

**MALAWI GREEN CORPS: GREEN JOBS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION  
AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**UNDP Contribution:** \$1,500,000  
**Implementation Period:** 02/01/2021 to 01/07/2022

**Situation Analysis**

1. Malawi has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the crisis continues to deepen across the region. Measures to stem the spread of COVID-19 are exerting heavy economic damage on livelihoods, business and job opportunities available to Malawians, especially youth. Multiple crises stemming from the epidemic are still unfolding, with a host of external and internal factors dampening Malawi's economy, access to public services, and health and education outcomes. Preliminary data indicates that Malawi's imports were 26 percent lower in April and May 2020 compared to period last year, with decreased demand from key trade partners weighing heavily on exports. Domestic factors are also contributing to Malawi's socio-economic crisis through increased risk aversion and social distancing policies. COVID-19 cases continue to rise due to increased community transmission, with secondary and tertiary effects of containment efforts constraining domestic economic demand and contributing to massive job loss, particularly among women, with up to a million jobs at risk by the end of 2020. Though projections are evolving as the crisis unfolds, Malawi's GDP growth is expected to decline sharply, aggravated by the country's large informal sector reliant on natural resources and high rates of poverty and food insecurity.
2. Malawi's policy actions aim at three objectives: protecting lives, protecting livelihoods, and protecting the future. Complementary to life-saving health interventions, the government is focused on supporting livelihoods during the economic slowdown while also scaling up investments to support broad-based recovery and resilience in the medium term. Protecting the future means addressing Malawi's ongoing vulnerability to climate and other exogenous shocks which have a strong impact on poverty, and which the COVID-19 pandemic is aggravating as a *poverty-multiplier*. Malawi is faced with persistently low resilience to disasters and economic shocks, and slow economic growth due to its high dependence on rain-fed agriculture, over-reliance on biomass for household energy, and widespread ecosystem degradation. In the face of widespread income loss owing to the pandemic, and in the absence of affordable alternatives, many poor communities are being forced to accelerate stress on already degraded forests, watersheds and other ecosystems. Laying a foundation for a sustainable and green recovery, while addressing lost income and employment among its vulnerable youth population, presents Malawi with the opportunity to place green growth and nature-based solutions at the center of its pandemic response. A national Green Corps, as outlined herein, contributes to ongoing efforts by the Government of Malawi to safeguard and expand employment opportunities across the country, particularly for young women and men, while accelerating a green economic transition. The initiative also dovetails with ongoing efforts by UNDP to strengthen domestic networks of young climate champions and entrepreneurs in green business.

3. Aligned to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), Malawi's National Resilience Strategy, and its Landscape/Forest Restoration Strategy, the Malawi Green Corps aims to provide youths with skills and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods through an approach that engages them in environmental management and ecosystem-based adaptation, while building their capacity and skills to take up and create green jobs themselves and/or enter the job market with a foundation in environmental restoration and innovation. The multi-phase Green Corps initiative envisages scale up through access to finance and technologies as well as upskilling and mentoring of youths as part of a long-term green economy process in Malawi.
  
4. Under the existing partnership agreement between the Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources and UNDP for the *Transformative Adaptation for Climate Resilience (TRANSFORM)* programme, UNDP and the Government of Malawi will jointly launch the Malawi Green Corps in the first quarter of 2021 to provide at least 2,000 youth<sup>1</sup> aged 18 to 30 with employment opportunities for up to four months per year focused on environmental restoration of critical hotspot areas across Malawi<sup>2</sup>. The objective of the Malawi Green Corps is to provide youth with employment<sup>3</sup> and on-the-job technical training to address youth unemployment, and create a pathway to green jobs by linking with business incubation programmes being supported by GoM, UNDP, ILO, the EU, FCDO, Royal Norwegian Embassy, African Development Bank and others. The initiative will deliver training focused on forest restoration, high-quality tree planting and care, site management, tool safety, native plant species conservation, invasive plant identification, environmental advocacy and communications, entrepreneurship, and other specialized topics to be agreed with the GoM (see Output 4 below) to equip members of the **Malawi Green Corps** to conduct environmental restoration.

