



LIFE CONCERN (LICO)

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

Contact Details

Executive Director

Life Concern Organisation

Off Rumphi Police Road

Next to District Commissioners Office

PO Box 145

Rumphi

Cell: +265 888 555 199

+265 999 948 588

Email: lifeconcernorg@gmail.com

Website: www.licomw.org

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HCMC	Health Centre Management Committee
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HP	Harmful Cultural Practices
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KRAs	Key Result Areas
LICO	Life Concern Organisation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MW2063	Malawi Vision 2063
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
RDDP	Rumphi District Development Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TB	Tuberculosis
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Acknowledgments

Life Concern Organisation (LICO) extends heartfelt appreciation to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan 2026–2030. The successful formulation of this plan was made possible through the active participation, guidance, and commitment of diverse stakeholders at community, district, and national levels.

LICO sincerely thanks the Ministry of Health, District Health Office, Malawi Police Service, Judiciary, and the District Education Office for their valuable insights and technical input throughout the consultation process. We are equally grateful to the Rumphi District Council, traditional and community leaders, faith-based organisations, civil society partners, and the community members whose voices and lived experiences helped shape the direction of this strategy.

Special appreciation goes to the Board of Trustees, management, and staff of LICO for their dedication and teamwork during the review and design of this plan. Your efforts have laid a strong foundation for a more coordinated and impactful response to the health, social, and economic challenges faced by the people of Rumphi and beyond.

Finally, LICO acknowledges the continued support of its development partners and donors for their trust, collaboration, and shared vision of transforming lives and strengthening community resilience.

Foreword

It is with great optimism that I present the Life Concern (LICO) Strategic Plan 2026–2030. This plan marks a renewed commitment to building resilient, inclusive, and empowered communities in Rumphi District and beyond. It is both a continuation of our past achievements and a bold step forward in addressing the emerging challenges that affect the health, education, and livelihoods of the people we serve.

Since its establishment in 2008, LICO has worked tirelessly to respond to critical social and health issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, gender-based violence, and inequality. Through strong partnerships with government institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), and development partners, LICO has contributed meaningfully to the well-being of vulnerable populations, especially women, girls, and children.

This Strategic Plan reaffirms our commitment to advancing the rights, dignity, and potential of every person. It reflects a shared vision developed through a participatory process involving staff, board members, communities, and key stakeholders, and anchored on evidence, inclusiveness, and accountability. By aligning our priorities with the Malawi Vision 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we aim to ensure that our work remains relevant, impactful, and sustainable in an ever-changing world.

The plan's eight Key Result Areas spanning health, education, gender equality, climate resilience, economic empowerment, and institutional strengthening form the backbone of our strategy to achieve long-term transformation. Central to this approach is our belief that true development is achieved when communities are empowered to drive change from within.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Board of Trustees, management and staff, our partners, and the communities who have walked this journey with us. Your dedication, trust, and collaboration continue to inspire the work we do.

As we embark on this next strategic phase, I am confident that, together, we will continue to make a lasting difference, creating healthier, stronger, and more self-reliant communities that reflect the true spirit of sustainable development.



Board Chairperson
Life Concern

Executive Summary

The LICO Strategic Plan 2026–2030 represents a deliberate effort to build upon the strategic successes and organizational learning derived from the 2022–2025 period. It unequivocally reaffirms LICO’s institutional dedication to the holistic empowerment of marginalized and vulnerable populations, primarily within the Rumphi District and extending its reach regionally. This document articulates a clear and actionable framework for advancing crucial development goals, including public health, quality education, gender equity, climate resilience, and economic self-sufficiency, ensuring rigorous fidelity to the precepts of the Malawi Vision 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Established in 2008, LICO is a legally registered non-governmental organization operating under the Malawi Trustee Incorporation Act (Certificate TR/INC 4822) and is professionally affiliated with the NGO Board of Malawi and CONGOMA. The organisation was conceived by its Board of Trustees in collaboration with community leadership to mount an effective response against pervasive local challenges, notably the impact of HIV/AIDS, endemic poverty, gender-based violence, and inadequate access to essential social services. LICO’s history includes receiving the internationally recognized **UNAIDS Red Ribbon Award in 2014**, a testament to its excellence in HIV/AIDS treatment, care, and support programming. LICO’s ultimate vision is premised on *“Healthy communities, living with dignity and resilience, in a sustainable environment”*. Its mission is *“To empower marginalized and vulnerable populations in Malawi to achieve improved well-being by delivering integrated, high-quality services and capacity building across health, education, gender equality, and sustainable livelihoods”*. This mandate is guided by fundamental institutional values: Integrity, Transparency, Unity of Purpose, Accountability, Sustainability, and Trustworthiness.

The formulation of this Strategic Plan was the product of an exhaustive, participatory process, involving executive staff, board members, community representatives, and crucial stakeholders across government departments, civil society, and development agencies. The methodological approach integrated comprehensive desk reviews of the previous strategic cycle and critical policy instruments, including the UN SDGs, Malawi 2063, and the Rumphi District Development Plan, ensuring that the final strategy is directly reflective of local realities and priorities.

To achieve its transformative mission, the plan delineates eight specific **Key Result Areas (KRAs)**: Health Service Delivery, Education and Digital Literacy, Gender Equality and Child Protection, Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods, Economic Empowerment, Institutional Capacity Strengthening, Social Enterprise Development, and Governance and Advocacy. This strategic focus ensures direct contribution to global and national targets, most notably **SDG 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 13**.

LICO’s **Theory of Change** asserts that sustainable societal transformation is contingent upon the delivery of integrated, multi-sectoral interventions. By addressing the reciprocal complexities of health, education, gender, climate, and livelihoods, LICO aims to generate five overarching outcomes: improved community health status, equitable educational access, enhanced protection for women and children, strengthened local climate resilience, and elevated economic self-

reliance. These outcomes are designed to collectively deliver the long-term impact of resilient, self-reliant, and thriving communities.

