



UNITED NATIONS
MALAWI



UN COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS MALAWI: 2024 UPDATE



by UN Country Team in Malawi
Data and analysis as of 2024

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement	IFMIS	Integrated Financial Management Information System
ART	Antiretroviral prophylaxis and treatment	IMF	International Monetary Fund
APEI	Accelerated Programme on Economic Integration	IPRT	Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit
AU	African Union	IMF	International Monetary Fund
BoP	Balance of Payment	INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
BLAs	Bilateral labour agreements	IOM	International Organization for Migration
CCA	United Nations Common Country Analysis	IoT	Internet of Things
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund	IHDI	Inequality Adjusted Human Development Indexes
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework	LFPR	Labor Force Participation Rate
CBCCs	Community Based Child Care Centres	LGA	Local Government Authority
CHREAA	Centre for Human Rights Education, Advice, and Assistance	LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa	LENOB	Leave No One Behind
DoDMA	Department of Disaster Management Affairs	LDCs	Least Developed Countries
DRM	Disaster Risk Management	MoHS	Ministry of Homeland Security
ECF	Extended Credit Facility	MPHC	Malawi Population and Housing Census
EDz	Ease of Doing Business	MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration	MPRS	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy
GoM	Government of Malawi	MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
GDI	Gender Development Index	MHRC	Malawi Human Rights Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	MiGoF	Migration Governance Framework
HDI	Human Development Index	MW2063	Vision Malawi 2063
HCI	Human Capital Index	MIP-z	10-year Implementation Plan
HIPC	Highly-Indebted Poor Countries	MDAs	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person		

MSSP	Malawi Social Support Policy	RBM	Reserve Bank of Malawi
MNSSP	Malawi National Social Support Programme	RDS	Refugee Status Determination
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index	RUSLE	Revised Universal Soil Loss
NSO	National Statistical Office	RCO	UN Resident Coordinator's Office
NCCATIP	National Coordination Committee against Trafficking in Persons	SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution	SERP	Social Economic Response Plan
OPC	Office of the President and Cabinet	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
PFM	Public Finance Management	SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
PMTCT	Prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV	SCTP	Social Cash Transfer Programme
PLWHIV	People Living With HIV	SADC	Southern African Development Community
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief	TT	Travel and Tourism
PECGs	Pillar and Enabler Coordination Groups	TGE	Total Government Expenditure
PPP	Public Private Partnerships	UN	United Nations
PWDs	Persons with disabilities	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
PWA	Persons with albinism	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
PoC	Persons of concern	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
RCF	Rapid Credit Facility	VNR	Voluntary Nation Reviews
		WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
		WHO	World Health Organisation

FOREWORD

Malawi's Vision 2063 (MW2063) aims to transform Malawi into a wealthy and self-reliant industrialised 'upper middle-income country' by 2063. The country's long-term vision and its first 10-year implementation plan, which aim to create a better and more sustainable future for all, are aligned to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Common Country Analysis (CCA) provides an analytical overview of the dynamics of development in the country to inform programmatic priorities for the UN in Malawi in support of delivery of the 2030 Agenda and national priorities.

The multidimensional and integrated nature of contemporary development needs poses unique challenges to policymakers and development partners alike. The interconnectedness of rising poverty, deprivation and inequalities in income and access to basic social services; and with environmental challenges such as climate change, human-made and natural disasters such as cyclones and an increasing frequency of prolonged droughts, for instance, implies that these challenges can no longer be dealt with in isolation. A siloed approach will not deliver the desired results. Solutions to these issues and many other present-day challenges, therefore, ought to be coherent and multidimensional in scope; maximising synergies, robustly analysing impact, carefully managing tradeoffs, and addressing structural and institutional bottlenecks.

The CCA reflects the UN system's independent, impartial, and collective assessment and analysis of the country's development context. It examines progress, gaps, opportunities, and bottlenecks vis-à-vis a country's commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda and national priorities as well as UN norms and standards. The analysis builds on foresight analysis, a review of the latest available evidence, national statistics, and independent surveys, the 2018-2023 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Evaluation and the UN COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF). It also draws on capacities and resources from within and outside the UN system along with consultations with stakeholders. Overall, the analysis complements national assessments and serves as a basis for strategic prioritisation and informing the review of the Cooperation Framework and Theory of Change (ToC), as well as the joint work plans and programmes.

Rebecca Adda-Dontoh

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) is a core analytical function carried out by the UN development system at the country, regional and global levels requiring collective assessment and analysis of a country's situation for its internal use in developing and reviewing the Cooperation Framework, as well as inform its policy dialogues with the government and stakeholders in the country. In 2024, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Malawi carried out an update of the 2021 CCA. The CCA is an independent, impartial, collective, integrated, forward-looking, and evidence-based analysis of the country's context and situational developments. The CCA examines the progress, gaps, opportunities, and bottlenecks vis-a-vis Malawi's commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda, human rights and UN norms and standards and the principles of the UN Charter. This CCA also identifies multidimensional risks that could impact the development trajectory of the country.

The UN inter-agency task force conducted an integrated strategic analysis, based on a foresight analysis, a systematic secondary review and synthesis of over 70 latest reports from government entities, UN agencies, UN Human Rights Mechanisms, research institutions, civil society organisations, and bi- and multilateral donors. Besides, the CCA provided an opportunity for UN agencies to come together with key national and international stakeholders to discuss national development challenges, opportunities, and common approaches at the beginning of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF). The 2024 CCA, amongst others,

serves as a basis for strategic prioritisation and informing the review/ validation of joint work plans and programmes as well as the Cooperation Framework and Theory of Change (ToC).

The analysis has identified four interlinked and mutually reinforcing development challenges, which hinder the capacity of Malawi to progress along the path to the socio-economic transformation that meets the current and future environmental needs. Several opportunities for addressing the rights of those left behind by the development process have been identified.



The top development challenges are as follows:

1. Unsustainable, Undiversified, and Non-Inclusive Growth

Malawi's heavy reliance on subsistence and rainfed agriculture limits its growth potential and susceptibility to exogenous and endogenous shocks. These include natural disasters and weather shocks, public health outbreaks, market shocks, sudden reductions of capital inflows, including aid, and geopolitical events. The agriculture, tourism, extractive, and manufacturing industries remain underdeveloped, with limited access to innovative financing for investment and expansion. Nevertheless, the country has several opportunities in the areas such as economic diversification, promoting exports through the existing global and regional trading blocs, the global and national momentum on the transformation of the food system, and utilizing the integrated national financing framework to support sustainable financing.



2. Weak Governance Institutions and Processes



The country is rich in policies and strategies; however, the implementation of various policies and strategies remains weak, primarily due to factors such as politicisation, ineffective oversight and accountability mechanisms, and weak coordination, among others. Weak governance is associated with mismanagement, corruption, inefficient use of financial resources, continuity of harmful cultural practices and negative social norms, human rights violations. While decentralisation reforms have been rolled out at the sub-national level, they remain fragmented, gender-blind, uneven, and incomplete fashion, given that central ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) continue to retain control over expenditure responsibility for a high percentage of development and capital investments. The participation of women and youths in governance institutions and processes remains weak.

Huge disparities exist in access to justice for women, as well as for other marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. There are opportunities to be harnessed around the enhancement of democratic process, peace and social cohesion, decentralisation and empowerment of local councils, national and sectoral planning, transparency, and accountability, strengthening constitutional bodies and oversight institutions, promoting access to justice, the rule of law and human rights, and the national momentum on

gender equality and women's empowerment.

3. Inadequate and Uneven Distribution of Investments in Human rights and Human Capital Development

Despite significant strides by the government to ensure that the education and health sectors consistently receive a substantial portion of the national budget, the budgets for the education and health sectors remain below international commitments (20% Dakar Commitment on Education for All and 15% Abuja target). Other critical sectors such as nutrition, gender, youth, social welfare/ protection, WASH, science, technology, and innovation continue to receive sub-optimal investments and are largely reliant on donor funding. The rapid population growth is expected to significantly increase the demand for social sector investments and further worsen the country's ability to meet basic social service needs and basic economic and social rights.

Malawi's population density is among the top ten in Africa, with adolescent fertility remaining high at [136 per 1,000 births](#). This contributes to both the population growth and the high incidence of adolescent deaths due to unsafe abortion. The health system remains fragile in addressing mortality and morbidity. For instance, the 2022 cholera crisis and recurrent disease outbreaks and highlight insufficient and limited investment in safe water infrastructure, delivery and poor community-based sanitation practices. Similarly, the education system under-resourced, resulting in inadequate outcomes in terms of quality. The key opportunities

under this area include international development cooperation, the youth dividend, the global and national momentum on furthering gender equality, including the 50:50 and He-for-She campaigns, the opportunity to accelerate Private and Public Sector partnerships (PPP), promote safe, orderly, and regular migration for everyone, and low-cost diaspora remittance flows for development.

4. Climatic Change, Environmental Degradation, and Inadequate Energy

Malawi is highly vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather events, the worsening environmental degradation, and the unsustainable use of wood and charcoal fuel supply. Other environmental challenges include overfishing, widespread soil erosion and degradation and the overexploitation and illegal trafficking of wildlife. These issues, combined with the effects of population growth and (internal/cross-border) migration patterns exacerbate increased food insecurity, environmental degradation, and poverty levels. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by increased exposure to food insecurity and violence following natural disasters.



Key opportunities for addressing these challenges include the following:

- The 2024/25 forecasted favourable La Niña weather conditions.
- The existence of the National Climate Change Fund.
- Scaling up innovative solutions such as parametric and weather index microinsurance, and proven and successful climate SMART technologies.
- Exploring new opportunities on green debt financing.,
- Increasing engagement with the private sector to promote alternative renewable and clean energy sources.
- Ensuring the meaningful participation of marginalised groups in situations of vulnerability, including women, girls, youth, children, people with disabilities, and older persons.

Multi-Dimensional Risks

Malawi faces five broad categories of multi-dimensional risks. Of these, the most severe ones are risks posed by the political and governance situation, public health outbreaks, climate change and environmental degradation and economic instability. Security risk impact is rated moderate.

1. **Political and governance risks:** rated as high.
2. **Public health risks:** rated as high.
3. **Climate change and the environment risks:** rated as high.
4. **Economic risks:** rated as high.
5. **Security risks:** rated as medium.