### Overview and Expected Outputs

- 5 This initiative aims to provide youths with skills and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods through an approach that engages them in environmental management and ecosystem-based adaptation while building their capacity and skills to take up and create green jobs themselves. Under TRANSFORM, the partners will initiate and pilot a multi-phase Green Corps initiative that will be scaled up in subsequent phases through access to finance and technologies as well as well as upskilling and mentoring of youths as part of a long-term green economy process in Malawi.
  
- 6 This partnership will coordinate mentorship and hands-on environmental leadership training through project-based learning, and assist Malawian youth in developing future skills and building diverse networks with environmental organizations and businesses. UNDP will facilitate Malawi's transition to a green economy by assisting the bidder to connect **Green Corps** members

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<sup>1</sup> Number of target beneficiaries will be determined based on consultations with government partners respecting remuneration rates. For the purposes of budgeting, bidders are requested to use 2,000 youth as the planning figure.

<sup>2</sup> Hotspots will include areas of illegal waste disposal, micro-watershed catchments for forest regeneration, soil loss mitigation, and productive landscapes.

<sup>3</sup> As a guide to bidders, the GoM regulations for national minimum wage is US\$66/month (\$3.3/day) for unskilled labour. MWK50,000/month x 2,000 youth x 4 months = MWK400m (US\$529,100). Remuneration may be aligned with the National Youth service, a new initiative announced by the President of Malawi in early September 2020, and in accordance with UNDP Guidance Note on Cash-Based Interventions. Rates should be set to avoid labour market distortion and will be aligned with market rates for social protection beneficiaries.

with a growing network of environmental organizations and green businesses being supported by UNDP's Malawi Innovation Challenge Fund ([www.micf.mw](http://www.micf.mw)), the Malawi Growth Accelerator ([www.growmalawi.com](http://www.growmalawi.com)), and the new *Zanchito* entrepreneurship, vocational training and business incubation initiative starting in 2021 with co-finance from the EU<sup>4</sup>.

- 7 Following confirmation of the hotspots to be prioritized under existing frameworks<sup>5</sup>, cohorts of youth adjacent to these areas will be employed by the service provider on a staggered basis for deployment upon induction into the **Malawi Green Corps**<sup>6</sup>, setting the foundation for phased expansion to 2,000 youth, based on lessons learned from the initial cohorts supported under this national initiative. Green Corps candidates will acquire employment experience, develop their network with national environmental organizations, benefit from access to peer learning through online platforms to share experiences, develop new skills in environmental restoration through mentoring by government and non-government technical experts on ecosystem restoration.
- 8 The following are four key outputs expected to be delivered by the bidder:

***Output 1: Malawi Green Corps Launched***

UNDP will sign partnership agreements with the Government of Malawi and the selected service provider for delivery of core objectives, including: identification and rehabilitation of environmental hotspots aligned to existing national priorities on watershed, forest and landscape restoration; confirmation of roles and responsibilities for district and community engagement; accountability and tracking system for salary payments (linked to national ID card); design and dissemination of online mentor and peer platform (to be co-supported by UNDP Acceleration Lab); M&E framework for measuring biophysical improvements in rehabilitated areas; and outreach and branding plan.

***Output 2: Recruitment and Mobilization of Green Corps Cohorts***

Recruitment of youth will prioritize localizing economic benefits to host communities and districts, with preference to engaging workers living adjacent hotspot areas. Leveraging UNDP's partnership with Malawi's National Registration Bureau (NRB), biometric national ID cards will be used by the service provider to validate personnel and ensure transparency of labour inputs and remuneration. Recruitment guidelines will be finalized by the service provider in consultation with UNDP and GoM, incorporating gender, disability and income-poverty considerations. Consistent application of health and safety protocols, including those for COVID-19 as well as protection safeguards for vulnerable people, will be adhered to by all partners. The service providers must include personnel protective equipment (PPEs) as part of its procurement plan.

