

COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY OF THE SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME MALAWI

OPERATIONAL PHASE 8 (OP8)



SEPTEMBER 2025

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OP8 Financial Resources - SGP Country Programme (estimated US\$)

Total SGP Grants to date since Country Programme start date (2009)	USD3 097 379
OP8 GEF Core Funds	USD 937,500 TBC
OP8 GEF STAR Funds	USD 750,000
Other funds (secured)	USD 0
Other funds (expected/to be mobilised)	USD 200,000

1. INTRODUCTION

The Eighth Operational Phase of the Small Grants Programme (SGP OP8), which will run for three years from 2026 to 2028, builds on over 30 years of successful experience in empowering local civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) to design and lead community-driven initiatives that have improved household wellbeing, raised awareness and resilience against environmental threats, and delivered local and global environmental benefits. As economic development pressures intensify in many parts of the developing world and inequalities rise, local communities, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, are becoming increasingly marginalised and struggle to cope with threats related to ecosystem degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change. Lessons learned and experiences gained in previous SGP Operational Phases (OPs) have shown that integrated, landscape approaches are effective in encouraging collaboration among multiple stakeholders, connecting local CSOs/CBOs with enabling partners, and achieving mutually supportive livelihood and environmental outcomes on a broad scale.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), the GEF Small Grants Programme implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), aligns its OP strategies with those of the GEF and its co-financing partners. It offers a global portfolio of innovative, inclusive, and impactful projects that tackle environmental and sustainable development issues. The programme provides grants of up to \$50,000 directly to local communities, including community-based organisations and other non-governmental groups, for projects in Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation, Land Degradation, Sustainable Forest Management, International Waters, and Chemicals. The Programme is overseen by the National Steering Committee (NSC), which serves as the main decision-making body of the SGP at the country level, offering overall oversight, guidance, and direction to the Country Programme. The Programme has a National Coordinator responsible for programme operations, including grant administration, monitoring implementation, and acting as the link between UNDP and the NSC.

Financial and technical support for projects promotes environmental conservation and restoration while improving people's well-being and livelihoods. Local actions by civil society and grassroots community-based organisations, including women's groups, youth, and persons with disabilities, are recognised as essential for building multi-stakeholder alliances. These alliances help achieve global environmental benefits and contribute to GEF-8 programming, the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025, and national priorities to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international commitments.

Building on over 30 years of successful operations in more than 136 countries, though currently active in 127 nations, the eighth Operational Phase of the SGP aims to "promote and support innovative, inclusive, and scalable initiatives, and encourage multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level to address global environmental issues in priority landscapes."

SGP in Malawi has been operational since 2009 in different landscapes during OP4 and through all the OPs, and now it is about to start working on OP8.

The objectives of the SGP OP8 are to engage local CSOs/CBOs in landscape approaches in Malawi, providing them with access to knowledge and information, capacitating them through learning-by-doing and skills development, and delivering technical and grant assistance for interventions that improve wellbeing and socioeconomic conditions while also delivering global environmental benefits.

The OP8 objectives reflect the key features of GEF Small Grants Programme 2.0, including new approaches to support youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples, linking with complementary mechanisms such as the Microfinance Initiative and CSO Challenge Programme, collaborating with other GEF Agencies, and leveraging opportunities provided by GEF strategies, including the delivery of the GEF-8 Integrated Programmes. Furthermore, OP8 will create opportunities for innovation and expansion, catalyse multi-stakeholder alliances to test new approaches through CSOs, and utilise its dialogue platforms to achieve greater impact. OP8 will also align with and contribute to the UNDP Strategic Plan (2022-2025), Malawi Vision 2063, particularly its First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP 1), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other national strategies, policies, and frameworks.

2. COUNTRY PROGRAMME SUMMARY: Key results and achievements

2.1 SUMMARY: Key Results and Achievements

Results

The Malawi Small Grants Programme started in 2009 during the OP4. Since then, the programme has allocated a total of USD 3,097,379, with which the programme has funded 102 projects with an average award of USD30,366. The total amount of cash co-financing is USD1,598,997 and in-kind co-financing is USD 1,346,150.

Table 1: Total Grants and Cofinancing

Basic Stats	Total Amounts (US\$)	Average Amounts (US\$)
Number of Projects	102	
Total Amount in Grants	3,097,379	30,366
Total Amount of Cash Co-financing	1,598,997	15,676
Total Amount of Kind Co-financing	1,346,150	13,198
Total Amount of Co-financing	2,945,148USD	28,874

The Programme has been underway through 4 successive OPs. During the OP4 (2008 - 2011), the programme had a national geographical focus. The national focus was maintained in the 5th Operational Phase (2011-2014) with a special interest in addressing issues in hotspot areas. A specific landscape was selected during the 6th Operational Phase (2015-2018): the Lakeshore Landscape covering Karonga, Rumphi, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota and Salima districts. In the 7th Operational Phase, another landscape covered the Mzimba/Rumphi/Nkhabay cluster and included the cities of Lilongwe and Blantyre. The OP8 commences in 2026 and is intended to cover the same geographical areas to ensure continued progress in environmental and climate change management initiatives to conserve the landscape.

Over the 4 OPs, the SGP in Malawi has focused on climate change management, afforestation and reforestation, efficient energy utilisation, power generation, irrigation, environmental governance, waste management,

conservation of wildlife and ecotourism, among others.

The highest share of projects addresses Land Degradation, accounting for 33% of the portfolio. This is followed by Climate Change (30%), Biodiversity (23%), Chemicals and Waste (7%) and Capacity Building (6%). Despite not having the highest number of projects, the Climate Change focal area has received the largest share of funding, totalling USD 963,686. This reflects the country's priority in managing climate change (Figure 1).

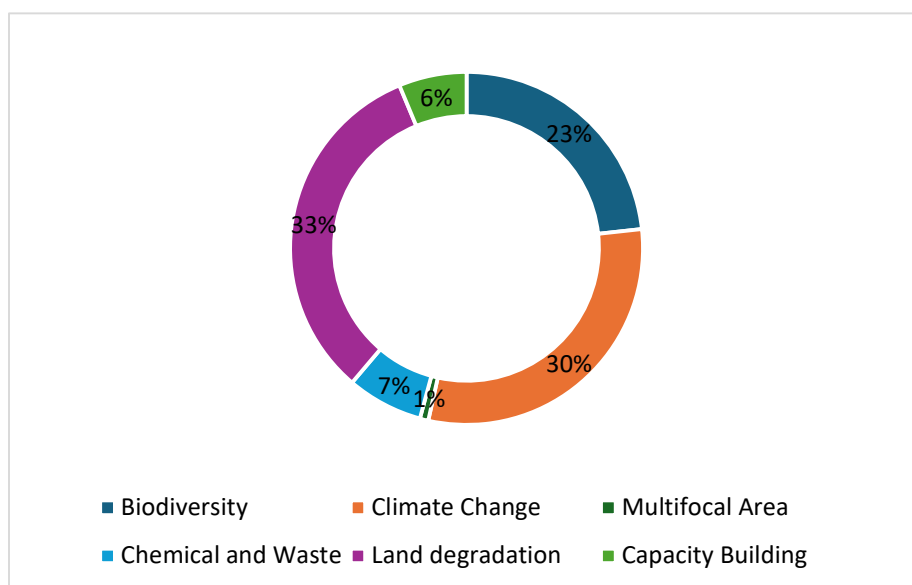


Figure 1: The thematic distribution (number of projects) for Malawi's SGP portfolio

Table 2: Financing by Focal Area

Focal Areas - Total	Grant Amount (US\$)	Co-financing in Cash (US\$)	Co-financing in Kind (US\$)
Biodiversity	828,330 USD	756,913	448,008
Climate Change	963,686	329,604	325,200
Multifocal Area¹	3,850	480	2,329
Chemicals and Waste	256,400	49,722	117,178
Land Degradation	866,937	434,383	413,401
Capacity Development	178,176	27,896	40,035

The proportion of financing per focal area is presented in Figure 2. As shown in this figure, the Climate Change focal area received the highest proportion of funding at 31%, followed by Land Degradation (28%), Biodiversity (27%), and Chemicals and Waste (8%). Capacity Development accounted for 6% of the total funding. This finding is presented in Figure 2, showing the distribution of financial resources across thematic focal areas in Malawi's SGP portfolio.

