



Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
Evidence and Standards for Better Food Security and Nutrition Decisions



Malawi IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Report

February 2022



IPC Analysis Report on the Chronic Food Insecurity Situation

Malawi



Analysis Partners



Why this report?

The February 2022 IPC Chronic Food Insecurity (CFI) analysis report is designed to help the Government of Malawi and its development partners address the underlying causes of chronic hunger in the African country. Based on data collected between 2011 and 2021, the report is designed to offer stakeholders possible solutions to chronic hunger between 2022 and 2026. The Malawi CFI report pinpoints the persistent, protracted vulnerable populations focusing on drivers and root causes and complements global tools with a focus on specific vulnerabilities in the country.

The Process

The Malawi IPC CFI process began in August 2021 with an awareness campaign conducted for key governmental and nongovernmental institutions across Malawi, followed by the establishment of the core group and Technical Working Group. The analysis workshop took place from October 2021 to February 2022 with data collected from numerous sources and spanned over ten years from 2011 to 2021 and also involved policy analysis and review.

About the IPC Chronic Food Insecurity scale

The IPC Chronic Food Insecurity (IPC CFI) classification provides invaluable information for decision-makers that focus on medium- and long-term objectives to decrease food insecurity, making IPC an inclusive classification system that informs both crisis mitigation and prevention and structural and developmental policies and programs. In particular, the IPC Chronic Food Insecurity classification provides:

- Differentiation between severities of chronic food insecurity, which are differentiated by size and duration of gaps in quality (micro-nutrients) and quantity (energy) of dietary intake;
- Estimations of the population in different severity levels of persistent food insecurity, even in the absence of exceptional circumstances;
- Classification of areas in terms of severity of persistent food insecurity to which at least 20% of the population falls; and
- Identification of key drivers of chronic food insecurity

The IPC Chronic Food Insecurity is conducted according to the four functions of the IPC, including:

- Consensus-building;
- Methodical evaluation, review and convergence of all evidence available against global thresholds;
- Quality assurance; and
- Strategic communication for action.



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1. Report Snapshot

Key Figures | Chronic Food Insecurity | February 2022

 **5.4M**

Out of 16.6 million Malawians, approximately 5.4 million people in Malawi face moderate or Severe chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI Levels 3 and 4) due to abject poverty and recurrent shocks, among other drivers.

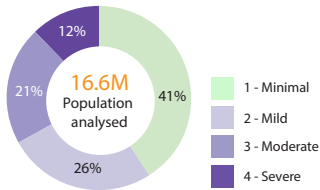


33% of the population is in IPC Level 3 or above.



70%

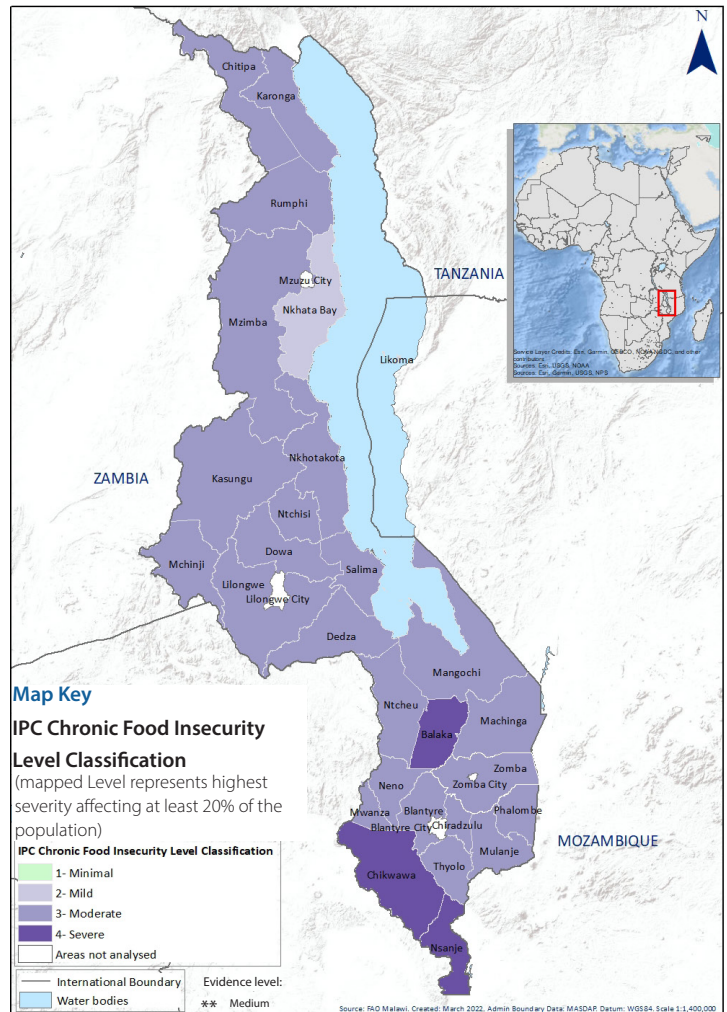
Over 70% of Malawi's population of about 19.1 million people is living below the international poverty line of \$1.90/day



Overview

Approximately 5.4 million people in Malawi living in rural and secondary urban centres are facing Moderate or Severe chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI Levels 3 and 4) due to abject poverty and recurrent shocks, among other drivers. The February Malawi IPC Chronic Food Insecurity (CFI) analysis found that an additional estimated 4.4 million people face mild food insecurity, whilst approximately 6.9 million people face No/Minimal chronic food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity in Malawi, where over 70% of the population of about 19.1 million people is living below the international poverty line of \$1.90/day, is driven by abject poverty, recurrent shocks, poor policies and implementation as well as reliance on weak livelihood strategies.

The report recommends medium to long-term interventions to address the structural causes of chronic food insecurity are necessary, particularly for the country's most vulnerable populations, including subsistence farmers, the elderly, female-headed households and others. Overall for the country, most districts were classified as IPC CFI Level 3 (Moderate), whilst two districts, Nkhatabay and Likoma were classified as IPC CFI Level 2 (Mild). Overall, most Northern and Central Regions districts were classified as Moderate CFI (Level 3). However, of major concern are districts in the Southern Region, which have the highest proportion of the population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4 (Severe). This is followed by the Central Region. The districts in the Northern Region had the lowest total population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4. Balaka, Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts in the Southern Region were classified overall as IPC CFI Level 4.



Key Drivers



Poverty

Malawi remains one of the world's poorest countries. More than half of the population lives below the country's poverty line.



Flooding

Over the last few decades, floods have frequently occurred, causing damage to infrastructure, crops, and livestock and leading to livelihood asset depletion.



Poor Policies

Agriculture remains constrained due to ineffective or inadequate implementation of policies on land and livelihood support.

Recommended Actions

Social safety nets



Social safety net programs such as cash transfers, school feeding programs, and public works can reduce poverty and are part of the country's current response priorities.



Improved nutritional practices

Scale-up of livelihood assistance for the winter wheat season, the spring season crops and vulnerable herding households are essential to prevent further deterioration of household food production capacity in rural areas.



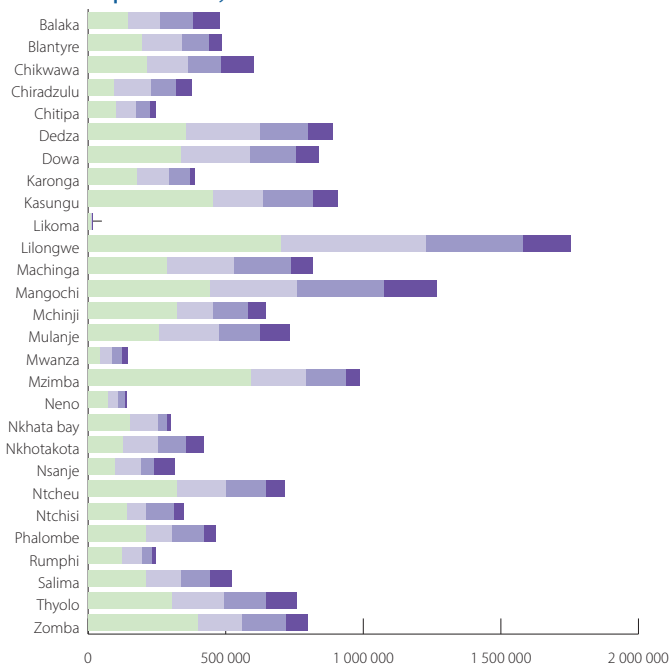
Land and agricultural policies

Government crop input support should strike a balance between maize and other commodities in order to enhance production and bolster the productivity of other food-security crops and ensure consumption of nutrient dense foods.

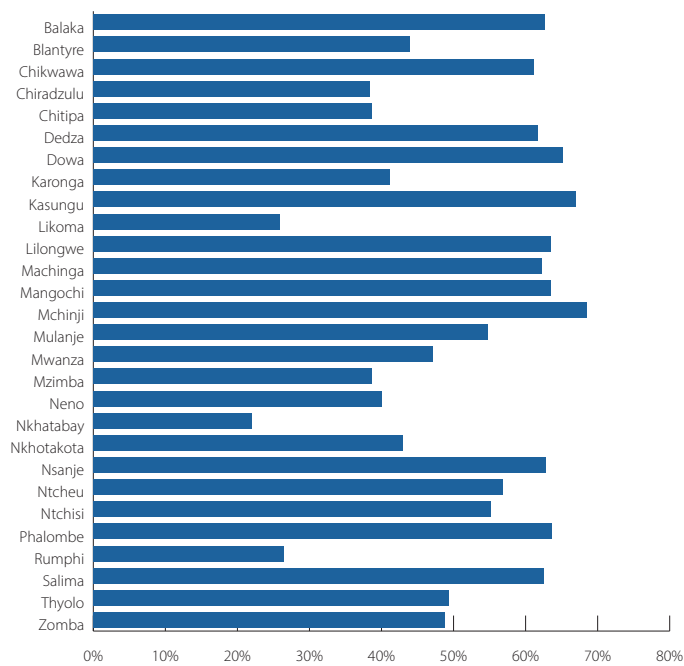
Note that the major urban centres of Lilongwe, Blantyre and Zomba were not covered by this analysis.

While monetary poverty is one of the crucial elements considered in the CFI analysis, the complexity of the socio-economic context offers numerous additional parameters that must be factored in while detecting CFI, such as formal and informal safety nets, the importance of subsistence farming in granting access to food also to the poorest segment, market integration as one element that may at times not allow full availability and access even to those who are not poor, among others. For this reason, we notice a partial consistency between CFI prevalence and poverty, with some deviation in terms of severity and magnitude in numerous districts.

Number of people in Chronic Food Insecurity by district | February 2022



Percentage of poverty rates by district | 2020



Chronic Food Insecurity by district | February 2022

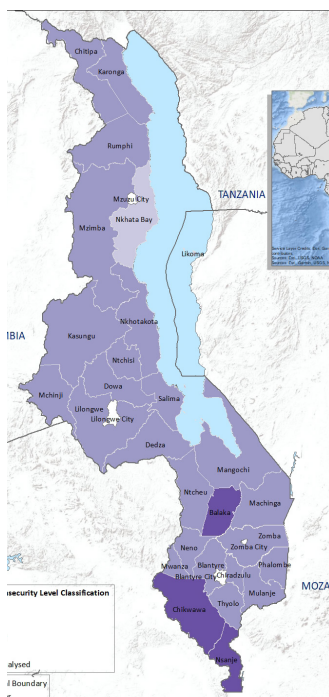
Overall, most districts in the Northern and Central Regions of Malawi were classified as Moderate CFI (Level 3). However, a concern is districts in the Southern Region, which have the highest proportion of the population in IPC CFI Level 4 (Severe). The Central Region follows this. The districts in the Northern Region have the lowest total population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4. Balaka, Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts in the Southern Region were classified overall as IPC CFI Level 4. Overall for the country, most districts were classified as IPC CFI Level 3 (Moderate), whilst two districts, Nkhatabay and Likoma were classified as IPC CFI Level 2 (Mild).

Poverty rates by district | 2020

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than half of the population lives below the national poverty line²⁶, with 51.5% living in poverty in 2017 and 50.7% in 2020. Due to poverty, more than a quarter cannot consume the recommended daily amount of food (Quantity) and with adequate dietary diversity (Quality). The three districts classified in Severe Chronic Food Insecurity (IPC CFI Level 4)—Nsanje, Balaka, and Chikwawa—are amongst Malawi’s poorest, with poverty rates of 62.8%, 62.7%, and 61.2%, respectively. Low agricultural productivity, limited opportunities in non-farm activities, volatile economic growth, rapid population growth, inadequate coverage of safety net programs and targeting challenges are all factors that contribute to poverty in Malawi.

Chronic Food Insecurity Feb 2022

Projected Acute Food Insecurity Oct 2021 - Mar 2022



Comparison of Chronic and Acute Food Insecurity

Chronic food insecurity and vulnerability to shocks are high in almost all districts, highlighting the need to put in place measures to help mitigate or lessen the impact of these shocks, as their occurrence will almost certainly lead to an increase in acute food insecurity. An area or household can experience acute or chronic food insecurity, or both, simultaneously. Recurrent acute food insecurity is frequently linked to chronic food insecurity in a bi-directional cause-and-effect relationship. On the one hand, households classified as chronically food insecure are more likely to experience acute food insecurity when shocks occur. In contrast, those experiencing recurrent acute food insecurity crises may deplete their livelihood strategies or assets, or both, and are more likely to experience chronic food insecurity.

MAP KEY

IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Level Classification
(mapped Level represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Mild
- 3 - Moderate
- 4 - Severe


MAP KEY

IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification
(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine



2. Overview of Chronic Food Insecurity in Malawi

FEBRUARY 2022		
 <p>33% of the population</p> <p>5,4 million people facing moderate and severe chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI level 3 and 4)</p> <p>IN NEED OF ACTION</p>	Level 4 Severe	1,900,000
	Level 3 Moderate	3,400,000
	Level 2 Mild	4,400,000
	Level 1 Minimal	6,900,000

The results of this IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Analysis will remain valid for the next 3-5 years in absence of unusual shocks.

The Malawi IPC Chronic Food Insecurity (CFI) analysis conducted in February 2022 based on data collected between 2011 to 2021 revealed that approximately 5.4 million people in Malawi are facing Moderate or Severe chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI Levels 3 and 4). In response, medium to long-term interventions to address the structural causes of chronic food insecurity are necessary. An additional estimated 4.4 million people are facing mild food insecurity, whilst approximately 6.9 million people are facing No/Minimal chronic food insecurity.

Overall, most districts in the Northern and Central Regions were classified as Moderate CFI (Level 3). However, of major concern are districts in the Southern Region, which have the highest proportion of the population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4 (Severe). This is followed by the Central Region. The districts in the Northern Region has the lowest total population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4. Balaka, Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts in the Southern Region were classified overall as IPC CFI Level 4. Overall for the country, most districts were classified as IPC CFI Level 3 (Moderate), whilst two districts, Nkhatabay and Likoma, were classified as IPC CFI Level 2 (Mild).

The main drivers of chronic food insecurity in the most-affected districts are recurrent shocks and hazards, particularly floods and prolonged dry spells; poor livelihood strategies that are vulnerable to the said shocks whilst lacking resilience; poor policy implementation and high poverty levels.

Over the last few decades, floods have been occurring frequently, causing damage to infrastructure, crops, and livestock and leading to livelihood asset depletion. In addition, Malawi has, over the years, articulated various development policies and programs to promote growth and reduce poverty within agriculture and related sectors. Despite the crucial role that agriculture plays, the performance of the sector remains constrained due to poor implementation of these strategies and interventions.

Malawi remains one of the world's poorest countries. More than half of the population lives below the country's poverty line (National Statistics Office (NSO), 2021) and a quarter are in extreme poverty. Due to high levels of poverty, Malawi continues to rely on low value livelihoods strategies. The most common low value strategies reported include casual labour and self-employment, such as the sale of firewood and charcoal.

Table 1: Level Name and Description of Chronic Food Insecurity

Level 1 No/Minimal Chronic Food Insecurity	Level 2 Mild Chronic Food Insecurity	Level 3 Moderate Chronic Food Insecurity	Level 4 Severe Chronic Food Insecurity
In a common year, households are continuously able to access and consume a diet of acceptable quantity and quality for an active and healthy life. household livelihoods are sustainable and resilient to shocks. households are not likely to have stunted children.	In a common year, households are able to access a diet of adequate quantity but do not always consume a diet of adequate quality. household livelihoods are borderline sustainable, and resilience to shocks is limited. households are not likely to have stunted children.	In a common year, households have ongoing mild deficits in food quantity and/or seasonal food quantity deficits for 2 to 4 months of the year, and consistently do not consume a diet of adequate quality. household livelihoods are marginally sustainable, and their resilience to shocks is very limited. households are likely to have moderately stunted children.	In a common year, households have seasonal deficits in quantity of food for more than 4 months of the year and consistently do not consume a diet of adequate quality. household livelihoods are very marginal and are not resilient. households are likely to have severely stunted children.