Successful implementation requires strict institutional alignment, the adoption of professional best practices, stringent budget controls, and regular strategic review meetings. A dedicated Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEAL) Officer will assume responsibility for continuous performance tracking using predefined indicators. A formal midterm review will be executed to assess progress, and an independent, end-of-plan evaluation will measure comprehensive effectiveness and sustainability.

The realization of this Strategic Plan's objectives is fundamentally dependent upon forging and maintaining robust, collaborative partnerships with government ministries, international development partners, the private sector, and local communities. A core objective moving forward is the enhancement of LICO's social enterprise arm to bolster financial sustainability and judiciously reduce long-term dependency on external donor funding.

This Strategic Plan signifies LICO's renewed and resolute commitment to achieving meaningful life transformation through evidence-based, inclusive, and durable approaches. By emphasizing empowerment, resilience, and innovation, LICO is positioned to cultivate healthier, better educated, and economically secure communities that actively contribute to Malawi's national development agenda and the global pursuit of sustainable human development.



Vision

Healthy communities, living with dignity and resilience, in a sustainable environment.

Mission

To empower marginalized and vulnerable populations in Malawi to achieve improved well-being by delivering integrated, high-quality services and capacity building across health, education, gender equality, and sustainable livelihoods.

Core Values

Integrity
Transparency
Unity of Purpose
Accountability
Sustainability
Trustworthiness

1. Introduction

This Strategic Plan (2026–2030) is the direct outcome of a comprehensive review and evaluation of the prior planning cycle (2022–2025). Designed to cover a five-year period, this document will serve as the definitive framework for the strategic direction of LICO, its implementing partners, and all key stakeholders.

The rigorous development of this plan was facilitated by an external consultant. The process commenced with a thorough desk review of the preceding Strategic Plan (2022–2025) and associated annual reports for various projects implemented by LICO within its target communities.

Primary data collection was executed through a consultative workshop attended by LICO management, staff, Board members, key district level stakeholders, and community leaders. This was further supplemented by Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted with the Senior Management Team (SMT) to gather in-depth insights and validation.

Following an extensive internal review by the staff and management teams, the final draft was formally submitted to the Board of Directors for final endorsement and approval.

2. About Life Concern Organisation

2.1 LICO's Background

Life Concern Organisation (LICO) was established in 2008 and is legally registered with the Government of Malawi under the Trustee Incorporation Act (Certificate No. TR/INC 4822). The organisation is also duly registered with the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) and the NGO Board of Malawi, which serves as the national regulatory authority for non-profit entities.

LICO was founded by a committed Board of Trustees, working in close consultation with community members from Rumphi District, in response to the growing health and socio-economic challenges affecting vulnerable populations. The organisation was created with a shared vision to improve the quality of life of marginalized groups by addressing key issues in health, education, gender equality, and sustainable livelihoods.

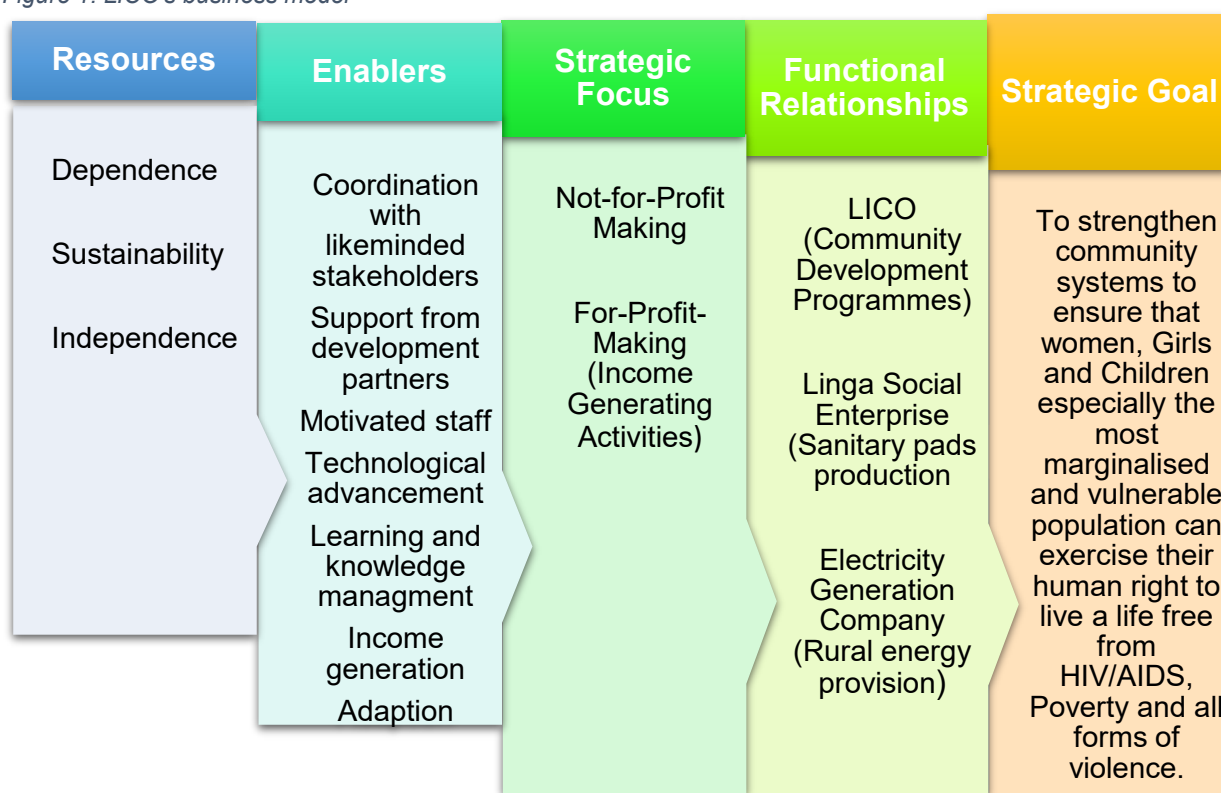
LICO is a recipient of the prestigious UNAIDS Red Ribbon Award in 2014 under the HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support category in Melbourne, Australia. The award has played a great role in transforming LICO's image globally. This is evidenced in the increase in number of donors and funding base since 2014 from about MK15 million (3 donors) to over MK200 million in 2016 (12 donors).

