

# Upgrading Trading Centres surrounding Blantyre City

-A strategy for attaining sustainable Urbanization



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*L* *d of urbanization of Blantyre City, calls for a concerted effort to come up with long term solutions that can effectively address the numerous social problems that come as a consequence of rapid urban growth. This paper tries to explore some of the best options to be followed in order to attain sustainable urbanization. It is my belief that through following various interventions urbanization will never be a burden and that the problem of shelter will be addressed.*

## 1 Shelter Situation Analysis

### 1.1 Basic General Data

#### Geography and Administration

Malawi is a landlocked country found in south eastern Africa and bordered by Tanzania to the north and northeast, Mozambique to the east, south and southwest and Zambia to the west and northwest. The country has a surface area of 118, 480 km<sup>2</sup> of which about 21% is water.

For administrative purposes, the country is divided into three regions namely; the Northern, Central and Southern regions. The country has four main cities; Mzuzu in the north, Lilongwe in the centre and Blantyre and Zomba in the southern

region. Lilongwe is the administrative capital city where government Ministries are located, as well as diplomatic missions and most international and local Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Blantyre is the commercial capital of Malawi where most of the manufacturing industries as well as most of the commercial entities are located.

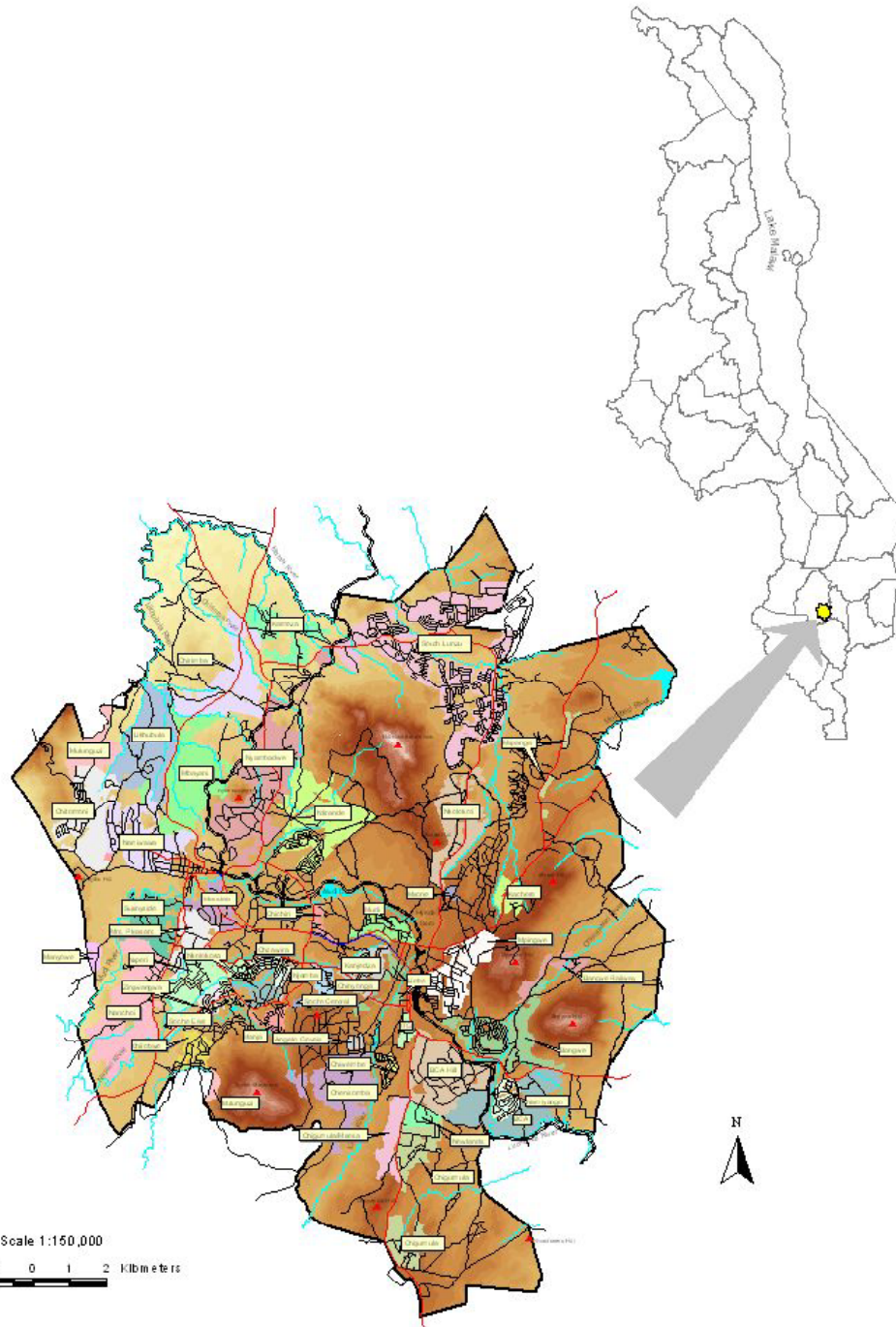
### ***Blantyre District Assembly***

Blantyre District is one of the Districts in the Southern region of Malawi. It is located in the Shire Highlands and is the geographical centre of the Southern Region of the Country. It covers an area of 2,012 sq. Km. The district contains the urban part which is the city and the rural part. A part from containing the city, the district also has several small semi-urban areas, trading centres and a larger rural area. The city area covers a tenth of the district total area.

Blantyre City is the largest urban centre of the country. It has the area of 228 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 661,444 people. It is the commercial and industrial capital of the country and forms the communication and transportation hub to all parts of the country as well as neighbouring countries. The city was founded in 1876 by Dr David Livingstone, a Scottish missionary, and was named after his birthplace, Blantyre in Scotland. It is also the oldest urban centre in the region predating Harare, Johannesburg and Nairobi. (Kabanga, 2006)