¹ Multifocal projects cover a range of priority areas that are covered by the programme

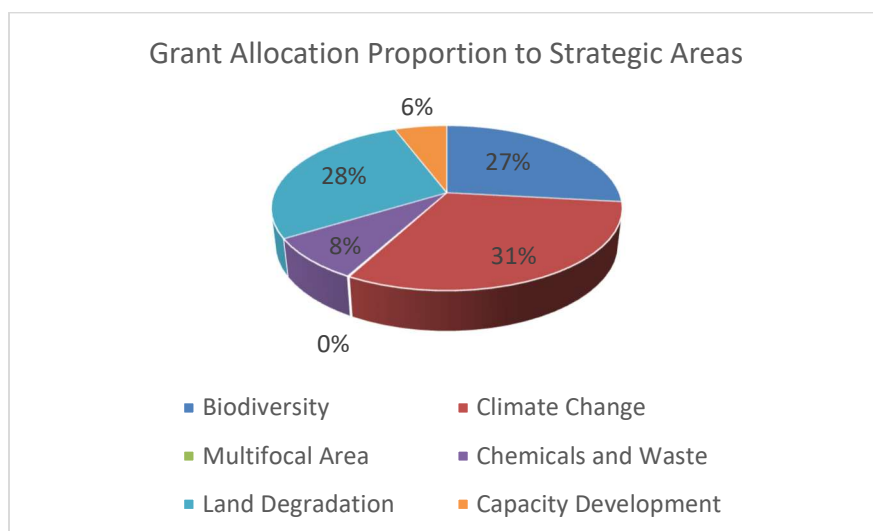


Figure 2: The proportion of financing per focal area

Achievements

The Programme has supported a total of 102 grantees, which include 74 NGOs and 28 CBOs. Although an evaluation was not conducted at the end of each OP, information from the SGP database and progress reports showed the following achievements over the four successive OPs (OP4, OP5, OP6 and OP7)

- i. Conservation and restoration of 1,157 ha of community forests and degraded areas.
- ii. Provision of gravity-fed potable water to 2,500 households (direct beneficiaries) with extended coverage using resources generated from user fees.
- iii. Installation of hydroelectric power plant to generate 75 kVA of electricity for 300 people in Mchezi in Nkhatabay
- iv. Job creation for over 157 out of school and vulnerable youths through wealth creation initiatives from waste
- v. Generation of over US\$40,000 for 150 beneficiaries from various enterprises such as beekeeping, arts and craft, mushroom production, vegetable production, bakery, poultry production, piggery, waste composting, waste collection fees, and solar-based enterprises, leading to increased incomes and contributing to adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- vi. Development of innovations and new technologies such as fish solar drier and energy efficient smoking kilns.
- vii. Empowerment and transformation of more than 1,100 women and youth through increased access to microfinancing using the village savings and loans (VSL) modality resulting in various off-farm enterprises and reduced dependence on natural resource extraction for livelihood support.
- viii. Social inclusion of 1,600 HIV and AIDS affected people in climate change-related livelihood activities, including conservation farming, energy-efficient cook stoves and fruit and vegetable production.
- ix. One grantee, Sustainable Farming Solutions, has received a US\$20,000 grant from Segal Family Foundation and US\$100,000 fellowship from Mulago Foundation to continue with the climate-smart agriculture activities they worked on during the SGP grant. In the past years, one grantee won the Hivos Social Innovation Award in 2015, and another one received the 2016 SEED Africa Award for Innovation.

2.2 Lessons Learnt

A few lessons have emerged from the implementation of the Programme in Malawi as follows:

- a) Capacity Building
 - i) Capacity building through awareness-raising initiatives is key for people-centred programming. Activities associated with or resulting in environmental degradation continue to happen due to a lack of community awareness of the consequences of such activities and alternative sustainable practices. Investments in training and awareness of communities for the success of the programme and national priorities towards sustainable development should be prioritised.
 - ii) Clinic sessions on project proposal development would be instrumental in enhancing the quality of proposals and ensuring more effective participation of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) in the Programme
- b) Community-led initiatives have also proven very effective in SGP programming. Communities need to control their environment and development projects throughout all the phases, i.e., planning, implementation and decision making. This ensures effective and efficient adoption of the new technologies, fosters innovations, and enhances ownership.
- c) Knowledge management
 - i) The programme has for long experienced challenges in knowledge management, which have been exacerbated by gaps in the monitoring and evaluation framework. These challenges have negatively affected the consolidation and documentation of programme results. There is a need for a systematic and harmonised monitoring and reporting framework. Therefore, each project should have a monitoring framework corresponding to a standard framework against which results should be reported and documented. Results-based reporting should be integrated into financial and administrative training modules, as well as field monitoring activities, to enhance the capture and communication of programme impacts
 - ii) inadequate data which can be used to trace the progress progressively
- d) Project Monitoring, Planning and Implementation
 - i. To maximise environmental, socio-economic outcomes, project design and implementation should adopt an integrated approach that aligns ecological restoration with livelihood enhancement. This is critical, as communities demonstrate higher engagement and sustained participation in initiatives that deliver demonstrable, co-beneficial impacts on both their environment and well-being.
 - ii. CPS 7 implementation highlighted the importance of strong leadership continuity and inclusive decision-making, as challenges such as frequent turnover of the National Coordinator, recruitment delays, top-down approaches, and limited project monitoring negatively impacted efficiency and stakeholder engagement.

3. COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

3.1 Alignment with national priorities

The Small Grants Programme (SGP) is strategically aligned with Malawi's national development priorities and its commitments under various international environmental conventions to which the country is a signatory. The following table shows the list of national and international conventions to Malawi as a party.

Table 3: List of relevant conventions and national/regional plans or programmes

Conventions + national planning frameworks	Date of ratification / completion
National Frameworks	
GEF-8 National Dialogues	2025
Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for the UN SDGs	2022
CBD National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)	2006, 2015
UNFCCC National Communications	2010, 2021
UNFCCC Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA)	2021, 2022
UNFCCC National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPA)	2006, 2015
Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the Paris Accord	2015, 2021
UNCCD National Action Programmes (NAP)	2020
SC National Implementation Plan (NIP)	2021, 2022
National Adaptation Plan Framework	2020
Regional and International Frameworks	
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	1992
Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)	2003, 2012, 2021
UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	1994
Stockholm Convention (SC) on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	2001
Minamata Convention (MC) on Mercury	2013
UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	2015
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)	2010
Strategic Action Programmes (SAPs) for shared international waterbodies (IW)	2016
African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources	1973
Protocol on wildlife conservation and law enforcement in the SADC.	2000
GEF National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA)	2001
Bonn Challenge	2016

Table 4: National/Regional plans or programmes

Name of Plan/strategy	Operational period
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)	2015-2025
UNFCCC Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Measures (NAMA)	From 2012
Forests and Landscape Restoration Strategy	From 2017
National Charcoal Strategy	2017-2027
National Waste Management Strategy (NWMS)	2019-2023
Malawi 2063	2020-2063
Voluntary National Reviews (NRVs) for the UNITED Nations SDGs	2020
National Resilience Strategy	2018-2030
National Social Protection Policy	2024-
Malawi Renewable Energy Strategy	2017-2030

3.2 Gaps and opportunities

Based on the scoping exercise conducted for the CPS OP8 development, gaps were identified for meaningful involvement of communities and CSOs to further implement the national priorities. Some of the gaps that exist are in the following:

- i. Climate variability - Unpredictable and erratic weather patterns, driven by climate change, have led to more frequent and intense events such as riverine and flash floods. These changes negatively impact crop yields, increase evapotranspiration due to rising temperatures—leading to soil moisture loss—and cause property damage from severe storms. With over 80% of the population living in rural areas, the majority are especially vulnerable to these climate-related impacts.
- ii. Land degradation - despite the SGP's commitment to sustainable development, persistent land degradation in Malawi highlights a critical gap in the implementation of localised land restoration and management strategies.
- iii. Increased social vulnerabilities - Food insecurity because of low agricultural productivity; increased incidence of illnesses due to use of poor water; increased incidence of dangerous and damaging floods, landslides, and mudflows; damages to social infrastructure such as roads and bridges due to floods; increased power blackouts due to problems with electricity generation.
- iv. Increase Deforestation and forest degradation - caused by heavy dependence on biomass fuel and increasing demand for charcoal in urban areas; illegal logging to exploit timber for international market and domestic use; growing population developing competing land interest leading to conversion of forest land areas for settlement and agriculture; as well as climate change-related events like droughts and floods which contribute to degradation of forests and reducing their resilience, making them more vulnerable to human exploitation.
- v. Threatened flora and fauna species due to poaching and habitat loss because of deforestation
- vi. Energy supply- limited national grid coverage and underdeveloped renewable energy infrastructure have left much of the country without reliable electricity access. As a result, the majority of households rely on firewood and charcoal as their primary sources of cooking energy.
- vii. Grantee capacity constraints-there is a limited technical capacity among grantees to effectively design, monitor, and evaluate project outcomes, particularly within the climate change thematic area. This includes challenges in defining appropriate indicators, collecting reliable data, and measuring the overall impact of interventions. To address the limited business models capacity amongst the grantees, there is need for grantee training in developing sustainable business models through agribusiness/business incubation and market linkages for various business initiatives and natural resources to sustain the operations of the CBO/NGOs whilst conserving/managing natural resources. The common initiatives include bee keeping and honey production, production of energy efficient stoves, wild edible fruits and mushrooms, production of energy efficient fish processing facilities and fish products among others.
- viii. Limited security of land tenure in Malawi continues to impede the effective implementation of sustainable development programs, as unclear ownership and land rights discourage long-term investment in land restoration and responsible resource management