2.2 LICO's Business Profile

LICO is a not-for-profit making local NGO that implements programmes using financial support from development partners. LICO collaborates with district level government stakeholders and other civil society organisations (CSOs) in designing and implementing community programmes. At community level, LICO collaborates and engage with traditional and religious leaders, governance structures, volunteers and direct beneficiaries of the programmes to deliver results that are relevant and sustainable.

However, we realised that our programmes can be highly sustainable if we have inhouse income generating activities. Accordingly, sister company to LICO, namely Linga Social Enterprise, was established. This company makes reusable sanitary pads which are sold to stakeholders, including other CSOs, on a small fee. Currently this company is supplying the sanitary pads only in Rumphi district. But there are plans to extend the market to include local and international NGOs which increase girls' access to SRHR services across the country. These income generating activities are intended to produce enough resources for funding the various programmes that LICO intends to implement in Rumphi district, and elsewhere in Malawi. The business model is shown in the figure 1 below:

Figure 1: LICO's business model



3.3 LICO's Strategic Foundations

Vision:

Healthy communities, living with dignity and resilience, in a sustainable environment.

Mission:

To empower marginalized and vulnerable populations in Malawi to achieve improved well-being by delivering integrated, high-quality services and capacity building across health, education, gender equality, and sustainable livelihoods.

Values:

Table 1: LICO's core values

Values	Value Statements
Transparency	We believe that our donors, stakeholders and direct beneficiaries have the right to know how we are implementing our programmes. We therefore have an open-door policy to allow interested parties to access our reports or other records held in our offices for public scrutiny.
Accountability	We accept responsibility for our actions or omissions. We therefore Endeavor to support the structures that should make us answer questions on any of our programmes.
Sustainability	We desire to create sustainability for our positive results. In this regard, we have embarked on creating social enterprises to ensure continuous inflow of funds for our programming.
Integrity	We are conscious to consistently act according to applicable rules and regulations, norms, culture, values and ethical standards regulated by law and society's values.
Trustworthy	We believe trust is the hallmark for our legitimacy. We will therefore always be dependable and reliable to our donors, stakeholders and direct beneficiaries.
Unity of purpose	We promote mutual understanding and collaboration in our programming. We therefore commit to collaborate fully with our donors, stakeholders and direct beneficiaries.

3. Environmental Scanning

4.1. Strengths

The following are internal strengths which LICO can take advantage of, to effectively implement this strategic plan and achieve its desired strategic results:

Table 2: Strengths

Strengths	Implications
Skilled and committed staff	A competent and motivated workforce enhances organizational efficiency, program quality, and innovation. It positions LICO to deliver impactful interventions and attract funding through demonstrated professionalism.
Strong organizational reputation and leadership	Established credibility and visionary leadership increase stakeholder confidence, making it easier to secure partnerships, funding, and community buy-in for new initiatives.
Robust financial and governance systems	Effective financial controls and governance promote transparency and accountability, strengthening donor trust and ensuring sustainable resource management.
Deep community trust and long-term partnerships	Strong community relations facilitate smooth project implementation, local ownership, and sustainability of interventions, even after donor funding ends.
Evidence-based and innovative programming	Use of data-driven and creative approaches enhances program relevance, adaptability, and effectiveness, allowing LICO to remain competitive in the development sector.
Recognized social enterprise model (Linga Pads)	The social enterprise provides a revenue diversification opportunity and demonstrates LICO's capacity to merge social impact with financial sustainability.

4.2. Weakness

The following are internal weaknesses that LICO should address to attain the desired strategic outcomes in this strategy.

Table 3: Weaknesses

Weaknesses	Implications
Heavy reliance on donor funding	Dependence on external funding exposes LICO to financial instability when donor priorities shift, underscoring the need for income diversification.
Limited transport and ICT infrastructure	Insufficient logistical and technological capacity hinders efficient service delivery, monitoring, and communication across project sites.
Weak digital systems and online visibility	Limited digital presence reduces LICO's visibility to potential partners and donors and constrains advocacy and knowledge-sharing opportunities.
Overlapping roles and unclear HR structure	Role duplication leads to inefficiency and potential internal conflicts, highlighting the need for organizational restructuring and clear job descriptions.
Narrow geographic and programmatic reach	Concentration in few districts and sectors limits LICO's national influence and restricts its eligibility for broader funding opportunities.

Weaknesses	Implications
Limited national-level policy engagement	Minimal presence in policy spaces weakens LICO's ability to influence decision-making and advocate for systemic change aligned with its mission.

4.3. Opportunities

The following are the opportunities available in the environment that LICO can seize to effectively implement this strategic plan and attain its desired outcomes.

Table 4: Opportunities

Opportunities	Implications
Alignment with Malawi Vision 2063, MGDS IV, and SDGs	LICO's alignment with national and global frameworks enhances funding prospects and strategic partnerships with government and development agencies.
Donor interest in digital literacy, climate, and gender equality	Targeted alignment of programs with emerging donor priorities can attract new funding streams and expand LICO's thematic areas.
Growth in digital and green economy funding	Access to environmental and technological grants offers a chance to diversify programs and position LICO as a leader in sustainability and innovation.
Strategic partnerships with government and private sector	Collaboration can enhance resource mobilization, technical capacity, and scalability of interventions while improving policy influence.
High community trust and participation	Continued engagement of communities ensures program relevance, sustainability, and effective co-creation of development solutions.
Emerging youth empowerment and innovation opportunities	Investing in youth-led initiatives strengthens LICO's social impact and visibility while building future leadership and innovation capacity.