Blantyre City is perched on the Shire Highlands at an altitude of 1150m above sea level with an undulating topography comprising flat areas and small hills with a tropical continental type of climate. Temperatures range from 10°C in the cold season to 35°C in the hot season and annual average rainfall of about 1122 mm. The city is located on latitude 15° 47' S and longitude 35° 00' E. (Kabanga, 2006)

Map 1.0: Location of Blantyre City in Malawi



Date: 17 January 2006 / Scale: 1:150,000 / Projection: UTM Zone 36 / Source: Arc View 3.3, Arc GIS 8.2a / Prepared by: C. Chanza / Checked by: M. Zezza Manwa - ALMA CONSULT

### ***Demography and Health***

Current National population of Malawi is at 13,066,320 while the population of Blantyre city is at 661,444 (2008 PHS, NSO). Out of this 67% live in slums and squatter settlements (Kabanga, 2006).

The latest population census conducted in 2008 established the following data regarding total population, number of households and density for both the country and Blantyre.

***Table 1: 2008 Population***

Region	Total	Male	Female	No. of HH	Land sq km	Density persons/sq km
Malawi	<b>13,066,320</b>	6,365,771	6,700,549	2,957,685	94,276	<b>139</b>
Blantyre						
city	661,444	337,655	323,789	154,782	220	3,007
rural	338,047	164, 546	173,501	80,879	1792	189

*Source: 2008 Population and Housing Census, NSO.*

A look at population data for Blantyre and Malawi for the three intercensal period helps to establish a trend of urban population growth for city of Blantyre relative to that of the country.

***Table 2: Intercensal Population 1887-2008***

Region	Population Census			Population Density			Average Household Size		
	2008	1998	1987	2008	1998	1987	2008	1998	1987
Malawi	13,066,320	9,933,868	7,988,507	139	105	85	4.4	4.3	4.0
Growth rate	2.8	2.0	3.7 <sup>1</sup>						
Blantyre									
City	661,444	502,053	333,120	3,007	2,282	1,514	4.3	4.0	3.9
rural	338,047	307,047	256,405	189	172	143	4.2	4.1	4.0

*Source: 2008 Population and Housing Census, NSO.*

The Malawi population is relatively young with 48% of the population (6,216,432) aged 18 years and above. Of this 2,972,335 are males and 3,244,097

<sup>1</sup> The high rate of population growth was due to influx of refugees

are females. Of this 2,972,335 are males and 3,244,097 are females. (NSO: PHS<sup>2</sup>, 2008).