1. INTRODUCTION



The UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) is a core analytical function carried out by the UN development system at the country, regional and global levels requiring collective assessment and analysis of a country's situation for its internal use in developing the Cooperation Framework, as well as inform its policy dialogues with the government and stakeholders in the country. It is the UN system's independent, impartial, collective, integrated, forward-looking, and evidence-based analysis of a country's context and situational developments. It accordingly involves examining various aspects of a country's sustainable development situation, particularly progress, gaps, opportunities, and bottlenecks vis-à-vis its commitment to achieving the 2030 Agenda, UN norms and standards, and the principles of the UN Charter, including as reflected in the Cooperation Framework Guiding Principles, and its agenda for sustainable development. The CCA, thus, underpins the Cooperation Framework.

The UNCT Malawi developed the [*2024-2028 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(UNSDCF\)*](#), also known as the Cooperation Framework (CF). The new generation CCA/CF guidelines require that the CCA must be updated annually to inform the development, review and validation of the CF and Theory of Change, as well as the Joint Work Plans (JWPs). The challenges and opportunities identified in the CCA inform the prioritisation of transformative development solutions under the CF. As per the internal guidance for the Cooperation Framework, agency strategic plans are supposed to derive from the UNSDCF, hence getting the CCA right is one of the important steps to ensure that the strategic plan for agencies addresses the key development challenges and root causes.

This CCA is an update of the 2022 CCA taking into consideration the following emerging issues:

1. Major developments that reset the past context, e.g., the El Nino weather impacting on the 2023/24 agriculture season, Tropical Cyclone Freddy (2023), influx of refugees and refugee encampment policy enforcement, the 44 percent exchange rate alignment in November 2023; the granting of an Extended Credit facility (ECF) arrangement valued at US\$175 million by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help restore macro-economic stability; death of the country's Vice President in a plane crash and political uncertainties with the national elections in 2025 and effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, among others.
2. New data and information that have become available (e.g., 2022 Voluntary National Review Report, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, IPC Chronic Analysis Report, World Bank Malawi Economic Memorandum (MEM) 2023, Malawi Economic Monitor (MEM) series, AfDB Malawi Country Focus Reports 2024, Malawi's Migration Governance Indicators Profile 2022, Mid-term Review of the Sendai Framework, and Malawi Gender Equality Profile, among others).
3. Renewed commitments and shifts in international cooperation such as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.
4. Analyses progress, challenges, and opportunities towards the 2030 Agenda/SDGs in view of the new data, and major developments and changes in legal, policy and regulatory frameworks.
5. Major legal, policy and regulatory changes since the 2020/2021 CCA and the 2022 update. The 2020/2021 CCA focused on the major shifts in its political and social context since the 2017 root cause analysis and the severe human and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.
6. Review of multidimensional risks in view of the major developments.
7. Feedback from the stakeholders during the multi-stakeholder workshop in October 2022 with government, private sector/academic and research institutions, civil society organisations, trade unions, media, and development partners.
8. Strengthened the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Principle: what are the changes in terms of marginalised groups in situations of vulnerability in terms of who is at greatest risk of being left furthest behind.

1.1 PURPOSE AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) annual update is an exercise undertaken by the UN Country Team (UNCT) to capture changes in the country context within a year – both actual and anticipated - which may have implications for programming. Updating the CCA is premised on the fact that country contexts are dynamic and evolving throughout each year of the programme cycle. Therefore, changes that impact the development landscape do occur or can be anticipated, including through new data, and analysis becoming available.

Given the last update was undertaken in 2022, the UNCT in Malawi is conducted an update of the CCA between August and December 2024 to take stock of the emerging challenges, opportunities, and risks that have an impact on Malawi's journey to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and can inform adjustments in the UNSDCF joint work plans. It is also part of a strategic pivot for the UN towards becoming the top source for independent, trusted analysis and policy advisory support on sustainable development in the 21st century.

The CCA update, seeks to, inter-alia: The specific objectives of the CCA update include:

1. **To update the CCA** utilising new data sources in identifying the immediate, underlying, and root causes and structural development challenges and causes at the national level affecting the achievement of national priorities, Agenda 2030, international human rights obligations and agreed international norms and standards and regional commitments.
2. **To identify and describe population groups** left behind or at risk of being left behind in the country, assessing the evidence of who is left behind and to what degree and the underlying intersection of drivers of risks and vulnerabilities, sources of deprivation, discrimination, needs, and analysis of inequalities, including gender inequality, taking into account political, social, cultural, geography, governance, conflict, disasters, climate change, the environment or the economy-related issues.
3. **To update the multidimensional risks that** could impact the development trajectory of the country, covering a full spectrum of development, humanitarian, peacebuilding, and human rights issues.
4. **To strengthen the CCA analysis** ensuring the integration of UN Guiding/Programming Principles such as leaving no one behind, human rights-based approach to development, gender equality and women's empowerment, resilience, sustainability, and accountability.

The report is structured into three parts:

1. Methodology and Approach:

This section outlines the methodology and approach used to develop the 2024 CCA update.

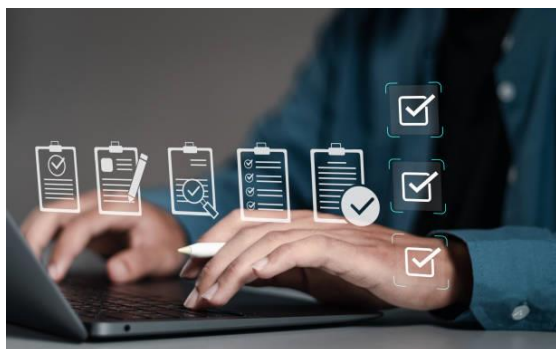
2. Assessment of Progress:

This section evaluates progress toward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, including the country's commitments to international norms and standards.

3. Development Challenges and Opportunities:

This section identifies the key development challenges and opportunities that will have the most catalytic impact in achieving the SDGs.

2. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH



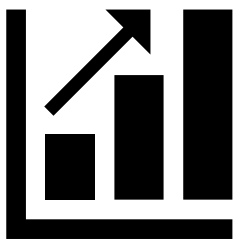
The 2024 CCA update depended on a foresight approach making use of the International Futures (IFs) model, systematic secondary review and synthesis of the latest available statistics, analyses, research, and reports from government entities, UN Human Rights Mechanisms, UN agencies, research institutions, civil society organisations, and bi- and multilateral donors. The UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) created a repository that was used to consolidate the reports.

The CCA was guided by the new generation UN CCA and Cooperation Framework Guidelines and the relevant companion pieces, including The Guiding Principles Companion Piece, Companion Piece on Financing the SDGs and Funding the Cooperation Framework, Companion Piece on Economic Transformation and Companion Piece on Humanitarian–Development–Peace Collaboration, Multidimensional SDG Risk Analysis and the Checklist on Integrating Human Rights, Leave No One Behind and Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Common Country Analysis.

The CCA deployed the IFs to understand potential future scenarios, trends and uncertainties to better inform resilient and adaptable strategies and programming. IFs is a global model that covers 188 countries and integrates data to forecast major human, social, and natural systems. The platform allows for historical data analysis back to 1960 and forecasts hundreds of variables from 2020 to 2100. The foresight analysis makes use of three distinct economic growth scenarios, each designed to explore the potential trajectories of key SDG indicators.

(1) Scenario 1: Current Path (Business-as-Usual)

The base scenario outlines the expected future development in Malawi by 2030, assuming that historical growth patterns continue without disruptions in the economy in terms of shocks, policies or political stability. However, this scenario allows for non-linear change, acknowledging that deviations from past trends as growth in economic and human development trajectories change with shifts in the environment. In addition, the base scenario acts as a reference point to assess the effectiveness of alternative policy strategies.



To develop the base scenario, historical economic growth data from the past decade (2013 to 2023) was analysed, with an average growth rate of 3.3% and a standard deviation of $\pm 1.8\%$. Based on this analysis, the base scenario assumes that the average growth rate will remain at 3.3% from 2025 to 2030. In addition to the base scenario, two uncertainty-framing scenarios have been developed using the standard deviation of historical growth rates. These scenarios explore alternative growth patterns on top of the current trajectory, referred to as the pessimistic and optimistic scenarios. By considering these alternative scenarios, the analysis provides a broader view of potential outcomes under varying conditions, helping to capture the range of possibilities for Malawi's development trajectory.

The base scenario serves two key functions:

1. Quantitative Projection:

It provides a forecast of economic and social progress, projecting the country's future development.

2. Mechanisms and Pathways:

It identifies the underlying mechanisms and pathways driving this growth, enabling policy actors to identify key long-term challenges and opportunities.

(2) Scenario 2: Pessimistic Scenario

The pessimistic scenario reflects a more challenging future for Malawi, taking account the frequent economic and climatic shocks that have hindered the country's growth in recent years. Over the past five years, Malawi has faced numerous disruptions, including the El Niño weather conditions (2024), Tropical Cyclones Freddy (2023), Gombe (2022), Idai (2019), and Tropical Storm Ana (2022), and the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in 2023, the country's projected economic growth of 2.7% fell to 1.5% following the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Freddy. Similarly, in 2022, growth estimates dropped from an anticipated 5.2% to just 1.2%, primarily due to the effects of Tropical Storm Ana and Tropical Cyclone Gombe.

These significant deviations from projected growth highlight the likelihood of a more pessimistic economic outlook for Malawi. The pessimistic scenario was developed as a -1.8% deviation from the historical average growth rate of 3.3%, resulting in an assumed average growth rate of 1.5% from 2025 to 2030. This scenario provides a comparative framework against the base scenario, illustrating the potential impact of continued shocks on Malawi's development trajectory.

(3) Scenario 3: Optimistic Scenario

The optimistic scenario envisions a more favourable economic trajectory for Malawi, driven by successful interventions and positive developments. This scenario builds on historical periods when Malawi exceeded its average economic growth rate.

Key assumptions underpinning this scenario include:

- Targeted investments in high-impact projects within productive sectors will yield substantial returns such as Shire Valley Transformation, mega-farms, irrigation intensification, mining sector, and enhanced investment in value-added industries.
- Favourable weather conditions with minimal climatic shocks, supporting steady agricultural and economic growth.

The optimistic scenario was developed as a +1.8% deviation from the historical average growth rate of 3.3%, resulting in an assumed growth rate of 5.1% from 2025 to 2030. This higher growth rate allows for a comparison with the base scenario, illustrating the potential for accelerated development if these favourable conditions and interventions materialize.

Summary of the Scenarios

Table 1 below summarizes the scenarios used for this foresight analysis of the CCA (full results are presented in annex 1.

Table 1: Scenario Framing for the CCA Report

The CCA update was undertaken by an inter-agency task team constituted by the UNCT to update the chapters for the thematic areas in Table 1. The CCA update process tapped into the expertise and capacities that are available across the entire UN system - the Pillar and Outcome Groups, the Gender and Human Rights Technical Working Group, the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisory Group, and the RCO. The CCA was updated between September and November 2024.

