

Out of poverty

# United Purpose U

## Scaling-up Successful, Sustainable and Innovative WASH Service Delivery Approaches Malawi

### Project objectives & approaches

**Objective:** To enhance the health and quality of life of poor and vulnerable people in Phalombe District, by influencing and strengthening the capacity of local government to plan and manage effective WASH services, in line with national guidelines and priorities

**Approach:** We ensure gender and social inclusiveness, mainstreaming of climate change and disaster risk challenges in mobilising and strengthening capacity of target communities and change agents. In turn, the communities in partnership with the district council and WASH entrepreneurs are taking a leading role in decision making on how to improve and sustain their WASH situation. The ongoing lessons are translating into improved programming and influencing wider change at district and local levels.

Close collaboration and engagement of the key structures including government and the different change agents (at different levels). The change agents have improved capacity in planning and district wide project management; better resources are now allocated to WASH and as a result communities have increased access to sustainable safe water and improved sanitation.

### Lessons learnt

Even when communities agree and/or get involved in decision making on technology, especially about menstrual hygiene, it doesn't always mean adoption of the technology. For example, we consulted community members and key stakeholders about menstrual hygiene facilities that included an incinerator to burn used pads. However, due to cultural norms (e.g. witchcraft) around the handling and burning of another's blood, these incinerators are not being adequately utilised.

Training women in leadership roles does not equate to active decision-making. Low literacy levels affect their ability to feel confident to voice their ideas and decisions. Cultural norms also play a critical role in a woman's ability to take a lead, as men are often perceived to be the rightful decision-makers. Even where there is a woman chair in a group, she often takes a back position.

WASH Markets – it is very difficult to sell the WASH Market approach in a rural setting. Communities prioritise food, clothing and communication instead of investing in improved sanitation products such as latrines and slabs. It's not just about making sanitation products available and sensitising these products, but ensuring people value them enough to pay for them.

### Project challenge

Facilitating and supporting communities to attain ODF has been slow. To date, only one Traditional Authority of the four targeted has fully attained the ODF status. The project has made new strategies, which include involving local leaders in sensitising the community in order to accelerate the ODF attainment.

### Sustainability

We work with all development structures from the district to the lowest structure to ensure they have the capacity to continue to support the community beyond the project.

We are training district and community-based trainers to cascade the knowledge gained to others, as well as equipping community committees to support the community beyond the project. Tariff management, Value Chains for sanitation marketing products etc.

We successfully lobbied the district council to include WASH issues on their priority development agenda and allocate local resources. This is already leading to better project management and support by the council.



Women collecting safe water from a protected spring in Thuthuwa village, supported by the project  
Photo by: John Kayanula – United Purpose



Front row: John Kayanula, Harold Yolamu, Maxwell Chiputuba, Ronald Banda  
Back row: Lyson Bwanali, Christine Nantchengwe, Evans Jemire, Masuko Mthuzi, Cecilia Makonda, Semu Mabuwa, Daliso Mandandanda, Alex Mpeleya



Girls' disability inclusive VIP latrines, with menstrual hygiene facility at Bona primary school, supported by the project.  
Photo by: Sem Mabuwa – Action on Poverty.

### We are proud of:

The district council talks highly of our project and is encouraging other CSOs to adopt the project's approach regardless of their thematic focus. As a result, two CSOs have approached the project to learn about our implementing approach.