4.4 Threats

The following are the threats or dangers in the environment, that we must be aware of and take action to address or mitigate to ensure successful implementation of this strategic plan.

Table 5: Threats

Threats	Implications
Economic instability and inflation	Rising costs and economic volatility threaten project budgets and community livelihoods, requiring adaptive financial planning.

Threats	Implications
Donor competition and funding shifts	Increasing competition for limited donor funds could constrain program continuity, emphasizing the need for resource diversification.
Environmental and climate disasters	Natural hazards threaten community resilience and infrastructure, necessitating integration of disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation strategies.
Political and policy volatility	Changes in government or policy priorities may disrupt partnerships or program implementation, calling for flexible and adaptive planning.
Cybersecurity and data protection risks	Weak data security systems may expose sensitive information, leading to reputational and operational risks that require investment in ICT safeguards.
High youth unemployment and social instability	Economic exclusion of youth may lead to increased vulnerability and unrest, affecting project outcomes and community safety.

4. Key Results Areas and Strategic Issues

Life Concern Organisation (LICO) has identified eight Key Results Areas (KRAs) that reflect its strategic priorities for the period 2026–2030. Each KRA addresses critical development challenges that affect the wellbeing and resilience of communities in Rumphi District and beyond. The section below outlines these KRAs, and the strategic issues associated with each area.

5.1. Health Service Delivery

Health service delivery remains central to LICO's mandate of promoting community well-being. Despite national progress, many rural communities continue to experience limited access to quality, inclusive, and affordable health services. The uptake of Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services remain low, especially among adolescents, women, and marginalized groups. Malnutrition, high maternity and child mortality, and the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are major public health concerns. HIV/AIDS/TB, Mental Health,

The persistence of new HIV infections, coupled with poor adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), undermines progress made in the national HIV response. Additionally, mental health care and awareness are underdeveloped, resulting in untreated psychological distress within communities. Poor health infrastructure, inadequate waste management systems (such as non-functional incinerators), and frequent motorcycle-related accidents further exacerbate the health burden. Addressing these issues requires strengthened community health systems, improved health infrastructure, and increased investment in awareness and preventive interventions.

5.2. Education and Digital Literacy

Education is a powerful catalyst for social and economic transformation; however, barriers to access and quality education persist. Many learners, particularly girls, drop out of school due to poverty and lack of bursary support. Inadequate educational infrastructure, including insufficient classrooms, hostels, and sanitation facilities, compromises the learning environment.

The absence of proper Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, coupled with limited menstrual health management options, particularly affects adolescent girls. Furthermore, the limited supply of teaching and learning materials and the slow integration of digital literacy hinder the acquisition of relevant skills for the 21st century. Limited sports facilities and the rise in drug and substance abuse among learners contribute to poor retention and low performance. To mitigate these challenges, LICO will work to strengthen school infrastructure, promote digital literacy, and enhance holistic child development through life skills and extracurricular programs.

In addition, limited access to digital technologies and low levels of digital literacy among learners and teachers restrict opportunities for innovation, online learning, and employability. Rural schools often lack computers, internet connectivity, and basic ICT skills training, widening the digital divide between urban and rural learners.

LICO will therefore integrate Digital Literacy Awareness and Education across its education programming by supporting schools with ICT equipment, introducing basic computer and digital skills training, promoting safe and responsible internet use, and strengthening teacher capacity to integrate digital tools into teaching and learning. These interventions will prepare learners for the evolving digital economy while supporting Malawi's digital transformation agenda under MW2063.

5.3. Gender Equality, Women Empowerment & Child Protection

Persistent gender inequalities continue to expose women and children to social and economic vulnerabilities. Cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), child abuse, early marriages, and child labor remain widespread in many communities. These issues are aggravated by poverty, weak household income levels, and deeply rooted cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) remains a critical concern within both community and institutional settings, particularly affecting women, girls, and other vulnerable populations. Weak reporting mechanisms, fear of stigma, and limited awareness of safeguarding standards contribute to underreporting and inadequate response.

LICO will strengthen SEA prevention and child safeguarding systems by promoting zero tolerance for exploitation and abuse, supporting community-based reporting and referral mechanisms, and building the capacity of local structures, service providers, and duty bearers to prevent, detect, and respond to SEA and child protection violations in line with national child protection and safeguarding frameworks.

The increasing number of neglected and street children reflects the erosion of family and community safety nets. In addition, local peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms

remain weak, making it difficult to manage social tensions. LICO recognizes the need to strengthen community structures that promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and child protection through awareness creation, economic empowerment, and legal support systems.

5.4. Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods

The livelihoods of most rural households depend heavily on natural resources, making them vulnerable to climate-related shocks such as floods, droughts, and erratic rainfall. Environmental degradation caused by deforestation, unsustainable farming practices, and poor waste management further threatens community resilience.

Particular attention will be given to mountain ecosystem conservation and the protection of indigenous and forest-dependent communities, whose livelihoods, cultural identity, and food systems are increasingly threatened by deforestation, land degradation, and climate change. Unsustainable land use practices in mountainous areas have accelerated soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and water source depletion.

LICO will promote mountain conservation initiatives, including afforestation, community-led forest management, protection of water catchment areas, and indigenous knowledge integration in environmental stewardship. These efforts will strengthen ecosystem resilience while safeguarding the rights, livelihoods, and cultural heritage of indigenous communities living in and around mountainous landscapes.