Scenario	GDP growth (%)
Current path	3.3
Pessimistic path	1.5
Optimistic path	5.1

Table 2: CCA Thematic Areas

Theme	Lead and Participating Agencies
Overview of population groups (at risk of being) left behind and main drivers of exclusion	<i>UNFPA (Lead) and UN Women (Co-Lead)</i> ILO, IOM, FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNESCO, UNAIDS, WFP, UNHCR, WHO and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
Social development and exclusion analysis	<i>UNICEF (Lead) and UNDP (Co-Lead)</i> ILO, IOM, FAO, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNESCO, UNAIDS, WFP, UNHCR WHO and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
Economic transformation Analysis (socioeconomic situation analysis):	<i>UNDP (Lead) and UNRCO (Co-Lead)</i> ILO, IOM, UNIDO, UNCTAD, UNCDF, UNAIDS, UNICEF, ITC, IFAD [World Bank, AfDB, IMF], OHCHR and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
Climate and environment	<i>UNDP (Lead) and FAO (Co-Lead)</i> IFAD, IOM, UNICEF, UN Women, UNHCR, UNEP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, and WFP and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
Governance and institutional Capacity (State institutions and political situation)	<i>UNDP (Lead) and UNFPA (Co-Lead)</i> UNICEF, UNODC, UNFPA, UN Women, OHCHR, UNHCR, IOM, UNESCO and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)

Theme	Lead and Participating Agencies
Multidimensional SDG Risk Analysis	<i>FAO (Lead) and UNDP (Co-Lead)</i> ILO, IOM, FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UN Women, UNESCO, UNAIDS, WFP, UNHCR WHO and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
Prevention and Humanitarian-Development-Peace Collaboration (peace-humanitarian-development nexus)	<i>WFP (Lead), UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP (Co-Lead)</i> FAO, UN Women, UNFPA, IFAD, IOM, UNAIDS, UN Habitat, UNDRR, OCHA and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
National vision and development plan vis-à-vis the 2030 Agenda with links to regional and global frameworks/goals, when relevant	<i>UN Women (Lead) and UNICEF (Co-Lead)</i> All UN Agencies in the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisory Group and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
Financial landscape analysis	<i>UNRCO (Lead)</i> and all UN Agencies [World Bank, AfDB, IMF] and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)
Stakeholder/ partnership analysis	<i>UNRCO (Lead)</i> , ILO, IOM, FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNESCO, UNHCR, UN Women, UNAIDS, WFP, WHO and non-resident agencies (UNEP, OHCHR)

3. PROGRESS TOWARDS 2030 AGENDA AND SDGs IN THE COUNTRY

Including commitments towards international norms and standards



Malawi adopted the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and 230 indicators. The country began domesticating the SDGs through the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, 2017-2022 (MGDS III) and later in the Malawi 2063 (MW2063). MW2063 aims to trigger a change in people's mindset to develop and provides an opportunity for the country to define its developmental roadmap. The First 10-year Implementation Plan (MIP-1) operationalizes the MW2063 from 2021 to 2030 through which Malawi has put in place clear strategies to fast-track the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure it meets most of the goals by 2030. The Government of Malawi has adopted the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT) in its effort to align its national development plans, the first

10-year implementation plan (2022-2031) with SDGs and Agenda 2063. The results of the IPRT show that the alignment of MIP-1 to SDGs is at 81.62%. At the goal level, the alignment of MIP-1 to SDGs is at 98.53%, signifying that MIP-1 aligns with almost all 17 SDGs. At the target and indicator levels, 72.19% and 53.48% of the 169 targets and 244 indicators, respectively align with MIP-1.¹ Furthermore, the results of the national scoping exercise of Management Information Systems in 14 ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) and two district councils showed that the MDAs and district councils have strategic documents which are not aligned with the newly launched MIP I of the Malawi 2063. The SDG Index ranks Malawi on position **140 out of 166 countries** with an SDG index score of 56.75 as at end of 2024.² The overall score measures the total progress

¹ UNECA (2022). Report on the Application of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT) in Malawi

² The score can be interpreted as a percentage of SDG achievement. A score of 100 indicates that all SDGs have been achieved.

towards achieving all 17 SDGs. The SDG index reveals that 20.9% of the targets have been achieved or are on track, 40.3% have limited progress and 38.8% are worsening. Malawi's overall SDG Index score is below the global average.

This reflects the country's ongoing challenges in several areas, including poverty, health, education, and sustainable infrastructure development. Despite these hurdles, Malawi has made progress in specific areas, particularly in environmental sustainability.

Figure 1: SDG Progress

Source - [Sustainable Development Report 2024 \(sdgindex.org\)](https://sdgindex.org)



Challenges to achieving the National Development Plan include the recurring climatic shocks (Tropical Cyclone Freddy in 2023 El Nino affecting the 2023/4 agriculture season and an impending La Niña) and epidemics (cholera), effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, policy shocks, limited fiscal space, and corruption. It remains important to continue to focus on cross-cutting areas such as gender equality, migration, inclusion of vulnerable groups, and human rights, among others, to holistically address these global challenges and root causes of stalled socio-economic development.

Malawi's Human Rights Treaty

Commitments

According to the OHCHR Interactive Dashboard, Malawi is a state party to **13 out of 18 international human rights treaties**.

However, the country has yet to ratify the following five instruments:

1. Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Aiming at Abolition of Death Penalty
2. Optional Protocol to the International Covenant On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights
3. Option Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
4. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communication Procedure
5. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities

Human Rights Review and Key Recommendations

Malawi underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) during the 36th session of the UPR Working Group in November 2020. As a result, the country received 232 recommendations, of which it supported 192 at the adoption of its UPR outcome during the 46th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2021—representing a 24.67% increase compared to the second cycle.³

The **Government of Malawi** accepted recommendations covering:

1. Legal and general framework of implementation
2. Universal and cross-cutting issues, civil and political rights, economic, social, and cultural rights, women's rights, and rights of other vulnerable groups and persons. The recommendations focus on SDGs 3, 5, 8, 10, and 16 (see Figure 2).⁴

The Human Rights Council in its 3rd cycle, 36th Session of the UPR, recommended that the Government of Malawi withdraw its reservations to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session36/MW/MatrixRecommendationsMalawi.docx>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session36/MW/InfographicMalawi.pdf>

Women's Rights

The 8th periodic report on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women commended Malawi's efforts to improve gender equality, including legislative reforms, national plans, and International treaty ratifications. However, it raised concerns about the persistence of some discriminatory laws and practices, limited awareness of women's rights, and challenges in access to justice, education, and health for women, especially in rural areas.



Key Recommendations Include:

- Amending outdated laws
- Improving gender-sensitive legal frameworks
- Increasing women's access to economic opportunities
- Enhancing support for victims of gender-based violence and integrating gender considerations in climate change and disaster policies
- Increasing national investment in gender mainstreaming and reducing reliance on external funding
- Prioritization of women's rights in achieving the SDGs and ensure inclusive participation of women in all areas of society.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The 2023 report on the concluding observations for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities urged Malawi to implement comprehensive legislative reforms to support vulnerable groups, including women, children, and persons with disabilities. All efforts should align with national and international frameworks such as the SDGs and Sendai Framework.



Key recommendations include:

- Improving access to inclusive education, healthcare, employment, and social protection.
- Addressing discrimination and stigma against persons with disabilities.
- Strengthening the role of disability rights organizations in policymaking.
- Enhancing access to justice for persons with disabilities.
- Adopting gender-sensitive disaster risk reduce strategies.

3.1 OVERVIEW: POPULATION GROUPS AT RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND AND MAIN DRIVERS OF EXCLUSION

The CCA annual update validated the **13 key groups** facing intersecting deprivations and forms of discrimination and exclusion. These include women, children, adolescent girls, youth, persons with disabilities, persons with albinism, persons living with HIV, LGBTQIA individuals, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, internally displaced persons, older persons, especially older women, and persons deprived of their liberty including prisoners.



In all these categories **women and girls** are further deprived and experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. The ultra-poor and food-insecure households are at risk of being left furthest behind. The drivers of inequalities include climate shocks, emergencies, health outbreaks, inadequate investment in human capital, capabilities and economic and social rights, weak governance and institutions, harmful practices, and negative social norms. The key factors associated with discrimination include gender, sexual orientation, age, disability status, HIV status, geography, socio-economic status, migratory status, religion, tribe, and political affiliation.

3.1.1 ADOLESCENT GIRLS

According to the 2020 Malawi National Statistical Office (NSO) thematic report on children and youth, out of every 10,000 children aged 10-17 years, 50 of them were heads of households.⁵ Female household heads were more (63 per 10,000 children) than male (36 per 10,000 children).⁶ The report also revealed that there were 226 children

living as married for every 10,000 children aged 12-17 years.

Furthermore, for every 1,000 rural residing adolescent girls, there were 127 births, compared to 78 births among adolescent girls in urban areas. A Rapid Assessment on Child Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies report⁷ indicates that Malawi registered a total of 13,067 cases of children living as married and 40,667

⁵ 2020. NSO Children and Youth Report

⁶ Ibid

⁷ https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/MoG-Malawi-COVID-19-RGA-Report-21052020-GiE-Signed-Off_.pdf

teenage pregnancy cases in 2020. Nearly half of the girls in Malawi are married and drop out of school by their 18th birthday which increases the Poverty, humanitarian disasters, religious and cultural norms and low levels of education are amongst the leading drivers of child marriages.⁸ Adolescent girls belonging to the poorest wealth quintiles have the highest share of entering a marriage between 15 to 18 years of age.

Recent disasters including El Niño (2023/204) and Tropical Cyclone Freddy (2023) have had a profound impact on women and girls. During disasters, women and girls, especially female-headed households that constitute most poor households, typically suffer disproportionate impacts, including adverse impacts to time poverty, protection and an increasing burden of care work. Findings from the Ministry of Gender El-Nino Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) show that the drought has overburdened women by adding to their existing gendered household and community roles, especially WASH-related.⁹

risk of early pregnancy, fistula and high fertility rate. The Committee Against Torture (CAT) has noted an increase in

The study further observed an upward trend in child marriages due to increased economic vulnerability and higher food insecurity. For example, Machinga district already reported twice as many cases of child marriage between January and May 2024 (286) as compared to the same period last year (162). Low or no education is positively associated with poor access to basic social services and economic, social and cultural rights (i.e., Early Childhood Development, antenatal care, nutrition, health-seeking behaviours, early marriages, school dropouts, etc.). Low levels of educational attainment and high levels of child marriage in Malawi are also associated with decreased levels of human capital accumulation, which affects women's school-to-work transition, and hampers their capacity to participate in the workforce. This further heightens the risk of trafficking and/or exploitation by unregulated private recruitment agencies to other countries.¹⁰

⁸ The right to education is guaranteed in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) which Malawi has ratified. Regarding the persistence of child marriage and related harmful practices, see further Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi* CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5 (2017) paras 24-25.

