Decades of WASH investments in Malawi have resulted in significant progress in enhancing access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene. From 2010 to 2015, access to improved water sources in the country increased from 79.7 percent to 87.2 percent. Access to improved sanitation facilities rose from 8.2 percent to 51.8 percent, and open defecation rates dropped from 15.7 percent in 2000 to 6.5 percent in 2020. The Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) estimated that 70 percent of Malawi’s population had access to basic water services, but this rate masks significant disparity between urban and rural households. While 86 percent of urban households have access to basic water services, only 67 percent of rural households have the same level of access. Low rural access rates have a negative impact on women and girls in particular; women and girls in Malawi are over ten times more likely to be responsible for water collection than men and boys. The average of 55 minutes spent per day on water collection in Malawi is among the highest time burdens measured globally, robbing women and girls of valuable time for educational, vocational, household, or recreational activities. The JMP reported that only 24 percent of households had access to safely managed sanitation. Furthermore, only 8 percent of households have a handwashing facility with soap and water at home. In HCFs, the situation is also concerning. A significant number (24 percent) of these facilities lack access to piped water from an improved source, and 9 percent lack any latrine facilities. Moreover, 32 percent of these facilities lack functional hand hygiene facilities at either point of care or toilets, significantly compromising hygiene standards and infection prevention and control.

Improving access to WASH is crucial for the well-being, economic growth, and overall health of Malawi’s population. Cholera remains endemic in the country, and localized outbreaks occur annually. Malawi’s worst cholera outbreak began in March 2022, spawned by Tropical Storms Ana and Gombe, which destroyed WASH infrastructure and displaced around 200,000 people. The outbreak has persisted through the rainy season of 2023, with over 58,000 cases and 1,700 deaths recorded by July 2023. Addressing water scarcity and improving WASH infrastructure access remains critical to stemming the spread of disease and improving health and nutrition outcomes.

1 Sources that have the potential to deliver safe water by nature of their design and construction include piped water, boreholes or tubewells, protected dug wells, protected springs, rainwater, and packaged or delivered water.

2 Drinking water from an improved source, provided collection time is not more than 30 minutes for a roundtrip including queuing.

3 Use of improved facilities that are not shared with other households and where excreta are safely disposed of in situ or removed and treated offsite.
Malawi has one of the lowest levels of water storage infrastructure in the region, which combined with inadequate rainfall, results in water scarcity for roughly 1.5 million people, mainly in central and southern Malawi. Water-reliant sectors contribute up to 35 percent of Malawi’s gross domestic product (GDP), making it clear that investment in water infrastructure and water resources management solutions is essential to the country’s economic growth. Malawi experiences an annual loss of $57 million or 1.1 percent of its national GDP, which can be attributed to health-related expenses and reduced productivity.

As the GoM makes progress toward the Sustainable Development Goal targets, it will face the following challenges:

**Macroeconomic crisis:** The above-described WASH context is better understood in light of Malawi’s fiscal challenges. Malawi has one of the highest poverty rates in sub-Saharan Africa, with 73 percent of the population living on $1.90 or less per day. Since 2019, Malawi has faced several economic setbacks, including a significant slowdown in the economy from 5.7 percent in 2019 to 1.7 percent in 2020. In addition, the country has been grappling with a severe foreign exchange shortage, which has resulted in a 25 percent currency devaluation in 2022 and a 30 percent rise in the cost of basic food items between 2022–2023. Declining purchasing power and rapid population growth will exacerbate Malawi’s economic and food security challenges. To help Malawi manage its balance-of-payments needs and counter the effects of food shortages, the International Monetary Fund approved $88.3 million in emergency financing support in November 2022.

**Weak institutional capacity to meet growing demands for WASH services:** According to JMP trends over the last 17 years, the rate of access to basic WASH services has struggled to keep up with Malawi’s growing population, which is expected to increase from roughly 20 million in 2021 to 30 million in 2035. The GoM has many policies and strategies which aim to improve water infrastructure and sanitation, such as the Water Resources Act, National Water Policy, and National Sanitation policies. However, it has struggled to implement them effectively. Most donor and government investments have focused on capital expenditures, with limited funds allocated for operation and maintenance (O&M); as a result, 30 percent of water systems in the country are non-functional. Additionally, there is insufficient emphasis placed on building human and financial resources.