Analysis of data on the rate of urbanization for the past three intercensal periods reveals that the rate of urbanization is fast. According to 1987 population and housing census, 11% of the country's total population lived in urban areas. In 1998 it rose to 14%. The just released results of the 2008 population and housing census have showed that the population of urban dwellers has grown to 15.4% of the total population. With an annual growth rate of 6.7%, it is one the fastest urban population growths in Africa.( Kabanga, 2006)

The urbanisation rate for the City of Blantyre was 8.5% (2000) and is among the highest against a national growth rate of 6.7% (1999) (Kabanga, 2006). The National Statistical Office (NSO) indicates that the city had a population of 16,048 people in 1947 and grew to over 520,000 in 1999. The table below shows some of the population figures from 1947 to 1999.

*Table 3: Population growth for the City of Blantyre from 1947 to 1999*

<b>Year</b>	<b>1947</b>	<b>1966</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Population</b>	16,048	109,000	219,011	332,120	478,155	519,033
<b>Growth rate</b>	N/A	N/A	9.2	5.2	4.0	8.5

*Source: Blantyre Urban Structure Plan Background Study Report of 2000)*

Life expectancy at birth in Malawi has fallen sharply over the past decade; average life expectancy is at 43.82 years (male 44.07 and females 43.57 years). This is basically due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, among other factors. The World Bank's country brief shows that in the period 2003, the under-five mortality rate was 178 per 1000 live births while the infant mortality rate was 112 per 1000 live births. (CIA: fact book)

Fertility rate is at 6.6 children per woman for the rural population and 4.6 for the urban population. Childhood and maternal mortality has been on the increase (Infant mortality at 69 per 1000, and under five mortality is at 118 per 1000) and life expectancy reduced due to the issue of HIV/AIDS. (MICS, 2006)

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<sup>2</sup> Population and Housing Census

## Economy

The country's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, which accounts for more than 90% of its export earnings and also contributes 45% of the GDP<sup>3</sup>. The economy grew by 6.5 in 2008. (CIA fact book). The economy is estimated to grow at an average annual growth of 5.3% in the next coming years. This fast growth in economy is attributed to good fiscal policies being implemented by the government.

The agriculture sector employs 85% of the labour force. In 2004, Agriculture produce relating to tea, tobacco, and sugar accounted for 70% of Malawi's exports. However, over the past two decades the economy has experienced a cyclic decline because of droughts and balance of payments problems. (NSO: 2008)

## 1.2 Shelter Related Fact and Figures

### Access to Shelter

The estimated housing stock in Malawi is 2,919,414. Out of this figure, 2,559,991 houses are in the rural areas while 359,423 houses are in the urban areas. It is expected that this figure is likely to change once the 2008 population and housing census final report is finally released. This is so because there is a lot of construction going on in most urban areas (NSO: 1998, Luhanga). There is a deficit on housing estimated at 100,000 in the major cities of Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzuzu. The shortfall is mainly met through the mushrooming of slums and informal settlements. It is estimated that 77% of rural housing is substandard and temporary.

On the tenure of households, we have rural (customary tenure) and urban (freehold, leasehold). It is estimated that 63% of the population in the urban area are renting while 37% of the houses in the urban areas are owner occupied. (Luhanga: 2007)

The building materials used in the urban areas are burnt bricks, sun dried bricks, cement and corrugated iron sheets. On the other hand rural areas mostly use sun dried bricks, sand, wattle and grass thatch.

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<sup>3</sup> Gross Domestic Product

### ***Housing developments and Plot types***

According to the 1987 Town and Country Planning Guidelines and Standards, the main types of housing development are low density permanent detached, medium density permanent detached, terraced or multi-storey, high density permanent detached, or semi detached and high density traditional detached (Luhanga: 2007).

In general, land is zoned for a particular type of housing development and mixing of types is normally permitted. However there is no objection to permanent housing being built in traditional housing areas. All housing developments in statutory planning areas are subject to town planning control, although there are certain exceptions in traditional housing areas. In urban areas the local authority may have building by laws, which govern the design and construction of permanent buildings (Luhanga: 2007).

Plot areas are 2000–4000 m<sup>2</sup> (for low density), 1000–2000 m<sup>2</sup> (medium density), 375–1000 m<sup>2</sup> (high density detached), 300–500 m<sup>2</sup> (high-density semi-detached) and 375–1000m<sup>2</sup> for traditional housing (Luhanga: 2007).