⁹ Ministry of Gender. 2024. Malawi El Nino Rapid Gender Analysis. Lilongwe.

¹⁰ Regarding the risk of trafficking, see further Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Malawi* CAT/C/MWI/CO/1 (2022) paras 35-36.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) highlighted some of the challenges facing adolescent girls in the education sector including:¹¹

- The persistence of structural and other barriers to girls' access to quality education, in particular at the secondary level, due to the lack of school infrastructure and inadequate sanitary facilities.
- The low percentage of the national budget allocated to education, with no explicit plan for an increase in order to improve capacity, especially for girls and particularly in rural areas.
- The significantly high dropout and low transition and completion rates among schoolgirls at the primary and secondary levels as a result of child and/or forced marriage, early pregnancy and traditional

attitudes, notwithstanding the adoption of a readmission policy.

- The persistence of sexual abuse and harassment of girls by peers and teachers at and on their way to and from school with impunity.

Adolescent girls face limited access to family planning services due to negative attitudes from service providers and stigmatisation. The high number of teenage pregnancies can also be ascribed to the criminalisation of abortion coupled with a lack of comprehensive age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning services, and limited access to modern contraceptives¹².

3.1.2 WOMEN

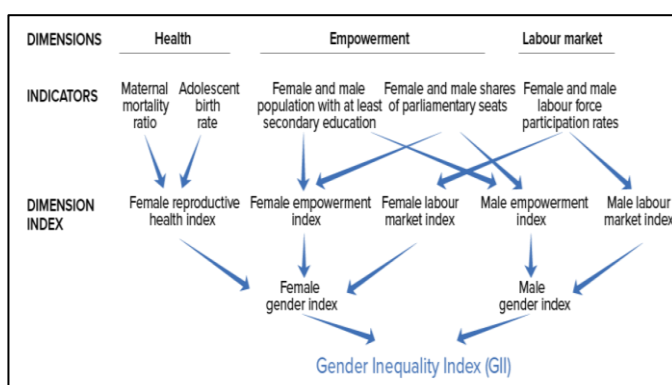


¹¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) para 30.

¹² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) para 34.

Malawi is ranked **173 out of 188** countries on the United Nations Gender Inequality Index¹³ and 116 out of 153 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index¹⁴. Women in Malawi fare worse than their male counterparts on socio-economic indicators related to literacy (*the literacy rate for males aged 5 years and above is 68.5%, while that of females is 62.6%; for the population aged 15 years and above, the literacy rate is 83.0% for males and 68.8% for females*), school attendance (*15.7% of females aged 5 and above have never been to school compared to 11.1% of males and for population aged 15 years and above, 18% of females had never attended school compared to 8.3% of males*), gender-based violence, highest level of education, attained economic opportunities (*i.e., access to credit, ownership of registered enterprises, access to justice services and access to social safety nets*), and ownership of assets (*i.e., land for farming, dwelling units, durable goods, farm implements*).¹⁵

The country is making progress in enacting laws that guarantee inheritance and land ownership rights to women, such as the revised Customary Land Act. However, these laws are often undermined by social norms and customs. Available data shows that women only own 17% of land with title deeds,¹⁶ although gender disaggregated land ownership data is scarce or difficult to find. Despite the formal recognition of customary rights through the land reform processes, this recognition has yet to translate into gender equality in land governance and protection of women's rights to land. While most women claim to have access to land, this does not extend to control and decision-making regarding how the land is used, even in matrilineal settings. The progress made on paper in securing women's land rights (through policies and laws), has not yet fully translated into actual rights to land for women. This is partly due to, on one hand, lack of concrete action to effectively implement these laws and policies, and on the other hand due to lack of awareness among women. Most women are not aware of these laws and policies, and the persistence of the patriarchal nature of customary laws, governed by traditional practices, undermines formal institution.



¹³ UNDP. 2024. Human Development Report.

¹⁴ UNDP. 2019. Human Development Report 2019: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century; WEF. 2020. Global Gender Gap Report 2020. See also: <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/africa/malawi>

¹⁵ NSO (2020), 5th Integrated Household Survey and NSO (2020) Thematic Report on Gender. See further Committee on the

Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi* CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) paras 38-39 regarding the economic empowerment of women in Malawi.

¹⁶ UN Women, n.d

The 2021 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report indicates that the incidence of multidimensional poverty is higher in female-headed households at 72.3% compared to male-headed households at 58.1%. The main factors contributing to this difference include electricity, literacy and schooling, food security, asset ownership, access to credit, access to social protection, and access to economic opportunities. Furthermore, for every 100,000 live births, 439 women die from pregnancy-related causes; and female participation in the labour market is 72.6% compared to 81.2% for men.¹⁷

Women continue to face significant discrimination in the labour market, including:

- Horizontal and vertical occupational segregation of the labour market
- The overrepresentation of women in low-paid jobs
- Failure to implement the principle of equal pay for work of equal value
- The persistent gender wage gap
- Insufficient maternity protection¹⁸

Women are overburdened with unpaid care work, which remains undervalued. For example:

- Women and adolescent girls aged 15+ spend 8.7% of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 1.2% spent by men.¹⁹
- Women constitute 70% of full-time farmers, carry out 70% of the agricultural work, and produce 80% of food for home consumption.²⁰
- Women and adolescent girls are more involved in caregiving roles compared to men and adolescent boys. For instance,
 - 51% of females collected water and/or firewood compared to 39% of men.
 - Women are also responsible for caring for the sick, the elderly and the orphaned.
 - The HIV/ AIDS has resulted in orphaned children with 11% of children aged 0-17 years that are orphans and the majority of them, 61% having lost father only.²¹

¹⁷ <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/MWI.pdf>

¹⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the*

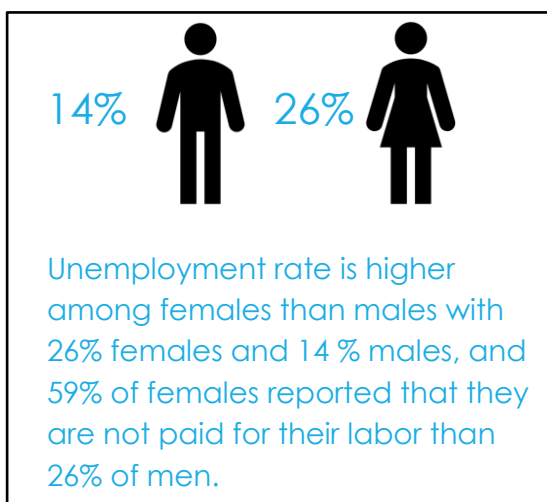
seventh periodic report of Malawi
CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) paras 32-33.

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

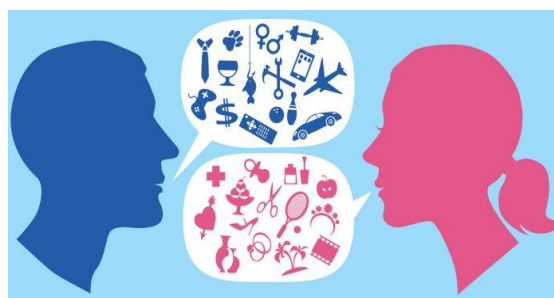
²¹ *ibid*

An intersectional approach is essential for analyzing women's participation in the labor market. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of power dynamics among women, identifies barriers faced by different groups, highlights diverse intersectional experiences, and informs targeted interventions. While the employment rate in Malawi is 55.2% for individuals aged 15–64 years, the employment rate of women is lower (48.6%) than the employment rate of men (78.0 per cent).²² Women are more likely to be employed in the informal sector than males with women constituting only 30% of total wage employment in non-agricultural sector.²³



In addition, young women are more than 1.5 times less likely than young men to be formally employed or undergo education or training. Furthermore, while Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is increasingly viewed as a promising pathway to transition young Africans who lack the foundational skills or interest in more academic tracks into the job market, gender gaps in TVET enrolment, especially in STEM fields, are significant. A lack of information about opportunities in male-dominated sectors, and social and cultural norms that attribute certain tasks to men at an early age, are some of the factors explaining this disparity.²⁴

Gender norms regarding divisions of labour exert an indirect influence, often leading women to choose sectors or roles that can be (relatively more easily) combined with childcare. These roles are also often more poorly paid than jobs in male-dominated sectors such as engineering, computing, transport and energy. These patterns are upheld by norms around suitable work for men and women (and suitable subjects for girls and boys to study).



²² Why Women earn less: Gender Pay Gap and Labour-market inequalities in Malawi https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/un_women_malawi_gender_pay_gap_report.pdf.

²³ AfDB Malawi Country Gender Profile, 2020

²⁴ AfDB Gender strategy 2021-2025

Gender inequality and feminized poverty are interconnected challenges that hinder sustainable development. For example, women perform 75% of the world's unpaid care and domestic work — effectively subsidizing the global economy. Women's and girls' unpaid care and domestic work is the backbone that allows households, communities, and economies to function and thrive. The UN Women Gender Pay Gap Report in Malawi shows that the unadjusted or raw gender pay gap in the country is 11.3% when considered at the hourly level and 27.2% when considered at the monthly level. The monthly gap is larger than the hourly gap because women work fewer hours than men in paid employment. In fact, women work fewer hours in paid employment than men across all age and educational level groups. This can be attributed to various factors, including women's disproportionate responsibilities for unpaid care work, discriminatory practices prevalent in the labour market and individual preferences.

Social and gender norms can restrict women's economic opportunities by limiting their access to information, networks, jobs and assets. Harmful gender norms justify wife beating with a higher number of women compared to men agree that wife beating is justifiable. About 16% of women and 13% of men agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife for at least one of the following reasons: if she burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, or refuses to have sex with him.²⁵ Both women and men are most likely to agree that wife beating is justified if the wife neglects the children (9% and 6%), respectively.²⁶ Harmful gender norms are also used to justify gendered occupational segregation that often relegates women to jobs that are deemed less valuable and thus pay lower wages. Social and gender norms are also a critical underlying factor in determining whether a woman can work, what kind of work she can do and what responsibilities she has aside from paid work. Norms can also determine what resources women can and cannot own.