***Output 3: Restoration of Environmental Hotspots***

Up to 5,000ha of degraded land will be restored by the **Malawi Green Corps**, including through clean-up of illegal dump sites containing non-hazardous waste<sup>7</sup>. Recyclable materials will be

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<sup>4</sup> Linkages will also be made between the MGC and UNDP's partnership with UNCDF to create a Malawi window under the Build Fund to support entrepreneurs, see <https://www.uncdf.org/article/5305/the-build-fund>.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Malawi's National Resilience Strategy, National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy, and Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Soil Loss Mitigation Plan.

<sup>6</sup> Targeting of MGC members will rely on eligibility criteria for the National Social Support Programme (MNNSP) and will be vetted by UNDP and MFNR.

<sup>7</sup> Corps members will be linked by UNDP with community recycling and composting groups established with financial assistance from the Government of Japan and other partners, with a view to promoting revenue generation. Pre-screening of waste sites will be done by qualified technicians provided by the service provider, with health and safety equipment provided to MGC and other personnel by the bidder.

diverted from the waste stream for repurposing, recycling and/or sale, providing further job and income generation opportunities. Afforestation and reforestation of degraded sites will focus on vulnerable watersheds and maximize use of fast-growing indigenous species of trees, shrubs and grasses suitable to the sites, with linkages to ongoing integrated watershed management and land restoration initiatives being delivered through government and development partners, including ecosystem-based adaptation initiatives financed through the GEF. For example, **Green Corps** members may work in similar locations to participants in the national social protection programme to ensure that restoration efforts are complementary, and may link to lake and river basin interventions under the existing Transformational Action for Resilience in Malawi (TRANSFORM) initiative.

#### **Output 4: Youth Skills Development and Peer Learning**

In parallel with Output 3, and through technical partners such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests, the partnership will ensure members of the **Malawi Green Corps** will benefit from peer learning, transfer of employable skills, and opportunities for youth engagement in environmental networks and coalitions. Members of the corps will also receive training in social accountability, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and civic engagement in order to take advantage of opportunities from the bidder and/or other available training. Gender mainstreaming will also feature prominently by offering equal opportunities to young women and men to join the Green Corps, while also delivering protection and gender equality training including on SGBV and HIV/AIDS, to all members. While the CO has experience with each of these organizations, a RFP will be released to inform the final selection of service providers and performance milestones. Outcome 4 will also identify opportunities to build the skills of youths so that they are able to develop and pursue nature-based businesses, including through grant applications to the new Zanchito initiative starting in 2021. This approach will expand the focus beyond employability to green business development. The bidder will collaborate with UNDP and the Zanchito initiative to promote *access* to skills development and entrepreneurship training.

- 9 A phased approach will be adopted for the **Malawi Green Corps**, with progressively higher level of skills development and youth ambition being linked to more diverse employment opportunities. Upon successful *graduation* from the Green Corps, members can elect to access through UNDP tailored trainings to support them to initiate green MSME start-ups, with preferential access to finance and/or technologies to facilitate revenue and business development. Subsequent phases will focus on sustainability of the corps through the state budget, and the long-term management of a cohort of MGC graduates who are willing to mentor newly inducted youth. In parallel, the CO will support government partners to develop a long-term green jobs strategy for youth. The bidder is required to outline in the methodology its approach to phasing of this initiative.

#### **Proposed Management Arrangements**

- 10 In light of the need to launch the initiative in the short-term to take advantage of the 2020/2021 rainy season, delivery of this Output under TRANSFORM is proposed under the UNDP *Direct Implementation Modality (DIM)*, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources<sup>8</sup>. A technical steering committee and working groups will be established to structure the **Malawi Green Corps** in line with the new National Youth Service initiative recently announced by the President of Malawi, as well as the National Youth Forest Landscape Restoration Programme, as any

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<sup>8</sup> Upon confirmation by the GoM of the institutional home for the Green Corps, the CO will sign a longer-term partnership agreement.

other platform as guided by MFNR. Partnership agreements with implementing partners will outline outputs, activities, performance milestones, timetable, division of roles and responsibilities, recruitment guidelines, fiduciary standards, requirements for narrative and financial reporting, participant surveys to gauge impact, and monitoring and evaluation procedures.

