



Lena Lungu, left, a National UN Volunteer with UNDP Malawi, responding to questions on the 'Buy Malawi' initiative at Lilongwe Trade Fair in July, 2018

UN Volunteer in Malawi fights poverty by promoting local products

As the world commemorated October 17th as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, key 'Buy Malawi' strategy stakeholders recognized the initiative as pivotal in tackling poverty in Malawi. Like most developing countries, a large proportion of the population generally prefer imported products and services to local ones. The 'Buy Malawi' strategy, an initiative by the Government of Malawi supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is encouraging local enterprises and people resident in Malawi to increase production and consumption of local goods and services to support the country's economic growth. One UN Volunteer, Lena Lungu, is actively supporting the communications, information and technology infrastructure behind this national initiative.

For the last four months, Lena Lungu has been helping implement the marketing and communications strategy that has become a lifeline of the 'Buy Malawi' initiative. She particularly developed key messages that target the populace to change their perception towards locally produced products and services and get private sector buy-in and support for success of the

strategy.

Within the four months of her assignment, she has particularly received positive feedback from the private sector. Out of the 166 companies she has reached out to, 25 are now full members of the initiative and 27 are in the process of completing their application. Local consumers, on the other hand, are now approaching the secretariat, not only with their concerns on quality, but also with suggestions of products that they would like to be produced and sold locally.

According to Lena, the 'Buy Malawi' initiative is critical if Malawi is to achieve Sustainable Development Goal number 8 of promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all and number 9 of building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation.

This year's International Day for the Eradication of Poverty was commemorated under the theme: *“Coming together with those furthest behind to build an inclusive world of universal respect for human rights and dignity”*. During an event organized by Malawi's Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism to mark the Day, the UNDP Resident Representative a.i. Claire Medina commended the strides taken so far in mobilising the private sector to ensure that quality products and services are produced for local and international consumption. She said such efforts have the potential of developing a thriving economy which will translate into the creation of more jobs.

“Recent targeted initiatives for companies on the use of the gazetted *'Buy Malawian, Build Malawi'* logo as a mark of quality, and supermarkets' involvement in stocking Malawian products, are raising hope for the effective implementation of the strategy,” said Medina. “Eradicating poverty requires that all sectors work together in creating possibilities for every citizen,” she said.

Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI)

President, Prince Kapondamgaga, said effective implementation of the 'Buy Malawi' strategy will require that both public and private sectors move in one direction.

“We are partners in development. Government alone cannot eradicate poverty just as the private sector can't work alone. It is important that together we ensure that the strategy is effectively implemented,” said Kapondamgaga who also chairs the BMS steering committee.

Malawi's Director of SMEs and Registrar of Cooperatives, Ministry of Industry, Trade & Tourism, Mr. Wiskes Nkombezi concurred, emphasizing that the Malawian government will continue providing a conducive environment for the private sector to thrive and create more jobs and help in reducing poverty in Malawi.

“There is no way Malawi will reduce poverty if many people cannot find employment. Employment can be created if we support and consume locally produced goods and services. The 'Buy Malawi' strategy is one way of ensuring that the country achieves self-sustenance which is key to poverty reduction,” said Mr. Nkombezi.

For Lena, such sentiments by key stakeholders are a vindication for her efforts and faith in the 'Buy Malawi' initiative. She is confident that a market system that promotes local production and consumption will place Malawi on the pathway for poverty alleviation and realization of the country's national vision.

 Sub-Saharan Africa

• buy malawi • buy local • Africa • poverty • Malawi

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 1: No poverty](#), [SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth](#), [SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure](#), [SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production](#)