3. Key Results and Drivers

3.1. Classification Results

According to the chronic food insecurity analysis conducted by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) and its partners in February 2022, 33 percent of Malawi's rural population (approximately 5.4 million people) are facing moderate (IPC CFI Level 3) to severe (IPC CFI Level 4) chronic food insecurity, with 12 percent of the country (1.9 million people) facing the highest level (IPC CFI Level 4 – Severe). Balaka, as well as the two Lower Shire Valley districts of Chikwawa and Nsanje, are classified in IPC CFI Level 4, with a combined level 3 and level 4 population of 45, 40 and 40 percent respectively. The remaining 10 districts in the Southern Region have been classified in IPC CFI Level 3 (Moderate) with Moderate and Severe chronic food insecurity affecting 23 percent and 13 percent of the population, respectively. All districts in the Central Region, including Dedza, Dowa, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Nkhosakota, Mchinji, Ntcheu, Ntchisi, and Salima, were classified in IPC Chronic Level 3 (Moderate), with 21 percent and 11 percent of the region's population suffering from Moderate and Severe chronic food insecurity, respectively. In the Northern Region, four districts – Chitipa, Karonga, Mzimba, and Rumpi – were classified as IPC CFI Level 3 (Moderate), with the region having a population of 464, 704 (20 percent of the population) suffering from Moderate and Severe chronic food insecurity, respectively. The remaining two districts, Nkhatabay and Likoma, have been classified as IPC CFI Level 2 (Mild), despite having 15 percent of their population suffering from chronic food insecurity, broken down as Moderate (10 percent) and Severe (5 percent).

The very poor and poor as defined by the Household Economy Approach (HEA)² are the household groups most likely affected by chronic food insecurity, as they are reliant on unsustainable livelihood strategies and spend a large percentage of their income (more than 50 percent) on food purchases. The main sources of income for the very poor, which are also volatile and at times limited by restrictions, are crop sales, livestock sales (albeit with low livestock ownership), casual labour (which relies on casual labour opportunities, agriculture season performance, and the incomes of the middle and better-off wealth groups), remittances and self-employment (including the sale of firewood and charcoal). The very poor's most important source of food is from their own crop production, relying mostly on rain fed agriculture on limited land with an average farm size of less than one hectare, which highlights their vulnerability to shocks. This food source is followed in importance by in-kind payments, purchases, food aid and wild food, including fishing. In addition, they typically have poor access to, and low use, of agricultural inputs. The very poor also generally live below the national poverty datum line. The Malawi Government set the national poverty line at MWK 70,899, MWK 109,797, MWK 164,191 and MWK 165,869 per person annually for 2004, 2010, and 2016 respectively (in January 2017 values) and 2020 respectively.³ The households that do not consume more than the set values are considered as living in poverty. The very poor households also quickly experience asset depletion and are the least likely to recover from the shock. The other two household groups – middle-income and better-off – are less affected by chronic food insecurity in comparison since they have larger incomes, greater livestock holdings, and larger asset ownership in general. However, as demonstrated in the CFI analysis classifications, these household groups are still likely facing both minimal and mild chronic food insecurity and they nevertheless require interventions to address the specific key drivers affecting them.

The social characteristics in some of the districts in IPC CFI Levels 3 and 4 (Moderate and Severe) are that women generally live at their spouses' village homes, with men dominating decision-making while women and children

² In HEA, wealth (i.e., Wealth groups Very poor, Poor, Middle, Better Off) is considered in relative (and local) terms - Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee, Livelihood Baseline Profiles, 2016

³ International Food Policy Research Institute, (IFPRI), Poverty Facts, 2019

have less authority over crucial decisions. Intra household decision-making statistics showed over 40 percent of the decisions were made by men whilst 30 percent were made by women and an additional 30 percent were jointly made⁴. Malawi has been found to have a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.565, ranking it 142 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index. The GI reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity⁵. This has had a negative impact on the districts’ socioeconomic growth, affecting health and education levels.

Malnutrition among women and children is still a major public health and development issue in Malawi, contributing to preventable child deaths. Malawi has committed to eliminate all forms of malnutrition by 2030 as a signatory to the global Sustainable Development Goals, and has achieved tremendous progress in lowering stunting by 10 percent in just five years⁶. Despite these significant advancements, malnutrition remains a persistent problem in the country’s rural areas. Stunting (low height for age) is more prevalent in rural areas, with about 39 percent of children in rural Malawi stunted compared to only 25 percent of children in urban areas⁷. Stunting affects 37 percent of Malawian children, whereas only 8 percent of children aged 6-23 months consume the minimum acceptable diet⁸; this has far-reaching implications for human capital, economic productivity, and overall national development.

3.2. Linkages between Acute and Chronic Food Insecurity

Chronic food insecurity cannot be measured by looking at a series of acute food insecurity episodes. While IPC acute food insecurity analysis focuses on identifying food insecurity of any severity that threatens people’s lives or livelihoods at any time, regardless of the causes, context, or duration, IPC chronic food insecurity analysis focuses on identifying persistent food insecurity of any severity that threatens people’s long-term well-being. While the IPC acute food insecurity analysis provides a “snapshot” of food security conditions, with greater sensitivity to more severe conditions (e.g. insufficient food intake and unsustainable livelihood change), the IPC chronic food insecurity analysis focuses on food insecurity that persists over time, even in the absence of particularly bad circumstances.

While analysing chronic food insecurity, the quantity and quality of dietary intake are considered, as well as seasonal variations. The duration of food intake deficits in quantity and quality over the course of a year helps in determining the severity of chronic food insecurity. Malawi has been analysing acute food insecurity using IPC for the past five years to inform actions that focus on short-term interventions to prevent, mitigate, and/or reduce severe food insecurity that threatens lives or livelihoods. This report informs actions aimed at improving the quality and quantity of food consumption primarily in the medium and long term, but also linked to short-term objectives.

The relationship between acute and chronic food insecurity in Malawi can be described in Table 2, based on the maps in Figure 3. Although the recommendations will be detailed later, the table provides a rough overview of anticipated activities.

⁴ Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee, (MVAC), Rural Households Assessment, 2018







⁵ United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP), Human Development Index, 2020

⁶ United Nations Children’s Fund, (UNICEF), Sustainable Development Goals, 2021

⁷ United Nations Children’s Fund, (UNICEF), The Nutrition Programme in Malawi, 2018

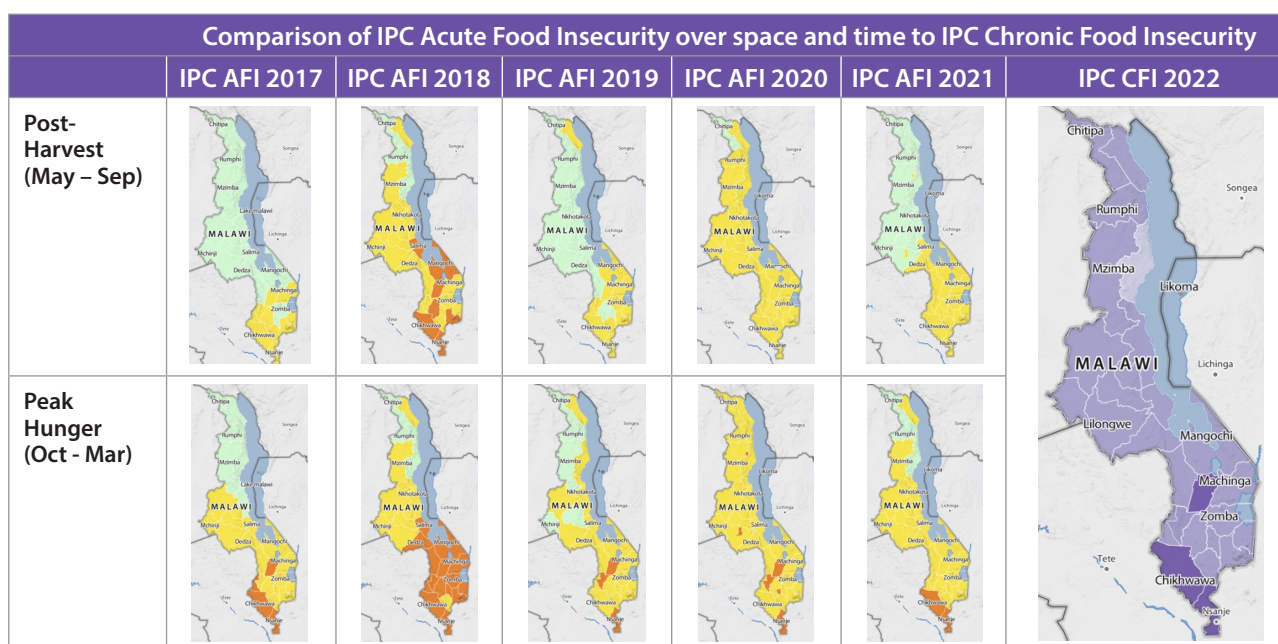
⁸ World Food Programme, (WFP), World Food Programme Partners with Ireland to fight Malnutrition in Malawi, 2021

Table 2: Relationship between Acute and Chronic Food Insecurity

Districts	Severity of Food Insecurity	Strategic Objectives
Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mangochi, Mulanje Mwanza, Neno, Phalombe, Thyolo, Zomba, Chitipa, Karonga, Mzimba, Rumphu, Kasungu, Dedza, Dowa, Lilongwe, Mchinji, Nkhotakota, Ntcheu, Ntchisi, Salima	 High Chronic  Low Acute	Long-term objectives (development)
Balaka, Nsanje, Chikwawa	 High Chronic  High Acute	Short-term objectives (relief) linked to long-term objectives (development)
Likoma, Nkhata Bay	 Low Chronic  Low Acute	Long term objectives to preserve livelihoods

Chronic food insecurity and vulnerability to shocks are high in almost all districts, highlighting the need to put in place measures to help mitigate or lessen the impact of these shocks, as their occurrence will almost certainly lead to an increase in acute food insecurity. An area or household can experience acute or chronic food insecurity, or both, simultaneously. In a bi-directional cause-and-effect relationship, recurrent acute food insecurity is frequently linked to chronic food insecurity. On one hand, households classified as chronically food insecure are more likely to experience acute food insecurity when shocks occur, whereas households experiencing recurrent acute food insecurity crises may deplete their livelihood strategies or assets, or a combination of both, and are more likely to experience chronic food insecurity.

Figure 3: Linkages between IPC Acute and IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Classification



3.3. Key Drivers

3.3.1. Recurrent/Usual Risks (on-going or usual stresses)

Malawi is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change, and ranked fifth on the top 10 countries affected by climate change in Africa in 2019⁹. Subsistence farmers are projected to be affected in a variety of ways by climate-related stressors. Increased exposure to extreme climate events such as droughts, dry spells, and floods, as well as erratic and unreliable rainfall, are among them¹⁰. The frequency and intensity of climate shocks has increased in Malawi during the last decade, affecting primarily the Southern and Central Regions, with some minor impacts in the Northern Region. Floods, prolonged dry spells, pest infestation on crops, severe winds, and price shocks have been recurring shocks in the country for over a decade. Floods continue to affect the agricultural sector, the main source of income for rural people in the country, and have inflicted devastation practically every year in the past decade.

In some regions of the country there have been yearly prolonged dry spells (defined in Malawi as 14 consecutive days with 0 to 2 millimetres of cumulative rainfall)¹¹ during the crop growing season, with crops at times reaching permanent wilting points, resulting in production loss and, over time, limiting food availability and accessibility. Households' overreliance on maize coupled with the crop's susceptibility to droughts and dry spells exposes households to food insecurity – and the impact will likely continue to be felt, especially considering the impact of climate change. Some parts of the Southern Region are characterized by low-lying areas with semi-arid conditions, making them susceptible to both dry spells and droughts. In the same region, other areas are prone to floods as a result of runoff from the upper highlands¹². Poor rain performance has direct consequences on household food and livelihood security, as lower yields are linked to household food consumption as well as access to cash if households opt to sell a portion of their harvest. Moreover, the demand for pre/post-harvest labour decreases, as there are less harvesting opportunities available.

Recurrent shocks and hazards have thus had a persistent and long-term impact on Malawi's chronically food insecure populations and this is worse when combined with generally low asset ownership and poor recovery, continuing to depreciate households' food insecurity levels. The main recurrent shocks for the period 2011-2021 are depicted in Figure 4. The frequency of occurrence was measured using the number of years the hazard occurred, disregarding how many times in a given year it may have occurred.

In Southern Region areas, a combination of flooding (causing waterlogging, nutrient leaching, etc.) and prolonged dry spells are now an annual phenomenon. This results in crop write-offs, limiting food availability and access and, as a result, impacting food consumption outcomes and, eventually, leading to chronic malnutrition. Furthermore, most areas have poor soil quality due to long periods of farming on the same pieces of land, necessitating the need to apply fertilizers to achieve a good harvest. However, fertilizer remains out of reach for most poor people, particularly those who are not on the Government's Affordable Input Programme (AIP). The AIP is a programme that allows Malawian subsistence farmers to purchase farm inputs at a subsidized cost, with the government paying over 70% of the cost. The programme targeted about 4,279,100 people in 2020¹³.

The other recurrent hazards are frequent pest infestations such as Fall Army Worm, which was declared a disaster in 20 of 28 districts in 2017¹⁴ and is now persistent in the country, causing crop damage and reducing crop production. Although livestock ownership has increased in Malawi over the past decade compared to the previous decade, livestock ownership is still not optimum, with about 40 percent of households reported

⁹ Germanwatch, Climate Risk Index, 2021

¹⁰ International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), World Bank, Climate Smart Agriculture Country Profile, 2018

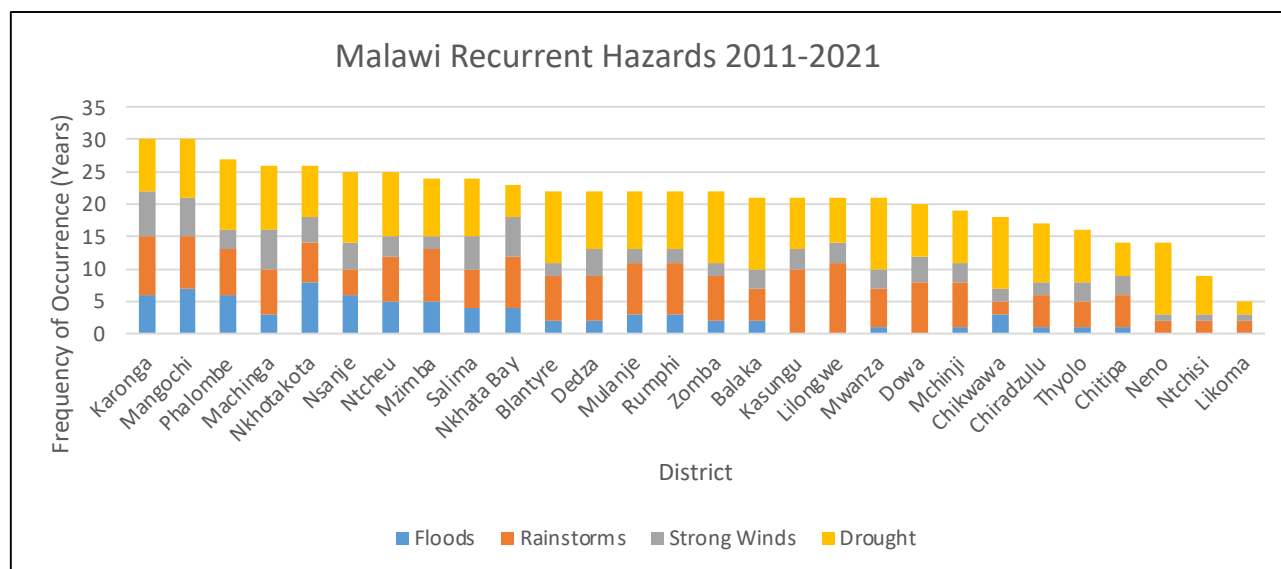
¹¹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Anticipatory Action Framework, 2021-2022

¹² Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee, Livelihood Baseline Profiles, 2016

¹³ Government of Malawi Anti-Corruption Bureau, Report on the Monitoring of the 2020-2021 Affordable Inputs Programme, 2021

¹⁴ <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/-farmers-battle-armyworms>

Figure 4: Frequency of recurrent hazards in Malawi 2011-2021



Source: United Nations World Food Programme Analysis using MVAC and Department of Disaster Management (DoDMA) Data

to be engaged in livestock farming in 2020 and of these, only 7 percent owning cattle¹⁵. Livestock production is also marred by livestock diseases, which are also recurring and further deteriorate livestock holdings and affect incomes from both livestock sales and the sale of livestock products. High food prices, particularly for the main staple, maize grain, during the lean season, are cyclical in nature, limiting peoples’ access to food on a yearly basis. Further, high fuel prices have been limiting food access annually, creating increases in the costs of transportation of food items and resulting in higher food prices.