### **Access to and cost of Basic Services/Infrastructure**

75% of the Malawi population use an improved source of drinking water. Out of this 96% live in the urban areas while 75% live in the rural areas. 20% of the people in Malawi are living in households that use improved sanitation facilities. Of these 45% are living in urban areas and 16% in rural areas. In the urban areas of Blantyre and Lilongwe, 88% of the population has access to improved drinking water sources. (MICS report, 2006).

93 percent of residents in Blantyre use solid fuel for cooking. Use of solid fuels is lower in urban areas (88 percent) than in rural areas, where it is almost universal (100 percent). About 48 percent and 44 percent of residents use firewood and charcoal respectively while 7 percent use electricity as source of energy for cooking (MICS report, 2006).

The adult literacy rate is at 69%. Out of this the adult literacy rate for women is 67% and for men is 77%. This is an improvement over the demographic and Health Survey of 2000 results where literacy rates were 49% for women and 72% for men. The 2006 MICS report further shows that adult literacy rates for age groups 15-19 and 20-24 are 73% and 66% respectively. In contrast, the 2004

Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) showed that literacy rates among people aged 15 years and above were 70% for males and 46% for females (MICS report, 2006).

The literacy rates are slightly higher in urban areas i.e. the literacy rate for men is 86% and that of the women is 85%. As can be observed, the literacy rates have still remained a challenge despite introduction of free primary school education in 1994. Primary school completion rate in 2003 was 41% and the rate of absenteeism was 17 days per student per year. Overall education attainment is higher in urban area than in rural areas. The proportion with no education in urban areas is about one third than in rural areas (MICS report, 2006).

### 1.3 Housing Policy

Malawi has just developed a National Housing Policy. This policy explains the government's decision to draw up strategies to regulate housing delivery. The government sees the policy as the first step for effective shelter delivery at local and national levels. The NHP also intends to tackle poverty by making the housing objectives and strategies consistent with the country's socio-economic goals and national endowments. Therefore, the NHP attempted to create dynamic, efficient and equitable urban land markets, to improve access to land by all, to improve living conditions in existing informal settlement, to resettle some informal settlers, to improve access to housing finance by low and medium income groups and to ensure sustainability of housing programmes. (Draft National Housing Policy, 2007)

The National Housing Policy include issues such as role of central government as an enabler and facilitator in the delivery of housing development programmes, issues of partnerships between central government, local government, assemblies, Non-Governmental Organizations, supporting partners, civil society and the homeless federation; housing for the urban poor, housing finance and cross cutting issues among others. In the new policy, Government's main goal will be to increase access to housing by all income groups. The strategies in attaining this goal will also be reviewed (Draft National Housing Policy, 2007).



In line with the policy, a set of programmes have been conceptualised some of which are Rural Housing Improvement Programme, Integrated Rural Development under the Infrastructural Services Programme (ISP) and the urban renewal programme.

The government has also created a full ministry responsible for Housing because in the past housing was under the Ministry of Lands Physical Planning and Surveys.

#### **1.4 Actors in Shelter Delivery and their Roles**

At the central government level, there is the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Surveys for the provision of policy direction, monitoring and land servicing. For house provision/production and land servicing, there is a parastatal known as Malawi Housing Corporation. At Local government level, there are the City and District and Town Assemblies for local policy, monitoring, delivery and land servicing (Luhanga: 2007).

The current existing NGOs include Habitat for Humanity, and Centre for Community Organization and Development (CCODE) for advocacy and house production. The private sector housing producers include Maone Park Limited, Kanengo Northgate, Press properties Limited. The community-based organization known as the Malawi Homeless Peoples Federation is involved in house production. In terms of research and development of shelter related delivery activities, the Malawi Polytechnic Engineering Department is involved (Luhanga: 2007).

#### **1.5 Shelter Design**

Physical Planning in Malawi is the responsibility of the Department of Physical Planning under the Ministry of Lands. The local authorities are also mandated to carry out physical planning activities but under the delegation of the Commissioner of physical planning (Luhanga: 2007).

Approval of building plans is done by the local authorities. Physical Planning/layouts of urban areas are prepared and scrutinized by the Area Planning Committee of the specific urban council and being submitted for approved by the Ministry responsible for Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development.