**Insufficient investment, particularly for rural WASH:** Roughly 80 percent of WASH funding in Malawi comes from donors, with a majority reserved for urban water infrastructure development. According to a WASH public expenditure review (PER) conducted in 2020, from 2014–2018, the GoM spent a mere 0.39 percent of its total government expenditures and less than 0.1 percent of its GDP on WASH. The water subsector accounted for 65 percent of the expenditure, with 80 percent going toward capital expenses, while 35 percent was allocated to sanitation and hygiene initiatives. To achieve 98 percent access to improved water supply and 90 percent access to improved sanitation by 2030, an estimated $140 million per year is required between 2015 and 2030. However, funding for the WASH sector in 2020 amounted to only $42 million, approximately 30 percent of the required amount. Private sector participation and financing in the WASH sector is still in its early stages in Malawi.

**Vulnerability to natural disasters:** According to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, Malawi is the 25th most vulnerable country to climate change out of 181 countries studied. However, the country ranks 160th in its readiness to respond to the impacts of climate change. Malawi has experienced at least 19 major floods, seven droughts, and repeated cyclones over the past five decades, leading to widespread displacement, food insecurity, and damage to infrastructure. According to the World Bank, Cyclone Idai destroyed roughly $3.8 million worth of WASH infrastructure in 2019 alone. Most recently, in March 2023, Cyclone Freddy resulted in nearly 700 deaths, displaced approximately 200,000 people, and affected half a million people, including people who lost access to WASH facilities in ten districts, further reducing the number of people with access to improved water and sanitation. Furthermore, due to climate change, Malawi is experiencing rising temperatures, more frequent drought periods, and increasingly short rainy seasons with more rain concentrated in single-day events. These water-related climate shocks will continue to have a significant impact on Malawi’s ability to deliver WASH services, particularly for sanitation. Fifty-five percent of sanitation facilities are simple pit latrines, which can easily overflow or collapse during floods and storms. Based on economic modeling, it is estimated that the direct costs of climate change impacts amount to a loss of at least 5 percent of Malawi’s GDP every year.
Malawi has a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework for water security, sanitation, and hygiene. Three critical documents that guide Malawi’s overall development include the National Resilience Strategy 2018–2030, the Malawi Vision 2063 and the Malawi First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1), the last of which provides the vision for the WASH sector and defines specific targets to be achieved by 2030:

- Increasing the population using safely managed drinking water services from 87 percent to 100 percent;
- Increasing the population using improved sanitation services from 52 percent to 65 percent; and
- Reducing the percentage of population reporting practicing open defecation from 6 percent to 0 percent.

Historically, water supply in Malawi was overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Water Development, while sanitation and hygiene fell under the purview of the Ministry of Health. However, in February 2022, the Ministry of Water and Sanitation was established with the mandate of overseeing all aspects of water management. Nonetheless, sanitation and hygiene remain under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Moreover, the National Water Resources Authority was established in 2018 with the goal to develop, administer, manage, and protect water resources to ensure the sustainable, effective, and efficient provision of water for all its intended uses. The Water Resources Act of 2013 provides guidelines for the administration, regulation, and management of water resources, while the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Health Care Facilities Roadmap of 2022 outlines key strategic actions for investments in WASH. These documents align stakeholders and investments around a common vision, investing in infrastructure and capacity building and developing strong monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress. To achieve these goals, the government will require significant technical and financial assistance from donors.

### USAID APPROACH AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The USAID/Malawi HPC plan represents a whole of Mission approach to achieving the goals set forth in the GWS. These activities include improving access to safe drinking water, promoting sustainable sanitation practices, and building the capacity of local institutions and communities to manage water resources in a resilient and sustainable manner. These activities are funded by development assistance, health, and humanitarian assistance funds and include:

- **Health**: Momentum 1 (Tiyeni), Momentum 2 (Tikweze Umoyo), and the Let Them Grow Healthy (Akule ndi Thanzi) activities;
- **Environment and Economic Growth**: Titukulane (Resilience Food Security Activity [RFSA]), Modern Cooking for Healthy Forests, and Growth Poles, a Feed the Future activity;
- **Education**: Secondary Education Expansion for Development (SEED) activity; and
- **Governance**: Governance for Solutions Activity (GfS) and Parliamentary Support Program
- United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) grant to support cholera-affected areas with water supply and infection prevention control measures in HCFs.