3.3.2. Livelihood Strategies

Households in Malawi depend on a number of options to obtain cash and food. Food is mostly obtained from households’ own production and market purchases. Some households also source food from in-kind payments as well as by collecting different wild foods from the natural environment. Depending on households’ wealth, income options vary. Poorer households generally sell their labour to wealthier households in exchange for cash. Nearly all households, but especially wealthier ones, earn cash from selling a portion of their harvest. Livestock and livestock product sales also supplement households’ income, but the degree to which households are able to exploit this option depends on the number and type of livestock owned. Finally, some households engage in self-employment opportunities, ranging from charcoal sales to petty trading of commodities¹⁶.

Agricultural activities provide a large proportion of household income in practically all of the country’s regions when compared to other sources of income. About 85 percent of households were engaged in agricultural activities in Malawi in the 2018-2019 season¹⁷. Several climatic shocks have impacted agriculture in the last decade, resulting in low productivity and yields, which have impacted household food stocks and subsequently their food consumption patterns. In addition, the soil on the limited arable land is overused and highly susceptible to erosion and degradation during floods and dry spells¹⁸. Despite that production persistently does not meet

¹⁵ The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS 5) Report, 2020

¹⁶ Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC), Malawi Livelihood Baseline Profiles, 2016

¹⁷ The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS 5) Report, 2020

¹⁸ United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Climate Risks Profile, Malawi, 2019

all of their food needs, all wealth groups continue to rely on crop production for both food and income, amidst the frequent shocks affecting these livelihoods. There is thus a phenomenon of limited variability and flexibility to move from the typical livelihoods to those that may be more suitable to the prevailing situation.

Furthermore, a large proportion of households are self-employed, engaging in petty trade that does not provide adequate income, while others rely on low-value livelihood strategies such as casual labour, which is reliant on the incomes of the middle and upper classes and thus vulnerable to external shocks. The common low value strategies that were reported include *ganyu*¹⁹ labour, charcoal making, firewood harvesting, fishing and various income-generating activities such as mat-making and petty trade. These livelihood strategies are affected by the lack of adequate financial capital, hence those who practice them continuously largely remain under the poverty datum line. These livelihood strategies include also those that mainly rely on rain fed agriculture which is vulnerable to weather-related shocks and lack of resilience. These in turn lead to low financial capital, poor food consumption patterns, including poor dietary diversity, and a continuous state of food insecurity.

In most districts, households' livelihood security is low, particularly in Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts where, in a non-exceptional year, roughly 21 percent of the population lives below the livelihood protection threshold²⁰ without the aid of humanitarian assistance according to the Household Economy Approach (HEA)²¹. This livelihood protection threshold represents the total income required to sustain local livelihoods. This means the total income required to cover all survival costs, maintain access to basic social services (routine medical and education), maintain productive assets in the medium to longer-term, and support a locally acceptable standard of living. In developmental terms, these households need interventions to protect their livelihoods²². In the majority of livelihood zones in Malawi, a comparison of households' total income in a typical year against the livelihood protection thresholds in their livelihood zone showed that they have livelihood resilience scores close to, though above, 1. A score of 1 means households have just enough to cover their basic livelihood protection needs without any cushion, while a score above 1 means households are able to cover their livelihood protection needs with a cushion. However, the closer to 1, the less of a buffer the households have, and the further away from 1 the better livelihoods security they have²³. Figure 5 illustrates Malawi household livelihood resilience scores²⁴ weighted, hence representing all wealth groups, by livelihood zones. If households have almost no gap between their total income and their livelihoods protection costs, any small disruption in cash and/or food income (through shocks), can result in a deficit and renders the households unable to recover quickly. If they do recover, they may not reach their previous levels and hence may be considered not resilient. On the other hand, a bigger gap between total income and the livelihoods protection threshold means households will tend to be far more resilient in the face of one or more shocks. The households with the highest livelihood resilience scores, in the better-off wealth group in Malawi, had as high as 2.32, which is a better scenario where they meet their basics and more, and hence can easily cope and bounce back in the face of external shocks.

¹⁹ Working for others for a daily wage is referred to as *ganyu* in Chichewa. *Ganyu* can take several forms, ranging from agricultural labour in the fields to grain processing, construction work, and other non-agricultural jobs

²⁰ Livelihood Protection Threshold represents the household-level costs of generating food and livelihood security in a particular livelihood zone in the medium to long term without depleting asset levels unsustainably. Save the Children, HEA COD, Reducing the Risk of Disasters, HEA Evidence, 2013

²¹ Household Economy Approach (HEA) is a livelihoods-based framework for analysing the way people obtain access to the things they need to survive and prosper. Save the Children, HEA COD, Reducing the Risk of Disasters, HEA Evidence, 2013

^{22,23} Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee, (MVAC), Malawi Livelihood Baseline Profiles, 2016

²⁴ In HEA, a household's resilience score is the ratio of their total income after a shock to the cost of protecting their livelihood (the livelihoods protection threshold). Save the Children, HEA COD, HEA Evidence, 2013

3.3.3. Natural Capital

While forests provide wild foods and fuel which are important to the poorest and poor households, the rate of deforestation in the districts is alarming. From 2001 to 2020, Malawi lost 193kha of relative tree cover, equivalent to a 13% decrease since 2000 and < 0.1% of the global total²⁵, hence affecting access to wild foods as well as firewood and charcoal for food preparation. In addition, although nearly all households have access to agricultural land, the land sizes are generally limited. Land holdings for the very poor and poor have an average of less than 1 hectare across smallholder farmers²⁶. Figure 8 shows the reduction of arable land in Malawi through the years.

Figure 5: Weighted household resilience scores 2015²⁵



Source: MVAC- Malawi Livelihood Baseline Profiles

In conclusion, because many smallholder households in Malawi are generally not resilient, this is a structural cause of their chronic food insecurity as they are susceptible to the annual recurrent shocks and continually face food deficits.

3.3.4. Poverty

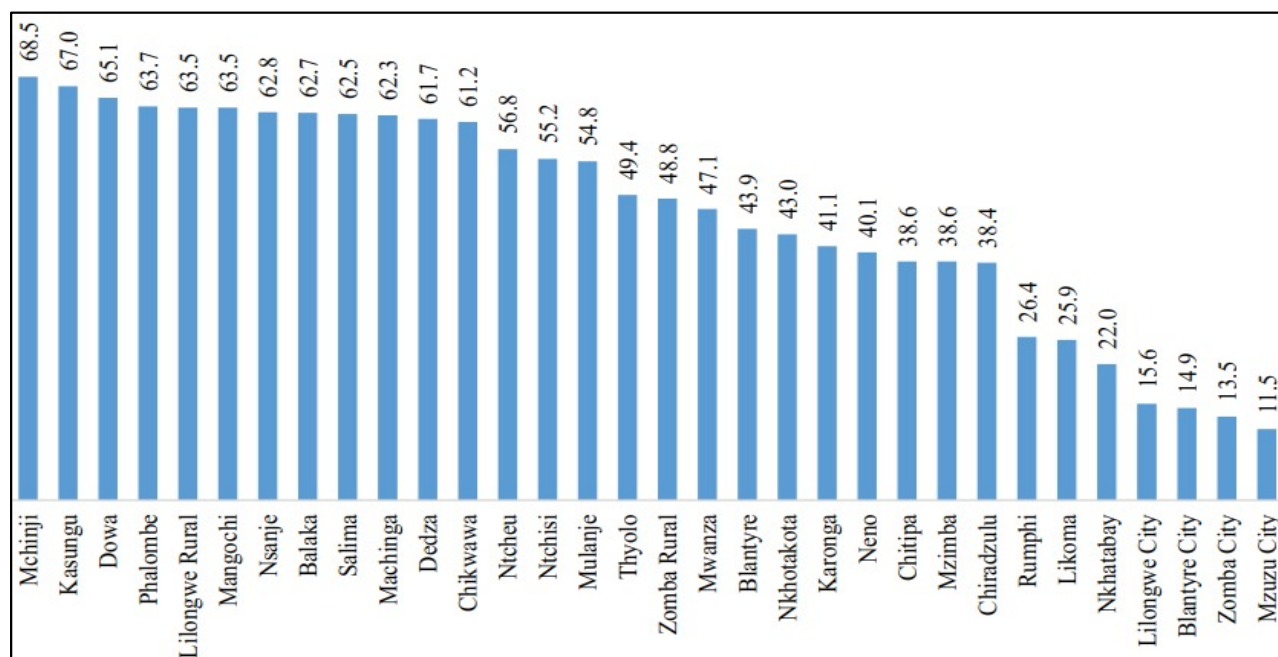
Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than half of the population lives below the national poverty line²⁶, with 51.5 percent living in poverty in 2017 and 50.7 percent in 2020. Due to poverty, more than a quarter are unable to consume the recommended daily amount of food (Quantity) and with the adequate dietary diversity (Quality). The three districts classified in Severe Chronic Food Insecurity (IPC CFI Level 4)—Nsanje, Balaka, and Chikwawa—are amongst Malawi’s poorest, with poverty rates of 62.8 percent, 62.7 percent, and 61.2 percent, respectively. Low agricultural productivity, limited opportunities in non-farm activities, volatile

²⁵ Livelihood zone acronyms: BPH Border Productive Horticulture (BOR) ; CHI Chitipa Millet and Maize ; CKA Central Karonga ; KAS Kasungu Lilongwe Plain ; LSH Lower Shire Valley ; MSH Middle Shire Valley ; MSK Misuku Hills ; MZS Mzimba Self-Sufficient ; NKA Northern Karonga ; NKH Nkhata Bay Cassava Zone ; NLS Northern Lakeshore ; PHA Phalombe Plain/Lake Chilwa ; PHI Phirilongwe Hills ; RVE Rift Valley Escarpment ; SHI Shire Highlands ; SLA Southern Lakeshore ; TMT Thyolo Mulanje Tea Estates ; WRM Western Rumphii Mzimba.

²⁶ National Statistics Office, Malawi Poverty Report, 2020

economic growth, rapid population growth, and inadequate coverage of safety net programs and targeting challenges are all factors that contribute to poverty in Malawi.

Figure 6: District poverty rates 2020



Source: National Statistical Office

The IPC CFI analysis included the following indicators of poverty: landlessness, unemployment, illiteracy, living standards and malnutrition under the topics that follow.

3.3.5. Financial Capital

Malawi has a high unemployment rate and the majority of the unemployed have been identified as between the ages of 15 and 30, indicating that it is the youth who are who are unable to secure jobs. The root cause of youth underemployment and unemployment in Malawi has been identified as a lack of jobs which is caused by limited structural transformation of the economy²⁷. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2018, the percentage of young men that are neither in education nor in employment (NEET) is 7 percent, whereas for women the percentage is 20 percent. It has also been found that among the portion of youth in the labour force, many work in the informal sector and/or face underemployment, and hence 25 percent of youth in Malawi are underemployed²⁸. In terms of overall education, which is a determining factor for employment, for the population 15 years and above in Malawi, about 13 percent were reported as having never attended school in 2020 and of these, around 50 percent cited the main reason as lack of money for school fees²⁹. The lack of education is one of the many reasons they become unemployable, as one of the

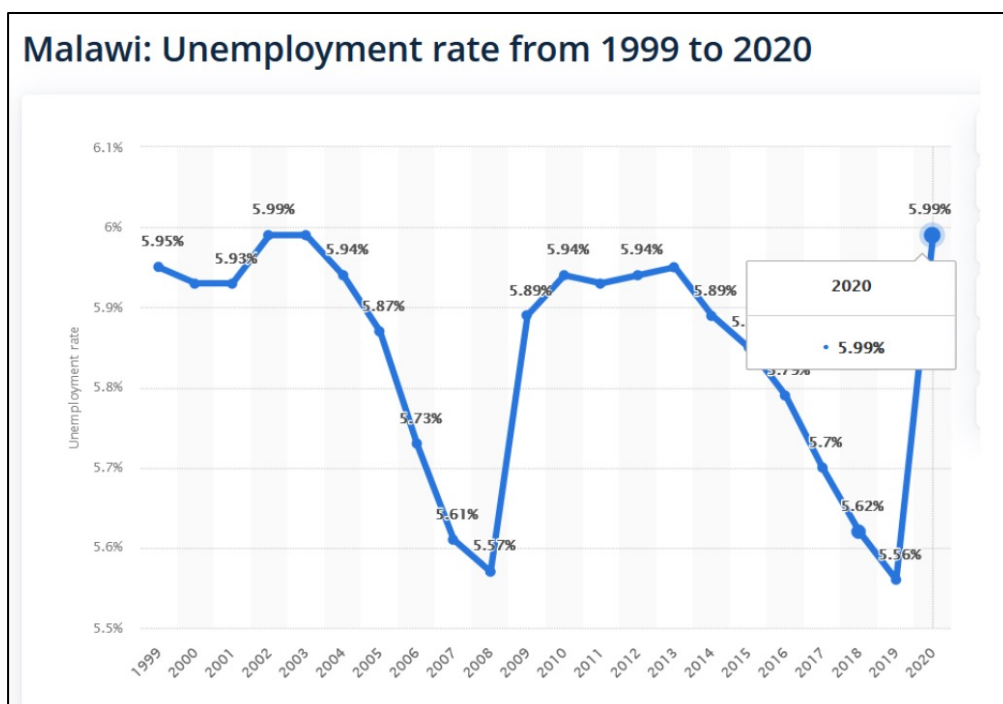
²⁷ National Planning Commission, Malawi Priorities Policy Project, 2021.

²⁸ National Planning Commission (NPC) Malawi, Copenhagen Consensus Center and the African Institute for Development policy (AFIDEP). The Malawi priorities Project, 2021.

²⁹ The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS 5) Report, 2020.

only sectors that would possibly employ them is the domestic help sector which does not require much in terms of skills but still demands some literacy for communication purposes. Almost all youth were employed in the two lowest skill tiers of employment as found by the National Planning Commission, and this included youth that had finished secondary and tertiary education³⁰. Figure 7 shows the overall unemployment rates in Malawi, which had been decreasing since the beginning of the decade but recently increased in 2020 due to the exceptional Covid-19 circumstances.

Figure 7: Malawi unemployment rates 2020



Source: World Bank

3.3.6. Human Capital

Malawi's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2019 was 0.483, which put the country in the low human development category, positioning it at 174 out of 189 countries and territories³¹ despite the improvements noted during the past decade. Across the country, literacy levels have remained low with about 30 percent of the population aged 15 years and above classified as illiterate in the 2018 population census. Literacy levels of females have been increasing since 1987 when only 32 percent were considered literate to 69 percent in 2018, but more still remains to be done³². Further, high illiteracy rates could explain the high reliance on casual labour

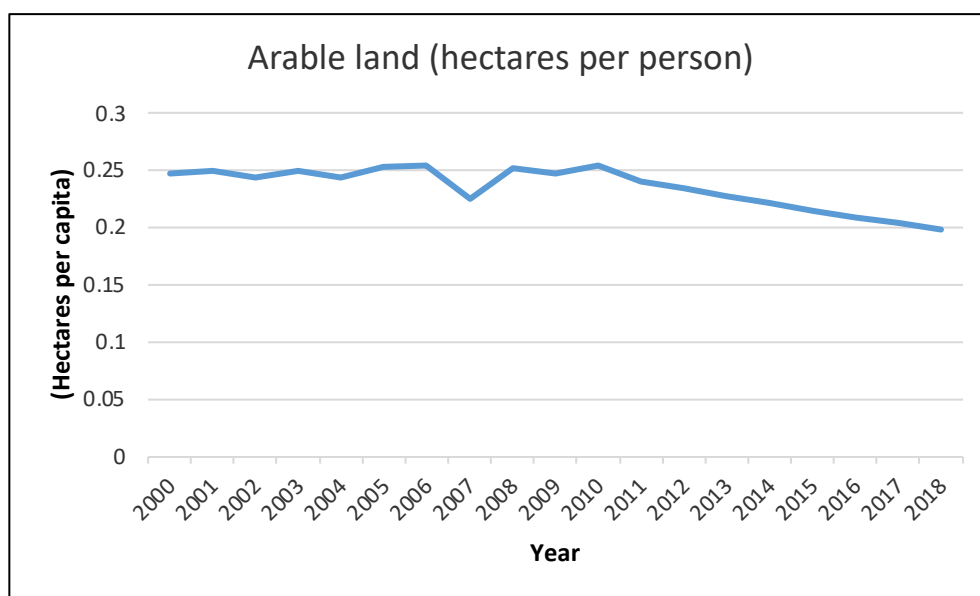
³⁰ National Planning Commission (NPC) Malawi, Copenhagen Consensus Center and the African Institute for Development policy (AFIDEP). The Malawi priorities Project, 2021.

