

## UNODC FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION IN MALAWI PRISONS

*" Prisons are hazardous environments as regards COVID-19*

*The systemic neglect of prisons and other places of detention in many countries has resulted in inadequate resources, management, oversight and accountability mechanisms, including ill equipped personnel and limited linkages to public health systems. Prison overcrowding persists in most countries and constitutes one of the most fundamental obstacles to providing safe and healthy custodial environments in line with fundamental human rights. Cramped accommodation areas, poor hygiene, ventilation and nutrition as well as insufficient health-care services in many prison systems will equally undermine infection control measures and thus significantly increase the risk for infection, amplification and spread of COVID-19" [UNODC Position paper on COVID-19 preparedness and responses in prisons.](#)*

Whereas there is an overall growing concern on the impact of COVID-19 to prisoners many correctional services in Southern Africa Region undertakes flagship initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of inmates. Malawi Prisons Service, for example, is taking action to mitigate the risks of shortage of food in Malawi prisons.

With technical support of UNODC and funding by the Government of Norway, three prison farms in Malawi (Mpyupyu, Kasungu and Chitedze) have cultivated a total of 254 hectares of maize and 28 hectares of legumes. UNODC supported the farms with the agricultural machinery, fertilizers, maize and legume seeds, as well as with chemicals and fuel for operation of the cultivation machinery. It is expected that 1,270 Metric tons of maize will be produced by these farms.



Maize crop at Mpyupyu Prison (February 2020)

To achieve better yields from these farms, the modern agriculture methods were introduced, including the principles of conservation agriculture using the soil rippers and chemical weeding. In addition to improving the food production, the project supports the rehabilitation for prisoners by teaching them modern agriculture methods. Prisoners will be able to apply the new skills after release from prisons and return to their communities.



*Maize harvesting at Mpyupyu Prison, April 2020*

To improve yield productivity and resilience to climate change, the projects set up an irrigation system that will use the underground water through boreholes and the pumps operated with solar energy. The new environmentally friendly irrigation system will allow to produce cash crops that will generate additional income for Malawi Prisons Service. In this regard, a 10-hectare horticulture production plan has been designed for the two main prison farms at Mpyupyu and Kasungu. The investments in the infrastructure and provision of new farming skills ensure project sustainability and ability of Malawi prisons to further sustain the efficient farming practices.



*Kasungu Prison Farm Boreholes*



*Borehole drilling in process at Kasungu Prison*

The harvest amounts to 30% of annual food requirements in Malawi prisons and is expected to mitigate the risks of hunger associated with COVID-19 crisis in prisons. In addition, the agricultural project assists the inmates to learn new skills for better reintegration into labour market after release.