Food insecurity remains a major challenge as agricultural yields decline due to soil degradation and low adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices. Inadequate disaster preparedness and weak community resilience systems limit the ability of households to recover from shocks. Addressing these issues will require multi-sectoral approaches focusing on environmental conservation, promotion of climate-smart technologies, reforestation, and strengthening local disaster risk management structures.

5.5. Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is vital for reducing poverty and promoting inclusive development. However, high unemployment rates, especially among youth and women, remain a significant challenge. Many individuals lack technical skills, business training, and access to financial services necessary to start or expand income-generating activities.

In response to evolving market demands and youth unemployment, LICO will introduce a Digital Entrepreneurship Program targeting youth and women. The program will focus on building skills in digital business models, online marketing, e-commerce, mobile-based services, and basic financial technologies.

Through mentorship, business incubation, and linkages to digital platforms and markets, beneficiaries will be supported to establish and scale digital enterprises. This approach aligns with Malawi's youth employment and digital economy strategies and enhances resilience by expanding income opportunities beyond traditional sectors.

Market linkages for small-scale producers are weak, leading to low productivity and limited competitiveness. The absence of small agro-industries and value-addition enterprises restricts

local economic growth. LICO seeks to promote entrepreneurship, vocational skills training, and access to microfinance while facilitating the establishment of small agro-processing and livestock programs to enhance household incomes and local economic participation.

5.6. Institutional Capacity Strengthening

The effective implementation of LICO's programs depends on a strong institutional foundation. Currently, the organisation faces constraints related to limited assets, outdated equipment, and insufficient staffing levels. Weak governance structures, gaps in occupational safety and health, and limited staff capacity pose risks to operational efficiency.

Enhancing organisational visibility and communication systems remains essential for improving stakeholder engagement and donor confidence. LICO will therefore invest in strengthening human resource capacity, improving governance systems, adopting digital management tools, and building a culture of performance and accountability across all levels of the organisation.

Strengthening resource mobilisation capacity will be a strategic priority for LICO to ensure financial sustainability and program continuity. This will include enhancing proposal development skills, donor mapping and relationship management, diversification of funding sources, and integration of innovative financing mechanisms. LICO will also strengthen systems for grants management, reporting, and compliance to maintain donor confidence and long-term partnerships.

5.7. Social Enterprise

To achieve long-term sustainability, LICO aims to reduce dependence on external donor funding through the development of social enterprises. The organisation currently has limited income-generating initiatives, which restrict its ability to finance operations independently.

LICO will deliberately expand and professionalize its social enterprise portfolio as a core sustainability strategy. Priority ventures will include reusable sanitary pad production, hospitality and accommodation services, catering and laundry services, community-based tourism, ICT and digital services, fitness and wellness centers, and community media platforms such as radio.

These enterprises will be developed through structured business planning, market analysis, and private sector partnerships to ensure profitability and social impact. Beyond revenue generation, the enterprises will create employment opportunities, support skills development, and contribute to local economic growth, while progressively reducing LICO's dependence on donor funding.

5.8. Governance and Advocacy

Effective governance and advocacy are key enablers of organisational credibility and impact. Weak community governance structures and low public participation in decision-making processes continue to hinder inclusive development. Internally, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of both the Board and management to enhance transparency, accountability, and strategic leadership.

At the policy level, continuous advocacy is required to address systemic issues affecting gender equality, education, climate resilience, and public health. LICO will work to amplify community voices, influence local and national policy processes, and promote good governance principles that ensure responsive and accountable service delivery.

5. Theory of Change

Life Concern's Theory of Change is built on the belief that integrated, multi-sectoral interventions targeting health, education, gender equality, climate resilience, and economic opportunity are essential to achieving sustainable community transformation. By strategically delivering specific Strategic Outputs, Life Concern aims to trigger positive behavioral, systemic, and economic shifts, leading to five interconnected Strategic Outcomes that collectively create a foundation for long-term community well-being and resilience.

The Pathway to Impact

The Theory of Change outlines five core pathways:

1. **Health Transformation:** If Life Concern increases the availability of quality SRHR, HIV, and maternal health services, enhances community awareness on nutrition and mental health, and improves the capacity of health workers, then communities (especially vulnerable groups) will have improved access to quality health services. This will result in a reduced disease burden and enhanced mental and physical well-being, leading to healthier, more productive populations.
2. **Educational Advancement:** If Life Concern improves access to education through bursaries and infrastructure, enhances teaching quality via support and digital literacy integration, and increases student participation in life skills programs, then children and youth will access quality, equitable, and digitally enhanced education. This will foster holistic development and future-ready skills, creating a generation of educated and skilled youth prepared for employment.
3. **Social Protection and Equality:** If Life Concern strengthens community structures and referral systems for GBV and child abuse, increases the socio-economic self-reliance of women through entrepreneurship, and enhances awareness of child rights and gender equality, then communities will uphold gender equality and safeguard children's rights. This will be evidenced by reduced GBV and harmful practices, resulting in equitable societies where women and children live free from violence.
4. **Environmental and Climate Resilience:** If Life Concern promotes the adoption of climate-smart agriculture, agroforestry, and sustainable land management, establishes early warning systems, and enhances environmental conservation through afforestation, then communities will adopt climate-smart and sustainable livelihood practices. This will enhance food security and resilience against climate shocks, leading to environmentally conscious and resilient communities.
5. **Economic Empowerment:** If Life Concern strengthens technical and entrepreneurial skills among youth and women, expands their access to microfinance and value-chain development, and supports small-scale agro-industries, then households and youth will

achieve improved incomes and sustainable livelihoods. This results in economically stable and self-reliant households contributing to local economic growth.