Opportunities

To enhance knowledge sharing, networking platforms through OP8 south-south cooperation mechanisms, opportunities identified will be explored and promoted in the SGP and amongst the community projects. These opportunities include:

- i. Existence of an enabling policy framework for addressing climate change impacts, including the National Adaptation Plans (NAP) and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which outline priority areas of focus for adaptation and mitigation across various sectors
- ii. Ongoing land management initiatives are promoted through agriculture extension services such as integrated catchment management, land restoration, and other sustainable and climate smart agricultural practices. The SGP will need to integrate climate-smart innovations in agroecology within the landscape approach to enhance its overall effectiveness.
- iii. Malawi signed up to the Bonn Challenge² pledge to restore 4.5 million ha of degraded areas important for biodiversity. At the same time, Malawi adopted the National Charcoal Strategy to address charcoal-led deforestation and the National Forests and Landscape Restoration Strategy to guide the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes.
- iv. The presence of both terrestrial and aquatic Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) within the landscape provides a strong foundation for mobilising resources aimed at conserving these ecologically significant zones. This biodiversity richness supports efforts to secure funding and partnerships for the protection and sustainable management of threatened species of flora and fauna.
- v. Landscape provides an opportunity for multiple energy sources. The landscape benefits from strong solar irradiation, as demonstrated by the successful operation of off-grid solar photovoltaic systems in homes and schools. This creates favourable conditions for scaling up solar power plants and mini-grids. Additionally, the presence of extensive protected and community forests provides a solid basis for biomass energy initiatives, making the area well-suited for agroforestry projects that support both energy access and environmental sustainability. It can also be advocated that the presence of waterfalls along rivers presents a valuable opportunity for developing mini-hydroelectricity schemes, leveraging the natural elevation drop to generate renewable energy.
- vi. The growing interest and active engagement of NGOs, CSOs, and local communities in environmental and climate change programs present a valuable opportunity to strengthen grassroots ownership, expand impact, and accelerate the scaling of sustainable development initiatives in Malawi. There is also responsiveness and willingness of the community in the implementation of the programmes
- vii. The presence of multiple partners offering technical assistance, collaborative engagement, and business incubation support presents a significant opportunity to accelerate innovation, strengthen capacity-building, and foster inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystems, particularly among youth and marginalised groups in Malawi.

² The Bonn Challenge is a global goal to bring 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested ecosystem into restoration by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030.

3.3 OP8 strategic priorities of the SGP Country Programme

Based on the baseline carried out in preparing OP7 CSP, in line with national priorities and the approved global strategic initiatives of the programme for the OP7, several priorities were identified for Malawi's SGP during OP7. These strategic priorities are being carried forward into OP8 since the programme is rolling over.

Table 5: SGP Country Programme's alignment with SGP OP8 Strategic Initiatives and country priorities/projects/programmes

SGP OP8 Strategic Initiatives - Global	SGP Country Programme's OP8 Priorities	SGP Country Programme's complementarity with GEF, UNDP, and other projects and programmes
<i>Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species</i> 1) Improve the effectiveness of biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and management through equitable governance systems by recognising and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. 2) Improve community-led biodiversity friendly practices and approaches, including promoting blue economy approaches (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, forestry, tourism, infrastructure, etc.). 3) Enhance community led actions for protection of threatened species.	i. Protect biodiversity hotspots, threatened plant species and headwaters of key tributaries ii. Participation in development and implementation of an appropriate conservation framework for wetlands and other fragile areas	UNSDF Strategic Priority Area 1: Support - sustainable, diversified, and inclusive growth. Outcome 1: By 2028, more people, especially the most vulnerable groups, including women, youths, and persons with disabilities, will participate in and benefit from food and nutrition security and a more diversified, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth resilient to shocks. - CPD Output 3.1 under UNSDF outcome 1: Governance institutions, communities, and finance mechanisms, enabled to plan, manage, and respond to climate change and build resilience from inter-connected climate shocks - CPD Output 3.3 under UNSDF outcome 1: Natural resource management and governance capabilities strengthened to contribute to resilience and the delivery of economic dividends. SGP contributes to: -National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2015-

		2025 Strategic Objective 3: Reduce direct pressure on biodiversity -NBSAP 2015-2025 Strategic Objective 4: Improve the status of biodiversity National Climate Change Policy, 2016 National Agriculture Policy, 2024 and Environmental Management Act 2017 Land Management Strategy 2000 The programme is also complementary to National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy with the goal of restoring 4.5 million hectares of degraded land by 2030
Low-carbon energy access co-benefits Support implementation of Paris Agreement and the NDCs 1) Promote renewable and energy efficient technologies providing socio-economic benefits and improving livelihoods. 2) Promote off-grid energy service needs in rural and urban areas.	i. Promote renewable, clean and energy-efficient technologies that provide socio-economic benefits and improve livelihoods.	SGP contributes to: UNSDF Strategic Priority Area 4: Adapt to climatic change, reverse environmental degradation, and support energy transformation. Outcome 4: By 2028, more people, especially the most vulnerable, including women and youth, are resilient to climate change and shocks, benefit from and have access to better-managed waste, ecosystems, and natural resources, including clean and affordable energy CPD Output 3.4. Strengthened capacity of institutions (including private sector) to increase access to and productive use of clean, sustainable, and affordable energy sources for communities furthest from the national grid SGP complements: Renewable Energy Strategy 2017 National Energy Policy 2018

Enhancing social inclusion (mandatory) 1) Promote inclusive targeted initiatives. 2) Mainstream social inclusion in all projects. (e.g. women/girls, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and persons with disabilities).	Enhancing social inclusion 1) Promote targeted inclusive initiatives including youth and persons with disability. 2) Mainstream gender equality and social inclusion in all projects. 3) Advocate for policy changes at the local and national level that promote equal rights and opportunities for all citizens.	SGP contributes to: - Strategic Priority Area 2: Strengthen institutional governance. • Outcome 2: By 2028, people in Malaŵi, especially women, youth, and those most left behind, will experience more inclusive good governance, peace, and robust political and civic participation. SGP Contributes to: Malawi 2063 Youth Engagement strategy (YES) and the Gender Equality Act and Policy National Youth Policy 2023
Knowledge Management (KM) (mandatory) 1) Capture knowledge and lessons from projects and activities. 2) Improve capacities of CSOs and CBOs. 3) Conduct South-South Exchanges to promote technology transfer and replication of good practices.	1) Capture knowledge and lessons from projects and activities. 2) Improve capacities of CSOs and CBOs. 3) Conduct South-South and peer-to-peer Exchanges to promote technology development and replication of good practices.	The Programme complements and serves as a delivery mechanism for implementation of some components of the following projects and programmes: GEF CSO network Malawi Government and UNDP project on: Environment and Climate Change Response (2024-2028) National Access to Information Policy, 2014 National Education Policy 2023 E-learning strategy

4. OP8 PRIORITY LANDSCAPES & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

4.1 Grantmaking within the priority landscape

Method for selecting priority landscapes

Since the OP8 Country Programme Strategy (CPS) is essentially a refinement of the OP7 CPS, no new landscape selection process was undertaken. As a result, the existing landscape comprising Mzimba, Rumphi, and Nkhata Bay was retained for OP8 implementation. Critical environmental and developmental considerations inform the decision to maintain operations within the current landscape. Despite concerted efforts, challenges experienced during the disbursed first tranche, such as prolonged drought conditions and Cyclone Freddy, impeded the full realisation of targeted outputs, underscoring the necessity for continued intervention.

The District Councils and NSC unanimously noted separately that several critical challenges impeded the effective execution of activities during the previous OP. Key among these were unforeseen climatic disruptions, including drought conditions and Cyclone Freddy, which significantly affected timelines and accessibility within the targeted

landscape. Additionally, the limited availability of Secretariat staff during crucial periods led to substantial gaps in coordination, monitoring, and overall implementation fidelity.