³¹ UNDP, Human Development Index Report, 2020

³² National Statistics office, Population and Housing Census 2018

which further exposes the population to poor food security. The high illiteracy rate and reliance on casual labour escalate the poverty rates in most regions of Malawi. As such, many smallholder households do not have adequate purchasing power to buy sufficient quality and quantity essential food and non-food items.

Figure 8: Arable Land in Malawi 2000-2018



Source: World Bank

3.3.7. Policies, Institutions, and Processes

Malawi has developed many development policies and programs in the agriculture and related sectors over the years to encourage growth and reduce poverty. Despite agriculture’s significant role in the economy and lives of smallholder households, the sector’s success is hampered by ineffective implementation of these plans and policies. Weaknesses in the conceptualization and design of the policies as well as insufficient district-level coordination mechanisms have been blamed for poor implementation.

As indicated in Table 3, this CFI analysis assessed the impact and implementation of numerous existing policies at the national and district levels.

³³ Global Forest Watch, Malawi Forest Change, 2021

³⁴ MVAC, Malawi Livelihood Baseline Profiles, 2016

Table 3: Policies and programmes that have had an impact on food security.

Policy/Strategy/Agreement	Description
Vision 2020	A long-term strategy drafted by the Government of Malawi that prioritized agriculture and food security to foster economic growth and development.
Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS)	Medium -term policy framework for social and economic development adopted to mitigate poverty through sustained economic growth and infrastructure development.
National Agriculture Policy (NAP)	The overarching national policy on agriculture that guides the agricultural transformation agenda in the sector, provides policy coherence, and enhances institutional efficiency and coordination.
Agriculture Sector-Wide Approach-Support Project II (ASWAp-SP II)/ National Agriculture Investment Plan	Prioritized investment plan in the agricultural sector based on priority agricultural elements of the NAP, the MGDS and is aligned to the African Union (AU)/Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP)/Malabo framework.
National Irrigation Policy (NIP)	The national policy that spells out the priorities for investment and institutional reform to facilitate increased sustainable irrigation in Malawi; the NIP is closely aligned to the NAP.
CAADP Compact/Malabo Declaration	A strategic framework of the New Partnership for Africa's development efforts and partnerships in the agriculture sector.
New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition	A country cooperation framework that stipulates national policy reform commitments to provide support within the agricultural sector with the overall goal of facilitating increases in private investment and scaling innovation.
Other Agriculture Sub- Sector Policies and Strategies	Agricultural Extension Policy, Fertilizer Policy, Contract Farming Strategy, Seed Policy, Farmer Organizations Development Strategy, Agriculture-Nutrition Strategy, Fisheries Policy, Livestock Fisheries Policy, Livestock Development Strategy, Agriculture Development Strategy, Agriculture Strategic Plan.
National Export Strategy (NES)	A strategy formulated to provide a prioritized road map for developing Malawi's productive base to allow for export competitiveness, export diversification, and overall economic growth and empowerment.
National Trade Policy	A policy framework that seeks to make Malawi a globally competitive export-oriented economy by driving structural transformation of the productive sector and generating higher and sustainable livelihoods through trade that recognizes the role of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and vulnerable groups. It aims to achieve this goal by supporting and managing domestic market structures and integration in regional and global markets through value chains with the ambition of increasing exports.
National Industry Policy	A policy framework that seeks to increase the proportion of manufacturing in GDP through structural transformation of the Malawian economy. It specifically aims at increasing productivity of the industrial sector, increasing diversification of industrial products, increasing value addition of primary products, and reducing trade deficits.
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	A set of 17 interlinked global targets set by the United Nations General Assembly that were set to be achieved by 2030; several countries committed to addressing several human development challenges, including poverty, health, hunger and nutrition, gender equality, education, climate change and environmental sustainability.
Southern African Development Community Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (SADC RISDP)	A 15-year regional integration development framework that sets the priorities, policies, and strategies for achieving the long-term goals of the SADC.
Multi-sectoral Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan	The Multi-sectoral Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan was recently reviewed and approved to provide guidance and direction on strategies to improve nutrition in Malawi; it seeks to create awareness on the magnitude of the nutrition problems and impacts on the individual, household, and national economic development, growth, and prosperity; and galvanize the nation towards the Malabo and SDG long-term targets of eradicating undernutrition in Malawi.
Compact2025/ Scaling-Up Nutrition Initiative	Malawi is party to the Compact2025, which is an international initiative designed to support countries in achieving the Malabo and SDGs of the International Food Policy Research Institute, which has long-term targets of eradicating hunger and undernutrition. The Scaling Up Nutrition is a global initiative that Malawi is party to, which also aims to support strategic investments and interventions to help eliminate undernutrition.

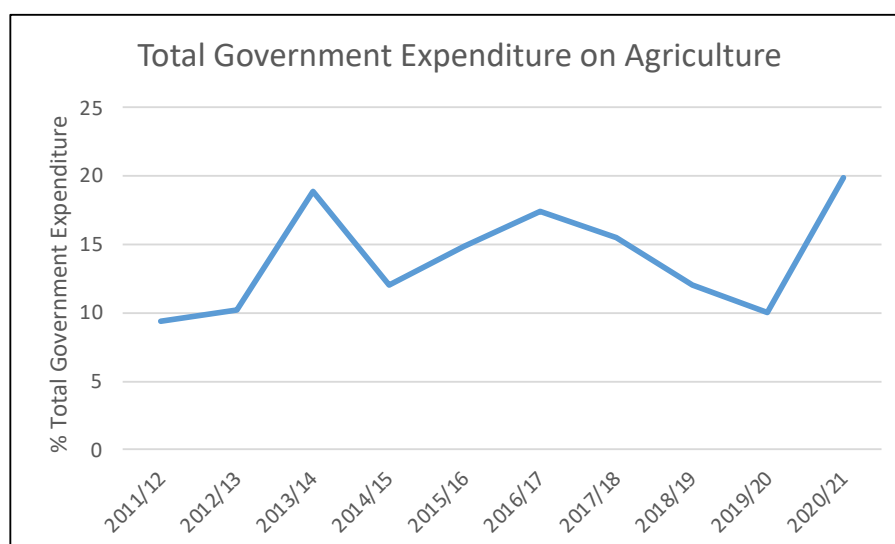
The Government of Malawi has developed and implemented several policies and programs over the years to address several challenges confronting the agriculture sector, including the Agriculture Sector-Wide Approach (ASWAp) (2010-2016), which operationalized the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), a series of five-year plans that serve as a national overarching policy and strategic framework to guide the country's development. Malawi is now in the third of the MGDS' five-year cycles. The current MGDS III, which focuses on education, energy, agriculture, health, and tourism and aspires to establish a productive, competitive, and resilient society, will last through 2022.

Malawi has also incorporated targets set in a number of regional and continental programs, such as the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) of maintaining a minimum of a 6 percent agricultural growth rate and a 10 percent national budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector, which is required if countries are to meaningfully reduce poverty, progress toward irrigation and livestock targets, and achieve SADC's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) targets for sustainable food security and poverty reduction, including achieving a GDP growth of at least 7 percent per year. The following are some of the specific SADC RISDP goals:

- Doubling cropland under irrigation to 7 percent as a percentage of the total by 2030;
- Increasing fertilizer consumption to 65 kg/ha of arable land by 2030;
- Increasing cereal yield in kg/ha hectare from an average of 2,000 by 2030;
- Doubling the adoption rate of proven technologies such as improved seed varieties and management of water and land by 2030; and
- Increasing livestock production by at least 4 percent annually.

Following the Maputo Declaration, the Government of Malawi has been dedicating more than 10 percent of the national budget to agriculture, resulting in a remarkable increase in public agricultural spending over the last decade. However, according to a policy assessment done by the Mwapata Institute in 2020³⁵, financial

Figure 9: Malawi government expenditure on agriculture 2011-2021



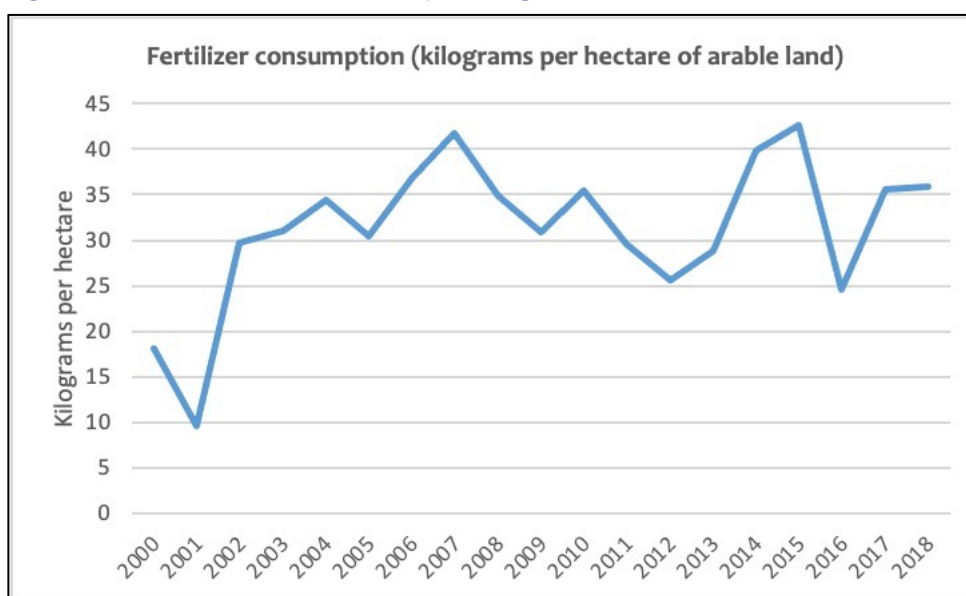
Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

³⁵ Mwapata Institute, Unlocking Implementation Challenges: Lessons from the Agriculture Sector, Policy Brief No. 3, 2020

delays, a lack of proper finance, and an over reliance on external funds were all observed. According to other studies, low access to loan policies makes it difficult for rural residents since they do not meet the minimum conditions for receiving a loan or credit. Increased government spending on agriculture is projected to boost agricultural growth; but this is only possible with increased investment in the sector.

The country has also implemented a number of input support programmes. The earliest forms of input subsidies in Malawi (1952-1980s) were known as universal input subsidies and were implemented as agricultural development policies in poor rural areas³⁶. Over the years, input support has taken different shapes in terms of the implementation modality, but has maintained the objective of increasing food production through the availing of free or subsidised agro-inputs. The Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP), which dominated the early part of the decade under review, was introduced in 2005³⁷. Malawi has therefore made some progress in improving food production through the availing of fertilizer subsidies. Malawi is gradually moving towards the 50-65 kg/ha fertilizer application target, thanks in part to the Government's Affordable Input Program (AIP) which was introduced in 2020, as a follow-up to FISP. However, the country is still falling short of the target set forth in the SADC RISDP, which calls for SADC countries to boost their fertilizer use to 65 kilograms per hectare as well as the target set by the Abuja Declaration of increasing to 50 kilograms per hectare.

Figure 10: Malawi fertilizer consumption (kgs/hectare of arable land) 2000-2018



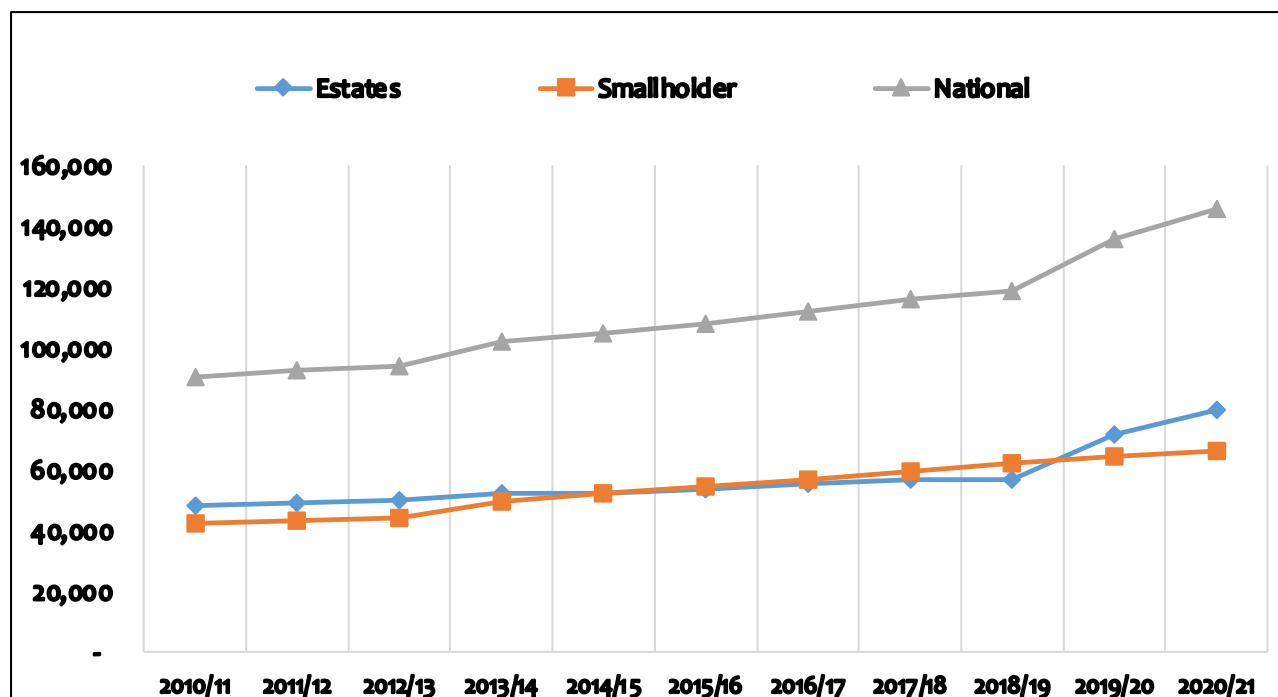
Source: World Bank

In February 2015, the government announced the Irrigation Master Plan and Investment Framework (IMPIF – (2015-2035) over a 20-year period. Water is a limiting factor in most sections of the country, thus the irrigation potential is estimated to be 407,862 hectares. The IMPIF has divided projects into three categories: short, medium, and long-term. Within the first six years of the IMPIF's operation, a total of 41,000 hectares had been produced. The private sector has developed a total area of 79,600 hectares, primarily for the cultivation of sugarcane and tea, as well as tobacco, cereals, and certain horticulture products. Drip, sprinkler, furrow, and centre pivot irrigation systems are being used. The total developed area of smallholder irrigation has risen steadily over the years to 66,000Ha. Gravity irrigation technologies have been on the rise, followed by treadle pumps and motorized irrigation technologies. On the other hand, the area covered by watering-can-based irrigation technology varies depending on water availability during a given season

³⁶ African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Impact of Agricultural input subsidy on Nutrition Outcomes, Malawi, 2021

³⁷ International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Malawi's Farm Input Subsidy Programme, 2014

Figure 11: Trends in irrigation development by holdings



Source: Ministry of Agriculture

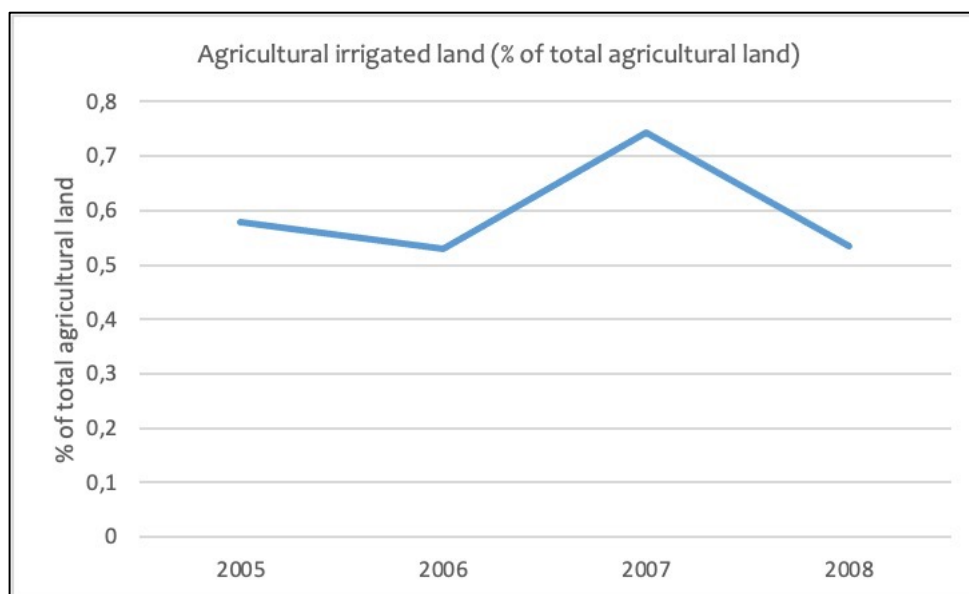
Despite the fact that the area under irrigation farming remains low, with Malawi failing to meet its target of doubling the area under irrigation, it has been noted that irrigation technologies such as gravity fed, motorized pumps, watering cans and treadle pumps are being used in most of the country. The Government continues to promote irrigation by rehabilitating the Limphasa irrigation scheme whilst building new irrigation schemes in Lirezi, Ntchete, and Chipuzumumba in Nkhata Bay District, the Wovwe scheme in Karonga District, and irrigation schemes in Thyolo, Machinga and Chikwawa Districts.