Key Assumptions for Success

The success of these integrated pathways hinges on several critical external factors and enabling conditions:

- a. **Political and Policy Stability:** The government must maintain commitment to supportive policies for health, education, and development, ensuring a favorable operational environment.
- b. **Active Community Engagement:** There must be consistent willingness from community members to adopt new health, agricultural, and entrepreneurial practices, and uphold social protection systems.
- c. **Sustained Resource Mobilization:** Life Concern must secure adequate and predictable funding and resources to ensure the continuous delivery of its strategic outputs across all five KRAs.
- d. **Functional Markets:** Viable market opportunities must exist for the products and services generated by the newly empowered women and youth, ensuring the sustainability of economic gains.
- e. **Climate Moderation:** The intensity and frequency of climate shocks must remain within a range that community adaptation and early warning systems (KRA 4) can effectively manage.

Ultimately, Life Concern's long-term Impact is the realization of transformed, resilient, and thriving communities where individuals, especially the vulnerable, enjoy improved health, quality education, economic opportunity, and social protection.

Figure 2. LICO's Theory of change



Health Transformation

- Improved nutrition awareness and reduced malnutrition.
- Increased access to and utilization of quality SRHR HIV, and Maternal health services.
- Strengthened capacity of health workers and community volunteers to

Education Advancement

- Increased enrolment, retention, and completion rates for learners, especially girls.
- Enhanced digital literacy, life skills, and learner support programs

Social Protection and Equality

- Enhanced community awareness of gender equality, child protection, and human rights.
- Reduction in GBV cases, early marriages, and child labor.

Environment and Climate Resilience

- Improved natural resource management and reduction in deforestation.
- Improved food security and nutrition through sustainable farming practices
- Increased adoption of climate-smart agriculture and agroforestry techniques

Economic Empowerment

- Strengthened technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills among youth and women.
- Increased access to microfinance, savings groups, and business development services.
- Increased household income and financial independence.

Sustainable and resilient communities where individuals, particularly women, youth, and vulnerable groups, enjoy equitable access to quality health, education, and economic opportunities, live free from violence and poverty, and actively contribute to social and environmental well-being.

Key Assumptions

- Continued government commitment to supportive policies in health, education, and development to ensure a favorable operating environment.
- Active participation and ownership by community members to sustain program outcomes.
- Availability of adequate and predictable funding to support effective implementation of interventions.
- Stable and functional market systems to enable income generation and sustainability.
- Climate shocks remain within manageable limits for adaptation and resilience measures

6. Alignment of the KRAs with International and Local Instruments

LICO's Strategic Plan (2026–2029) is designed to complement global, national, and local development priorities. Each Key Result Area is carefully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Malawi 2063 Vision (MW2063), and the Rumphii District Development Plan (RDDP). This alignment ensures that LICO's interventions remain relevant, coherent, and responsive to both community needs and the broader development agenda.

7.1 Key Result Area 1: Health Service Delivery

LICO's focus on improving access to quality health services directly contributes to SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. It also supports SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by promoting inclusive sexual and reproductive health services, particularly for women and adolescents.

At the national level, this KRA aligns with MW2063's Pillar of Human Capital Development, which emphasizes a healthy and productive population as the foundation for economic growth. Locally, it supports the Rumphii District Development Plan (RDDP) in strengthening health systems, improving SRHR services, and addressing maternal and child health challenges.

7.2 Key Result Area 2: Education and Digital Literacy

This KRA advances SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting access to inclusive and equitable education and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through targeted support for girls' education. It also links to SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by integrating digital literacy into learning programs.

Under MW2063, it contributes to the Human Capital Development Pillar, focusing on improved education quality, digital innovation, and skills development. The RDDP prioritizes improved school infrastructure, teacher support, and youth empowerment, all of which are addressed through LICO's education and digital literacy initiatives.

7.3 Key Result Area 3: Gender Equality, Women Empowerment, and Child Protection

This KRA strongly supports SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting the protection of women and children from violence, abuse, and exploitation. It also contributes to SDG 1 (No Poverty) through women's economic empowerment initiatives.

Nationally, the focus aligns with MW2063's Human Capital Development Pillar, which advocates gender equality and social inclusion as drivers of sustainable growth. Locally, it supports RDDP priorities on gender mainstreaming, protection of vulnerable groups, and strengthening community-based child protection structures.

7.4 Key Result Area 4: Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods

This KRA contributes to SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting climate-smart agriculture and adaptation measures, SDG 15 (Life on Land) through afforestation and land restoration, and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) through sustainable natural resource use.

It directly supports MW2063's Pillar of Environmental Sustainability, which calls for increased resilience to climate change and responsible management of natural resources. Within the RDDP, this aligns with district strategies on environmental conservation, disaster preparedness, and climate-smart livelihoods.

7.5 Key Result Area 5: Economic Empowerment

LICO's work in economic empowerment is aligned with SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by promoting entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and small-scale enterprise development.

At the national level, this supports the MW2063 Pillar of Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization, which seeks to enhance local economic participation and reduce dependency. At district level, it aligns with RDDP objectives that aim to expand economic opportunities for youth, women, and vulnerable households.

7.6 Key Result Area 6: Institutional Capacity Strengthening

This KRA contributes to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering effective governance, organizational accountability, and staff development.

In the context of MW2063, it aligns with the enabler on Effective Governance Systems, which emphasizes capable institutions for transparent service delivery. Locally, it supports RDDP priorities on institutional strengthening, coordination, and improved accountability in service delivery.

7.7 Key Result Area 7: Social Enterprise Development

Social enterprise initiatives contribute to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by creating sustainable income streams and employment opportunities.

This focus supports MW2063's Industrialization Pillar, which promotes entrepreneurship and innovation as engines for inclusive economic transformation. It also aligns with RDDP goals aimed at fostering community-based enterprises and partnerships that reduce donor dependency and increase local self-reliance.

7.8 Key Result Area 8: Governance and Advocacy

This KRA aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by promoting good governance, community participation, and evidence-based advocacy. It also supports SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through policy advocacy for women's rights and social inclusion.