Due to these circumstances, it is noted that the original landscape's full potential has yet to be realised. The NSC and the Councils recognised that while foundational work was initiated, the extent of progress fell short of expectations, not due to the landscape's limitations, but rather due to the external and operational constraints that prevailed. Therefore, maintaining the same landscape in OP8 is not only justified but strategic as it presents an opportunity to consolidate initial efforts, address previous gaps with renewed capacity, and achieve the intended outcomes with greater precision and continuity. It is opined that shifting to a new landscape at this juncture would risk diluting impact, fragmenting resources, and disregarding the lessons and investments already made.

The decision to continue in the same landscape ensures a more grounded, impactful, and results-oriented approach as we enter the new phase, with improved readiness, a better grasp of contextual challenges, and a committed support structure now in place.

The previous landscape selection for OP7 followed the review of OP6 programme results, stakeholder consultation, delineation of potential landscapes, and identification of a landscape that meets most of the selection criteria. Twenty-one (21) districts suggested by key informants were delineated into landscapes subject to the adopted landscape definition and defined parameters for delineation. The following spatial and socio-ecological parameters for the landscape delineation process were adopted:

- Watershed boundaries.
- Interaction between highland and lowland topography and land use; and
- Jurisdictional boundaries (a manageable number of administrative units by districts).

Based on the defined spatial and socio-ecological parameters, 17 districts from the total suggested districts qualified for delineation into landscapes. A total of 7 homogeneous clusters were formed from the listed districts, namely, Chitipa/Karonga, Mzimba/Rumphi/Nkhatabay, Kasungu/Nkhotakhota, Mulanje/Thyolo, Salima/Dedza/Lilongwe, Balaka/Ntcheu/Mangochi, Machinga/Zomba/Phalombe.

The seven quota samples were subjected to a selection process based on the following key criteria for landscape selection as defined by the Technical Guidance for OP7 CPS development: biodiversity significance (e.g., Hotspots, Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), etc.); areas of high land/forest degradation; high poverty/low human development index; and areas with limited energy access.

Data parameters were developed for each of the criteria as follows:

- Biodiversity significance: Number of terrestrial Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in the area.
Number of freshwater KBAs in the area; Number of management units (protected areas or Ramsar sites).
- Areas of high land and forest degradation: Soil loss rate; Forest cover loss.
- Areas with limited energy access: Proportion of Households with Electricity in Dwelling Units.
- High poverty/low human development index: Incidence of multi-dimensional poverty.

The seven quota samples were further analysed using a weighted scorecard of the landscape selection criteria (Biodiversity significance, Areas of high land and forest degradation, High poverty/low human development index, and Areas with limited energy access). Based on discussions with the NSC, biodiversity significance and areas with high land/forest degradation were considered more ideal in determining a specific landscape than poverty and energy access. A weighted score approach was applied to the data parameters to rank the potential sites. Based on the final scoring results, the Mzimba/Rumphi/Nkhatabay cluster ranked highest and qualified as the target landscape.

a) *Process for selecting priority landscapes*

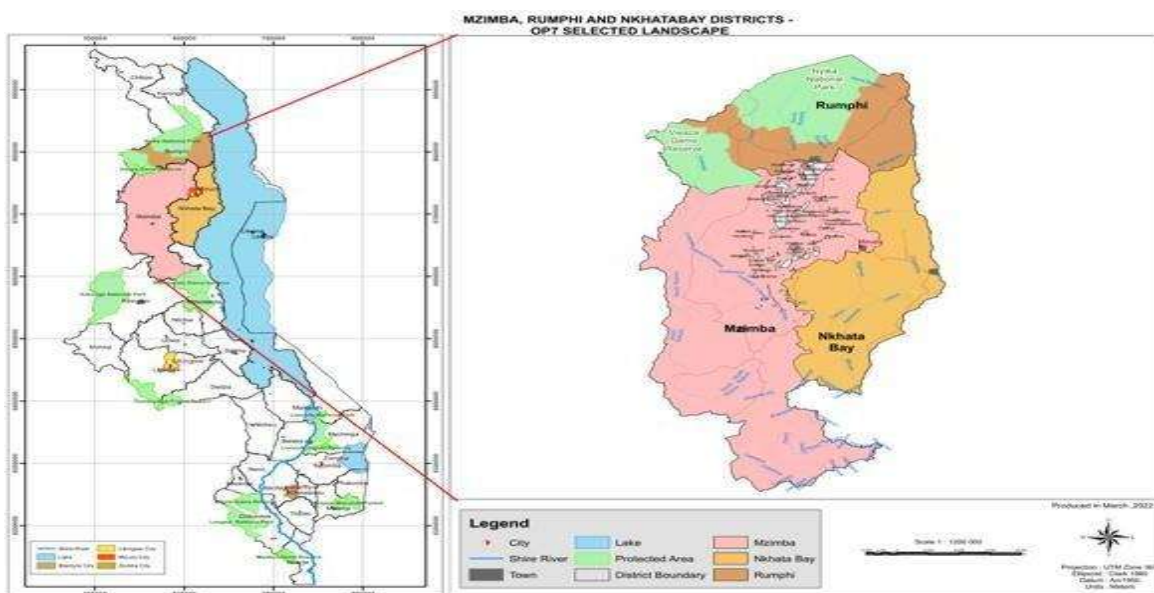


Figure 3: Map of OP8 Selected landscape – Mzimba/Nkhatabay/Rumphi Districts

The landscape is located between 11.01 degrees South latitude and 33.5 degrees East longitude in northern Malawi. Lake Malawi borders it to the east (parts of Rumphi and Nkhatabay), and Zambia borders it to the west (parts of Mzimba and Rumphi). Mzimba district headquarters (boma) is approximately 278 km from Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi, via the M1 and M9 roads. Rumphi boma is about 456 km away using the M1 and M24 roads; Nkhatabay is roughly 436 km using the M1, M5, and roads. Mzuzu, the only city within the landscape, is situated in Mzimba and is approximately 47 km and 68 km from, as discussed above, the relevant locations. The land is used for settlements, agriculture, forest reserves, and national parks and wildlife reserves, particularly in Rumphi district.

In the Mzimba district, 575,350 hectares (55%) of land are available for agricultural production. This is a large area compared to the 130,878 hectares (27%) in Rumphi and 44,781 hectares (11%) in Nkhatabay districts. The average smallholder farmland holding size in Mzimba is 2.45 hectares; in Rumphi, it is 0.8 hectares, and in Nkhatabay, it is 0.4 hectares. The forest reserve covers 40% of the land in Mzimba, 3.1% in Rumphi, and 46% in Nkhatabay.

The Baseline Assessment conducted in the selected landscape aimed to characterise both the biophysical and socio-economic environment. Its objectives included identifying key environmental challenges and uncovering opportunities for CBO and CSO. Through extensive stakeholder consultations, the study built a broad consensus on the most pressing environmental issues and pinpointed critical areas of concern. It also documented and recommended practical, high-impact solutions to guide the development of a strategic, results-oriented plan focused on providing alternative livelihoods for vulnerable communities within the landscape.

A highly consultative approach was employed to gather baseline data. Stakeholder consultations served as the primary source of information on environmental challenges within the target area. In addition, a community survey was conducted to collect primary data on the biophysical and socio-economic characteristics of the landscape. A desktop review of relevant documents complemented this to gather secondary data.

b) *OP8 Strategic Initiatives in the landscapes*

- Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species: The programme will promote conservation measures and sustainable land use practices that ensure ecosystem integrity and sustain the provision of ecosystem services. Community participation will be encouraged to promote project efficiency and the sustainability of results. Through direct involvement in SGP activities, the local population will increase awareness and appreciation of the benefits of multiple ecosystem services and gain knowledge and practical experience of biodiversity-friendly income-generating activities. Examples of interventions include: rehabilitation of deforested areas through agro-forestry, Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), Woodlots/Village forest areas; promotion of alternative energy sources such as waste to energy to decrease biomass usage, thereby reducing forest loss and enhancing ecosystem services upon which production systems depend; promotion of value addition and forest protection through non-timber forest products, and livelihoods support such as beekeeping, fruit production and processing, seedlings for agro-forestry, and afforestation.
- Low-carbon energy access co-benefits: The programme will support innovative and catalytic financing toward off-grid energy service needs in the landscape in complementarity with ongoing government-led interventions. It will also support capacity development and innovation to introduce suitable technologies through appropriate business models and community participation to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, the SGP will support the design and implementation of interventions to promote renewable and energy-efficient technologies, providing socio-economic benefits and improving livelihoods.
- Cross-cutting Issues: Malawi's SGP will ensure that cross-cutting initiatives are integral to implementing the programme in OP8. It will ensure that all groups, especially vulnerable populations such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities, are actively involved and benefit from the programme.