Most districts in the Central Region have accepted the Greenbelt Project³⁸, which involves cultivating most of the land along water bodies and that has sufficient residual moisture in the winter to increase irrigation farming in accordance with the Irrigation Policy. All of this indicates that farmers are interested in irrigation. Various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as ActionAid International Malawi (AAIM), Adapt Malawi, and World Vision International (to name a few), support the Government of Malawi's efforts in irrigation development. The proportion of irrigated land to the total arable land remains below the recommended 7 percent target as shown in Figure 11.

Further to the policies already explored, the maize export ban, which is imposed at times, erodes the gains of liberalized markets and adversely affects food access. Farmers are constrained to a small market as a result of the export bans, which work as a disincentive for them to produce more diversified crops. In addition, the banning of the internal transportation of produce from one district to another goes against market liberalization and makes commodities unavailable and inaccessible in surrounding districts. Poor roads and bridges continue to have a negative impact on the food security sector, because they prevent food from moving from production areas to other markets.

³⁸ The Government of Malawi formulated the Greenbelt Initiative (GBI) aimed at using the available water resources to increase production, productivity, incomes, and food security at both household and national levels for economic growth and development. Government of Malawi Greenbelt Initiative, 2011.

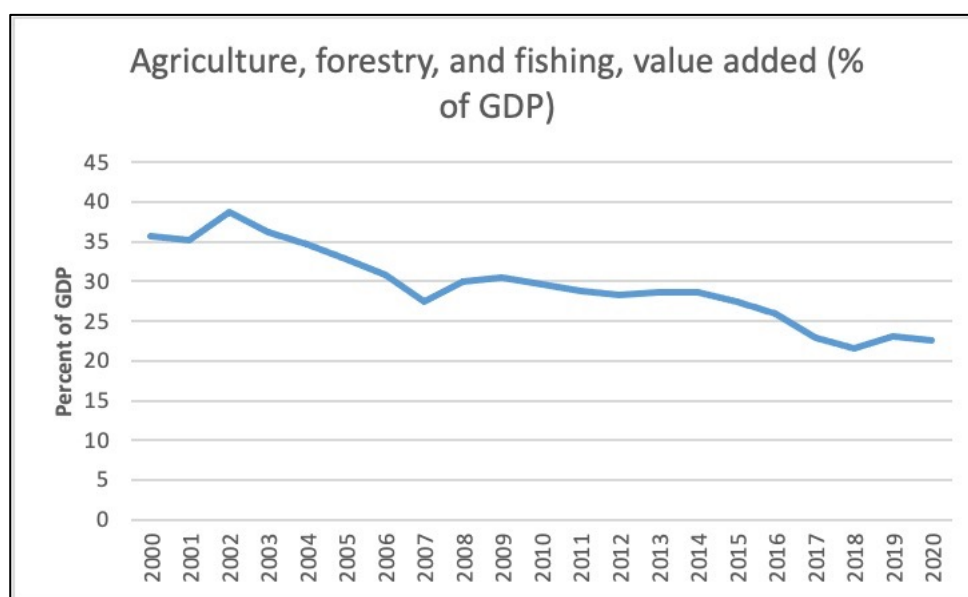
Figure 12: Trends in irrigated areas against a target of 7 percent, 2005-2008



Source: World Bank

In terms of crops grown in agriculture between 2004 and 2019, the percentage of Malawian crop farmers growing tobacco plummeted from 16 percent to 5 percent, and tobacco's part of total crop production value fell dramatically. A tobacco transition has already occurred, affecting the livelihoods of farmers who have stopped growing tobacco. Overreliance on maize production has been recognised as increasing households' vulnerability to shocks, thus crop diversification is a necessity, including cash crops such as tobacco. Despite the fact that the country significantly relies on maize production, investments are required to nurture robust tobacco alternatives. Disinvestment in tobacco has resulted in a decrease in agriculture's contribution to GDP, and earnings from tobacco leaf export have dropped dramatically in recent years as shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Agriculture, forestry, fisheries as percentage of total GDP 2000-2020



Source: World Bank

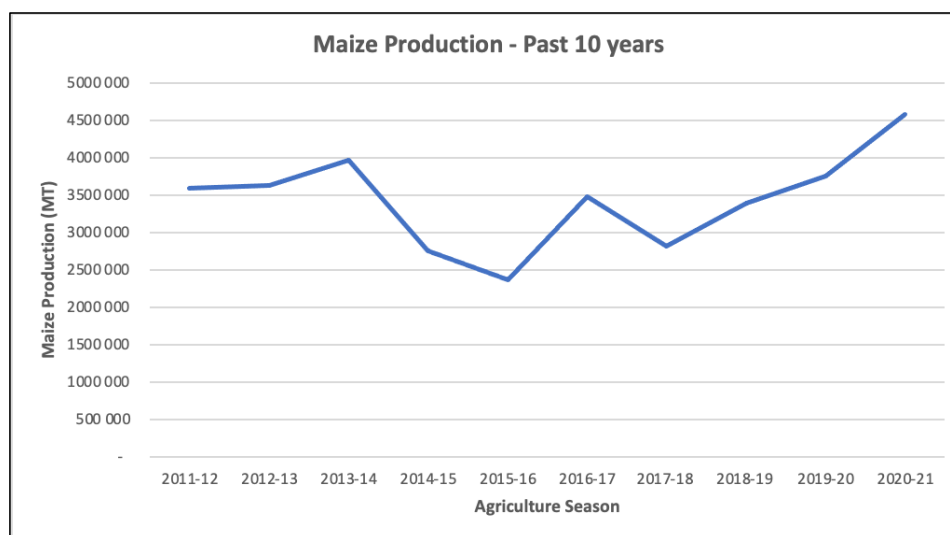
4. Limiting Factors

Food availability was indicated as a major limiting factor in the majority of districts, followed by access (13 districts), and food utilisation (10 districts).

4.1. Food Availability

Production levels are the main factor contributing to availability, limiting food security. Production levels are marred by challenges that have been highlighted as key drivers. Recurrent disasters such as floods, which are common in the Southern and Central Regions of the country and lengthy dry spells have been highlighted as contributing to chronic food insecurity by reducing food availability. Low-lying areas with semi-arid conditions characterize some parts of the Southern Region, making them vulnerable to dry spells and droughts, while others are prone to flooding due to runoff from the upper highlands. As can be seen in Figure 14 which shows the maize production trend over the past decade, the country has been increasing its maize production since 2017-18, peaking in 2020-21 at about 4.5m (mt). In 2020, the cereal requirement was about 3.1m (mt) and the country produced more than the requirement in maize alone. It is also worthy to note that the country has been susceptible to climatic shocks that occurred during the decade including in 2015/2016 (El Nino). In addition, despite the increase in production since 2017-18 which may signal an improvement, Malawi's annual population growth rate was 2.65 in 2020³⁹ and it is projected to continue increasing, thus showing availability of food per capita may continue to be a challenge, especially during the years when the country faces weather- related shocks.

Figure 14: Malawi maize production 2011-2021

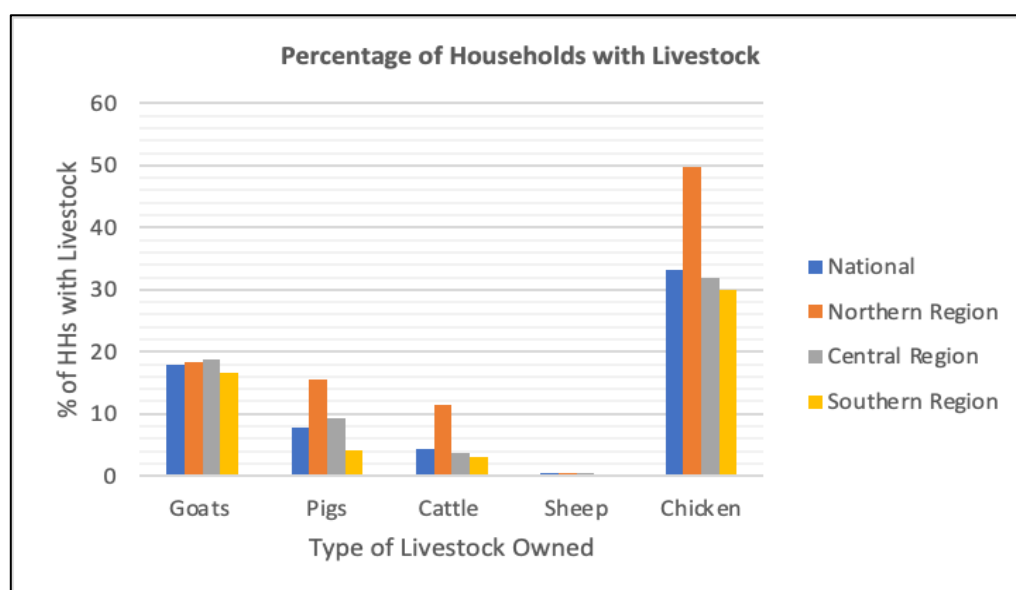


Source: Ministry of Agriculture

³⁹ World Bank Data, 2021

Livestock production is also affected by diseases, including Foot and Mouth Disease, which is endemic to Malawi and recurs on an annual basis, wreaking havoc on livestock productivity levels, as usually cattle have to be killed and disposed of once infected⁴⁰. According to the 2018 Census, 33 percent of households had chickens, 18 percent had goats, 8 percent had pigs, and 4 percent had cattle overall in the country, indicating that livestock ownership is still quite low across the country. The lowest livestock ownership rate is observed in the Southern Region as depicted in Figure 15. This is the same region that has the largest number of households experiencing acute food insecurity each year during the lean season period.

Figure 15: percentage of households with livestock in malawi 2019



Source: National Statistical Office

Furthermore, in the face of a high incidence of weather-induced crop failures, a lack of diversity of agricultural activities results in low productivity. Most farmers are subsistence farmers who have not embraced crop or livestock diversification, which could result in higher yields, instead relying on indigenous varieties that are no longer adaptable in an increasingly unpredictable climate.

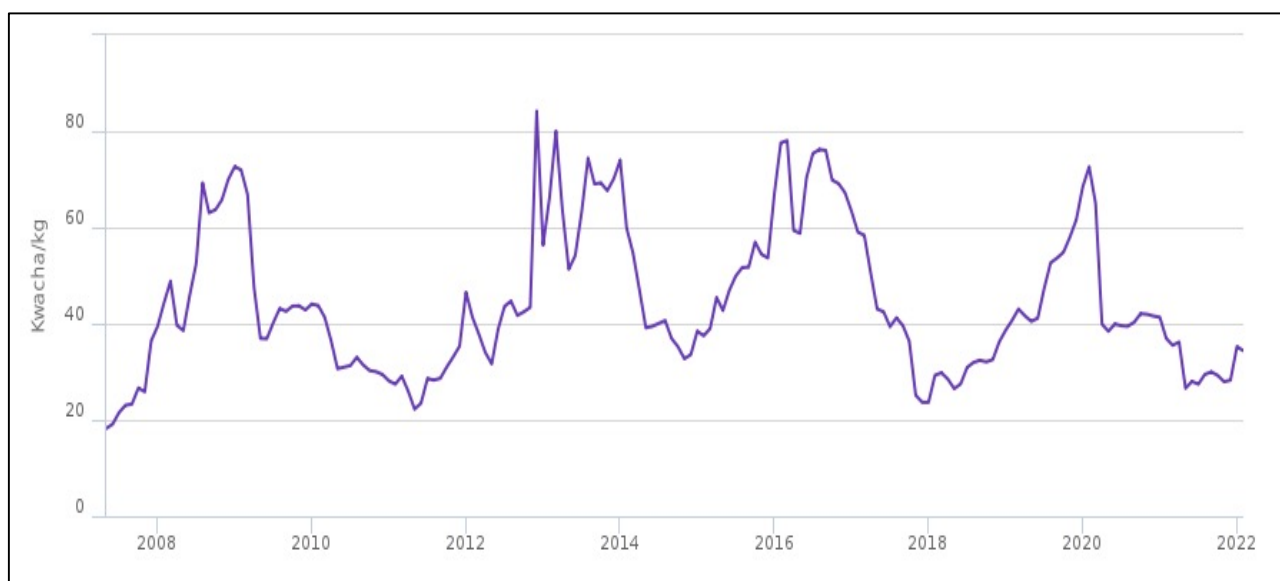
4.2. Food Access

Low-lying areas—particularly the Lower Shire and the areas surrounding Salima and Karonga Districts—are particularly prone to annual floods. Floods have a significant impact on food security dimensions, mainly availability (which cannot be overstated) but also access, due to limiting incomes at household level and the destruction of roads that limit physical access to markets. In addition, long periods of farming on the same plots of land have also degraded the soil, which now requires more fertilizer to produce a good harvest. Land sizes have shrunk over time as the population has grown and the amount of land available for cultivation per household has decreased, particularly in rural areas. High population growth puts more pressure on waning available resources, thereby impacting on food availability and access of food to households.

⁴⁰ World Animal Health Information database, Foot and Mouth Disease, Malawi, Weekly Diseases, 2021

The lack of access is compounded by the high unemployment rate, which is caused by a lack of education and skills, and leads to lower incomes across the rural population. The country also has high dependency ratios which has an impact on the overall access to food, as the higher the dependency ratio, the less households are able to meet their food needs vis-a-vis the low-income levels from unsustainable livelihood strategies. The dependency ratio for Malawi was at 1.2 in 2020, which means that there were 0.2 more economically inactive persons for every economically active person⁴¹. According to the Integrated Household Survey 2020, the dependency ratio relates the number of children (0-14 years old) and older persons (65 years or over) to the working-age population (15-64 years old). The dependency ratio was higher in the rural areas at 1.3 compared to urban areas at 0.9. Furthermore, high food prices, particularly for the staple maize grain, are recurring in nature, limiting households' access to food year after year. Households with a high and increasing dependency ratio are more vulnerable to price shocks as their incomes either remain stagnant or decrease whilst both their dependency and the prices increase thus rendering them unable purchase food during the lean season and unable to meet their basic food needs. Areas within Malawi's Southern Region always have higher prices than the rest of the country. The combination of a high and increasing dependency ratio which is impacted by population growth and increasing prices renders household access challenges. Figure 16 shows that price shocks have been more common in Malawi over the last decade.

Figure 16: Maize monthly retail real price per kilogram, 2008-2022



Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, IFPRI

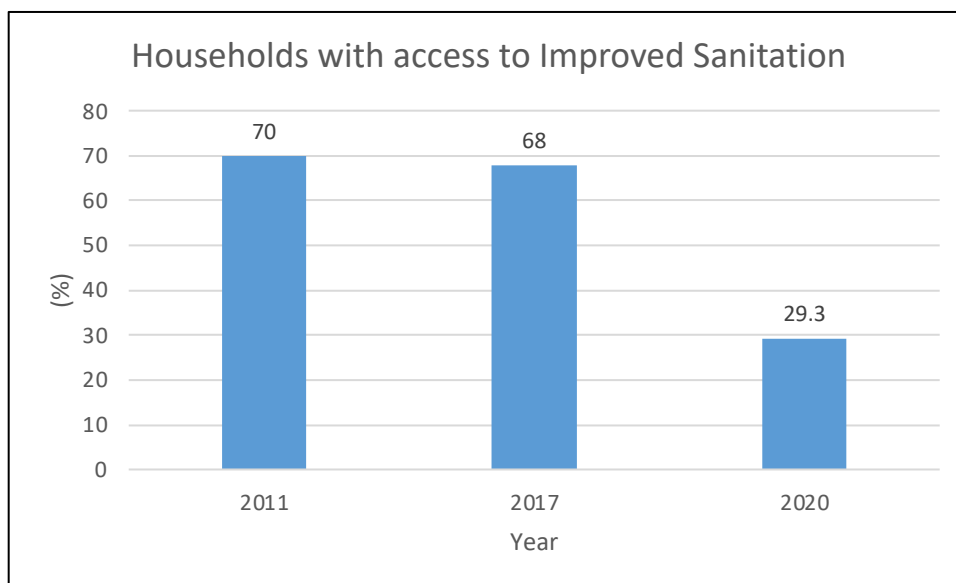
^{41,42} The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS 5) Report, 2020.