- 11 Programme activities and deliverables will be detailed in an implementation plan, with timelines to facilitate tracking and measure progress of the project. The workplan, to be negotiated and validated by government partners, will also ensure that the project remains within its prescribed scope, cost and timetable.
- 12 Aligned to delivery needs, the project will draw on national UN volunteers where additional human resources may be required for overall management of the programme. The UNV system ensures access to short-term skilled personnel to support implementation. Risk logs will be used to monitor mitigation measures and corrective actions to address challenges. A full social and environmental screening, including gender analysis and action plan will be commissioned, together with a programmatic environmental management plan, to ensure that this initiative does not contribute to deleterious social effects or unintended impacts on ecosystems. While this project is anticipated to be delivered over 18 months, its objective is to serve as the foundation for a permanent government-led programme for youth employment focused on ecosystem restoration bolstered by community engagement and stewardship of restored sites.
- 13 To ensure the sustainability of the Malawi Green Corps, UNDP will prioritize long-term alignment with the Malawi Youth Forest Landscape Restoration Programme (MYFRP), an initiative historically funded directly by the state budget prior to the COVID-19 crisis which has severely constrained Malawi's fiscal space for environmental action and job creation. Through the MGC, UNDP will strengthen management, operations and delivery of results for long-term ecosystem restoration and green jobs, with eventual transition of the MYFRP into the MGC to allow for a broader range of youth environmental engagement.

## Partnerships

- 14 The UNDP Country Office (CO) has long-standing partnerships with government counterparts and other development partners in the areas of youth employment, ecosystem management and local governance. By building on these partnerships, the creation of the **Malawi Green Corps** represents an opportunity for UNDP to assist Malawi to transition towards new employment pathways focused on the creation of youth-centric green jobs.
- 15 Engaging with the Government of Malawi, specifically the Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour, and targeted districts and city councils, UNDP will provide technical assistance to define the overall structure and organizational design of the **Malawi Green Corps**, with ambition toward eventual national integration as part of Malawi's National Youth Service and the revitalized MYFRP to be supported as part of this initiative.
- 16 The partnership landscape for this initiative provides opportunities for targeted engagement with organizations and initiatives such as UNV, JPO, technical partners such as JICA, GIZ, and volunteer groups such as the Malawi chapter of Corps Africa (<https://www.corpsafrica.org>).

17 Longer term, and as part of ongoing work by UNDP Malawi to promote a green recovery and economy, the Malawi Green Corps will encourage government, UN, and other partners to converge around a national strategy for green jobs. To this end, UNDP is already exploring with ILO and other UN partners the scope for green jobs as part of the broader UN Malawi Common Platform for Climate Action under development in Malawi.

### Complementarity with other Programmes for Green Recovery for COVID-19

18 Aligned to the commitment by Malawi’s new national government to prioritize job creation, the President of Malawi will be invited to launch the Malawi Green Corps, together with Ambassadors and high-level officials. By catalyzing finance from UNDP’s Rapid Finance Facility, UNDP will work with national partners to mobilize additional resources to scale-up the Malawi Green Corps by demonstrating quick results, sound management and financial oversight, empowerment of youth, and lasting environmental restoration through district and community stewardship of rehabilitated sites. Promotion of job creation and environmental restoration in Malawi are thematic priorities for several development partners, all of whom have been targeted for resource mobilization, e.g., Royal Norwegian Embassy, EU, Germany, Japan, and the FCDO. In October, the **Malawi Green Corps** was highlighted by UNDP and the Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources to the UK Minister for Africa during his trip to Malawi. This initiative represents an opportunity for the UK in its capacity as chair of COP26, for Malawi as chair of the LDC Group, and as partners in the Coalition for Climate Resilient Investment and the Adaptation and Resilience group, for UNDP to position the **Malawi Green Corps** as a key announceable for these partners at COP26. Additionally, the initiative will link to the UNDP investment mapping as part of the INFF to explore financing options for long-term sustainability.