The preparation of these layouts by these urban councils has to abide with the urban master plan specifications and guidelines given (Luhanga: 2007). Other urban councils with the Sustainable Cities Programmes have adopted the strategic Urban Development Planning, which is more flexible, action and participatory oriented. Social inclusion is minimum; most of the time the housing financier is the decision maker. Gender issues are increasing in the field of housing development and management. Sustainable urban development is achieved when planning, designing and maintaining of the projects/programmes are done based on community's participation, needs and ownership. Norms and codes are set and being monitored by the government and local governments so as to assist and direct the planning and designing process (Luhanga: 2007).

## 2. Organisation

Blantyre District is one of the local authorities found in the Southern region of Malawi. As a Local Authority, Blantyre District Assembly has the constitutional mandate to govern and provide social economic services to its subjects.

Among other services, the Assembly performs the following services: housing estate including those for leasing purposes; control of building standards; valuation surveying of land with its properties; enforcement of lease agreement as agents of central government; valuation of public and customary land.

Apart from performing those stated function, the Assembly is also involved in coordinating all the development players which also include those of the housing sector.

## 3. Shelter Problem

The shelter problem in Blantyre is the development of squatter settlement due to shortage of decent houses following the rapid urban growth. (Kabanga: 2006) As already discussed in the Shelter Analysis section, the main cause of the shelter problem in Blantyre city has been the high rate of urbanization. The rapid urbanization rate is affecting shelter related situation in a number of ways.

In the first place, the high influx of people is putting a lot of pressure on the infrastructure and basic social amenities in the city. With only 220 sq. km of

surface land and a population density of 3007 per sq. Km the city proves to be small to support a big population. The end result of this has been pressure on the available resources thus in the process lowering their quality.

Other problems that have been affected include the following: impact on housing demand; sewerage disposal problems; pollution of streams that drain from hills and highlands that originate within the city; increased demand of energy that has resulted in serious deforestation in search of firewood and charcoal in the rural areas surrounding the city. In short, the high urbanization rate has the negative impact on the development and sustainability the city of Blantyre.

(Kabanga: 2006)

### ***Evidence of high urbanization rate***

There is all the evidence to support the view that a considerable proportion of the population is as a result of migration of people.

The high urbanization growth rate for Blantyre of 8.5%, shows that much of the population of the city of Blantyre is as the result of rural-urban migration. In contrast, the population growth of Blantyre rural has been declining. For instance, the population census results of 2008, shows that the population of the rural only grew by 1%. This clearly shows that there is rapid migration of people from the rural to the city.

The 1998 population census results hinted on this fact. The 1998 report observed that the high population growth that was registered propelled rural - urban migration due to high food insecurity in the rural areas as farm land declines. (1998 PHS; NSO)

The other piece of evidence is provided by the 1998 population results by analysis of population sex ratio. On the basis of 1998 census there were 262,815 males compared to 239,238 females thereby giving a sex ratio of 110. The report then observed that the high sex ratio suggests significant rural – urban migration in favour of men seeking jobs and other opportunities. The report further said that for Blantyre it had been a trend since the 1970s where up to 39% of the population in Blantyre City was from outside the city, mostly (52%). The report therefore concluded that migration contributes significantly to population growth. (Alma Consultancy)

The report shows that natural increase is more significant factor of population growth than migration. But the report observed that this natural increase is due to both the 'resident' and migrant population. Therefore the report concluded that between resident population and migrant population, it is migrant population who contribute significantly because of their younger age structure than the resident. In Blantyre natural increase may contribute up to 50% of population growth (Alma Consultancy).

As already stated the problem of shelter is affecting 67 percent of all the people who are living in the informal settlement.

It is the duty of the local authority in collaboration with all the concerned sectors to see to it that the problem of urbanization is well taken care of. The other important sectors include the civil society organization, NGOs and the community in general.

## 4. Proposal for Change and Improvement

Looking at the enormity of the shelter problems in the city of Blantyre, calls for a concerted effort in order to deal with the situation in a coherent and sustainable manner. No single strategy can comprehensively address the problem of shelter. Hence, there is need to tackle the problem in a multi-sectoral way. In other words, there is need to deal with the main root causes and not just the symptoms.

A number of interventions need to be carried out to ensure total control of the problem. The following are some of the things that need to be tackled:

- Decongesting the population through development and uplifting of the trading centres in the rural areas.
- Upgrading of slums and squatter settlements through among other things increase access of social services.
- To make available adequate planned land for all categories of income earners especially for the poor and vulnerable.
- The Malawi Government should implement a comprehensive National Housing Policy (NHP) to guide stakeholders in the development of housing for the urban poor in each city /urban settlement

- To establish a National Housing Fund to address problems of housing finance for households, community based organisations and Blantyre City (Alma Consultancy).