Within MW2063, it relates to the enabler on Effective Governance, which calls for participatory democracy, transparency, and civic engagement. It further aligns with RDDP strategies to strengthen local governance structures and community participation in decision-making processes.

7. Key Results Areas, Strategic Outcomes and Strategies

KRA1: Health Service Delivery

Table 6: KRA 1: Health Service Delivery

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
1.1 Communities, especially women, youth, and vulnerable groups, have improved access to quality and inclusive health services, leading to reduced disease burden, enhanced SRHR outcomes, improved nutrition, and strengthened mental and physical well-being.	1.1 Increased availability and utilization of quality SRHR, HIV, and maternal health services. 1.2 Enhanced community awareness and preventive practices on nutrition, NCDs, mental health, and hygiene. 1.3 Improved capacity of health workers and volunteers to deliver inclusive and gender-responsive health services.	1.1 Integrated Health System Strengthening & Community Outreach: Focus on expanding decentralized clinical services (SRHR, HIV, Maternal Health), driving public health campaigns (NCDs, Mental Health, Nutrition), and investing in staff and volunteer capacity.

KRA 2: Education and Digital Literacy

Table 7: KRA 2: Education and Digital Literacy

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
2.1 Children and youth, particularly girls and marginalized learners, access quality, equitable,	2.1 Improved access to education through bursary schemes, school infrastructure	2.1 Holistic Learner Support & Infrastructure Development: Combine financial and physical support (bursaries, WASH, infrastructure) with curriculum

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
and digitally enhanced education in safe, inclusive learning environments that foster holistic development and life skills for the future.	<p>development, and WASH facilities.</p> <p>2.2 Enhanced teaching quality and learning outcomes through provision of learning materials, teacher support, and digital literacy integration.</p> <p>2.3 Increased student participation in sports, life skills, and drug prevention programs.</p>	enhancement (digital literacy, teacher support) and co-curricular programs (sports, life skills, substance abuse prevention).

KRA 3: Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and Child Protection

Table 8: KRA 3: Gender Equality, Women Empowerment and Child Protection

Strategic outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
3.1 Women, girls, and children live free from all forms of violence and discrimination and have improved access to socio-economic opportunities	<p>3.1 Strengthened community structures and referral systems for GBV and child abuse.</p> <p>3.2 Increased socio-economic self-reliance among women and youth through entrepreneurship and training.</p> <p>3.3 Enhanced awareness on gender equality, human rights, and child protection.</p>	3.1 Gender and Protection Mainstreaming: Integrate GBV prevention, women's empowerment, and child protection within all LICO programs; support survivors through referrals, awareness, and advocacy for policy enforcement.

KRA 4: Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods

Table 9: KRA 4: Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
4.1 Communities adopt climate-smart and sustainable livelihood practices that strengthen	4.1 Increased adoption of climate-smart agriculture, agroforestry, and	4.1 Community Resilience and Adaptation: Promote climate-smart agriculture, reforestation, and

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
resilience, improve food security, and protect the environment.	<p>natural resource management.</p> <p>4.2 Strengthened community-based disaster risk management systems.</p> <p>4.3 Enhanced environmental conservation and reforestation efforts.</p>	environmental awareness campaigns; strengthen community preparedness and adaptation strategies.

KRA 5: Economic Empowerment

Table 10: KRA 5: Economic Empowerment

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
5.1 Women, youth, and vulnerable groups achieve sustainable livelihoods and improved household incomes through inclusive economic opportunities.	<p>5.1 Enhanced technical and vocational skills development for youth and women.</p> <p>5.2 Improved access to microfinance, savings, and entrepreneurship training.</p> <p>5.3 Increased participation in value chains and small-scale agro-industries.</p>	5.1 Inclusive Livelihoods and Enterprise Development: Strengthen entrepreneurship skills, support small business start-ups, and promote market linkages for local products and services.

KRA 6: Institutional Capacity Strengthening

Table 11: KRA 6: Institutional Capacity Strengthening

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
6.1 LICO operates as a strong, efficient, and accountable institution with enhanced human, financial, and technical capacity.	<p>6.1 Improved staffing, governance, and management systems.</p> <p>6.2 Enhanced organisational visibility and communication capacity.</p>	6.1 Organisational Development and Systems Strengthening: Build staff capacity, modernize operational systems, strengthen internal governance, and improve external visibility and partnerships.

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
	6.3 Strengthened monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems.	

KRA 7: Social Enterprise Development

Table 12: KRA 7; Social Enterprise Development

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies
7.1 LICO generates sustainable income through diversified social enterprise ventures that contribute to organisational growth and community development.	<p>7.1 Established and operational social enterprise initiatives in areas such as tourism, accommodation, catering, laundry, fitness centers, community radio, and sanitary pad production.</p> <p>7.2 Enhanced capacity for business planning, management, and marketing.</p>	7.1 Enterprise Diversification and Sustainability: Develop and manage profitable social enterprises that provide employment, generate income, and reduce dependency on donor funding.

KRA 8: Governance and Advocacy

Table 13: KRA 8: Governance and Advocacy

Strategic Outcome	Strategic Outputs	Core Strategies to Achieve Outcomes
8.1 Communities actively participate in governance and development processes, supported by transparent and accountable institutions.	<p>8.1 Strengthened community governance and participation structures.</p> <p>8.2 Improved board and management capacity for effective leadership.</p> <p>8.3 Enhanced advocacy on gender equality, education, and climate resilience.</p>	8.1 Governance and Policy Engagement: Promote accountability, transparency, and citizen participation through advocacy, policy dialogue, and capacity building of local governance structures.