Women also suffer disproportionate impact of shocks. According to Rapid Gender Assessments conducted for El Nino (2023/24) and Tropical Cyclone Feddy (2023), out of 7,970,852 people affected, 4,131,245 were women while 776,149 out of 1,515,616 affected farmers' households across all districts are female headed.

²⁵ Source MDHS 2015/16

²⁶ Ibid

With the forecasted La Niña weather phenomenon in 2024/25, this trend is likely to continue. It is critical to note that while Malawi has endeavored to integrate gender into its humanitarian response, although key changes in the policy, institutions, systems are required to ensure an effective and efficient gender responsive humanitarian response that also addresses the development and peace nexus.

Women migrating into and out of Malawi for economic reasons also often face challenges, including:

1. Confronting a different set of gender constraints in the host community.
2. Facing gendered access to documentation and services where they face higher levels of discrimination than men.
3. Being at higher risk of exploitation due to informal employment status, as well as being trafficked due to their vulnerability.
4. Continuing to experience intersecting forms of discrimination based on HIV status, disability, sexual orientation in addition to gender-based discrimination.

However, it is important to understand the nature of migration of women, whether independent or accompanied by husbands, and how this challenges the traditional “gendered configurations of space and motion” in Malawi over time. Women in migrant source areas are significantly impacted by the increasing trend of married men leaving their villages in search of work

in other districts (Malawi’s urbanization rate of 4%), or more commonly, to South Africa. Anecdotal accounts indicate that women left behind with or without children in villages are cared for by the husband’s family, but are also expected to perform marital duties, including sexual activity, with the other men in the family until the husband’s return. Because most men who migrate do so through largely irregular pathways and stay in South Africa for extended and indeterminate periods, the women left behind remain stranded and with few options for recourse. Women traders also face challenges in the form of tariff/non-tariff barriers, access to finance, and socio-cultural norms. Small scale cross border traders (SSCBTs), who are mostly women (estimated at 80%) are exposed to numerous risks due to lack of transparency at border posts, limited availability of trading information, and the vulnerability of migrants. Most trade between neighboring African countries is conducted by vulnerable, and unregistered traders with limited alternatives for income. To scale up businesses, women must provide collateral and proof of fixed income for loan agreements. Additionally, married women are required to submit loan applications that must be co-signed by their husbands making it difficult to upgrade from small to medium scale cross-border trading.

However, Malawi has made progress in empowering women to take up decision making positions, although representation by women remains low.²⁷ At the cabinet level, female representation stands at 41% in 2024.²⁸ Meanwhile, the average percentage of female representation in the National Assembly stood at 23% in 2019²⁹ compared to 16.7% during the 2014 election.³⁰ For local government, female representation in assemblies stood at 14% in 2019 up from 11% in 2014. Similarly, in public senior management, female representation has improved over the years, with the proportion of women in the judiciary and foreign services standing at 32% and 45%, respectively. Malawi has a female Speaker of the National Assembly. Additionally, Malawi also has a female Ombudsman, a female head of the Law Commission, a female head of the Human Rights Commission and female Inspector General of the Malawi Police. Almost 40% of all Board Members of Parastatals are women.

Furthermore, 3 out of the CEOs in state owned enterprises are women. The Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) is also led by a woman, Justice Annabel Mtalimanja who was appointed as the Chair in July 2024. Despite the progress made, including core areas such as running for office as members of Parliament and local government elections, there are opportunities including addressing harassment, boosting campaign finance and strategies, and introducing quota or special measures to accommodate women and intraparty democracy.



In the Public Service, Malawi has a female Secretary to the President and Cabinet, 28% of Principal Secretaries are women; 30% of directors of departments are women and 50% of the recently appointed judges and ambassadors are women.

²⁷ As recognized by Malawi in its initial State report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Initial report submitted by Malawi under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant*, due in 1996 E/C.12/MWI/1 (2022) para 19.

²⁸ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Initial*

report submitted by Malawi under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 1996 E/C.12/MWI/1 (2022) para 19.

²⁹ Malawi 2022 National Voluntary Review Report

³⁰ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Initial report submitted by Malawi under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant*, due in 1996 E/C.12/MWI/1 (2022) para 19.

³⁰ Malawi 2022 National Voluntary Review Report

The country has also made significant strides toward adopting laws on domestic violence, deceased estates, disability, education, trafficking in persons, and marriage to outlaw, criminalize, penalize, and protect women from discrimination, negative customs, and sexual harassment, among others.



However, challenges such as implementation, resource constraints, weak institutional capacity and a lack of public awareness of human rights remain problematic.³¹ Under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW), the National Male Engagement Strategy was developed to promote a gender transformative approach that ensures that men take a leading role in eliminating violence against women. The strategy also aims to guide the implementation of all male engagement interventions to ensure that men and boys play a role in promoting positive masculinities and addressing GBV particularly violence against women and girls. In addition, Malawi is the second country in Southern Africa to launch the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security in 2021. Nevertheless, the trends in domestic violence indicate that incidences of gender-based violence continue to increase despite initiatives by the Malawi Government and its partners. In Malawi, one in every three women experience violence, including sexual gender-based violence.

According to the NSO report of 2017, 42% of women experience intimate partner violence, compared to the global average of 30%.³²

³¹ As recognized by Malawi in its initial State report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Initial*

report submitted by Malawi under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 1996 E/C.12/MWI/1 (2022) para 184
³² [Violence against women \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/gender-based-violence)

Older women are subjected to violence due to suspicions of practising witchcraft and teaching it to children.³³ Additionally, extreme weather events (*i.e.*, droughts, Tropical Cyclone Freddy, Tropical Storm Ana and Cyclone Gombe, etc.) and health shocks have widened inequalities and exacerbated sexual and gender-based violence and other vulnerabilities among women and adolescent girls.³⁴ GBV imposes immense economic and social costs, which include the negative multiplier effects due to decreased female labour participation and reduced productivity at work, health effects such as injuries and depression which could result in increased mortality, and the resultant costs of treating and or preventing GBV.

Further, with COVID-19, child marriage in Malawi increased by 81%, according to a rapid assessment study in 2020 by Ministry of Gender.³⁵ A study by UN Women on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on girls and women in Malawi found that the reported cases of sexual violence had increased to 1,890 in 2020 from 1,548 in 2019.³⁶

In 2023, the government identified 81 trafficking victims and referred at least 69 victims to care, compared with 145 victims identified and an unknown number of victims referred to care in 2020. (TIP Report Malawi US Dept. of State 2023)

Similarly, the cases of economic abuse increased to 832 in 2020 from 652 in 2019.³⁷ Climate change and other environmental hazards lead to an increase in diseases such as preeclampsia in pregnant women, a leading cause of maternal and child death in Malawi.³⁸

Overall, the major constraints impeding the advancement of women and gender equality in Malawi include weak capacity of national gender institutions, limited economic opportunities, weak participation of women in politics and decision making, poor private sector engagement, inadequate education facilities and a lack of infrastructure such as sanitation facilities. Married women in Malawi are most likely to have sole or joint decision-making power about visiting family or relatives (78%) and their own health care (68%) and less likely to make decisions about major household purchases (55%).³⁹ Overall, 47% of married women participate in all three decisions. Additional challenges include lack of awareness of sexual and reproductive health rights, harmful practices, gender stereotypes and prejudicial social attitudes leading to discrimination, as well as weak monitoring and evaluation systems for generating evidence-based data in gender and GBV programming, including humanitarian interventions.

³³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi* CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) paras 46-47.

³⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi* CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) para 40.

³⁵ https://careevaluations.org/wp-content/uploads/MoG-Malawi-COVID-19-RGA-Report-21052020-GiE-Signed-Off_.pdf

³⁶ UN women social economic impact of Covid 19 in Malawi – May 2021

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ NHS (2022) <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/first-aid-and-safety/safety/safety-in-the-sun/>

³⁹ MDHS 2025/16

3.1.3 CHILDREN



Children (persons less than 18 years) constitute 51% of Malawi's population.

Birth notification and birth certification are fundamental documents both from a human rights perspective and as an instrument for social and economic planning. However, only 25.9% of the children had birth certificates by 2018, with a lack of awareness about the National Registration Act contributing to this challenge. Out of the 20,000 new HIV infections in 2021, 15% were children (0-14 years; as a result of mother-to-child transmission). Additionally, an estimated 50,000 Malawian children under 15 years old are still living with HIV. Meanwhile, 11% of Malawi's children aged under 18 years were orphans. Child trafficking remains a significant issue of concern. Traffickers usually exploit children by forcing them into labour in agriculture, goat and cattle herding, begging, fishing, brickmaking, and crime. They also lure children in rural areas by offering employment opportunities, clothing, or accommodation, for which they were sometimes charged exorbitant fees,

resulting in labour and sex trafficking through coerced through debts.⁴⁰

In 2022, the Committee Against Torture (CAT) noted that the legal framework does not properly address the crime of trafficking for sexual exploitation, including cases involving online or digital technologies; and that cases of trafficking are allegedly underreported vis-à-vis the prevalence of the phenomenon, including child trafficking.⁴¹ Police sometimes transported migrants, particularly children, in the same vehicle as their suspected traffickers, resulting in potential intimidation and further traumatization of victims. Trafficking in body parts of persons with albinism continues, with a high number of abductions, killings and exhumation of remains of children with albinism persisting.⁴² However, the government has increased the number of convictions of traffickers and established district committees to coordinate victim services and investigations. Additionally, the government, with support from international organizations, has been conducting training programs for law enforcement officers to improve their ability to identify and investigate trafficking cases. Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain, such as a lack of shelters and protective services, which sometimes results in

⁴⁰ <https://migrants-refugees.va/it/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/02/2021-CP-Malawi.pdf>

⁴¹ Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Malawi* CAT/C/MWI/CO/1 (2022) paras 35-36.

⁴² Committee against Torture, *concluding observations on the initial report of Malawi* CAT/C/MWI/CO/1 (2022) para 33; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi* CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5 (2017) paras 26-27.

the detention of victims during investigations. Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remained significant concerns.⁴³

Children in Malawi also face the challenges of defilement, sexual abuse, forced marriage and other harmful practices such as initiation rights and (more recently) Female Genital Mutilation,⁴⁴ sexual exploitation, and multi-dimensional poverty. The main drivers of child marriage include school dropouts and poverty, which are also both causes and consequences of the issue, including gender discrimination, cultural and religious traditions, peer pressure, and limited resource allocation towards enforcement of existing marriage laws.⁴⁵ Based on the 2019/20 Integrated Household Survey (IHS 5) multi-dimensional child poverty increased to 69.6% from 60.5% in 2017, after a drop from 63.6% in 2012. Deprivations were found to be very high in housing, sanitation, and education thereby violating the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These deprivations also overlap significantly across multiple dimensions. Deprivations among children vary with age and are influenced by socio-economic circumstances. For example,

deprivations are more pronounced in cases where a household head is not working, elderly, woman or where a household head has low or no education. Failure to attend pre-primary education has serious consequences for school readiness and ultimately educational outcomes in later years.