4.2 Grantmaking outside the priority landscapes

During the scoping process, stakeholders emphasised the need to focus on urban areas due to increasing environmental challenges, such as poor waste management and energy demands that drive deforestation in surrounding catchments. Thirty per cent (30%) of the resources will be allocated to projects aimed at catalysing sustainable urban solutions.

The programme will implement activities targeting vulnerable people and communities in urban contexts, as was the case in OP7. The SGP will also promote an integrated management approach to address urbanisation challenges from

the point of origin (i.e., in rural areas and migration corridors) to the destinations of people's movement during this urbanisation transition. The programme will demonstrate selected urban solutions by addressing several key urban environmental issues, including waste and chemicals management; urban wetland and watershed management; energy and transport; ecosystem services and biodiversity conservation.

As part of the strategic initiative to catalyse sustainable urban solutions, organisations from all major cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe, and Mzuzu were selected. This inclusive selection is aimed at ensuring the participation of communities directly and indirectly affected by solid and liquid waste. The initiative focused on enabling these communities to create wealth through the principles of recycling, reusing, and reducing waste. The outcomes and lessons from this selection will be carried forward into OP8 to enhance continuity and impact. These initiatives will be implemented to catalyse sustainable urban solutions, organisations from all major cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe, and Mzuzu.

Blantyre is in the southern region of Malawi. It lies within the Shire Highlands, an area of elevated terrain characterised by rolling hills and valleys. The city is situated at an altitude of approximately 1,039 meters (3,409 feet) above sea level. Its coordinates are roughly 15.7861° South latitude and 35.0058° East longitude. Blantyre is one of Malawi's oldest and most industrialised cities. The city lies in a hilly terrain and is surrounded by Miombo woodlands. It experiences a subtropical highland climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. Blantyre City faces environmental challenges such as deforestation, soil erosion, and increasing urban waste due to rapid population growth and industrial activity.

Lilongwe is positioned in the central region of Malawi and serves as the Capital City. It is located on a plateau along the Lilongwe River with gently rolling landscapes and a mix of savanna and riparian vegetation, at an elevation of about 1,050 meters (3,445 feet) above sea level. The City's coordinates are approximately 13.9833° South latitude and 33.7833° East longitude. Its central location makes it a strategic hub for administration and transportation. The city is experiencing environmental pressures, including wetland encroachment, pollution of water sources, and urban sprawl, particularly in its peri-urban areas. This brings in problems of waste management, too.

Mzuzu is found in the northern region of Malawi. It lies near the Viphya Plateau, surrounded by forested highlands and cooler temperatures due to its elevation of around 1,250 meters (4,101 feet) above sea level. The City's coordinates are roughly 11.4500° South latitude and 34.0167° East longitude. Mzuzu is the primary urban centre in the north and a gateway to the northern lakeshore. It is surrounded by the Viphya Forest, one of the most extensive man-made forests in Africa, and enjoys a cooler climate due to its elevation. The city is rich in biodiversity but faces environmental threats such as deforestation, illegal logging, poor waste management and land degradation in surrounding forest reserves.

Zomba City lies in the southern region of Malawi at the foot of the Zomba Plateau. The City stands at an elevation of about 900 meters (2,953 feet) above sea level, with coordinates near 15.3833° South latitude and 35.3333° East longitude. Zomba is known for its scenic landscape and was formerly the capital of Malawi during colonial times up until 1975. The area is known for its scenic highlands, evergreen forests, and numerous streams and waterfalls. The plateau serves as a vital water catchment and biodiversity hotspot. However, Zomba City is challenged by poor waste disposal, forest encroachment, charcoal production, and soil erosion on the slopes of the plateau.

4.3 CSO-government-private sector dialogue platforms

The three Districts' Socio-Economic Profiles (SEPs), District Development Plans (DDPs), and District State of Environment and Outlook Reports (DSOERs) will be referenced and used as a platform for engagement to ensure that the implementation of both the DDPs and the CPS benefits the communities. The DDPs and DSEORs identified capacity building, especially training of communities in governance and leadership, management, business and financial management, and knowledge management, as a priority geared towards human development for CSOs. In the Mzimba/Nkhatabay/ Rumphu Landscape, partnerships will be forged to establish and strengthen a structure for projects aimed at promoting natural resources management and livelihood improvement.

In the areas both inside and outside the landscapes, the programme will work towards strengthening the District Environmental CSO Networks together with the other nationwide forums on environment and climate change to bring together CBOs, communities and stakeholders with a common interest in sustainable management of natural resources. In attaining this, the Programme will strengthen the partnerships with the District Environmental Subcommittee (DESC) at the district level. The DESC is a decentralised local government structure comprised of various departments and CSOs with the primary mandate of providing technical guidance on the implementation of environment and climate change management, providing technical oversight and assistance to implementing entities and ensuring that the entities abide by the environmental and related policies. The programme will also forge partnerships with the private sector, NGOs and other forums around the country to facilitate dialogue between all stakeholders and ensure that the voice of all is captured.

The GEF-CSO Network will be enhanced to ensure that it increases members' and public awareness and knowledge of global environmental issues and GEF SGP grantees in understanding GEF focal areas in Malawi. The network also focuses on policy advocacy, capacity building, promoting transparency and accountability within the GEF, and ensuring that the voices of civil society are heard in global environmental governance. It will also encourage lobbying for STAR resources for the SGP.

4.4 Promoting social Inclusion, including gender equality and women's empowerment

The baseline study during OP7 CPS development sought to establish the status of inclusive participation in the landscape and relevant cultural practices. It was determined that the total population in the landscape is comprised of 51% women and 49% youth³. The landscape predominantly follows patrilineal cultural practices. However, the stakeholder interactions revealed considerable inequalities in decision-making processes, resource allocation, property ownership and job opportunities.

Women have generally been more active in development projects that require community mobilisation and social contribution. However, it was noted that incentivised projects had been dominated by male participation. The programme will, therefore, consider this context and ensure that the inclusion of minority needs is mainstreamed into all projects and activities; participation of vulnerable groups is a requirement for all projects; and facilitate

³ Youth defined as 10-35 years according to the National Youth Policy of 2023

sensitisation activities on gender equality before and during project implementation.

4.5 Criteria for awarding projects

The criteria for awarding projects within and outside the landscape will be as follows:

- ✓ Relevance to the Malawi SGP Country Strategy.
- ✓ Relevance to national priorities.
- ✓ Potential to influence policy processes.
- ✓ Potential to harness skills and resources of diverse players such as academia and the private sector.
- ✓ Innovative solutions to address the thematic areas
- ✓ Potential for social inclusion, particularly the youth, people with disabilities and gender equality; and
- ✓ Projects that address waste pollution and forest-related energy issues in urban areas.

4.6 Knowledge Management

The programme will prioritise knowledge management as a critical component of programme delivery in OP8. This will involve sharing and disseminating programme work, results, lessons, and good practices at different levels as follows:

i) Project Level

- Individual a knowledge management plan with a corresponding budget that allows the programme to capture their experience and access the training needed to carry out the projects.
- Peer-to-peer learning between local communities and SGP grantees to share knowledge, help communities learn from each other and as a tool for replication and up-scaling of best practices.
- Conduct knowledge exchange visits, forums, training workshops, and dialogues between communities and key stakeholders. Given the nature of SGP, these learning exchanges can be on technical issues related to its environmental work (i.e., testing technology or new approach) or on social or livelihood issues.
- Training on climate change, sustainable agriculture, and biodiversity conservation, project sustainable business models, management, accounting, marketing, and governance, among others.

ii) National Level

- SGP secretariat will work with the grantees in capturing their lessons; conducting knowledge exchanges; organising training workshops; working with the Government in achieving national environmental priorities to help scale up and replicate best practices and lessons learned
- Production and translation of knowledge materials in local languages, including project fact sheets, informational brochures, how-to manuals and case studies.
- Producing content for dissemination on SGP Social media page
- Conducting knowledge fairs and stakeholder workshops to allow communities to connect with key stakeholders like the academia, other NGOs, the Government and other development practitioners for replication, upscaling, policy influence, technical support, and knowledge transfer.
- Creating or strengthening networks for fostering knowledge through strengthening existing networks of CSOs around environmental and sustainable development issues.
- Support centres of excellence or demonstration sites showing different innovations
- Acting as a broker between grantees and other key partners by connecting grantees with Government services, NGOs, INGOs, academia or research centres, development agencies/practitioners, and private

sector companies.