- UNICEF grant to provide coordination at the district level with the government and other partners, support risk communication and community engagement, and rehabilitate non-functional water supply facilities in cholera-affected areas.

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iv Water Resources Management (WRM) is the process of planning, developing, and managing water resources, in terms of water quantity and quality, within and across water uses for the benefit of humans and ecosystems. WRM includes the institutions, infrastructure, incentives, and information systems that support and guide water management and uses.
In Malawi, sustainability is a key challenge for the WASH sector, as illustrated by high rates of non-functioning water systems, simple pit latrines that easily overflow or collapse during floods and storms, and low availability of handwashing facilities in homes and health care settings. Despite this, the PER revealed that households account for nearly 60 percent of sector financing, which presents an opportunity for USAID/Malawi’s activities to influence household decision-making to invest in WASH products and services. USAID/Malawi activities that contribute to SO2 include the MOMENTUM activities, UNICEF grants, Akule ndi Thanzi, and the GfS Activity.

Intermediate Results (IRs):

IR 2.1 Increase area-wide access to safe, equitable, and affordable sanitation services: To achieve area-wide access to sanitation services, USAID/Malawi will collaborate with the private sector to provide affordable and aspirational sanitation and hygiene products for households, with inclusive designs for all household members, including women, children, and those with disabilities. USAID/Malawi activities will equip WASH entrepreneurs with the necessary business development resources to operate and sustain viable sanitation businesses, including...
training and technical assistance to develop and implement effective business plans, marketing strategies, and financial management. In addition, women and youth will be encouraged to establish sanitation and hygiene enterprises as income-generating activities. USAID/Malawi will employ the experiences gained from Titukulane and global initiatives undertaken by USAID for market-based sanitation to help move households up the sanitation ladder.

**IR 2.2 Increase access to equitable, safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water services:** To improve community-based management of water services in Malawi, USAID/Malawi will focus on building capacity and engagement efforts at multiple levels. This will involve strengthening the ability of the District Water Development Offices and the District Coordination Teams to implement the national standards and guidelines for water supply infrastructure development and maintenance. At the community level, USAID/Malawi will support the formulation and training of Water Point Committees on several aspects, including gender and other environmental and social safeguard issues, Village Development Committees, and Area Development Committees responsible for the day-to-day management of water points on the lifecycle approach to O&M. The inclusion of women and youth will be a key consideration in water point management. The Mission will also support these committees to develop resource mobilization plans to ensure adequate funds are available for repairs when needed. To build toward rural water service professionalization, USAID/Malawi will also support developing policies for, piloting, and assessing rural water professionalization models that concentrate water point management, including O&M, in service providers that serve all water points within a broad service area. In addition to the aforementioned approaches, USAID/Malawi will also leverage the Feed the Future Growth Poles Activity to collaborate with the GoM and communities to identify how private sector infrastructure can be leveraged or expanded through public-private partnerships, corporate social responsibility, corporate foundations, or other mechanisms to extend the reach of services, including water and sanitation, to surrounding communities.

**IR 2.3 Improve performance and climate resilience of water and sanitation service providers:** In addition to focusing on WASH in communities, USAID/Malawi will also strengthen WASH in institutions through the Momentum 1 (Tiyeni) and Momentum 2 (Tikweze Umoyo) activities and in secondary schools through the SEED activity. Within HCFs, the Mission will prioritize the rehabilitation or upgrade of existing WASH and waste management facilities while also training District Health Officials on operation and maintenance and life cycle cost analysis and supporting them to develop maintenance plans. Health care staff will receive training on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) assessments, developing improvement plans and conducting routine monitoring to enhance adherence to IPC standards and protocols. At the school level, the Mission will focus on assisting the construction of new satellite secondary schools with fully functioning WASH facilities, including facilities for menstruation management. All institutional latrines will have facilities with access and utilization for people with limited mobility. The School Management Committee will be in charge of organizing and executing regular O&M to ensure sustainability of the infrastructure over the long term.