4.3. Food Utilisation

Food utilisation is impacted by a lack of access to improved water sources within a reasonable distance. In Malawi, a total of 86.5 percent of the rural population had access to improved water sources in 2020 and the majority of these had access to boreholes. The remaining 13.5 percent had access to unimproved water sources which affects food preparation methods, hence utilisation⁴². According to Integrated Household Survey (IHS), a household is considered to have access to an improved drinking water source if it's piped into the dwelling, piped into the yard or plot, collected from a communal standpipe, a protected well in a yard or plot, protected public well, borehole, tanker truck or bowser and bottled water. The IPC Chronic Food Security analysis analysed a water composite indicator which combined access to an improved water source within a reasonable walking distance. According to UNICEF Malawi, in rural areas, 37 percent of households spend 30 minutes or more to fetch drinking water in comparison to 13 percent in urban areas. Thus, the longer they have to walk to access clean water, the more they may access unimproved sources if they are nearer, to save time.

Access to improved sanitation has been an even greater challenge than water access, as only 29.3 percent of rural households had access to improved toilet facilities in 2020 according to the IHS survey, which was a major reduction compared to the previous years during the decade of analysis. Improved sanitation (toilet) facility

Figure 17: Rural households with access to improved sanitation



Source: Integrated Household Survey (IHS)

⁴³ The Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS 5) Report, 2020.

5. Food Security Outcomes

Continuously, poor food consumption quality—indicated in most districts by a lack of dietary diversity—is one of the conditions that underlies the poor chronic food insecurity classifications. This means that households continue to eat poor, monotonous diets high in starch and low in diversity of other food groups such as meats, fruits, and vegetables. The frequent and repetitive shocks and risks as well as households' inability to recover have made food consumption a problem over the years. Chronic malnutrition remains high, despite improvements as previously highlighted.

5.1. Food Consumption Quality

Data from both direct and indirect evidence indicated that the country's diet is not very diverse, with little change over the analysis period (2011 to 2021). Data from various sources (both national and regional analysis) such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), and AFIKEPO⁴⁴ surveys, among others, continue to show that only a small percentage of children meet the minimum dietary diversity requirements over time.

Only approximately three out of ten children have been estimated to meet the minimum dietary diversity during the last ten years according to this CFI analysis, with no substantial differences observed over the analysis period, with the Southern Region having lower estimates (about two out of ten children) while the Northern Region has slightly higher estimates (three in ten children). Similar trends have been observed in dietary diversification among women of reproductive age, with more than half of all reproductive-age women failing to meet the minimum dietary diversity requirement. The Southern Region has lower estimates than the other regions, particularly in Chikwawa and Nsanje Districts, which have been classified as IPC CFI Level 4 (Severe) and which have recorded the highest proportion of women failing to meet the minimum requirement nationally over the years.

Households' daily meals have been dominated by starchy food over the years, with the share of starchy staples as part of total food expenditure estimated to be between 40 and 50 percent in the last five years due to a lack of a diverse diet across the country⁴⁵. While it was estimated that cereals comprised roughly 40 percent of total food expenditure in 2017, it increased to 48 percent three years later⁴⁶. In Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts, households tended to spend the most of their total food expenditure on cereals, with minimal variation over time. With a diet dominated by starchy foods, evidence from multiple sources suggests that animal protein consumption in the country is low, ranging between 38 and 44 percent throughout time, with the lowest consumption levels recorded in the Southern Region. This is also the region that has the highest proportion of households in IPC CFI Levels 3 (Moderate) and 4 (Severe)⁴⁷.

With regards to consumption of animal/animal products, approximately one out of every ten children under five years consumed milk and/or milk products in 2011 based on analysed evidence from the demographic health survey (DHS), and this number remained unchanged in 2020. The same level of consumption trend was observed in egg, meat, and animal products consumption, with the exception of fish consumption, which was

⁴⁴ Afikepo' means in Malawi's main local language Chichewa: "let them (the children) develop to their full potential". The Afikepo nutrition programme addresses the problems of undernutrition in Malawi, particularly the under five children, AFIKEPO, 2021

⁴⁵ MVAC Households Assessment 2017 -2019

⁴⁶ MVAC Households Assessment 2017-2019

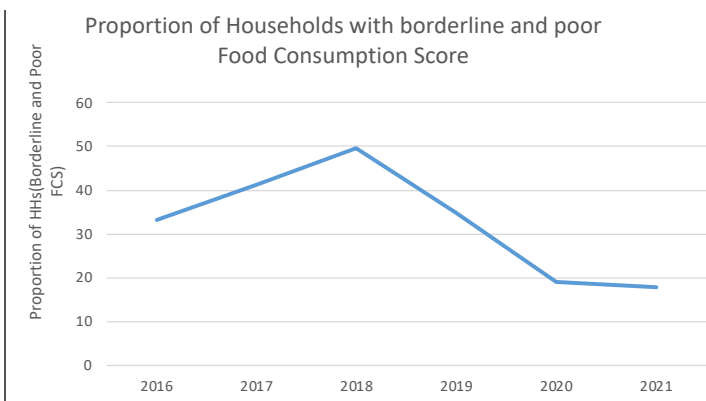
⁴⁷ Knowledge, Attitude and Practices Survey (KAP) Survey, The Afikepo Nutrition Programme and Nutrition-sensitive Agriculture component in Malawi AFIKEPO, 2020

significantly higher at roughly 30 percent. Furthermore, bio-fortified diet consumption is still low in Malawi, with just around one out of every ten households producing and consuming such foods. Similarly, iron-rich or fortified food consumption was around 40 percent throughout the analysed years, fluctuating between 38 and 44 percent throughout time, with the Southern Region having the lowest consumption as was observed during this analysis.

5.2. Food Consumption Quantity

Similarly to food consumption quality, the Southern Region has poor food consumption quantity results when compared to the other regions, whereas the Northern Region has superior results compared to the other two regions, hence this is where there are two districts in the IPC CFI Level 2 (Mild) category. The Lower Shire Zone, which includes Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts, remains the hotspot zone and this is again evident in their final classification of Severe chronic food insecurity as populations continuously do not meet their caloric food needs. Observably, the indicators feeding into the food quantity in the Exceptional Years (EC), particularly in 2016 when the country was hit by an El Nino-induced prolonged dry spell, were significantly weak compared to the Non-Exceptional Years (NECs), showing how vulnerable the population is to climatic shocks.

Figure 18: Food consumption trends-borderline and poor categories, 2016-2021



Source: Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee

Various indicators of food consumption quantity remain quite poor, with varying trends over time, where some improvement has been noted in some indicators, and in some cases no meaningful change has been observed over the analysed period. One of the indicators, the Food Consumption Score (FCS), is commonly used in World Food Programme food security surveys and monitoring systems. The FCS is a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency (number of days during the past seven days) and the relative nutritional importance of different food groups, in particular considering protein quality content, and aims at providing information on dietary diversity and access to caloric intake. The proportion of households having borderline and/or poor food consumption halved during the period 2016 through 2021 (Figure 18). However, the Southern Region continues to have a higher proportion of households classified as having borderline and/or poor food consumption than the other regions.

Similarly, the household dietary diversity score (HDDS) which is a qualitative measure of food consumption that reflects household access to a variety of foods according to FAO, has improved dramatically over time, with households consuming less than seven food groups falling from 80 at the beginning of the decade (2011) to about 60 percent at the end (2021) countrywide, using multiple sources including MVAC, DHS, and IHS although this is still a very high percentage. In comparison to the other two regions, the Southern Region—and most notably the districts of Nsanje and Chikwawa—continues to have the largest number of households consuming less than seven food groups. On the other hand, Likoma District has the lowest proportion of households consuming less than seven food groups. According to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), which is a household or individual food insecurity measurement resource developed by FAO that is used to monitor food security at the national, regional and global level, about 65 percent households faced moderate to severe hunger in 2017 and the same again in 2020, based on evidence from the integrated household survey. This is

over half of the population who continue to face food challenges during non-exceptional years. The Household Hunger Scale (HHS), derived directly from the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), assesses whether households have experienced problems accessing food in the preceding 30 days by measuring the severity of food insecurity as reported by the households themselves for that period. Over the years, as assessed by MVAC, the households which faced “moderate household hunger” (scores 2–3) and “severe household hunger” (scores 4-6) were about 40 percent since 2014 through 2020, and decreased to about 30 percent in 2021, but have remained significantly high and provide evidence of persistent food insecurity.

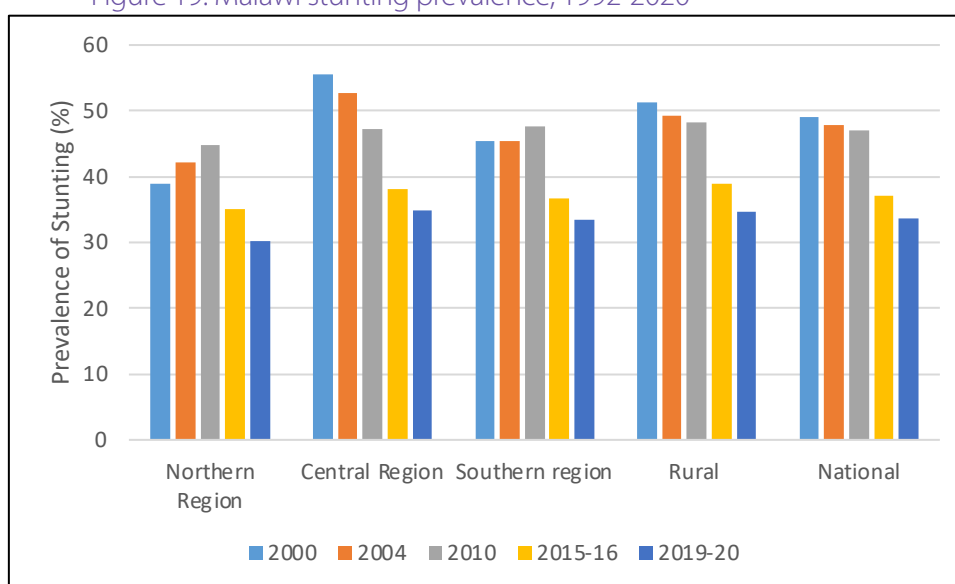
Overall, the country’s food consumption remains poor, owing to a lack of dietary diversity and an overreliance on cereal and/or starchy foods as the primary meal. Consumption of animal-based foods and other nutrient-dense foods (such as micronutrient-dense vegetables and fruits, nuts, seeds, and legumes) is still low, owing to restricted production, limited availability, and hampered access. Furthermore, food consumption quantity has exhibited inconsistent outcomes throughout time and is still vulnerable to climatic and weather-related shocks, among other hazards.

5.3. Nutrition

During the analysis period, the country’s general nutrition situation has vastly improved. Although the current stunting estimate is still categorized as very high (based on WHO categorization - thresholds⁴⁸), the national prevalence of stunting has decreased from 47 percent in 2010/11 to 35 percent in 2020⁴⁹. The moderately stunted children were about 20 percent and the severely stunted were about 14 percent. The Southern and Central Regions have the highest rates of stunting in the country, with 36 and 37 percent, respectively, while the Northern Region has the lowest rate at 28 percent (Figure 19).

The prevalence of anaemia in children has remained high, with roughly six out of ten children presenting with some kind of anaemia over the course of the analysis period. The Southern Region has the greatest frequency of childhood anaemia in the country and no substantial change was recorded during the analysis period. Conversely, the prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age grew slightly from 28 percent in 2011 to 33 percent in 2016 based on data from the Demographic Household Survey (DHS), indicative of a deteriorating trend.

Figure 19: Malawi stunting prevalence, 1992-2020



Source: National Statistics Office

⁴⁸ World Health Organisation (WHO) Thresholds: WHO, Global database on child growth and malnutrition, 2022 <2.5%: very low, 2.5 to <10%: low, 10 to <20%: medium, 20 to <30%: high, ≥30%: very high.

⁴⁹ National Statistics Office, Demographic Health Survey, 2011, Integrated Household Survey, 2020



6. Recommendations for action

The IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Analysis for Malawi has revealed that out of 28 districts, none of them are classified as being in CFI Level 1; two are in IPC CFI Level 2; twenty-three (23) are in IPC CFI Level 3; and three are in IPC CFI Level 4. The three districts which are in Level 4 are Balaka, Chikwawa and Nsanje. Despite this overall classification, each district has a population in each of the four phases, namely Minimal, Mild, Moderate and Severe for these populations. There are thus different response objectives and priorities based on these objectives.

6.1. National Agricultural policies

- Agricultural policies and input support programs that prioritize the cultivation of staple crops, mostly maize, thwart efforts to improve the quality, availability, and affordability of nutrient-dense foods in the diet (IFPRI 2018). Government crop support should strike a balance between maize and other commodities in order to enhance production and bolster the productivity of other food security crops.
- To reduce market fragmentation and promote price transmission, the Government and its development partners are encouraged to explore investments in support of strengthening market services and infrastructure. The Government should encourage public and private sector infrastructure investment to help with service delivery, such as market linkages and accompanying infrastructure as well as the promotion of technologies that are compatible with farmer resources.
- The Government of Malawi should align government financing and allocations to priority programs as laid forth and approved in national and sectoral plans to overcome policy and program implementation issues. When policies are being developed, there is need to include the voices of key stakeholders such as farmers, the private sector, and civil society to ensure that policymaking processes are more inclusive and transparent.
- The lack of operational monitoring and evaluation frameworks as well as implementation plans in the development of policies, programs, and projects was identified as one of the major policy implementation issues. The Government is encouraged to include these well before making any policy decisions.

6.2. Agricultural Productivity

- The Government's recent changes to the Livestock Development Policy, which includes the development of the Livestock Policy 2021-2026 that supports the policy paradigm shift to increase and complement efforts to commercialize the smallholder sector, are laudable. Supporting the livestock sector can help to raise earnings and reduce poverty in rural areas as well as improve nutrition and reduce overall food insecurity. Livestock development and support will also help to diversify and sustain rural livelihoods. In the face of recurrent climate shocks, livestock will operate as a hedge against such events, particularly in the Southern Region.
- The Government's efforts to develop irrigation area to meet regional targets and protect farmers who rely predominately on rain fed agriculture from climatic shocks such as dry spells and droughts, are commendable. As a result, development partners are encouraged to work with the Government to ensure that these goals

are met. Irrigation will lessen farmers' vulnerability to erratic and unpredictable rainfall, limiting supply shock effects on pricing.

- Recurrent climatic shocks, particularly in the Southern Region, are a major source of poverty and can halt progress toward poverty reduction. Therefore, greater efforts should be made to better coordinate and integrate poverty reduction measures with climate change adaptation strategies. The Government should also explore linking its programmes with climate-smart financing as a means of garnering sustainable funding for its initiatives.

6.3. Health and Nutrition

- Nutrition interventions that have been shown to alleviate chronic malnutrition in pregnant women, lactating mothers and young children should be scaled up. Antenatal vitamin supplementation, which is low-cost and easy to give to improve birth outcomes and reduce the risk of stunting, is one example. Other examples include promoting the consumption of healthy, diversified diets, including high-quality, nutrient-rich food in children 6 to 24 months old through a combination of various Infant Young Child Feeding (IYCF) programmes, strengthened and concerted efforts aimed at improving nutrition for pregnant mothers to reduce intra-uterine growth retardation; and intermittent malaria presumptive treatment in malaria-endemic areas across the country.
- Preventing chronic malnutrition necessitates interventions that target dietary quality and quantity, aim to reduce disease incidence and prevalence, enhance educational performance, and address maternal factors connected to birthweight and pre-term delivery, among other factors. Some of these factors necessitate that the Government and its development partners engage communities in order to alter some of Malawi's traditional customs, such as initiation rites that lead to early sexual involvement and marriage.
- Water and sanitation improvement programmes should be scaled up in order to increase improved access, especially in the rural areas. This will go a long way in improving not only utilisation efforts but also overall health and nutrition indicators.

6.4. Land

- Through programs that encourage the sustainable use of natural resources, unsustainable and environmentally damaging livelihoods such as charcoal and firewood gathering should be discouraged. Disinvestment in tobacco has gone a long way towards assuring the sustainable use of natural resources. That said, increased Government investment for agricultural research is urged in order to improve agronomic performance and reduce vulnerability in the agriculture sector, particularly in the area of improved seed varieties and the use of fertilisers.
- The Government should consider the increase of rural land ownership vis-a-vis the population increase and overuse of the current smallholder land available for crop production. Malawi should consider expanding on the efforts to increase smallholder access to land including through the redistribution or sale of underutilized or uncultivated land⁵⁰.

