Program Overview
CARE began working in Malawi in 1998, mainly through partners and focusing on the areas of education and HIV/AIDS. In response to the widespread drought that struck Southern Africa in the early 2000s, CARE Malawi launched a major emergency relief effort to assist thousands of people facing acute food insecurity. As the drought situation receded, CARE expanded its programming to include food and livelihood security, and governance and social accountability.

CARE Malawi provides assistance in food security, nutrition and livelihoods, helping Malawians improve their income generation. One of our major focus areas is the empowerment of women and girls, including working with adolescent girls in rural communities and very poor, female headed-households in the areas of food and nutrition security, education, sexual, maternal and reproductive health. As part of our historic focus on emergency response, we regularly respond to drought and other natural disasters, and assist communities in developing disaster risk reduction strategies and methods to cope with climate change.

Humanitarian Assistance
Malawi is vulnerable to natural disasters including flood, drought, and disease and pest outbreak. Climate change has increased the intensity and frequency of weather-related hazards in Malawi in recent decades, which significantly impacts the lives and livelihoods of women and men, girls and boys. The recent drought, the worst in the region for 35 years, has left more than 40 per cent of Malawians in need of food assistance. Floods are a regular occurrence, affecting more than one million people in 2015, and displacing around 100,000 people in February 2017.

CARE has provided food assistance and distributed seeds to Malawians affected by drought. Our response to the floods in February 2017 included distributing household items such as blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, and kitchen utensils. We also distributed hygiene packs to women and adolescent girls. CARE is also assisting displaced communities in building temporary shelters by providing materials including nails, poles, and tarpaulins.

Food and Nutrition Security
Malawi faces many challenges in moving beyond chronic food insecurity, including high population density, decreasing soil fertility, poor transport links to international markets, high rates of HIV/AIDS, and increasing exposure to climate change in the form of droughts and floods. Around 85 per cent of Malawians are dependent on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. Average per capita income is just over USD1000 a year, and more than 40 per cent of the population were reliant on food assistance at the height of the recent drought.

CARE Malawi is working with farmers to increase the productivity and profitability of their crops, and assisting them with improved agricultural techniques. CARE is working with communities to promote climate smart agriculture including planting of climate resilient crops such as cowpea.
pea and soybean, promoting small scale irrigation, and identifying markets for the crops they produce. To improve the nutrition status of pregnant and lactating women, primary school pupils and children under the age of five, CARE is promoting the preparation and consumption of nutritious foods comprising all food groups. CARE is working with farmers to cultivate highly nutritious crops including soybean, beans, ground nuts and sorghum.

Adolescent Girls Empowerment
In 2015 Malawi had the ninth highest rate of child marriage in the world. Low levels of education, particularly for girls and women, continue to impede development. Malawi’s national literacy rate is 65.8 per cent and female literacy is 59 per cent. Only 29 per cent girls stay in school through their final year of formal primary school education. Girls face significant cultural barriers to education, lack access to textbooks and materials, and have few positive female role models and mentors.

CARE is working with young girls between the ages of 10 and 18 to assist them in making better decisions about their lives. CARE is providing scholarships and mentor programs, as well as training in life skills and reproductive health. Improved facilities including the building of girls’ toilet blocks and housing for female teachers is designed to make for a better and safer environment for girls’ education.

Gender
CARE puts gender at the heart of our programming. Gender inequality remains a major issue in Malawi and the country is ranked 145 out of 188 on the 2015 Gender Development Index.

Community volunteers work to raise awareness on issues such as gender based violence, early marriage, family planning and to ensure women’s participation in decision making. Through village saving groups CARE improves women’s access to adequate and affordable financial services.

While CARE works to empower women, it is never at the exclusion of men. CARE’s work is most successful when men are fully engaged and their involvement leads to sustainable gains. Men and women who belong to more equitable societies are, on average, healthier, more financially secure and better educated.

Inclusive and Accountable Governance
CARE Malawi uses a number of tools to promote inclusive and accountable governance including the Community Score Card (CSC). The CSC was originally developed by CARE Malawi in 2002, as a tool for citizen engagement that enabled Malawians to assess the quality of service delivery in various sectors, and to plan, monitor and evaluate improvements to important services in collaboration with service providers. The CSC can be used to gather feedback from service users and improve communication between communities and service providers.