SDG 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Life-Long Learning Opportunities For All



Education is a fundamental right and a vital prerequisite for reducing poverty, empowering women, protecting children from hazardous and exploitative labour and sexual exploitation, promoting human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and democracy. Education is also vital in protecting the environment, economic growth, and influencing sustainable population growth. However, Malawi's education sector is characterised by poor learning outcomes across particularly at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels.

⁴³ [TIP Report Malawi US Dept. of State](#) 2023

⁴⁴ According to the Government of Malawi, "The practice of FGM appears to be a new phenomenon to Malawi. Nevertheless, the government is committed to conducting a thorough investigation in order to ascertain its existence and take appropriate legislative interventions by using existing laws referred to above or where the need arises, to effect

amendments to legislation to address the issue." See Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *eighth periodic report submitted by Malawi under article 18 of the Convention*, due in 2019 CEDAW/C/MWI/8 (2021) para 34.

⁴⁵ UN women social economic impact of Covid 19 in Malawi – May 2021

This is largely due to lack of early childhood education provision and inadequate staff to run the community-based childcare centres, high repetition and dropout rates due to low quality of teaching, and low transition rate to secondary schools due to limited facilities and teaching resources. The education sector also faces severe infrastructure shortages, such as the availability of 32,455 desks for over 5 million pupils,⁴⁶ and a lack of sanitation facilities which disproportionately affects girls.⁴⁷ Furthermore, linked with prolonged school closures due to the health and climatic shocks, young people, especially out-of-school girls, face increased risk of migration, and child labour.

The 2015 National Child Labour Survey Report showed that 15.8% of children aged 5 to 9 years and 29.2% of the children aged 10 to 13 years were engaged in non-hazardous work, while 38.7% of children aged 10 to 13 years were engaged in hazardous work.⁴⁸ This contributes to the high number of out-of-school children in Malawi. Among primary school age children who are out-of-school, 17% of them are in child labour and 22% have functional difficulties. This over-representation for out-of-school children with functional difficulties indicates that they are

low enrollment at the pre-primary level caused by lack of funding and disproportionately excluded from primary education. There are opportunities to strengthen the education curricula on key protection and awareness elements, including for example child labour and trafficking in persons.

Malawi is experiencing a triple burden of malnutrition, over, under and micronutrient deficiencies. The overweight and obesity prevalence among adolescent girls is 7% higher than WHA target, and it is on an increasing trend. Malnutrition among women and children is still a major public health and development issue contributing to preventable child deaths. Despite making advancements, malnutrition remains a persistent problem particularly in the country's rural areas. Stunting (low height for age) is more prevalent in rural areas, with about 35.5% of children in rural Malawi stunted compared to only 29.3% of children in urban areas.

⁴⁶ As indicated by the Government of Malawi in its initial State report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Initial report submitted by Malawi under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant*, due in 1996 E/C.12/MWI/1 (2022) para 159.

⁴⁷ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Eighth periodic report submitted by*

Malawi under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2019 CEDAW/C/MWI/8 (2021) para 30(a).

⁴⁸ As indicated by the Government of Malawi in its initial State report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Initial report submitted by Malawi under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant*, due in 1996 E/C.12/MWI/1 (2022) para 33.



The Committee on the Rights of the Child has raised concerns about the lack of child-sensitive budgeting in Malawi. In the light of its General Comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realisation of children's rights, the committee accordingly recommended that Malawi allocates adequate budgetary resources, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for the implementation of children's rights and increase the budget allocated to the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health.⁴⁹

3.1.4 YOUTH

Young people are the largest and fastest growing proportion of the population in Malawi with **51% of the population below the age of 18 and 80% below the age of 35**. There are significant gender disparities within the group. High rates of child marriage among girls, and their limited control over their sexual and reproductive health contributes to high maternal mortality ratio (381 per 100,000 live births), teenage pregnancy, and widespread gender-based violence, affecting possibilities to reach their full potential. Girls aged 15 to 19 are ten times more likely to be married than boys. Meanwhile, teenage pregnancy increased from 26% in 2010 to 29% in 2015/16. Early pregnancy multiplies the risks to girls' health, increasing the likelihood of complications such as

obstetric fistula, or death from pregnancy-related causes. Pregnancy (along with child marriage 37.7%) is one of the leading causes of school drop-out among girls.

Almost half (54.1%) of young women in Malawi with no education have started childbearing and only 10% of young mothers return to school, despite the adoption of a readmission policy. With between 300 and 500 thousand youths entering the active labor force every year, young people face limited chances to secure decent formal employment. The youth face challenges associated with inadequate competitive technical and technological skills for the labour market, limited access to productive assets, limited access to basic social

⁴⁹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi* CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5 (2017) para 8.

and protection services as well as economic, social and cultural rights and lack of technologies and financial resources. There are significant push factors for youth to migrate for economic purposes, and many do so via unsafe routes, facilitated by unregulated private employment agencies or organized crime syndicates such as migrant smugglers. Additional challenges include stigmatisation and discrimination of youth with disabilities and youth-at-risk, who may be associated with cliques and gangs.



According to a UN Women report, the youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) rate stood at 31% (i.e., one in every three young Malawians between the ages of 15 and 24 are not in employment, education or training). Of this group, 38% of young women and 23% of young men are NEET. In addition, up to 86% of secondary age adolescents in Malawi are out of school and lack opportunities for alternative learning. Some of these secondary age adolescents do not have foundational literacy and numeracy skills, necessitating functional literacy programmes.

Young adults whose place in the labour market is often informal, temporary, and tenuous at best experience greater job and income losses due to the impact of health shocks and climatic disasters. Young women are more vulnerable to the impact of these shocks through interrupted education, economic and food insecurity, disruptions in services and unplanned pregnancies, which combined reduce access to labour market opportunities. The youth are also excluded from both national and local level governance structures and lack a strong voice to influence the course of decisions on crucial policy and development issues.

Limited access to youth friendly services, rampant cases of alcohol and substance abuse, limited access to mental health services, high rates of early and unintended pregnancies, high child marriage rates and rising cases of unsafe abortions and GBV

are some of the key challenges that youths are facing.



In 2024, the Government launched the Malawi 2063 Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) aimed at facilitating the active participation of the youth in the transformation of the country towards an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation by the year 2063.

3.1.5 PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Malawi Population and Housing Census (MPHC) collected data on persons with disabilities (PWDs) for the first time in 2018. It found that 10.4% of the population aged five years and older in Malawi were living with at least one type of disability and about 0.8% were persons living with albinism. Of which, 10% were males and 11% were females. Several indicators related to the living standards of a household suggest that households headed by persons with a disability tend to be slightly worse off. The proportion of unpaid family workers is slightly higher among the persons with a disability than among persons without a disability (20.4% as compared to 18.6%). In terms of WASH, 83.6% of households headed by a person with a disability have access to an improved water source, compared

According to the 2018 MPHC thematic report on disability, a higher percentage of persons without a disability are employed (58.7%) compared to those with a disability (54%).

to 85.9% among households with a head without a disability. With regard to education, 44% of persons with disabilities have never attended school compared to 18.9 % of people without disabilities. Results from the 2018 MPHC indicate that the level of school attendance for children with a disability was lower than for children with no disabilities.

In Malawi, persons with disabilities suffer disproportionate challenges in accessing employment, education, justice, credit, inclusive and friendly WASH facilities, protection and health services and dignified sources of income. Women and girls with disabilities face compounded challenges in accessing justice, particularly for sexual violence. The lack of financial resources increasingly leaves persons with disabilities vulnerable to situations of violence, particularly women, girls and persons living with albinism. There are allegations that persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities

are routinely held in custody for prolonged periods or in prisons among the general prison population, at times subjected to solitary confinement and restraints, with no access to any appropriate assistance, despite the State party's assertion to the contrary. The 2018 MPHC thematic report on disability shows that most of the persons with disabilities are aware of the services available to them, but there is lack of assistive devices for them, including children, to receive available services, and failure by health workers to effectively communicate health messages. Persons with disabilities, especially those with hearing, visual impairments, intellectual, mental /psychosocial face barriers to the delivery of inclusive education e.g., transport for itinerant teachers, inadequate specialist teachers, inaccessible infrastructure for learners with special needs, inadequate teaching and learning materials and lack of assistive devices. Discrimination in public services, lack of rehabilitation, lack of special attention and unpaid family work are challenges faced by persons with disabilities. The government is commended for allocating budget provision to disability programmes in the national budgets, in line with cost estimates in the National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy. However, there are opportunities to improve, including allocating sufficient resources for infrastructure rehabilitation to ensure that social services such as skills development and tertiary education services are inclusive.

The Government of Malawi is also commended for responding to the CRC (2017) concerns in the light of its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities. In this regard, the government is implementing several strategies, including:

- Strengthening coordination structures between line ministries and other organisations
- Empowering OPDs to effectively carry out their mandates in response to CRC
- Engaging communities to embrace policies on inclusive education
- Introduction of CBE to support out-of-school children/youths including those with disabilities, and technical skills to support people with special needs



The impacts of COVID-19 revealed that persons with disabilities in Malawi were significantly impacted and continue to be a Left Behind group in national responses and development initiatives. After the COVID-19 pandemic, persons with disabilities and the organisations that represent them need to be capacitated to meaningfully engage with duty-

bearers across the government line ministries.



A Rapid Impact Assessment on COVID-19 on Persons with Disabilities in Malawi revealed that persons with disabilities were marginalised and received limited information in accessible or easy-to-read formats on key national issues.

3.1.6 PERSONS WITH ALBINISM

Human rights violations of persons with albinism have been a significant challenge in Malawi. The 2018 MPHC revealed that there are 134,646 persons with albinism (PWA). Grave concerns remain for their protection and wellbeing with ongoing reports of abduction, ritual killing and exhumation of remains, including those of children living with albinism.⁵⁰ Despite constitutional provisions safeguarding the rights of all citizens, including PWAs, their right to life remains elusive due to widespread myths and misconceptions. Since 2014, the country has registered 145 perpetrated crimes against persons with albinism across 21 districts. The cases involve, among others, murder (20), attempted murder (2), cases where the accused were found in possession of human bones or tissue (15), abduction cases (16), cases involving tampering with graves (45), cases of assault causing bodily harm (4), cases involving other negative

conduct (16), a case of suicide (1) and a case involving conspiracy to commit murder (1).⁵¹ Harmful cultural beliefs associating “magic” with body parts of a person with albinism continue to place persons living with albinism at risk of abduction, violence, and death.