- National Steering Committees (NSC) contribute to knowledge exchange of community practices between the civil society and the Government, UNDP and other key stakeholders and help identify projects for replication and scaling up.

iii) Global

The Programme will also contribute to the wider OP8 digital library by sharing publications, manuals, and other materials it generates. All grantees must report progress and document impact stories and lessons learned. A standardised comprehensive reporting template will be provided to ensure uniformity. Where possible, grantees will share best practices and experiences with other agencies at global and regional levels. An end-of-OP8 evaluation will also be conducted to capture lessons learnt during the process, as this was not done in OP7.

5. COMMUNICATION PLAN

To achieve the GEF-SGP goals, it is essential to implement interventions in a collaborative and inclusive approach. To achieve this, communication provides an effective way of promoting and engaging with key stakeholders and beneficiaries. During the OP7 CPS development scoping study, informants clearly expressed the need for the programme to facilitate linkages amongst collaborators through a free-flow information system and an effective knowledge management system.

The communication plan addresses challenges such as the lack of information about GEF-SGP amongst partners, potential collaborators, and beneficiaries; a lack of coordination between key players and interventions in the implementation of the programme; and limited availability of information on previous and ongoing interventions in the programme to facilitate learning and knowledge exchange.

The plan provides a starting point for effective and timely exchange of information amongst partners within and outside the programme at community, national and global levels. It aims to improve the quality of engagement between the programme stakeholders for enhanced impact and sustainability of interventions.

Table 6: Communication Plan

Objective	Target	Key messages	Tools/ medium	Indicators	Responsible
To promote awareness of the SGP and application process	Potential grantees	The SGP supports innovative ideas for the good of the environment and development.	Physical meetings; posters; radio adverts, training, handbooks, social media platforms e.g LinkedIn and Facebook	Number of information products developed Number and type of dissemination platforms used Number of people accessing information products	SGP Country team
To promote community participation in SGP implementation and adoption of technologies	Target communities Grantees	Role of communities and ownership initiatives in conserving the environment while improving their livelihoods.	Radio, community meetings, storytelling, onsite community training, South-south exchange.	Number of people participating in community engagements	SGP Country team
To enhance the linkage of SGP projects to district planning and reporting frameworks in the target landscapes and urban areas	District/City Council Authorities in the target landscapes and urban areas.	SGP's significance in delivering district plans and priorities related to sustainable development.	Progress reports, physical meetings, case studies, handbooks.	Number of SGP strategic initiatives reflected in district development plans Number of SGP implementing partners involved in district development processes in the target landscapes and urban areas.	SGP Country team, Grantees
To enhance recognition and contribution of the SGP in national frameworks	GEF Operational Focal Point	SGP linkage to national priorities with grassroots initiatives.	Progress reports, learning events, factsheets, and case studies.	Number of national policy platforms engaged	SGP Country team Government partners
To enhance the contribution of the SGP to national policy	Government Departments and Agencies	Creating an enabling policy framework for the meaningful impact of local initiatives.	Emails, physical meetings, print media, website; visual media products, learning events, field visits	Number of national policy engagement platforms participated in Number of SGP priority initiatives reflected in national policy	SGP Country team SGP Country team

Objective	Target	Key messages	Tools/ medium	Indicators	Responsible
To increase resources for SGP implementation	Development partners, Private Sector	SGP addresses local impacts of global environmental challenges.	Physical meetings, Emails, social media platforms, and print media.	Percentage increase in programme funding	SGP Country team
To increase co-financing for SGP implementation	Private sector	Investing in the environment is good for business and corporate social responsibility.	Physical engagements, case studies, visual media products.	Percentage increase in funding contribution from the private sector	SGP Country team

6. RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND PARTNERSHIP PLAN

a) Secured and planned cash and in-kind co-financing

The total guaranteed financing for Malawi's SGP under OP8 amounts to US\$937,500 spread over 3 years. Of this, 72% is allocated specifically for grants, while the remaining 28% is designated for administrative and operational expenses. This figure does not include co-financing or funds raised through resource mobilisation efforts.

b) Co-financing opportunities

The OP8 will need to diversify its funding sources through the following:

- Engagement with Government and UNDP to secure SGP funding for grants and/or operational resources, such as allocations from Government's STAR and UNDP TRAC for OP8. The National Steering Committee will have to showcase contributions made through the SDG grants to national development and lobby the Government for their buy-in for SGP to be recognised as the critical link between Government policies and active grassroots participation. Malawi will also strive to access the resources that are made available to SGP through the Community Development and Knowledge Management for the Satoyama Initiative Programme (COMDEKS) which provides small-scale finance- delivered through the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP)- directly to local communities, Indigenous Peoples and civil society to implement locally led projects that enhance livelihoods and well-being, conserve biodiversity, address climate change, and support local cultures and traditional practices.
- Positioning SGP as a delivery mechanism for community components of other UNDP and Government led projects and programmes by bringing to the fore SGP's comparative advantage, such as its ground reach through the grassroots networks and demonstrable community empowerment dividends already achieved.
- Engage with other GEF Implementing Agencies (ADB, FAO, UNEP, and World Bank) to support the small grants program within their GEF programs.
- Engage with new potential donors such as Irish Aid, NORAD, USAID, UKAID, JICA, WFP, EU, India, and China to support the small grants program.

- v. Engage with the private sector to support SGP as part of their corporate social responsibility platform
- vi. Engage in proactive new programme development drive through collaborative efforts with Grantee Partners Network and other organisations
- vii. SGP to increase its visibility as part of its resource mobilisation drive. The visibility materials include newsletters, posters, and policy briefs.
- viii. With the assistance of the programme and through their own initiatives, grantees will be encouraged to leverage additional funding from the government and other development partners. The project results have to be used to motivate for continuation of the initiatives as programme funds would have provided a foundation with visible results.

c) Grantmaker and partnership opportunities

Working at the landscape level during OP8 will present opportunities to identify new partners to collaborate on various aspects of planning and implementing the CPS. These strategic partnerships might include: (i) leveraging co-financing; implementing capacity-building activities; (ii) conducting exchanges; and (iii) influencing policy at local, national, and regional levels. Forging partnerships related to a given landscape will require acting at different levels and being sensitive to the importance of including diverse stakeholders and institutions – for example, with traditional institutions of governance at the community level on the one hand and with national-level authorities on the other. The SGP National Secretariat will work closely with district and urban councils to build the capacity of the grant applicants so that they explore other opportunities for grants from other donors to scale up their interventions under the grant.

The SGP team including NSC members will work with communities and CSOs that have implemented projects with interesting results and potential for upscaling and replication to develop proposals to be submitted to other development partners for funding. In addition, the programme can group a conglomeration of CSOs to access funds as a consortium in order to tap on their individual capabilities/strengths and leverage more resources. Through the use of the stakeholder workshops and knowledge fairs, the programme will continue to bring on board other development partners and government as a way of marketing the grantees and establishing linkages for further execution of the grant maker+ role. Apart from sharing information, the programme will run proposal development clinics to further guide CSOs and communities through one-in-one interactions. Stakeholder workshops and partner meetings will be also used to advertise the grant maker+ role of SGP.

7. PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The Programme has realised that most CSOs have limited technical, financial and managerial management capacities. To that end, capacity development proposals can be developed through linkages with the GEF-SGP CSO Network as a lead and umbrella organisation, such as the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA), to address the identified capacity challenges.

In addition, the Programme will tap into an opportunity presented by the Government of Malawi through the National Internship Programme under the Ministry of Labour by engaging graduates with technical skills to work with the CSOs that have been supported. This avenue will also be explored with other international programmes such as United Nations Volunteers (UNV), US Peace Corp and other volunteer programmes. All

the donors and funding facilities struggle with absorption of funds and project management by CSOs hence the initiative aforementioned will be a step in the right direction.

Through corporate social responsibility, the private sector can find the grantmaker role interesting as it provides an opportunity to attain results faster through an alternative avenue. Within the Mzimba/Nkhatabay/Rumphi landscape and the cities targeted there are private sector entities (including mining, hospitality, manufacturing industries) that would find it easier to work with organisations that reach grassroots due to the complexity of working with communities.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The risk management plan has identified risks that may affect the implementation of the OP8 program strategy, their degree of risk, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and the mitigation actions towards the risk. The risks were identified through consultation meetings with OP6 selected institutions and stakeholder meetings during the baseline assessment during the development of OP7 CPS. These risks have been adopted for the OP8 CPS and additional ones have been identified and analysed.