6.5. Poverty

- Poverty eradication was identified as the first Sustainable Development Goal because it is still one of the world's most pressing issues. Poverty is pervasive, deep, and severe in Malawi; thus, the Government and its development partners are encouraged to consider poverty reduction, poverty relief, and/or poverty alleviation as a combination of economic and humanitarian policies that can be utilized to pull people out of poverty permanently. These are policies that increase, or are intended to increase, opportunities for the poor

⁵⁰ USAID Malawi Country Profile, Landlinks, 2022

to create wealth for themselves as a means of permanently ending poverty.

- The Government is encouraged to promote programs that empower the poor (particularly women) by providing them with access to microfinance, while also promoting income-generating activities that aim to boost the entrepreneurial spirit and minimize vulnerabilities. These loans will assist rural people in obtaining the items they require to improve their economic well-being. Along with farm activities, promoting non-farm livelihoods can provide opportunities for economic growth and poverty reduction. These solutions should be linked to the establishment of comprehensive value chains and market systems.
- Women's empowerment programs that focus on education and vocational training should be increased significantly. The economically empowered woman improves overall food security through an increased awareness of utilization and nutrition aspects, and increased financial access and increased power for decision making on food purchases and household expenditures.
- The Government should continue to see poverty as a challenge that can be overcome by implementing the steps outlined in the SADC RISDP on poverty eradication, namely:
 - Improving the productive capacities of Member States and the Southern African Region;
 - Improving income-earning opportunities for the poor;
 - Creating socio-economic and political conditions that promote poverty eradication;
 - Addressing inequalities, marginalization, and vulnerabilities that perpetuate poverty; and
 - Confronting global imbalances and policies that impede the situation of the major developing countries.

6.6. Implementation and monitoring of results

- The most recent policy implementation which is set to make a huge impact on food security is the Malawi Vision 2063 which replaced the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III as the country's new medium-term development strategy. It is aimed at helping Malawi graduate into a middle income economy and achieve most of the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030. The National Planning Commission unveiled the Malawi Vision 2063 in January 2021. The policy intends to transform Malawi into a wealthy and self-sufficient industrialized upper middle-income country. MW2063 is anchored on three key pillars, namely: Agriculture Productivity and Commercialization; Industrialization, and Urbanization⁵¹. These Pillars are also affixed by seven 'Enablers', namely: Mindset Change; Effective Governance Systems and Institutions; Enhanced Public Sector Performance; Private Sector Dynamism; Human Capital Development; Economic Infrastructure; and Environmental Sustainability. The policy document already takes cognisance of the need for resilience and development programmes. The IPC Chronic Food Insecurity analysis findings should be linked to the implementation of this important country document in the following ways: Pillar One, which is Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization, and Enabler 7, Environmental Sustainability:
 - The Malawi Vision 2063 (Malawi Implementation Plan 1) acknowledges that "Several factors have contributed to the failure of agriculture to realize its potential, including: limited access to land; unsustainable natural resource use, limited access to farm inputs; low mechanization; poor land management practices; poor access to finance; weak linkages to markets; prolonged politicization of maize as a staple food crop; high dependence on few crops, especially tobacco for export earnings; increasingly fragmented land tenure system; limited irrigation; lack of agriculture diversification; and limited investment in agricultural research and extension services"⁵²

⁵¹ National Planning Commission, The Malawi 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP 1), 2021

⁵² National Planning Commission, The Malawi 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP 1), 2021

⁵³ National Planning Commission, The Malawi 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP 1), 2021

which is in agreement with the findings of this CFI analysis. It is therefore recommended that Government efforts which are outlined in the Implementation plan such as agriculture diversification, mechanization and irrigation development continue to be implemented through the response objectives outlined below in order to address chronic food insecurity and its key drivers, especially lack of resilience, poverty and recurrent hazards.

- The Enabler on Environmental Sustainability outlines that its main motive is to “utilize natural resources for responsible and sustainable development with an ethic of conserving for current and future generations”⁵³. The response priorities outlined below should be implemented in such a way as to uphold this Enabler and achieve the overarching objectives of the MIP 1.
- The IPC CFI analysis results should also support the implementation of the National Resilience Strategy, i.e. the second phase of the National Resilience Strategy beginning 2023 to 2030. This strategy is linked to the implementation of the Malawi first ten-year Implementation Plan (MIP-1), to run from 2021 to 2030, (Malawi Vision 2063)⁵⁴. The National Resilience Strategy set out to begin the transition from recurrent humanitarian appeals to protective and productive investments. Considering the priorities of the strategy already aligned, the IPC CFI analysis results could be used in the following manner:
 - The National Resilience Strategy (NRS) outlined the priority areas defined during implementation, such as high-value catchments and watershed areas, drought prone zones, or market corridors⁵⁵. In turn, the IPC CFI analysis identified priority areas through severity classification of chronic food insecurity. The CFI analysis identified key drivers in each district, and hence in alignment with the priority areas of the NRS, can inform specific types of programmes, identify key areas for targeting, and the duration necessary in each district: short, medium, or long term.
 - The Resilience strategy provided a list of Indicators for monitoring:
 - Extreme poverty
 - FIES
 - Reduction in number of people requiring emergency food and cash assistance as a result of flood, drought, and other emergencies
 - Percentage of poor Malawians graduated from the social safety net transfers through protective and productive asset creation and cash transfers
 - Percent of poor Malawians living above the poverty line who do not backslide into poverty
 - Percentage increase in availability, access, quality, and affordability of recommended food groups in local and regional markets
 - Annual reduction in percent of children <5 years of age stunted
 - Percent reduction in anaemia in children <5 years of age and women of childbearing age etc.⁵⁶.

The IPC CFI analysis product informs programming for five years if there are no structural changes. It is therefore recommended that the indicators that inform IPC CFI analyses are collected annually, so that after the five years, the IPC CFI analysis converges evidence and comes up with actionable conclusions. This can in turn become a good yardstick for measuring the CFI status after implementing both medium to long-term response programmes, as specified below.

⁵⁴ National Planning Commission, The Malawi 2063 First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP 1), 2021

⁵⁵ National resilience Strategy (2018-2030)

⁵⁶ National resilience Strategy (2018-2030)



7. Response Priorities

Levels 3 and 4: Approximately 5.4 million people Require Medium- to Long-Term Interventions

Level 3-Moderate Chronic Food Insecurity: Households in this category have persistent mild food quantity deficits and/or seasonal food quantity deficits for two to four months of the year and consistently do not consume a diet of acceptable quality. Household livelihoods are only minimally sustainable, and their shock resistance is quite low. Moderately stunted children are more likely to be found in these households. Around 3.4 million Malawians suffer from moderate chronic food insecurity.

Level 4-Severe Chronic Food Insecurity: In a typical year, households in this category endure seasonal food shortages for more than four months of the year and consistently do not consume a nutritious and diversified diet. Household livelihoods are extremely unstable and not resilient. Children in these households are likely to be severely stunted. In Malawi, around 1.9 million people suffer from severe chronic food insecurity.

Both level 3 and level 4 response objectives are targeted at addressing underlying issues in order to improve the quality and quantity of food consumed and reduce chronic malnutrition. At these levels, acute food insecurity must be linked to chronic food insecurity, and safety net programs must be considered to increase the quality and amount of food consumed. In addition, supplementary programs to address underlying issues are required to significantly reduce chronic food insecurity and chronic malnutrition.

The following response priorities are recommended:

1. **Improving social safety nets.** The following are some of Malawi's safety net programs that have the ability to reduce poverty and are part of the country's current response priorities:
 - a. Social Cash Transfers (SCT) – to help reduce extreme poverty and the inability to meet basic requirements. SCTs are designed to assist in reducing food insecurity by improving households' disposable income and hence their economic access to food.
 - b. School Feeding Programs – This program aims at ensuring that school children (pre-primary, school-aged or adolescents) have reliable access to safe, adequate, and nutritious foods and improved learning capacity. The program also aims at increasing enrolment.
 - c. Public works program – Malawi's public works program is one of the country's social protection programs. Beneficiaries participate in the program in exchange for cash or in-kind compensation. The program attempts to protect low-income households, especially in the event of large macroeconomic shocks or famines. It is critical to keep this program going as a top priority in the fight against chronic food insecurity. However, this program should seek to incorporate skills/training components as well as establish linkages to formal, longer-term employment with companies once the initial public works activities have ended.
 - d. Food Assistance for Assets (FAA) – This initiative attempts to meet the immediate food requirements of the most food insecure people. Cash, vouchers, and/or food transfers are distributed as part of the program,

with the goal of strengthening beneficiaries' long-term food security and resilience. This initiative must be expanded and maintained.

2. **Increase the adoption of improved nutritional practices.** This chronic food insecurity analysis identified that beyond food availability, food utilization - which encompasses the knowledge and preparation of food – encompasses the very critical aspect of nutrition and therefore the following response priorities are key:
 - a. Promotion of nutrition education at household level: Through Infant and Young Child Feeding programmes. This aims at enhancing the adoption of nutrition-specific behaviours and practices, especially amongst nutritionally-vulnerable households. The program advocates for the consumption of diversified food groups. To improve nutrition status of children under five in Malawi, reduce wasting among children under five years, pregnant and lactating women, PLHIV and other vulnerable groups, it is essential to improve breastfeeding practices and improve positive behaviour change through care group interventions for optimum nutrition.
 - b. Consumption of nutrient-dense foods: Through knowledge transfer programmes to educate communities on their locally available foods and growing of nutritious crops, trees and poultry keeping. Vulnerable households should be encouraged to diversify their diets starting from the planting of diverse crops and increasing their consumption of nutrient-dense foods.
 - c. Improved access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities and practices.
3. Due to low household resilience level to hazards and risks like floods, dry spells, strong winds, stormy rains, pest and plant and animal diseases, there is need to **promote resilience-building programmes**. Some of the Malawi's potential programs or activities that can be upscaled include:
 - a. Reducing dependency on rain fed agriculture by way of promoting irrigation. As highlighted under policies, implementation of the irrigation policies would improve the food security as a whole through availing alternative methods of water.
 - b. Making weather-based crop/area yield insurance more accessible to smallholder farmers by availing more free loans that are not attached to assets or any form of collateral and expanding crop insurance to smallholder farmers.
 - c. Promoting water harvesting techniques, including runoff and rooftop after harvesting. Central community water tanks may also be considered as a method of trapping water, especially the rainwater.
 - d. Providing improved seeds and agro-tools that help families produce food sustainably.
 - e. Constructing dykes in major flood-prone areas to prevent crop, livestock and infrastructure damages.
 - f. Promoting afforestation, especially along rivers and in residential locations.
 - g. Promoting/adapting safe house construction guidelines in the communities to withstand the effects of floods, strong winds and cyclones which are recurrent.
 - h. Providing access to quality agro-inputs .

Level 2- Mild Chronic Food Insecurity: The IPC CFI analysis reference table describes Level 2 as situations where, in a common year, households are able to access a diet of adequate quantity but do not always consume a diet of adequate quality. Household livelihoods are borderline sustainable, and resilience to shocks

is limited. Households are not likely to have stunted children. The response priorities should therefore focus on improving food quality and building household-level resilience. The following response priorities are therefore recommended for the 4.4 million people classified as being in Level 2 across all districts:

1. Due to low households' resilience level to hazards and risks like floods, dry spells, strong winds, stormy rains, pest and diseases, there is need to **promote resilience-building programmes**. Some of the Malawi's potential programs or activities to be upscaled have been included in recommendations for levels 3 and 4 above may be explored for this population.
2. **Promote the consumption of an adequate quality diet.** Chronic food insecurity analysis goes beyond food availability, as it also looks at food utilization, preparation and stability. Food utilization is a very critical element of nutrition, hence nutrition response activities need to be explored as recommended for population in levels 3 and 4,

Level 1-No/Minimal chronic food insecurity: This is described as households who are continuously able to access and consume a diet of acceptable quantity and quality for an active and healthy life. Household livelihoods are sustainable and resilient to shocks, and households classified as being in Level 1 are not likely to have stunted children. The response objectives for the approximately 6.9 million people in Malawi who are classified as being in Level 1 are to monitor the food security situation, invest in disaster risk reduction activities, and reinforce livelihoods as needed (particularly in anticipation of large-scale shocks).



8. Situation Monitoring and Update

In Malawi, a large percentage of the population is categorised as IPC CFI Level 3 or higher. This population is exposed to long-term inadequate diets due to an inability to obtain food and is frequently linked to poverty and lower socioeconomic positions within society. The country's chronic food insecurity has been compounded by the recurrence of various types of climatic shocks. To identify the impacted individuals, determine their geographic areas, and understand the root causes, it is necessary to monitor the food security situation and its causal factors. This will help to inform the design and implementation of response programs.

In order to provide evidence-based planning, budgeting, and targeting of suitable interventions aimed at preventing and alleviating the impacts of chronic food insecurity, conducting periodic food and nutrition security surveys, assessments, and monitoring activities in the country is vital.

The Government and its partners should monitor the contributing causal elements in order to compute indicators that show trends over time for future CFI analyses. The livelihood sources, poverty levels, food expenditure, and household resilience levels that were available throughout the current analysis all require continued monitoring. Other contributing factors, such as the usage of potable water sources, the quality of food consumed in terms of nutrient intake, and the proportion of energy derived from macronutrients as well as the levels of pollution all require additional monitoring.

Furthermore, data gaps from previous surveys and evaluations were discovered in the current analysis, resulting in the omission of several vital aspects needed to further enhance this analysis. It is also suggested that a concerted effort be made to broaden the scope of current national data collection/assessment tools to include the collecting of additional data and information that would enable the computation of missing critical indicators for future CFI updates. The Prevalence of Undernutrition (PoU); the Starchy Staple Ratio (SSR); the share of energy; access to safe water (15 litres consumed per person per day); and resilience (measurement according to the IPC threshold for classification) are among the essential indicators that were missing from this analysis.

Furthermore, the report suggests that the Livelihood Zone Profile Baselines be updated, as key essential indicators included in the CFI analysis were derived using data and information from the Livelihood Zone Profiling baselines that were completed over seven years ago (in 2014-2015). Further, some livelihood-related data may have changed throughout this time, necessitating the need to update the baseline data.

While the CFI data analysis process has highlighted the volume and rich availability of food and nutrition security data and information that has been collected by numerous institutions throughout the country for many years, there is no central repository to preserve all of the data in one place for easy reference. As a result, it is suggested that the Government establish a Food Security Information System within the MVAC Secretariat, which will consolidate data and information from various surveys, assessments, monitoring exercises, and other sources into a central repository for easy reference and future CFI update analyses.

Almost all districts had enough data to examine during data analysis, with the exception of Likoma District, which had limited data to offer critical indicators for the exercise. Likoma District faced significant data

difficulties, making it challenging to conduct a thorough analysis. As a result, the team had to rely on data from a neighbouring district, Nkhata Bay, to make inferences vis-à-vis the food security situation in Likoma. The CFI Technical Working Group (TWG) advises the Government and its data collection partners in the country to include Likoma in all surveys and evaluations so that appropriate data may be gathered over time to undertake trend analyses of all required indicators.

8.1. Risk Factors to Monitor

From the analysis, several hazards were identified over the years that put most districts at risk to food insecurity. The following were some of the identified risk factors that need to be monitored in order to reduce chronic food insecurity:

- **Low rainfall amounts accompanied by prolonged dry spells** have been reported in select districts across the Southern Region including Nsanje, Chikwawa, Balaka, Blantyre, Machinga, Mwanza, Phalombe as well as Karonga District in the Northern Region for the past ten years leading to poor crop yields as compared to other areas.
- **Occurrence of hails storms and floods:** While some districts have reported low rainfall amounts, there are some districts that have reported more rainfall amounts above normal causing hailstorms and heavy floods that could destroy crops hence affecting production levels. However, while floods destruct crops in some districts, they also support winter production in other districts like Karonga, Nsanje and Chikwawa, where flooded soils are rich in residual moisture and alluvial, which support crop growth.
- **Fall Armyworm attacks:** Malawi started experiencing Fall Army Worm infestations in 2017 where the pest heavily affected crops, with 20 out of 28 districts declaring disaster areas following an attack by this pest. The most-affected districts were those that experience hot weather, low rainfall and some prolonged dry spells, namely Balaka, Nsanje and Karonga.
- **Food production trends (diversity and quantity):** Despite Malawi registering an increase in staple production, food consumption indicators have remained reduced due to poor feeding practices, which have been exacerbated by limited food choices and diversity. It is therefore important for the country to intensify diversified production that will promote different food combinations in food preparation hence the need for monitoring.
- **Changes in food prices:** The price of maize in the Northern and Central Region districts have been lower than the long-term projected averages, implying a decrease in prices over time. During this same time, food prices in Southern Region districts from 2015 to 2021 have been above long-term averages, implying an increase in the price over time.
- **Percentage access to savings and loans:** Low access to savings and loans was reported in all districts, which implies that most households do not accumulate savings that can safeguard them during times of crisis, and this may lead to poor access to several enterprises and food insecurity in times of crisis which prevents households from any investment that might improve their situation.
- **Unemployment rates:** All districts reported high unemployment rates resulting from high illiteracy levels and limited job opportunities, which were worse from 2020 because of COVID-19. There is need to keep monitoring the unemployment rate as it has implications on household access to goods and services, which in the long run affect food security issues.