Additionally, a harmful practice persists wherein sex with girls or women with albinism is prescribed as a cure for HIV.⁵² To address these challenges, the Government of Malawi, alongside stakeholders like the Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi (APAM), has been implementing a multi-sectoral National Plan of Action on Albinism since 2018. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) expressed serious concern about the inadequate enforcement of the laws and policies aimed at protecting the rights of children with albinism, the lack of resources for their implementation, and consequently the poor

⁵⁰ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5* (2017) para 26(b).

⁵¹ Association of Persons with Albinism Annual Report – Jan 2019 and Under the Same Sun Report

⁵² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7* (2015) para 20.

protection, rehabilitation and legal services available to child victims with albinism as well as the reportedly lenient sentences handed down to perpetrators.⁵³ In addition the CRC raised concern on the significant number of cases of abduction, ritual killings and exhumation of remains of children with albinism; and the high rate of school dropouts among children with albinism.⁵⁴ The government committed to 21 UPR recommendations calling for greater commitment to ensuring the full range of human rights of persons with albinism. However, despite interventions such as improved security and health services under the National Action Plan, attacks against PWAs still occur, with 49% of all albinism-related cases happening during election periods. People with albinism continue to live in fear and face discrimination including difficulty in finding

employment because they are believed to have a short lifespan, which also hinders their individual growth and contribution to the development of the country. Moreover, the high school dropout rate among persons with albinism is exacerbated by sight problems which affect their reading abilities. The high rate of school dropout among children with albinism can also be attributed to fear of attacks, poor vision, prohibition from wearing appropriate sun protection clothing, unavailability of specific sun protection tools and insufficient skilled staff trained to meet their needs and ensure their inclusive education.⁵⁵ The continued challenges highlight the need for ongoing efforts to raise awareness at societal and familial levels, combat stereotypes, and improve justice and accountability for victims.

3.1.7 PERSONS LIVING WITH HIV

The HIV epidemic is declining in Malawi, with HIV prevalence among 15-49 years (declining from 9.2% in 2018 to 6.7% in 2023).⁵⁶ The reduction in HIV prevalence is due to several fruitful interventions including: a successful multi-sectoral effort in recent years to control the epidemic through a rapid scale-up of ART, introduction of Pre and Post Exposure

Prophylaxis (PREP/PEP), the universal test-and-treat approach that started in 2016, continued scale up of Option B+ for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, introduction of HIV self-testing in 2018, the transition to Dolutegravir-based regimens in 2019, and an increase in voluntary male medical circumcision. There have also been rigorous primary prevention and

⁵³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5* (2017) para 26.

⁵⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5* (2017) para 26.

⁵⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5* (2017) para 26(c).

⁵⁶ [AIDSinfo | UNAIDS](#)

structural interventions for adolescent girls and young women, as well as key populations, which have proved successful in several districts. New infections among children have declined significantly, owing to the combination of successful antiretroviral prophylaxis and treatment and high ART uptake. The current rate of decline in new HIV infections, however, is too slow if Malawi is to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. New infections are still high at 14,000 in 2023 (SPECTRUM) with 3,600 new infections among young women (15-24) and an estimated 1,800 new infections in infants (<1 yr).



Young women aged 15-24 account for approximately 4,200 (24%) of the total new HIV cases annually with almost half (47%) of the new cases occurring in the cities of Lilongwe and Blantyre, and in the districts of Mulanje, Mangochi, Lilongwe, Zomba and Thyolo. More than 982,000 (590,000 women, 355,000 men, 50,000 children < 15 years) Malawians are still living with HIV. Moreover, HIV disproportionately affects women, with HIV prevalence among adults (15-49 age group) higher among women (8.4 %) than men (4.8 %). This disparity is especially prominent among the youth (25-29-year-olds), where the HIV prevalence is three times higher in women (13.6 %) than men (4.7 %).

Deeply embedded gender inequalities and harmful gender norms put women and girls more at risk of HIV infection. HIV/AIDS prevalence is higher in border communities among female sex workers (49.9-55.5%) compared to male sex workers (12.8-17.5%) and clients of female sex workers (12.8%). The female sex workers are engaging with migrant workers, often men from migration affected communities, male truck drivers, and male traders who cross the border regularly. The women are often migrating between communities on both sides of the borders; hence they are left out of continuous health treatment and response. Male engagement in both testing and behavioural change interventions, by contrast, is weak. Stigma and discrimination continue to affect access to services, especially among vulnerable populations, many of whom are females.

The 2016 Malawi Stigma Index Study revealed that employers, fellow employees, health workers, schoolteachers, and church leaders are some of the perpetrators of stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV (PLHIV) at the workplace.

However, Malawi has also made significant progress in reaching 95-95-95 HIV and AIDS global Agenda 2030 where the country has made some strides with women at 97-96-96, men 93-95-95 first but lagging behind on Pediatric HIV 87-83-84. Funding for the HIV response is largely dependent on external sources, and this remains worrisome. The Global Fund to Fight

AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and PEPFAR are the biggest funders. Domestic funding is estimated at only 9% towards the health sector (excluding WASH) which is still below the required ABUJA declaration of 15%. This continues to raise concern about the sustainability of Malawi's HIV response should the international donors reduce or divest the funding.

Worries about corruption and other governance concerns within the government are weighing heavily on donor aid provision in the sector. The promulgation of the 2018 HIV (Prevention and Management) Act and National HIV/AIDS Policy is a positive step that should lead to increased domestic funding to the sector.

3.1.8 LGBTQIA+ PERSONS



Malawi criminalises consensual same-sex relations and, as a result, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and other subjects (LGBTQIA+) people routinely experience violence and discrimination. According to Human Rights Watch, there have been incidences where the Malawi Police have physically assault, arbitrarily arrest and detain LGBTQIA+ people, sometimes without due process or a legal basis, at other times as punishment for simply exercising basic rights, including seeking treatment in health institutions. The Committee

Against Torture (CAT) has similarly noted that LGBTQIA+ persons are particularly vulnerable to violence by both public officials and private persons and such violence is generally underreported to the national authorities due to fear of reprisals, prosecution and further discrimination.

Furthermore, despite the moratorium in place since 2012 on the prosecution for consensual same-sex acts, a transgender woman was reportedly charged under Article 153 (c) of the Penal Code in 2021.⁵⁷ The Committee also expressed concern about reports that perceived LGBTQIA+ asylum-seekers are often refused registration and the processing of their applications.⁵⁸ The combination of criminalisation of adult consensual same-sex conduct and social stigma has had an insidious effect on their individual self-expression, forcing them to adopt self-censoring behaviour because any suspicion of non-conformity may lead to violence or

⁵⁷ Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Malawi* CAT/C/MWI/CO/1 (2022) para 29(c).

⁵⁸ Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Malawi* CAT/C/MWI/CO/1 (2022) para 37.

arrest. Among other recommendations, the 2020 UPR recommended that the Government of Malawi should repeal sections 137A, 153, 154 and 156 of the Penal Code and develop comprehensive legislation that prohibits any discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.



3.1.9 REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Malawi is a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government of Malawi made reservations to certain articles of the 1951 Convention relating to freedom of movement, right to wage earning employment, exemption from reciprocity, movable and immovable property, right of association, liberal professions, public education, and labour legislation and social security. In 2018, the government agreed to implement the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) under the New York Declaration of 2016. In line with the GCR objectives, the country aims to include refugees in the National Development agenda, adopt the settlement approach and enhance self-reliance for forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

The Dzaleka Camp (an increase from 48,000 in July 2022). The camp receives a monthly average of 300 new arrivals mostly from the DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda. Approximately 45% of the forcibly displaced and stateless people in Dzaleka camp are women, while children constitute 48% of the population. Malawi has an

encampment policy which confines refugees and asylum seekers to Dzaleka Refugee Camp, with limited opportunities for the full enjoyment of their rights. The camp was initially established to host between 10,000 and 12,000 persons but has now stretched over five times its normal capacity, grappling with several challenges stemming from congestion. To decongest Dzaleka Refugee camp, the government has identified a new settlement in Chitipa district. Government and UNHCR joint assessment missions have been conducted and an estimated budget of 85 million dollars is needed to develop the settlement.

Since 2023, the Malawi Law commission has begun reviewing the 1989 Refugee Act with financial support from UNHCR. The ongoing legal and policy reform, expected to be completed in December 2025 will enable the lifting of some of the key reservations made to the 1951 Convention such as freedom of movement, the right to wage earning employment and right to public education. UNHCR and its partners will continue to support the government in

implementing the pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. This support will focus on areas such as registration and documentation, settlement approaches, and enhancing self-reliance for refugees. Criminal networks operate in the camp, where vulnerable men, women, and children are often being exploited for profits within the camp itself or trafficked into other countries in Southern Africa for forced labour and/or prostitution.

In 2023, the government in collaboration with UNHCR completed the verification exercise that significantly improved the quality of data, reduced the backlog of asylum applications, and facilitated the issuance of identity documents. Despite that situation, other challenges such as the absence of the Refugee Committee meetings continue to delay the normal processing of asylum claims.

As of 30 September 2024, Malawi hosted a population of **55,829** refugees and asylum seekers, from different countries, at Dzaleka Camp (an increase from 48,000 in July 2022).

Human rights challenges that refugees face in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp

- Lack of freedom of movement
- Poor sanitation
- Limited economic and livelihood opportunities
- Severe overcrowding
- Lack of access to basic services
- Gender-based violence

3.1.10 INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

Malawi is a country of [origin, transit, and destination](#) for mixed migration flows. Besides refugees, immigrants from neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe, and immigrants from Nigeria, as well as Asia (mainly Pakistan and India), choose Malawi as their destination of choice. Malawi is also positioned as a key transit country on the deadly Southern Route, where migrants from the Horn and Gulf of Africa as well as the great lakes region migrate to South Africa. Malawi experiences an

influx of predominantly young male Ethiopian nationals, who transit using irregular pathways. Trucks and tankers are used to transport the irregular migrants clandestinely, with migrant smugglers putting migrants in confined and high-risk spaces in these vehicles to hide them from border authorities. In October 2022, a mass grave containing around 30 bodies identified as Ethiopian nationals was found in Mzimba district. It was indicated that the cause of death was asphyxiation.