19 The following table outlines resource mobilization progress to date:

Funding source	Amount	Purpose of / period covered by Funding
UNDP TRAC	\$1,500,000	Partnership agreements, incl. remuneration of Malawi Green Corps (MGC) members, procurement of goods and materials (e.g., seedlings, equipment), travel, communications, outreach
Government of Malawi	TBC	Steering Committee and sub-committee meetings; oversight and coordination
Government of Japan (Japan Innovation Challenge)	\$95,000	Clean-up of illegal waste sites by MGC members and innovative public engagement on waste management.
UNAIDS (UBRAF) Malawi Country Envelope for 2020	\$59,700	To support “Inclusion of SRHR/GBV/HIV and AIDS in the national Contingency and Humanitarian Response Plan”. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration of SRHR, GBV, TB and HIV and AIDS in emergency response</li> <li>Guidelines for inclusion of SRHR, GBV, TB, HIV and AIDS in the Humanitarian Response Plan</li> </ul>

### Risk Mitigation

*Risk 1:* Employment demand among youth exceeds available resources, leading to dissatisfaction of youth and criticism of government and partners.

*Mitigation:* Targeted selection of hotspot areas for rehabilitation to pre-determine recruitment needs and strong management of the recruitment exercise. Recruitment guidelines will outline eligibility criteria for Malawi Green Corps, remuneration rates, and terms of employment, ensuring transparency and public awareness of the initial scope of the initiative. Creating employment opportunities for women, persons with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, or other vulnerabilities will be prioritized, with measures in place to ensure a safe working environment. Regular engagement and open communication with MGC cadre to manage expectations, problem solve, and promote continued support for the importance of the MGC to green jobs, environmental restoration, and youth civic engagement.

*Risk 2:* Lack of equipment, nursery materials, and/or delivery of poor-quality rehabilitation services.

*Mitigation:* Seedlings will be sourced in proximity to rehabilitation sites from pre-existing nurseries to reduce transport and maintenance costs (while stimulated local markets); indigenous species suitable to micro-climates will be selected; technical partners will formulate detailed site rehabilitation plans, protocols for adherence by MGC members (e.g., spacing of saplings and seedlings, safety procedures, maintenance, proper waste disposal); UNDP will undertake timely and direct procurement of goods and equipment (e.g., protective clothing, gloves, shovels) for use by MGC cadres.

*Risk 3:* Poor adherence to COVID-19 prevention guidelines.

*Mitigation:* UNDP delivery partners, as part of signing partnership agreements, will commit to observing Government of Malawi and UN health and safety protocols to mitigate the risk of COVID-19. UNDP will conduct regular spot-checks to ensure adherence to guidelines and will provide masks, sanitizers and other safety equipment, including through existing support to local manufacturers of PPEs. Physical distancing will be observed at all times, including during outdoor work by MGC members. Training and awareness raising on COVID-19 prevention will be delivered by Ministry of Health and WHO personnel on a regular basis to each MGC cohort group.