Table 7: Description of the risks identified in OP8

Description of the Risk and Effect on the Programme	Degree of risk (low, medium, high)	Probability of risk (low, medium, high)	Planned Risk Mitigation Action
GEF SGP projects adversely impact fragile habitats and ecosystems, thereby threatening environmental degradation in fragile environments.	High	Low	GEF SGP projects to comply with UNDP social and environmental standards. The call must include the standards as part of the selection criteria.
Reputational risk due to non-delivery of project results	High	Low	Adhering to both UN and Government transparency and ethical principles during programming and implementation
GEF SGP projects may lack community-based climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction as a cross-cutting theme. This may exacerbate the vulnerability of communities to climate change impacts.	Low	Low	GEF SGP projects to comply with UNDP social and environmental standards on climate change adaptation and mitigation. The call must include the standards as part of the selection criteria
Partnership risk- Lack of buy-in from the critical stakeholders. Abandonment by critical stakeholders. Non-participation of key stakeholders.	High	medium	Continuously engage with the relevant stakeholders (existing and potential) to ensure progressive and un-interrupted implementation of the projects

Intermittent funding to the recipient of the SGP grants would affect the smooth implementation of the programme.	High	Medium	To avoid the situation, the National Secretariat must address the causes of delays in funding disbursement and approval processes. In OP6 and OP7, the challenge was real
Low community and stakeholder participation risk the sustainability of the programme.	Medium	Low	The project design is to be informed by community and stakeholder consultation, including the roles of each stakeholder—the selection team to consider this aspect when selecting the grantees.
Grant recipients misappropriate SGP grants, which would affect donor confidence in the programme, thus risking future continued funding.	Low	Medium	Need for thorough due diligence on the grantees. Grants are also provided in tranches and not a lump sum. Disbursements are based on verified progress. Furthermore, the grantees sign agreements that state that any procurement above 10% value of the grant needs authorisation from the Secretariat
Natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, and dry spells have a negative impact on both the implementation and impact of the SGP projects. The gains and positive impacts from the programme may be negatively affected.	High	High	The grantees develop a risk management plan that considers natural disasters. The risk management plan will be updated quarterly depending on the emerging risks.
Low global funding towards the grants considering the Ukraine-Russia, Middle East wars. This would affect the availability of resources for the program	High	Medium	There is a need to diversify funding sources for the SGP projects, including lobbying the Government for allocation to the program.
Political interference at the local level. This may affect program implementation locally, thus affecting program impact.	Low	Medium	There is a need for a thorough stakeholder analysis by the grantee recipients and active involvement of the relevant stakeholders in program implementation. The selection criteria include an evaluation of stakeholder analysis and participation in the program.
Global pandemic. Any emergence and resurgence of a pandemic would greatly affect program implementation as both staff and stakeholders cannot physically meet for programme implementation.	High	Medium	The program would recommend adherence to safety measures as prescribed by health authorities including an awareness of the pandemic and its preventative measures.

Limited Local Government support would affect the sustainability of interventions.	Medium	Medium	GEF SGP Secretariat: - to create awareness among the respective councils on the program and how it contributes to the national achievement of the MW2063 vision. - to facilitate joint monitoring visits with the Government, thereby lobbying for more government support for the program OP8 grantee recipients work with government line ministries for specific projects.
Implementation and human capital risk	High	Medium	Clear succession plan and supporting staff to ensure project continuity

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

Monitoring and evaluation are important aspects of the OP8 SGP activities. During the consultations with the Councils on OP8 CPS development it was noted that OP7 project implementers in the district registered improved engagement with the Council and communities which helped in following project activities, outcomes, and impacts. The Council also noted improved accountability of community-based organisations implementing the grants. Since district and urban Councils have authority over local development activities and managing of the environment, this continued involvement in monitoring activities needs to be enhanced. Before inception, the Local Authorities must be briefed on the project proposals, and project progress reports must be shared with the Council during implementation.

The grantees implementing projects will be required to compile periodical reports (quarterly and annual reports) to provide updates on project implementation progress. The grantees will be provided templates for the reports in line with the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and adopted programme indicators. The templates will require the development of case studies and success stories to capture the achievements and notable experiences in implementing the projects. SGP projects will pick from Project Roster of Indicators guided by SGP Country Programme M&E guidelines. At project conclusion, these indicators are to be reported in SGP project mid-term and final progress reports. These compilations will be captured in handbooks, factsheets, case studies, films, and video materials. They will be added to the digital library to inform learning across the programme at local, national, and global levels.

The call for proposals will stipulate that each project invests 4-6% of the total grant amount on project level monitoring and evaluation. The funds may also be utilised towards submission of project progress reports, including monitoring GEF-8 indicators. The grantees will be mandated to initiate a project evaluation as an integral part of the grantee M&E plan, it is also covered here.

The programme will facilitate training on knowledge management to help grantees develop storytelling skills and to access the learning platforms available through the programme for cross-learning. The programme will also facilitate beneficiary networking events for current and previous cohorts to promote synergy between interventions and maximise the benefits from the provided support.

9.1 Monitoring approaches at project and country levels

To ensure that the programme delivers the required results and impacts, it is crucial to have a system/plan in place with tools to use in progress tracking of projects throughout the implementation period. Monitoring and evaluation ensure that the planned actions are delivered within budget and on time; minimise risk impacts, facilitate the achievement of impacts/results; and enable learning and interventions in case of setbacks. The projects will be required to have a budget on M&E activities and also subjected to monitoring and evaluation for at least 3 times during their lifespan. Gender-disaggregated data will be systematically collected to ensure inclusive participation and to strengthen the project's ability to reach and respond to the specific needs of all beneficiaries.

9.1.1 Monitoring Approaches at Project Level

At the project level, grantees will identify GEF-8 global environmental indicators (Table 8) and socio-economic benefit indicators (Table 9) that their project will contribute towards. The grantees will set a quantitative target for the selected indicators, which will be included in their project design and monitoring and evaluation plan, and form part of the Memorandum of Agreement between them and the SGP. Preference will be given to projects with a high degree of alignment on both CPS indicators and targets. Project designs should elaborate on how the beneficiary communities will be involved in monitoring the project results and include 5% of its budget for community M&E activities such as community storytelling sessions, community learning circles, and visual monitoring/reporting. The SGP National Secretariat will monitor grantees' progress towards meeting the indicators through site visits, mid-term/progress and final reports and update the country database.

The grantees will be expected to monitor their own projects to enhance ownership and tracking progress by adhering to approved implementation. Through self-monitoring grantee will timely produce progress in line with the reporting requirements of the programme. In OP7, all projects supported by the programme will be required to have a project board /project implementation committee established who will be in charge of implementing all components of the project. The project board will be encouraged to host meetings monthly to gauge and evaluate progress enabling them to come up with interventions in case there are delays.

9.1.1 Monitoring approaches at National Level

A database will be used to record the results of all projects against GEF-8 global indicators and generate monitoring reports, using a standardised data collection and reporting system developed by the SGP. The GEF SGP CMPT will compile the country programme results and impacts and report on progress by monitoring targets and indicators in the results framework. The SGP National Secretariat will provide the NSC members with monitoring reports, quarterly project progress reports, final technical and financial

reports, and results of completed projects submitted to the NSC. An Annual Monitoring Report, which illustrates the results of SGP projects against GEF-8 global indicators and national priorities/targets, will also be presented to the GEF-8 Focal Point (Malawi Government). NSC members will also be invited to undertake monitoring activities, particularly where there is a need for further oversight in project implementation. Government extension staff will assist in facilitating the projects by offering technical support and training regularly. Frequent monitoring of projects will be essential for knowledge and technology transfer.

The programme will strengthen established synergy and working relationships with various departments in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change and other government extension agents through the District Environment Subcommittees (DESC) and NGOs as partners at the grassroots level to fast-track monitoring of projects. As part of promoting monitoring and evaluation by other partners at local level, upon approval of the project the programme will send a formal notification and invite the entities to a partnership in project implementation. The arrangement is to be fruitful as the partners avail technical expertise and other resources to fast-track project implementation. In OP8, this will be strengthened and more strategic partnerships, such as academic and research institutions, will be forged with instructions for research and academics so as to intensify M&E for projects.

Apart from the grantees and partners, the programme takes the lead in monitoring and evaluation of projects through engagement of the NSC. The field monitoring missions will be done, at a minimum, once a year to ensure continued coaching and mentoring for grantees. The monitoring and evaluation arrangements include review of project implementation plans, production of progress reports, field monitoring missions' reports, updating of the database, and constant review of the disbursement table to ensure timely availability of financial resources to grantees. The programme uses the proposal templates, disbursement tables, baseline reports and stakeholder reports as tools for monitoring and evaluation of projects.