### ***The need to upgrade the Trading Centres***

In this proposal, I take the option of upgrading the trading centres as a strategy to help to stabilise the rapid urbanization rate and consequently help to address the problem of shelter. There are other programmes that will tackle the other problem areas.

In order to deal with the situation, there is need to create urban space for those people that will be added to the population. With the existing urban areas already under stress for urban facilities, there would be a need to create more new urban centres to accommodate the increase in urban population. Since the population of Malawi is expected to double in 15 years time urbanization too is expected to grow with greater proportion. (Alma Consultancy-2006)

Much as it is true that policies and strategies aimed at stopping urbanization can not succeed, efforts to arrest the rate of urbanization could be necessary so as to allow for more time to plan and provide more services to urban centres in a more orderly manner.

It is because of this that there is an urgent need to come up with strategies that will be geared at decongesting the urban centres in order to make them viable and habitable.

The primary challenges include sustaining the infrastructure and quality of life in Blantyre city and provide more space to the immigrants. Attainment of such a feat will ensure provision of appropriate urban facilities along with employment opportunities.

Realising this important need, the government of Malawi has in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy highlighted the need to come up with a programme that will promote sustainable urbanization growth. This is in a bid to urbanize more areas and provide more space for the urban dwellers.

The MGDS postulates that such an initiative of promoting urbanization growth will have to emphasize the provision of infrastructure development such as roads

and communications, energy supply, agro-processing and manufacturing (MGDS, 2006).

### ***Defining the trading centre concept***

The upgrading of trading centres will take into consideration the spatial aspects as contained in the National Physical Development Plan (NPDP). The National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) deals with spatial aspects of the nation's social and economic development (NPDP, 1994).

The National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) recognizes the existence of satellite centres as centres that exist close to a big urban centre which provides basic services to its designated catchment area as well as help to ease congestion of the main urban centre (NPDP, 1994).

The trading centres are small towns (satellite towns) existing between five to fifteen kilometres in the outskirts of the city which have about 5,000 to 10,000 people.

### ***Programme(s) to Operationalize the Upgrading of Trading Centres***

The government of Malawi has two programmes that intend to operationalize the promotion of urbanization. These programmes are namely: the Infrastructure Services Programme (ISP) and Urban Window Component of Local Development Fund. (LDF, Urban Window)

However, the programme that is more relevant to the upgrading of Trading Centres is the Local Development Fund through the Urban Window. This is so because the Infrastructure Services Programme (ISP) is geared towards rural growth centre programme through the Integrated Rural Development Programme.

The Local Development Fund is a financing mechanism which is aimed at strengthening the decentralization process in Malawi through supporting of planning and management of development of resources at the Assembly level; enhancing the accountability of Local Authorities; facilitating the implementation of the National Decentralization Policy. (LDF, Urban Window).

The urban Window component of the LDF aims to finance Socio-Economic Infrastructure in the urban centres where urban centres include cities, town, municipalities, district centres, rural Growth centres and all human settlements as

classified in the National Physical Development Plan (NPDP). .( LDF, Urban Window)

Specifically, the Urban Window component of the LDF has the following objectives:

to develop and improve socio-economic infrastructure in the urban centres to stimulate local economic development for private investment and especially for the low income groups; to improve the management capacity of the local authority in implementing larger investment. .( LDF, Urban Window)

The creation of more urban space through the upgrading of Trading Centres will require carrying out a number of tasks which include:

1. To lobby management at the ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Blantyre District Assembly to implement the upgrading of Trading Centres.
2. To include the upgrading of trading centres in the Assembly's annual budget
3. To include the upgrading of trading centres in the Annual Investment Plan and submit them to central government to be included in the sector in investment plan.
4. To write proposals and submit them to secretariat of Local Development Fund for funding.
5. To develop urban structure plan or urban development plan for the Trading centres before commencement of the project.
6. To develop a master plan for solid waste disposal, drainage, water and sanitation for each of the trading centres to benefit from the programme.
7. To conduct a research in order to ascertain economic viability, sustainability as well as their impact to the surrounding areas of the proposed trading centres. .( LDF, Urban Window)

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