8. Implementation Strategies

Life Concern Organisation (LICO) is committed to effectively implementing this Strategic Plan through structured, coordinated, and transparent approaches. The following modalities will guide the execution process to ensure that all planned strategies translate into measurable results.

i) Institutional Alignment

All programmes, departments, and individual roles will be aligned with the organisation's overall vision, mission, and strategic objectives. This alignment will ensure coherence, accountability, and collective effort in achieving LICO's desired outcomes. Staff will be guided by clear performance expectations linked to the strategic goals.

ii) Adoption of Best Practices

LICO recognizes that best practices are proven approaches and techniques that yield effective and sustainable results. The organisation will continuously identify, document, and share such practices among staff and partners. Management will encourage innovation, recognize outstanding performance, and integrate effective practices into organizational processes to promote excellence and learning.

iii) Budget Control and Financial Management

The organisation will ensure the prudent and transparent management of financial resources to support the implementation of this Strategic Plan. Budgets will be administered efficiently, and financial risks will be regularly monitored and mitigated. Variance reports will be prepared, and annual external audits will be conducted to ensure accountability and continuous improvement in financial management.

iv) Strategic Plan Review and Coordination Meetings

Regular strategic plan review and coordination meetings will be conducted, particularly with the management team, to track progress and address implementation challenges. These meetings will provide an opportunity to assess alignment, share updates, and make data-driven adjustments where necessary. Staff will also be continuously oriented on LICO's vision, mission, and desired outcomes to foster ownership and sustained commitment to achieving strategic results.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

LICO will designate a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEAL) Officer responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of the implementation of interventions outlined in this Strategic Plan. The officer will collect and manage monitoring data from both internal sources and external stakeholders, including beneficiaries, to track progress and performance. Data collection will employ multiple methods and be conducted at agreed intervals as specified in the annual implementation plans.

Furthermore, LICO will conduct a midterm evaluation of the Strategic Plan to assess progress, identify lessons learned, and adapt interventions to changes in the operating environment. At the end of the five-year period, an independent end-of-plan evaluation will be commissioned to assess overall effectiveness, document key achievements, and generate insights to guide the development of the next Strategic Plan.

Annex: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

KRAs	Strategic Outcomes	Indicator	Baselines	Milestones 2026-2029	Targets 2030
Health Service Delivery	Communities, especially women, youth, and vulnerable groups, have improved access to quality and inclusive health services, leading to reduced disease burden, enhanced SRHR outcomes, improved nutrition, and strengthened mental and physical well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % increase in access to SRHR, HIV, and maternal health services - % reduction in new HIV infections- % of population with knowledge on nutrition, NCDs, and mental health - Number of trained health workers and volunteers 	Low access to integrated SRHR and mental health services; limited capacity of health workers	50% increase in access to SRHR and maternal health services; 30% increase in trained health personnel	80% of target population accessing quality and inclusive health services; 60% reduction in preventable diseases
Education and Digital Literacy	Children and youth, particularly girls and marginalized learners, access quality, equitable, and digitally enhanced education in safe and inclusive learning environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School enrolment and retention rates (by gender) - % of schools with functional WASH and digital learning facilities - % of learners participating in sports and life skills programs 	High dropout rates; limited WASH and digital infrastructure	40% reduction in dropout rates; 60% of schools supported with WASH and ICT	80% of schools implementing inclusive education and digital literacy programs; dropout rate below 10%

KRAs	Strategic Outcomes	Indicator	Baselines	Milestones 2026-2029	Targets 2030
Gender Equality, Women Empowerment & Child Protection	Women, girls, and children live free from violence and discrimination and have improved access to socio-economic opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of GBV and child abuse cases reported and managed - % increase in women with access to income-generating opportunities- Existence of functional community GBV and child protection structures 	High prevalence of GBV and limited empowerment initiatives	50% increase in functional community protection structures; 40% reduction in GBV cases	GBV prevalence reduced by 70%; 70% of women economically empowered
Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods	Communities adopt climate-smart and sustainable livelihood practices that strengthen resilience and improve food security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of households adopting climate-smart agriculture- Hectares of land reforested or restored - Number of community disaster management committees functional 	Low adoption of climate-smart agriculture; weak environmental structures	50% of target communities implementing climate-smart practices; 10,000 trees planted	90% of target households practicing sustainable agriculture; 50,000 trees planted

KRAs	Strategic Outcomes	Indicator	Baselines	Milestones 2026-2029	Targets 2030
Economic Empowerment	Women, youth, and vulnerable groups achieve sustainable livelihoods and improved household incomes through inclusive economic opportunities.	- % increase in household income levels- Number of youth and women trained in entrepreneurship- Number of SMEs supported or established	High unemployment and limited business support	1,000 youth and women trained; 20% increase in household income	3,000 youth and women empowered; 60% increase in household income levels
Institutional Capacity Strengthening	LICO operates as a strong, efficient, and accountable institution with enhanced human, financial, and technical capacity.	- Number of staff trained in M&E, finance, and management- % improvement in organisational audit performance- Level of stakeholder satisfaction	Limited capacity and weak systems	60% of staff trained; improved governance systems established	Fully functional management systems; 90% staff competence in core areas
Social Enterprise Development	LICO generates sustainable income through diversified social enterprise ventures that contribute to organisational growth and community development.	- Number of social enterprise ventures established - % of organisational income from internal revenue- Number of jobs created through enterprises	Limited or no income-generating ventures	3 sustainable enterprises established; 20% income from internal sources	At least 5 profitable enterprises; 50% of annual budget financed through internal income

KRAs	Strategic Outcomes	Indicator	Baselines	Milestones 2026-2029	Targets 2030
Governance and Advocacy	Communities actively participate in governance and development processes supported by transparent and accountable institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of governance and advocacy platforms supported - % of community members participating in decision-making processes - Number of advocacy campaigns conducted on key social issues 	Low community participation and limited advocacy initiatives	5 advocacy campaigns conducted; 30% increase in community participation	10 advocacy initiatives institutionalized; 70% of communities engaged in governance activities