

# Malawi Country Profile



## Historical events

- 1859 David Livingstone discovers Lake Nyasa (Lake Malawi)
- 1884-85 Conference of Berlin: the partitioning of Africa by European nations
- 1891 Nyasaland established as a British Protectorate
- 1964 Independence from Britain: Nyasaland becomes Malawi
- 1966 Malawi becomes a Republic
- 1994 First multi-party democratic elections: no longer a "Life President"

## Geography

- Size: Slightly smaller than Pennsylvania
- Location: East-Central, sub-Saharan Africa
  - Southern end of the Great Rift Valley (The Jordan River valley is the northern end of the Great Rift Valley, which extends over 3,000 miles to Lake Malawi in southern Africa)
  - Land-locked country, surrounded by Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique
- Lake Malawi: 3rd largest lake in Africa; 10th largest lake in the world; covers 1/5 of Malawi; home to over 700 species of tropical fish; called the "Calendar Lake"-365 miles long, 52 miles at its widest point
- Mt. Mulanje: Highest mountain in Central Africa
- Major Cities: #1-Capitol-Lilongwe; Central Region
  - #2~Blantyre-Commercial center; Southern Region
  - #3-Zomba-Old colonial capitol; Southern Region
  - #4-Mzuzu~Northern Region

## Population and Demographics

- One of the most densely populated countries in Africa
- Approximately 15 million population, 75% rural, 25% urban
- Majority (71%) of the urban population live in squatter areas of the cities
- Estimated to have one of the highest rates of urban growth in the world
- Children under 18 years of ages account for half the population
- High fertility rate of 5.7
- Life expectancy is in the 40s
- Literacy rate is 64% (69%-males; 59%-females)

## Socio-economic status

- Per capita income: 75% live in extreme poverty (\$1.25 per day)
- One of the 10 poorest countries in the world
- One of the least developed countries in the world-ranked among the 20 least-developed nations on the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) which is based on life expectancy, literacy and ability to buy goods and services
- 65% are poor and unable to meet their basic needs
- 80% of poor live in rural areas
- Vast majority are subsistence farmers ("If they don't grow it; they don't have it!")

## Mortality and health

- Malawi as the second highest maternal death rate in Africa
- Children:
  - Anemia is as high as 54%
  - 47% have stunted growth
  - 25% are underweight
  - 6% are 'wasted' due to malnutrition

- Health Services  
Two doctors for every 100,000 people (total of 248 doctors in the country)  
56.4 nurses for every 100,000 people (total 4,450 nurses in the country)
- Only 36% of the population has access to safe water
- Only 8% have access to electricity

## **HIV & AIDS**

- Estimated sero-prevalence of HIV infection in adults (age 15-49) is 10.6%
- Young females are particularly vulnerable: in the 15-19 age group, the infection outnumbers males 6 to 1
- 80,000 children under 15 are living with HIV

## **Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)**

- Over 1 million orphans in Malawi
- Approximately 70,000 orphaned annually
- 20% of Malawian households are caring for orphans
- Over 50% of orphans are cared for by grandparents
- Close to 20,000 newborn babies are infected yearly through 'mother-to-child-transmission'

## **Education**

- Primary schools (grades 1-8) have free admission; but not compulsory  
91.3% of Malawian children enter primary school  
50% drop out after grade 3  
Only 26% of those entering complete primary school  
Of those who complete, only 16% are girls  
Teacher/Student ration is 1:90
- Secondary schools (grades 9-12) require tuition fees  
Less than 10% who enter primary school proceed to secondary school
- Tertiary (colleges, universities) admission is based on selection by performance in school, leaving exams as well as entrance exams  
Less than 1% enter university
- Sanitation and hygiene in schools  
20-25% of schools do not have safe water supply  
Average of 150 pupils use one latrine-some schools have no latrines  
80% of schools have no electricity

## **Religion**

- Non-religious 0.1%
- Traditional African 6.5%
- Muslim 16%
- Christian 76%  
Catholic 23.06%  
African Independent 6.83%  
Protestant 29.47%