**IR 2.4 Increase adoption of key hygiene practices:** To complement investments in water and sanitation infrastructure, USAID/Malawi will support the development and scale-up of evidence-based behavior change programming to increase the demand for improved sanitation facilities and consistent practice of hygiene behaviors. Social and behavior change initiatives will promote handwashing with soap, safe disposal of children’s feces, hygienic food preparation and handling, separation of children and animal feces, and menstruation management. In addition, USAID/Malawi will explore non-communication-based approaches to behavior change through introducing nudges or environmental cues to establish consistent handwashing practices. Women, men, and youth will be essential in peer-to-peer transmission of messages.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3**

**Improve Climate-Resilient Conservation and Management of Freshwater Resources and Associated Ecosystems**

Malawi faces the dual challenge of water scarcity and a rapidly growing population. The country’s main water source is groundwater, but increased periods of intense rainfall and resulting high surface run-off have decreased groundwater recharge and surface water body retention. Compounding this issue, 90 percent of Malawi households rely on woody biomass for fuel, which has led to rapid deforestation and watershed degradation. This has contributed to increased siltation of rivers and damage to hydroelectric and water supply infrastructure, such as dams, which are critical to ensuring sustainable access to water for current and future generations in Malawi.
Intermediate Results (IRs):

IR 3.2 Enhance reliability and quality of water resources through watershed management, including protection, restoration, and nature-based solutions: USAID/Malawi recognizes the importance of watershed protection and management in achieving water security. As such, the Mission will support development and humanitarian assistance initiatives that focus on water resources management. The Modern Cooking for Healthy Forests activity will increase the sustainability of forest reserves by reducing the demand for wood fuel and strengthening market systems to provide alternative energy sources. By reducing deforestation, terrestrial and aquatic (e.g., freshwater rivers and lakes) ecosystems, including the Dzalanyama Forest Reserve watershed that serves as the source of water for the Lilongwe Water Board, will be stabilized. Similarly, the Titukulane activity and other initiatives supported by the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) will enhance watershed restoration through nature-based solutions, such as tree planting, to increase water and soil conservation structures and their resilience, improve water filtration, and prevent runoff for sustainable WASH solutions.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4
Anticipate and Reduce Conflict and Fragility Related to Water

Malawi is highly susceptible to droughts and flooding, particularly in the Southern Region. These shocks exacerbate the already poor reliability of water services, leaving the water sources that serve people and livestock inoperative for extended periods. The USAID/Malawi BHA-funded activity, Titukulane RFSA, and Akule ndi Thanzi will address long-term WASH needs for vulnerable populations, while the UNICEF award aims to mitigate the spread of cholera, as detailed below.

Intermediate Results (IRs):

IR 4.1 Strengthen capacity to predict, prepare for, and adapt to shocks affecting water and sanitation systems in fragile settings: Disaster risk management is a shared function of the national and district governments, cutting across multiple sectors. The Mission will work with communities to develop multi-sector resilience plans that include disaster risk scenarios and required adaptations; collaboratively plan and sequence actions to mitigate these risks; and create, finance, and implement strategies to ensure water availability during shocks.

IR 4.2 Address humanitarian WASH needs: In southern Malawi, an area most prone to droughts and flooding, USAID/Malawi and its partners will construct and rehabilitate boreholes to provide vulnerable communities with safe water. In addition, water point committees will be supported to develop water facility management and preventive maintenance plans. This is accompanied by social behavior change campaigns promoting the construction of handwashing facilities and the use of pit latrines.

IR 4.4 Strengthen coherence across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding approaches to water and sanitation programming: Through the WASH cluster coordination structure, USAID/Malawi and its partners across humanitarian and development interventions collaborate on joint work planning, identifying opportunities for integrating interventions and sharing data and knowledge. USAID humanitarian and development partners also participate in district council meetings and proactively identify synergies to facilitate coordination and collaboration at the district level. Additionally, these partners upload their WASH data to the mWater platform to enhance data sharing and coordination.
USAID/Malawi is committed to integrating the GWS Operating Principles throughout its WASH programming. All five WASH activities have a strong government engagement and capacity building focus to **strengthen national and local systems** to catalyze investments to improve the enabling environment for sustainable WASH service provision. Furthermore, the Titukulane RFSA targets the poorest communities with the aim of meeting the needs of marginalized or underserved people and communities and those in vulnerable situations. The RFSA leverages **data and continuous learning** through its Refine and Implement phase of activity development, and USAID/Malawi also shares WASH data through the WASH cluster to improve coordination for WASH service provision in shock-affected communities. Given Malawi’s high susceptibility to weather-related shocks, **resilience** is incorporated into all activity design and implementation levels.