- **Poverty rates (standards of living):** Poverty rates in Malawi are still very high in all the districts where above 50 percent of households live below the poverty line. Poor households will have great challenges in meeting food security in both normal and lean seasons.
- **Possibility of land degradation due to increased use of solid fuels:** The increase in the use of solid fuel in all districts of Malawi will lead to cutting down of more trees, leaving bare grounds which will be prone to soil erosions and hence land degradation.
- **Percentage change in the number of learners receiving school meals:** The number of learners receiving school meals is very low in all the districts in Malawi. As partners are coming in for support, there is need to monitor program improvement on coverage.
- **Improvements in road networks:** Many Malawian roads are in poor condition and the situation becomes worse where there are repeated occurrences of floods which lead to poor road condition.
- **Percentage increase in usage of electricity:** the percentage usage of electricity was very low in all districts, as most homes are not electrified. Many are dependent on solid fuels, which in the long run may lead to land degradation, ultimately affecting food production and availability.



9. Process and Methodology

The Malawi IPC-CFI process began in August 2021, when an awareness campaign was conducted for key institutions to nominate their focal person to participate in the IPC CFI analysis. Establishment of the Core Group and Technical Working Group were also done. In October 2021, a series of awareness meetings were conducted to introduce chronic food insecurity analysis to key stakeholders across Government departments and amongst development partners. This was followed by a re-analysis workshop that was held in October and trained the Core Group in IPC CFI contributing factors and outcome indicators, as well as how to reanalyse them for the IPC CFI. In November 2021, data collection and preparation began. Data was collected from numerous sources and spanned over 10 years from 2011 to 2021. In December 2021, a working session was held to start the pre-analysis activities (namely step one -context analysis), continued data analysis and policy review. January 2022 marked the evidence organisation and repository preparation in anticipation of the main analysis which was held in February 2022.

The Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Chronic Food Insecurity (CFI) training and analysis event for Malawi was held in Blantyre from the 14th to the 25th of February 2022. A total of 30 people representing 19 Government different departments and development agencies were present. In attendance were representatives from academia, namely the University of Malawi and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR); Government departments (i.e., the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA), the National Planning Commission (NPC), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Ministry of National Unity, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (EP&D), the Ministry of Education – Department of Nutrition (MoE), Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (i.e., Concern Worldwide, World Vision International, United Purpose, Action Aid, CARE, and Save the Children), and United Nations' agencies (i.e., WFP, FAO, UNDP and UNICEF).

What are the IPC and IPC Chronic Food Insecurity:

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency, and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Chronic Food Insecurity is defined as a manifestation of inadequate food and nutrient consumption over longer periods of time, mainly due to structural causes. This persistence is determined based on an analysis of conditions under non-exceptional circumstances. It changes slowly, happens gradually, and does not usually pose an immediate threat to life, but may have severe consequences in terms of increased vulnerability and long-term negative impacts on health, physical, mental, and cognitive capacities.

The IPC analysis used the IPC Version 3.1 Manual, Chronic IPC addendum, Chronic IPC Guidance Note on Indicators and was conducted according to the set tools, procedures and protocols of the IPC under the four functions, namely building technical consensus; identifying and classifying (by severity) the key drivers; drafting communications for action; and ensuring quality assurance.

Sources

The analysis covered the three regions of the country using officially-published national survey reports and datasets during the period 2011-2021. The main sources of the analysis ranged from censuses, surveys, assessments, administrative records and reports from different Ministries and Departments, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies.

Limitations of the Analysis

- **Evidence Gaps:** Indicators such as the access to safe water (15 litres consumed per person per day) is not collected in Malawi, yet the direct water indicator for IPC CFI requires the quantity of water in order to assess the food utilization aspect. Malawi used a water composite indicator instead as a direct indicator which combined the access to improved or unimproved sources, plus the distance/ time taken to the water source.
- **Missing Data for Likoma:** There was limited data available for Likoma District. Thus, data for Nkhata Bay District was used as a proxy.



OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR LIMITING FACTORS AND KEY DRIVERS BY ANALYSIS UNIT

Areas	Limiting Factors for Food Insecurity						Underlying Factors for Food Security					
	Food Availability	Food Access	Food Utilization	Livelihood Strategies	Human Capitals	Physical Capitals	Financial Capitals	Natural Capitals	Social Capitals	Policy/Institutional Processes	Recurrent Risks	Unusual Crises
Balaka	Major	Major	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor
Blantyre	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Major
Chikwawa	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Chiradzulu	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor
Chitipa	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major
Dedza	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Dowa	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Karonga	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Major
Kasungu	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Major
Likoma	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major
Lilongwe	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Machinga	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Major
Mangochi	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Major
Mchinji	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Mulanje	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Mwanza	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Major
Mzimba	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major
Neno	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major
Nkhata bay	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor
Nkhotakota	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Major
Nsanje	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Major
Ntcheu	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Ntchisi	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Major
Phalombe	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Major	Major	Major
Rumphi	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor
Salima	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major
Thyolo	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major
Zomba	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Minor	Minor	Minor	Major
Legend	Major Factor	Major Factor		Minor Factor	Minor Factor		Not a Factor	Not a Factor		No Data	No Data	

Annex 1: District Context : Profile of the most affected districts

Balaka District

Balaka District is located in the Southern Region of the Republic of Malawi. Ntcheu District borders it to the northwest, Mangochi District to the north, Machinga District to the east, Zomba District to the southeast, Blantyre District to the south, and Neno District to the southwest. The district is located in the Middle Shire Livelihood Zone, which is located in the Southern Region of Malawi. Balaka is a relatively dry mid-lowland area with limited winter cropping and fishing along the Shire River. The zone is among the lowest in terms of cash income compared to other zones. The main livelihoods in the district are subsistence farming and small-scale fishing among those living close to the Shire River. There is an emerging informal mining sub-sector of terrazzo. Population pressure and poor land husbandry practices have degraded catchment areas and marginal lands and accelerated soil erosion, resulting in sedimentation in rivers. There is a diversity of cultures and beliefs in Balaka owing to the existence of several tribal groups. Cultural beliefs have some bearing on the socio-economic development of the district⁵⁷.

Classification

The IPC Chronic analysis found that 45 percent of the population in Balaka District (214, 821 people) are classified as Level 3 and 4.

Nsanje District

Nsanje District lies in the southern tip of the country within the Lower Shire Rift Valley. It is bordered by Chikwawa District in the north and Thyolo District in the north east and surrounded by Mozambique to the South. Geographically, the district has three major regions, namely the hilly rift valley scarp, the middle dryland and the lower marshy and wetlands along the Shire River. The district is located in the Lower Shire Livelihood Zone (LSH). This is a hot, dry lowland zone located in the Southern Region of Malawi along the southern part of the Shire River. Households benefit from the river to irrigate their food and cash crops which account for about 60 percent of their food production. The main livelihoods in the district are farming, fishing for those close to Shire River, livestock sales for the “better off”, and ganyu for the poor and very poor. In some parts of Nsanje District, boys and girls undergo initiation ceremonies when they reach the recommended age, where the initiates are advised on how to live with the elders and what roles they are going to perform as adults. However, the initial ceremonies have been criticized as a driver of premature sex, culminating in a host of challenges. This has negative effects on socioeconomic development of the district including health and education levels⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Balaka Socio-economic plan (SEP), Districts Development Plan (DDP) and MVAC Livelihood Baseline Profiles 2016

⁵⁸ Nsanje district Socio-economic plan (SEP), Districts Development Plan (DDP) and MVAC Livelihood Baseline Profiles 2016

Classification

The IPC CFI analysis found that 40 percent of the population in Nsanje District (126,449 people) are classified as Level 3 and 4.

Chikhwawa District

Chikwawa District is located in the Southern Region of Malawi. It shares an international boundary with Mozambique to the West and has district boundaries with Mwanza to the North, Thyolo to the East, Blantyre to the North East and Nsanje to the South. Its main topographic features are the flat basin along the Shire River and the Thyolo-Chikwawa Escarpment. The district is located in the Lower Shire Livelihood Zone (LSH) which is the same zone as Nsanje. This is a hot, dry lowland zone located in the Southern Region of Malawi along the southern part of the Shire River. Households benefit from the river for irrigation, which accounts for about 60 percent of their food production. The district follows a patrilineal system of marriage where women live at their husband's home and men dominate decision-making, while women and children have less control over key decisions. The power imbalance has an impact on socioeconomic development in the district⁵⁹.

Classification

The IPC Chronic analysis of Chikwawa District shows that 40 percent of the overall population (241,214 people) are in Level 3 and 4.

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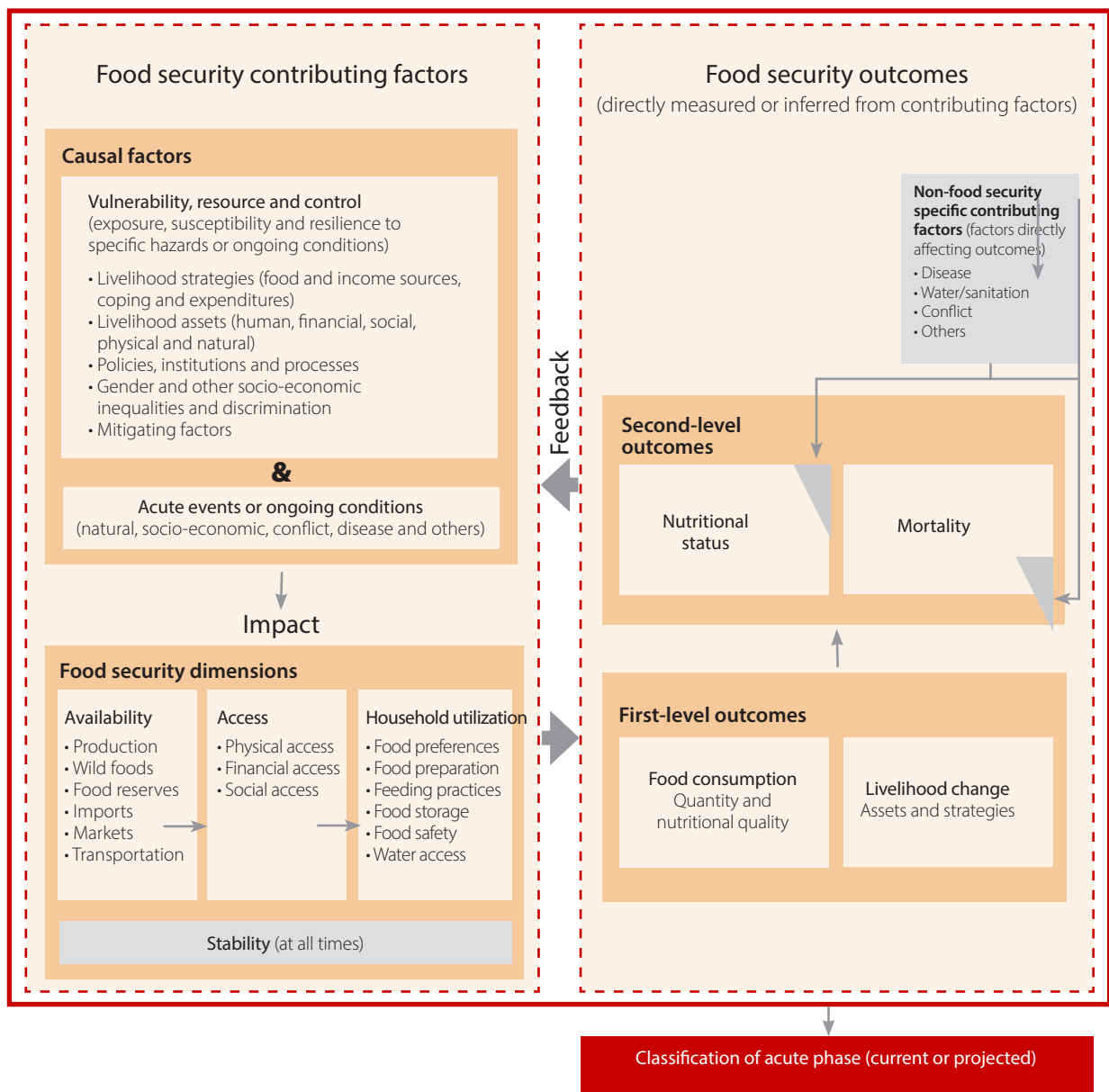
⁵⁹ Chikwawa district Socio-economic plan (SEP), Districts Development Plan (DDP) and MVAC Livelihood Baseline Profiles 2016

Annex 2: Population Table

Region	District population	Area Phase	Total Rural ¹	Level 1		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4		Level 3 +	
				#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#people	%	#	%
Central Region	Dedza	3	889,017	355,607	40	266,705	30	177,803	20	88,902	10	266,705	30
	Dowa	3	835,919	334,368	40	250,776	30	167,184	20	83,592	10	250,776	30
	Kasungu	3	906,926	453,463	50	181,385	20	181,385	20	90,693	10	272,078	30
	Lilongwe	3	1,753,299	701,320	40	525,990	30	350,660	20	175,330	10	525,990	30
	Mchinji	3	644,457	322,229	50	128,891	20	128,891	20	64,446	10	193,337	30
	Nkhotakota	3	419,593	125,878	30	125,878	30	104,898	25	62,939	15	167,837	40
	Ntcheu	3	716,432	322,394	45	179,108	25	143,286	20	71,643	10	214,929	30
	Ntchisi	3	346,154	138,462	40	69,231	20	103,846	30	34,615	10	138,461	40
	Salima	3	521,186	208,474	40	130,297	25	104,237	20	78,178	15	182,415	35
	Subtotal		7,032,983	2,962,195	42	1,858,261	26	1,462,190	21	750,338	11	2,212,528	31
Northern Region	Chitipa	3	247,514	99,006	40	74,254	30	49,503	20	24,751	10	74,254	30
	Karonga	3	388,780	174,951	45	116,634	30	77,756	20	19,439	5	97,195	25
	Likoma	2	15,391	7,696	50	5,387	35	1,539	10	770	5	2,309	15
	Mzimba	3	986,294	591,776	60	197,259	20	147,944	15	49,315	5	197,259	20
	Nkhata bay	2	299,493	149,747	50	104,823	35	29,949	49	14,975	5	44,924	15
	Rumphi	3	243,811	121,906	50	73,143	30	36,572	12	12,191	5	48,763	20
		Subtotal		2,181,283	1,145,082	52	571,500	26	343,263	16	121,441	6	464,704
Southern Region	Balaka	4	477,380	143,214	30	119,345	25	119,345	25	95,476	20	214,821	45
	Blantyre	3	485,912	194,365	40	145,774	30	97,182	20	48,591	10	145,773	30
	Chikwawa	4	603,037	211,063	35	150,759	25	120,607	20	120,607	20	241,214	40
	Chiradzulu	3	377,103	94,276	25	131,986	35	94,276	25	56,565	15	150,841	40
	Machinga	3	816,370	285,730	35	244,911	30	204,093	25	81,637	10	285,730	35
	Mangochi	3	1,264,737	442,658	35	316,184	25	316,184	25	189,711	15	505,895	40
	Mulanje	3	733,068	256,574	35	219,920	30	146,614	20	109,960	15	256,574	35
	Mwanza	3	143,578	43,073	30	43,073	30	35,895	25	21,537	15	57,432	40
	Neno	3	147,272	71,136	50	35,568	25	28,454	20	7,114	5	35,568	25
	Nsanje	4	316,123	94,837	30	94,837	30	47,418	15	79,031	25	126,449	40
	Neno	3	465,592	209,516	45	93,118	20	116,398	25	46,559	10	162,957	35
	Nsanje	3	759,062	303,625	40	189,766	25	151,812	20	113,859	15	265,671	35
	Zomba	3	797,548	398,774	50	159,510	20	159,510	20	79,755	10	239,265	30
	Subtotal		7,386,782	2,751,340	37	1,946,001	26	1,638,788	22	1,050,652	14	2,689,440	36
Grand Total			16,601,048	6,858,615	41	4,375,761	26	3,444,243	21	1,922,429	12	5,366,672	33

¹ National Statistics Office, (NSO), Population Projections, 2018

Annex 3: The IPC Food Security Analytical Framework



IPC

Integrated Food Security
Phase Classification



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