9.1.2 Capacity Building

The SGP country programme will train and mentor grantees to effectively report against the targeted indicators. Other agencies/experts can be engaged when necessary for specialised capacity building and training.

The programme will also focus on building the capacity of grantees on effective monitoring and evaluation of their individual projects.

Table 8: M&E Plans for the CPS

M&E Activity	Objective	Responsible parties	Source of the budget	Calendar
Development of the Country Program Strategy (CPS)	Framework for action, including the identification of community projects.	NC, NSC, national stakeholders, Beneficiaries	An SGP planning grant for hiring consultants can be used to update the CPS OP8 plan.	At the beginning of OP8

As part of the NSC meetings, ongoing project results and analysis review includes an annual CPS review.	Assess the effectiveness of projects, country portfolio, learning and adaptive management.	NC, NSC, Country Office. The final deliberations were shared/analysed with CPMT colleagues.	Staff time, country operating budget	At least one annual review to ensure that the OP8 CPS is on track to achieve its outcomes and make timely and evidence-based changes to the CPS as required.
Annual Monitoring Report Survey ⁴	Enable effective reporting to the CPMT and GEF. It is the main tool for recording and analytically presenting results to donors.	NC/PA in close collaboration with the NSC. The CPMT provides technical guidance support and receives final submissions from countries for further actions.	Staff time	Once a year from June-July
Country Portfolio Review	The capture of the methodological results of the portfolio at a given time to note changes in impact as well as wider adoption. The objective is to support reporting to stakeholders, learning and support for the strategic development and implementation of the CPS.	NC, NSC	The SGP Planning Grant to hire consultants to review the impact of previous operational cycles and use the lessons to develop and implement the OP9 CPS. Global M&E technical support can be expected.	Once per OP
SGP database	Ensure that all project and country programme inputs are recorded in the Spatulas.	NC, PAs,	Staff time	Throughout the OP. Ensure quality assurance and data completion before the annual monitoring cycle (May to June).
Audit	Ensure compliance with the rules and standards of implementation and management of the project.	UNDP / External subcontractor. NC/PA to provide the necessary support.	Overall operating budget	Annually for some countries, based on a risk assessment
Impact Reviews	Ensure evidence-based knowledge production of results for the entire OP. This will include specific	NC	Staff Time	Once per operational phase

⁴ Timely and quality country level submissions to Annual Monitoring Process are mandatory. As a Global Programme, it enables aggregated reporting by CPMT to GEF, UNDP and other stakeholders

	results on strengths such as social inclusion, broader adoption and delivery mechanism			
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9.1.3 Incorporation of ethical guidelines in M&E activities

The SGP country programme will adopt a ‘make no harm’ approach when administering all actions. It will consider the welfare, beliefs, and customs of those involved or affected, avoid or disclose any conflict of interest, and acknowledge the influence of culture within and across groups. It will be a requirement in the proposals to describe the contextualised community considerations and how project activities need to be tailored to these. CPS Results Framework Kindly change to landscape orientation

Table 9: Results Framework National programme Strategy for SGP OP8

Alignment with the SDGs - Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms - Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture - Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls - Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainability of water and sanitation for all - Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all - Goal 11: Make Cities and Human Settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable - Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production - Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact - Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development - Goal 15: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems - Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development
Synergy with the UNDP country programme document (CPD): - National Priority/Goal: Transition of Malawi to a productive, competitive, and resilient nation. - UNSDF Outcomes: By 2028, more people, especially the most vulnerable, including women and youth, are resilient to climate change and shocks, benefit from and have access to better-managed waste, ecosystems, and natural resources, including clean and affordable energy. - Related Strategic Plan Outcomes: Outcome 1: Advance poverty reduction in all its forms and dimensions - National Priority/Goal: Actively respond to climate change, prevent disasters, strengthen sustainable natural resource management and environmental protection - UNSDF Outcomes: By 2028, more people, especially the most vulnerable groups, including women, youths, and people with disability, participate in and benefit from food and nutrition security and a more diversified, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth resilient to shocks. Related Strategic Plan Outcomes: Outcome 3: Strengthening resilience and shocks to crises
The objective of the SGP OP8 program: <i>To promote and support innovative, inclusive, and impactful initiatives and to encourage multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level to address global environmental issues in priority landscapes.</i>

1 OP8 SGP CPS Strategic Initiatives	2 OP8 CPS Indicators and Targets	3 Means of verification
Strategic Initiative 1: Community-based conservation of threatened ecosystems and species i. Protect biodiversity hotspots, threatened plant species and headwaters of key tributaries ii. Participation in development and implementation of an appropriate conservation framework for wetlands and other fragile areas, steep slopes	<i>Indicator 1.1: Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity (hectares) (GEF Core Indicator 4.1) Baseline: 918.5 ha⁶ Target: 100ha</i> <i>Indicator 1.3⁵: Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity (hectares; excluding protected areas) (GEF core indicator 5) Baseline: 0 Target: 30,000ha</i> <i>Indicator 1.4⁶: Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment Baseline: 12,950 Target: 18,000</i> <i>Indicator 1.5: number of community protected/conserved area designations and networks⁷ Baseline: 25 Target: 35</i> <i>Indicator 1.6: Marine protected areas under improved management effectiveness (hectares) (GEF core indicator 2.2) Baseline: TBD Target: 9,000ha</i>	Individual project reports prepared by the PMF country teams (as part of the mid-term and final progress reports) Benchmark comparison variables (use of conceptual models and partner data, where appropriate) Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), the global database of the PMF Review of the National Programme

⁵ GEF Core Indicator 5

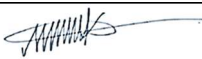
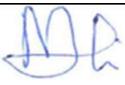
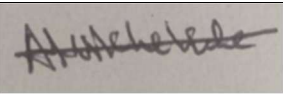
⁶ GEF core indicator 11

⁷ This applies to conserved areas outside government protected areas i.e., at Traditional Authority, Group Village Head, Village and Household levels

Strategic Initiative 3: Co-benefits of access to low-carbon energy sources i. - Promote renewable, clean and energy-efficient technologies that provide socio-economic benefits and improve livelihoods.	<i>Indicator 3.1: Number of direct beneficiaries as co-benefit of SGP intervention</i> Baseline: TBD Target: TBD <i>Indicator 3.2: KW of renewable energy capacity installed from local technologies (e.g., on renewable energy technology types of biomasses, small hydropower plant, solar)</i> Baseline: 0 Target: 75 KW <i>Indicator 3.3: Number of energy access solutions adapted to local needs and focused on communities, with successful demonstrations or scale-up and replication.</i> Baseline: 9 Target: 15	Individual project reports prepared by the SGP country teams (as part of the mid-term and final progress reports) Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), global SGP database Review of the National Programme Strategy (Noce contribution)
Strategic Initiative 7: Strengthening social inclusion Strengthening social inclusion Gender i. Support women's improved access, use, and control of: 1) Promote targeted inclusive initiatives including youth and persons with disability. 2) Mainstream gender equality and social inclusion in all projects. 3) Integrate gender equality into all aspects of social inclusion efforts 4) Advocate for policy changes at the local and national level that promote equal rights and opportunities for all citizens	<i>Indicator 7.2 Number of projects contributing to closing gender gaps related to access to and control over natural resources</i> Baseline: 1 Target: 6 <i>Indicator 7.3: Number of projects that improve the participation and decision-making of women in natural resource governance</i> Baseline: 12 Target: 24 <i>Indicator 7.4: Number of projects that target socio- economic benefits and services for women</i> Baseline: 6 Target: 12 <i>Indicator 7.5: Proportion of women-led SGP projects and concrete integration mechanisms to increase women's participation.</i> Baseline: 25% Target: 40% of women-led SGP projects and concrete integration mechanisms aimed at increasing women's	Individual project reports prepared by SGP country teams Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), global SGP database Review of the National Programme

	participation. <i>Indicator 7.6: Proportion of SGP projects that demonstrate appropriate models of youth engagement</i> Baseline: 3.7% Target: 10% of SGP projects that demonstrate appropriate models of youth engagement <i>Indicator 7.7: Proportion of SGP projects that demonstrate models of disability engagement</i> Baseline: 0 Target: 2% of SGP projects that demonstrate models of disability engagement.	
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10. National Steering Committee Endorsement

NSC members involved in OP8 CPS development, review and endorsement	Signatures
Dorothy Tembo-Nhlema	
Mphatso Kalembe (OFP)	
Julius Ng'oma	
Msekiwe Matsimbe	
Rashid Mpinganjira	
Robert Kapyepye	
Dr. Suzgo Kaunda	
Dr. Maggie Munthali	
Amon Lukhele	
Mercy Chirambo (UNDP SGP Focal Point)	