### MISSION RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The approaches above contribute to USAID/Malawi’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), as detailed below:

**Development Objectives (DOs):**

**DO 1: Public sector is more accountable and effective at national and decentralized levels:** Malawi’s WASH activities help to achieve all three IRs within this DO. By providing feedback mechanisms in the HCFs, WASH activities increase transparency, allowing patients to voice any concerns regarding the quality of WASH services, consequently contributing to the exercise of citizens’ rights and responsibilities (IR 1.1). Furthermore, the WASH activities strengthen the role of District Councils, and the District Water Offices in particular, by improving their ability to deliver WASH services throughout the district and contributing to improving public sector capacity to deliver quality services (IR 1.2) and strengthening the enabling environment for policies and reforms (IR 1.3).

**DO 2: Private sector increases inclusive and sustainable wealth generation:** USAID/Malawi’s WASH activities contribute to DO3 by emphasizing private sector engagement in the WASH sector, which directly benefits all three IRs. Through efforts to strengthen the marketability and business acumen of small sanitation enterprises, Malawi is able to increase its firms’ economic competitiveness (IR 3.2). Furthermore, the improvement and strengthening of the entire supply chain of sanitation products promotes an enabling environment for wealth creation (IR 3.3), ultimately contributing toward the increased resilience of people, households, communities, and systems in reducing vulnerabilities (IR 3.1).
KEY RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

COVID-19 and other outbreaks: Malawi faces recurrent challenges related to infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19. The pandemic has had a profound impact on the country and contributed to a slow down in the economy from 5.7 percent in 2019 to 1.7 percent in 2020. In addition, in February 2022, Malawi recently experienced an outbreak of wild poliovirus type 1 in February 2022, and as of April 2023, the country was facing its worst cholera outbreak in two decades, beginning in March 2022. These frequent and prolonged outbreaks place a significant burden on both the government and households, who must respond with limited resources and strained systems. USAID/Malawi will address the risk of outbreaks through its significant investments in strengthening WASH HCF to increase availability of water and sanitation as well as a strong emphasis on IPC.

Climate change and food insecurity: Climate change has a direct impact on WASH in Malawi. However, the indirect impact on WASH is also considerable. For instance, repeated droughts, cyclones, and flooding have a detrimental effect on smallholder farmers who rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification partnership, in February 2023, an estimated 5.4 million people in Malawi face moderate or severe chronic food insecurity, which, combined with the 4.4 million people facing mild food insecurity, represents over half the country’s population. The cumulative effect of dealing with health emergencies and chronic food insecurity in Malawi is that both the government and households have limited resources and are less willing to invest in WASH products and services. The focus of limited funds is often directed at immediate survival needs, leading to the neglect of long-term investments in WASH infrastructure and services. This situation results in poor WASH outcomes and reinforces the vicious cycle of poor health and poverty. To mitigate the impacts of climate change, USAID/Malawi will undertake climate vulnerability assessments in order to determine the specific climate risks and vulnerabilities associated with the infrastructure sites and their surrounding areas. Additionally, hydrogeological evaluation will be conducted for water sources to determine the aquifer characteristics, and recharge mechanisms to make existing infrastructure more resilient to climate impacts. In relation to anticipated and potential environmental risks which could emanate from WASH investments and activities, USAID/Malawi will undertake these activities in compliance with the USAID Environmental Procedures and national environmental requirements to mitigate environmental risks and to ensure and achieve environmentally sound design and management (ESDM) of activities.

BUDGET

This plan is costed based on prior year resources still available for programming, the FY 2022 estimated allocation of $6 million, and the FY 2022 President’s Budget Request of $4 million.

\[\text{v The term “USAID Environmental Procedures” often refers narrowly to 22 CFR 216; here the term collectively refers to the regulation, other FFA requirements, and the procedures and directives contained in the ADS.}\]
EXPECTED RESULTS

From 2023 to 2027, USAID/Malawi activities are estimated to help:

- 120,000 people gain access to basic water services
- 80,000 people gain access to basic sanitation services
- 134 institutions (schools and HCFs) gain access to basic water services
- 164 institutions (schools and HCFs) gain access to basic sanitation services
- Five WASH institutions strengthen capacity

Endnotes

1. DHS Program, *Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS)*, 2015–16
13. Center for Research Computing at the University of Notre Dame, *Malawi*.