

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

The framework for UN system development cooperation in Malawi is oriented by the Malawi Vision 2020 paper and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2002-2004. The Government conceptualised the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS) as the major instrument for managing progress towards the goals and objectives enshrined in the Vision 2020. Accordingly, all development partners are expected to design their cooperation programmes in support of the activities that should contribute towards achieving MPRS objectives. Within this national context, the second United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), for the period 2002-2006, was developed as the UN system's response to this more structured approach to development management, adopted by the Government of Malawi. The UNDAF offers the UN agencies both the opportunity and the means for enhancing goal-oriented collaboration and programme coherence. It also provides mutual reinforcement in addressing national development priorities and needs, in keeping with the continuing UN Reform Programme. Furthermore, the human rights approach, on which the UNDAF is based, was re-affirmed at the Millennium Summit in 2000.

The UNDAF is designed to increase the impact of the UN system's development programmes and activities in Malawi, with special attention to women and children, the poor, people living with HIV/AIDS, those with disabilities and the disadvantaged. Three development challenges have been approved for support within the UNDAF. These are:

- (i) Governance – with the aim of increasing the level and scope of popular participation in national affairs and the economic empowerment of local communities;
- (ii) Poverty – promoting active participation by beneficiaries in the conceptualization and implementation of poverty reduction programmes, improving coordination among stakeholders and providing assistance to such programmes. These should be achieved through, *inter alia*, enhancing skills acquisition so as to improve the income earning capacity of vulnerable groups; increasing their access to basic social services; reducing vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition and the fair equitable distribution of resources; and
- (iii) HIV/AIDS – strengthening the effectiveness of prevention, care and impact mitigation towards a significant reduction in the incidence of HIV and improved quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS.

In addition, four cross cutting areas were selected, which should be integrated, wherever possible, within the three core development areas, namely: Human Rights, Population, Gender and the Environment.

The UNDAF contains strategies aimed at achieving the objectives related to each of the three development challenges, which elaborate the specific mechanisms through which collaborative action should be pursued among the agencies, taking into account their respective mandates, policies and framework of engagement. A cooperative strategy framework was developed to facilitate and coordinate the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of collaborative programmes. The framework also identifies specific cooperation strategies, taking into consideration the three development challenges and cross cutting areas. It harmonizes collaborative programmes and rationalizes the utilization of resources among the UN agencies and cooperating partners.

Strategies exist for each of the development challenges, which elaborate the specific mechanisms through which collaborative activities of various UN agencies should achieve the intended objectives. In recognition of the number and diversity of stakeholders, in terms of their missions, policies, framework of engagement, as well as resource constraints, a cooperative strategy framework was developed to facilitate and coordinate the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of collaborative programmes. These are:

- (i) improved focus and results orientation, identifying where the system could make the most difference, by using its unique strengths as a development partner;

- (ii) stronger unity of purpose and team spirit within the UN System in the country;
- (iii) increased collaboration through a mix of agencies, parallel and collaborative programming;
- (iv) better integration of the normative and operational aspects of development cooperation;
- (v) increased dialogue and stronger partnership and alliances with other members of the development community, such as national and global civil society organizations; the private sector, bilateral donors, the World Bank, other international financial institutions and the European Commission;
- (vi) more efficient use of limited resources, based on improved division of labour, rationalization of resource allocation and streamlining of procedures; and
- (vii) improved opportunities for securing increased resources in support of national needs and priorities.