BUDGET / WORKPLAN

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	PLANNED ACTIVITIES <i>List all activities including M&amp;E to be undertaken during the year towards stated CP outputs</i>	TIMEFRAME									RESPONSIBLE PARTY	PLANNED BUDGET		
		2020		2021				2022				Source of Funds	Budget Description	Amount
			Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3				
Output 1. Launch Malawi Green Corps	<p>1. Finalize MOU with GoM outlining roles &amp; responsibilities; approach; target sites; M&amp;E plan; remuneration; safeguards; online learning platform; and governance arrangements.</p> <p>2. Procurement of MGC management agent, and UNV support.</p> <p>3. finalization of partnership agreement with executing agents</p>		x								GoM / UNDP	UNDP	Outreach & consultation; communications.	\$40,000
Output 2. Recruitment and Mobilization of Green Corps Cohorts	<p>1. Coding of online learning platform by UNDP/NRIS team, linked to national ID.</p> <p>2. Finalization of recruitment guidelines and engagement of HR partners</p> <p>3. Verification of MRC roster</p> <p>4. Procurement of PPE, equipment, inputs</p>		x	x	x	x	x				Service Provider	UNDP	Recruitment drive; digitization platform; remuneration for MGC youth	\$1,000,000
Output 3. Restoration of Environmental Hotspots	<p>1. Delineate bill of quantities for distribution of youth, supervisors, equipment and inputs to restoration sites.</p> <p>2. Quality assurance of restoration</p> <p>3. M&amp;E oversight and reporting</p>			x	x	x	x	x	x		Service Provider	UNDP & Gov't of Japan	Procurement of equipment, goods and supplies (incl. COVID-19 PPEs); travel; M&E	\$400,000



Output 4. Youth Skills Development and Peer Learning	<p>1. Delivery of skills training and green business incubation</p> <p>2. Identification and support to business opportunities for waste diversion and recycling, including through existing government and UN programmes.</p> <p>3. Delivery of safeguard training (SRH, harassment)</p>		x	x	x	x									Service Provider	UNDP	IEC materials; outreach; trainers; travel.	\$150,000
																	Total:	\$1,590,000

## RESULTS FRAMEWORK

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS <sup>9</sup>	BASELINE		MILESTONES AND TARGETS								
		Value	Year	2020	2021				2022			
				Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	
Output 1. Launch Malawi Green Corps	1.1 Partnership agreements, outlining deliverables and roles and responsibilities, agreed and signed;	0	2020	2								
	1.2. Digital MGC online platform, linked to national ID, fully functional.	0	2020		1							
	1.3 Hotspot areas selected.	0	2020		10	10	15	15	15	15	15	
	1.4 Communications plans and outreach strategy finalized.	0	2020									
Output 2. Recruitment and Mobilization of Green Corps Cohorts	2.1 (cumulative) number of eligible youth recruited in three quarterly cohorts of MGC (disaggregated by gender)	0	2020		300 (150 females; 150 males)	600 (300 females; 300 males)	900 (450 females; 450 males)	1200 (600 females; 600 males)	1500 (750 females; 750 males)	1800 (900 females; 900 males)	2,000 (1,000 females; 1,000 males)	
	2.2 Emergency employment assists HHs to meet essential consumption needs during COVID-19 response. Disaggregated by sex (measured by MVAC food insecurity)	0	2020			4,000	4,000	2,000				
Output 3: Restoration of Environmental Hotspots	3.1 Up to 100 illegal waste sites cleaned	0	2020	50	20	20	10					
	3.2 Cumulative number of ha of degraded land afforested/reforested (incl. mitigation of soil erosion)	0	2020		250	500	750	1250	1500	1750	2,000	
	3.3 % Improvement in regeneration of vegetative cover in targeted watersheds (through remote sensing data)	0	2020									30%
Output 4: Youth Skills Development and Peer Learning	4.1 High client satisfaction with MGC participation (% of total survey respondents)	0	2020									80%
	4.2 Adoption of behavioral changes among youth (% of total survey pop.)	0	2020									70%

MGC is aligned to the UNDP COVID-19 Integrated Response (Social and Economic Impact Needs Assessment and Response), and the Green Economy focus of UNDP's COVID-19 Offer: Beyond Recovery.

<sup>9</sup> It is recommended that projects use output indicators from the Strategic Plan IRRF COVID-19 indicators, as relevant. Due to the nature of the COVID-19 response work, quarterly milestones and targets are recommended. Monitoring will be conducted using the COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard. Reporting will be streamlined into the COVID-19 reporting exercise (mini-ROAR and COVID-19 indicators.) No separate reporting will be required for rapid financing facility.