utilised.
- Thanks to the catalytic support from the SDG Acceleration Fund, UNICEF was able to support the Government of Malawi to set up the CUCI Call Centre and its core functioning mechanisms. The successful process of the initial months of operations of the CUCI Call Centre has led to interest from several stakeholders who might want to use the call centre for additional functionalities and programmes. This includes, but is not limited to: i) Grievance & Redress Mechanisms for the SCTP; ii) Child Helpline; iii) GRM for Emergency MIS; iv) Monitoring & Evaluation of SSSP interventions; v) Potential for M&E of other interventions; vi) Broadcasting SMS, automated calls and other related services for sending out information (e.g. nutrition messages).
- UNICEF, thanks to additional and own resources, will be financing some of these expansions. This includes a grant of USD 75,000 from the Scottish Government awarded to UNICEF to support the transition of the CUCI Call Centre to a permanent feature of the national social protection system.
- UNICEF in support of the Government is also analysing potential options to leverage the interest on the call centre for resource mobilisation and sustainability, particularly in relation to the use of the call centre for surveys and to send out information for a broader range of programmes.

Annex 1 - Budget utilization

This is a uncertified Progress and Utilisation Financial Report for the Project “*Malawi: Joint SDG Fund Financing*” funded by UNDP-MPTF under Donor Agreement Number 00122513.

UNICEF has received US\$50,000 on grant SC200419 for the project. The below grant utilization report covers the period 30/06/2020 to 30/06/2021. In summary below is the status:

- Total Funds received: US\$50,000
- Total funds Utilised: US\$31,181.53
- Total balance unspent: US\$ 17,587.35

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)			unicef 		
OTHER RESOURCES CONTRIBUTION RECEIVED FROM: UNITED NATIONS MULTI PARTNER TRUST FUND					
DONOR STATEMENT BY ACTIVITY (UNCERTIFIED) FROM 30 JUNE 2020 TO 28 JUNE 2021 IN US DOLLARS					
				Page 1 of 2	
<u>Status of Contribution</u>					
External Reference:	PROJECT ID 00122513				
Description:	Malawi: Joint SDG Fund Financing				
Contribution Reference:	SC200419				
Effective Date:	30.06.2020				
Expiry Date:	31.03.2021				
Recipient Office(s):	Malawi				
Agreement Currency:	USD				
Agreement Amount:	USD	50,000.00			
Funds Received:	USD	50,000.00			
Refunds:	USD	0.00			
Funds Receivable:	USD	0.00			
<u>Summary of Expenditures (USD)</u>					
<u>Description</u>	<u>Cumulative Expenditure</u>				
Programmable Expenditure:	29,141.62				
Indirect support cost 7%	2,039.91				
Total:	31,181.53				
Funds Received in USD:	50,000.00				
Unspent Balance:	18,818.47				
<u>Summary of Expenditures by Recipient Office (USD)</u>					
Country/Regional Office	Incurred Expense		Cash Advances and Prepayments	Cumulative Expenditure	Commitments*
	2020	2021			
Malawi	1,940.52	29,241.01	0.00	31,181.53	17,587.35
<p>* "Commitments" include undelivered purchase orders, payment commitments for implementing partners and travel advances approved but not yet paid. The amounts shown in this column represent the status and value of the commitment as at the date the report is produced. As goods are received and commitments in respect of implementing partners and travel advances are paid these amounts will be added to "incurred expense".</p>					

Details of Expenditures by Activity - Office: Malawi

Outcome / Output / Activity Description	Incurred Expense		Cash Advances and Prepayments	Cumulative Expenditure	Commitments*
	2020	2021			
Outcome 023 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE	0.00	27,328.05	0.00	27,328.05	17,587.35
Output 003 COMMUNITY RESILIENCE	0.00	27,328.05	0.00	27,328.05	17,587.35
Activity 027 SP-COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE & RECOVERY	0.00	27,328.05	0.00	27,328.05	17,587.35
Transfers and Grants to Counterparts	0.00	27,328.05	0.00	27,328.05	17,587.35
Outcome 880 PROGRAMME EFFECTIVENESS	1,813.57	0.00	0.00	1,813.57	0.00
Output 007 CROSS CUTTING PROGRAMME COORDINATION SUPPORT	1,813.57	0.00	0.00	1,813.57	0.00
Activity 001 STAFF COSTS - IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT	1,813.57	0.00	0.00	1,813.57	0.00
Staff and Other Personnel Costs	1,763.49	0.00	0.00	1,763.49	0.00
General Operating + Other Direct Costs	50.08	0.00	0.00	50.08	0.00
Total Programmable Cost	1,813.57	27,328.05	0.00	29,141.62	17,587.35
Indirect support cost 7%	126.95	1,912.96	0.00	2,039.91	
Total	1,940.52	29,241.01	0.00	31,181.53	

DISCLAIMER: The above financial figures are interim figures; final figures will be provided by the UNICEF comptroller after the year-end closure of the accounts

The unspent balance will be consumed by the commitments already presented in the report and their related Indirect Support Cost, after payment in July, 2021