Currently, irregular migration is managed from a security standpoint, with irregular migrants placed in immigration detention upon interception by police or immigration officers. This includes children separated from their parents, including the most recent 62 migrant children placed in Maula prison in October 2024. Upon serving their sentence for an immigration violation, irregular migrants are detained in prisons for indeterminate periods, relying on family support and/or third parties, such as IOM to facilitate their voluntary return to their home country. The Government of Malawi is showing interest in exploring alternatives to immigration detention and have identified this as one of five priorities outlined in the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) National Implementation Plan currently being drafted.

In addition to smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons (TIP) remains a critical concern. In late 2022, a delegation consisting of Malawi Government officials travelled to Oman with the intention to identify and return 50+ exploited and abused Malawian women and girls who had signed employment contracts, issued employment permits and travelled to Oman expecting to do domestic work. This highlighted the high numbers of Malawian women who travel to the MENA region for domestic work, the risks of exploitation to which they are exposed and the lack of sufficient and accurate data on these patterns. Instances of human trafficking are also evident between

Malawi and other countries in the SADC region, especially South Africa, with young girls and women being taken to South Africa for marriage. Trends also include Malawian men subjected to labour exploitation in Mozambique. It has also become evident that organised crime, including smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons has infiltrated government systems, with corruption risks increasing. This was reported most notably in the 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report by the US Dept of State.

The conflation of the crimes of smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons remains an issue perpetuated by constrained, under-resourced, and understaffed judiciary and police, public service, who are often leaned upon by the criminal elements to aid and abet their criminal enterprises. The extremely outdated 1964 Immigration Act is currently under amendment. Further, steps have been taken to include the definition and criminalization of smuggling of migrants, guided by the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. This will accompany existing legislation and frameworks such as the Trafficking in Persons Act (2015), the National Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons 2023-2028 and establishment of the National Coordination Committee against Trafficking in Persons under the Ministry of Homeland Security (MoHS). Malawi also has measures in place to combat labour exploitation through the Constitution which prohibits “slavery, servitude and forced labour” and the

Employment Act which prohibits forced labour and ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in 2022. In addition to difficulties in law

With regard to safe and regular labour mobility pathways, the government, in the 2023-24 Mid-Year Budget Review Statement titled "Time for reflection to Recover, Develop and Protect our Economy", stated its intention to escalate labour exports. According to this Statement, the government aims to have in place three bilateral labour migration agreements with other countries and "targets to export 10,000 to 15,000 employees over the next five years with total inflows estimated at around US\$3.6 billion." The Government of Malawi entered an MOU with the Government of Israel. The MOU has very limited legal backing and has not been made public. Hundreds of Malawian labour migrants are already in Israel. These numbers are in addition to pre-existing large groups of Malawian labour migrants abroad, the majority of which remain without robust protection. Malawi's employment services market for the recruitment of labour migrants overseas is largely unregulated.

Malawi is yet to fully utilise the regional agreements promoting labour mobility. The SADC has various protocols and agreements covering migration and labour mobility; however, most of them are not operational in Malawi as of February 2022, with the exception of the SADC Labour Migration Policy Framework

enforcement measures, data on trafficking in persons is not regularly collected and is difficult to obtain due to the clandestine nature of organised crime.

and its Labour Migration Action Plan (2020-2025). Additionally, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa's (COMESA) Protocol on the Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visa Requirements (1984) and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, the Right of Establishment and Residence (2001) aim to promote labour mobility, but they are also not yet operational. Meanwhile, Malawi also has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Accelerated Program on Economic Integration (APEI) with Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, and Zambia which aims to facilitate labour mobility within the countries; however, there is no evidence of its implementation. The country also does not have any formal bilateral labour agreements (BLAs) in place. The Malawi Government developed the Diaspora Engagement Policy 2017 which sought to tap both human, and financial capital from Malawi Diaspora Community to enrich various sectors of the economy and has since not been updated.

Under the framework of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (2018), the MoHS led the development of Malawi's first-ever National Migration Policy and draft National Labour Migration Policy. However, these policies are still yet to be adopted. To give impetus to these

policies and frame the implementation of GCM objectives from a more practical perspective, the Ministry of Homeland Security, along with a wide range of stakeholders from government ministries, departments

and agencies, civil society organisations, private sector, and others, are developing a GCM National Implementation Plan to be launched early 2025.

3.1.11 INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE



Climate change and environmental migration are increasingly becoming major drivers of human mobility (internal displacement, migration and planned relocation) in Malawi. The increase in the frequency and intensity of floods has led to an increase in number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) with the highest figure (more than 650,000) attributed to the floods that were induced by Tropical Cyclone Freddy in March 2023. To date, some of the IDPs from the 2023 floods remain in secondary displacement as their places of origin remain inhabitable. In March 2024, floods displaced more than 20,000 people in Nkhotakota and Karonga Districts. A similar displacement occurred in 2022, when Tropical Storm Ana and Cyclone Gombe caused widespread floods in Southern Malawi in January and February 2022, affecting more than 660,000 people and displacing more than 113,000

people. Following these displacement situations, the early decommissioning of sites by the government resulted in the return of people to their areas of origin, despite inadequate and unrepaired infrastructure and high exposure and risks to future flooding incidents. Needs are also high for around 8,648 households that were relocated to new areas to end their displacement situation. However, in addition to around 1,795 people, around 400 households that remain displaced in Nsanje (1 camp), Chikwawa (2 camps), Zomba (1 camp) and Nkhotakota (1 camp) districts, many more people are in urgent need of relocation due to their high vulnerabilities of future displacement risks due to climate hazards.

In contrast to floods, movements due to slow onset hazards like droughts/prolonged dry spells, are semi-voluntary and sporadic in Malawi. In response to the impact of dry spells, notably food insecurity, some members of affected households tend to migrate to other parts of the country to look for casual work. In most cases, male members of the households are the ones who are

involved in these movements. Movements are generally from rural to urban areas (Blantyre City, Mzuzu City and Lilongwe City) and from rural areas of affected districts, mainly in the Southern Region, to rural areas of the northern region districts of Rumphi and Mzimba especially tobacco farms. Yet another group, move across borders in search of better economic opportunities, using irregular routes and thus making it difficult to quantify the magnitude. Due to the nature of these movements, which are usually sporadic and individualistic, it is difficult to capture a full scale of the migration patterns.

Land and environmental degradation have also triggered migration of households from resource-depleted areas to regions with present better livelihood opportunities. Degradation is also exacerbating the impacts of climate change. For example, areas

with degraded land are vulnerable to the impact of dry spells which lead to low productivity of land due to water scarcity and declining soil fertility. Data from the 2016 loss estimate show that 33 tons of soil is eroded every year with Southern Region districts being the most severely affected. Data from the 2024 Malawi Vulnerability Assessment (MVAC) showed that almost the same districts suffering from heavy soil erosion were also severely affected by the 2024 prolonged dry spell and its subsequent food insecurity. In response to this environmental and climatological phenomenon there are both anecdotal and observed migrations from rural areas of the southern region to urban areas in the southern and central regions and other rural areas in the central and northern regions of Malawi. These movements involve women and children and pose the risk of trafficking in persons and child trafficking and child labour.

3.1.12 OLDER PERSONS

Disabilities related to old age, such as mobility, vision and memory loss coupled with a lack of social support services make older people vulnerable to climatic shocks and during disasters.



According to the 2018 MPHC, there are a total of 891,805 persons aged 60 years and above in Malawi, representing 5.1% of the total population. Most of the elderly (91.6%) are in rural areas.

Given the lack of adequate social protection, close to 90% of persons aged 65 and above are still engaged in the labour force, and the main activity is subsistence agriculture. A total of 115 older women were attacked with 19 killings, 43 property destruction, 5 raped and 45 affected

through torture, evictions, land, and property grabbing. Older women are subjected to violence for being suspected of practising witchcraft and teaching it to children. This requires

amendment of the Witchcraft Act, awareness raising especially in rural areas about the criminality of such attacks, and prosecution of perpetrators.⁵⁹

3.1.13 PERSONS DEPRIVED OF THEIR LIBERTY



The constitution of Malawi prohibits the use of torture or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment. However, there are reports prison officials employed these practices. Police sometimes are reported to use excessive force and other unlawful practices, including torture, to coerce confessions from detained suspects. A 2021 report by the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) stated that torture was widespread in prisons. A nongovernmental organization (NGO) Centre for Human Rights Education, Advice, and Assistance (CHREA) provided free legal assistance to 102 inmates who claimed to have been tortured in various detention centres.

Prison conditions remain harsh and life threatening due to severe overcrowding, inadequate food and potable water, and unsanitary conditions. The situation is even worse for migrant children who are held in adult detention facilities for indefinite periods of time and separated from their parents.

According to the prison inspectorate's 2021 report inspectors found recurring problems of serious overcrowding, poor sanitation, insufficient food and potable water, a lack of health care, and poor ventilation and lighting, and prisoner abuse. In 2022, the prison inspectorate reported a total prison population of 16,704 in a space with a designed holding capacity of 7,000. Similarly, the 55 children detained in Chirwa and Mpemba Reformatory Centers have limited opportunities for vocational training and reintegration back into the community and often overstay their sentences due to lack of transportation to return to communities.

⁵⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Eighth periodic report submitted by*

Malawi under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2019 CEDAW/C/MWI/8 (2021) paras 46-47.

While prisons have a designated welfare officer with specialized training, to receive prisoner complaints regarding conditions, the complaints process, however, is oral and informal, which allows for censorship, and provides little follow up. Prisoners sometimes can submit complaints to CSOs that record cases for inclusion in government advocacy and reports,

but this rarely results in action on individual cases. From January to August 2024, the MHRC received 11 complaints regarding the rights of prisoners. NGOs attributed the low number of submitted complaints to fear of retaliation by authorities.

3.2 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND EXCLUSION ANALYSIS

3.2.1 POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN MALAWI

With a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US\$ 672.9 (World Bank, 2023), Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world and is part of the least developed countries (LDCs) category defined by the United Nations⁶⁰. In 2019/20, 50.7% of the population was below the poverty line,⁶¹ slightly lower than the 51.5% registered in 2016/17 (NSO, 2021). The incidence of poverty in urban areas increased, with 19.2% of the population found to be poor in 2019/20 as compared to 17.7% in 2016/17. The situation in the rural areas showed a decrease from 59.5% to 56.6% over the same period (NSO, 2021). The female population is more often poorer, with 56.8% of the women living below the poverty line in 2019/20 as compared to 48.5% of men (NSO, 2021).

Ultra-poverty⁶² increased over the same period from 20.1% to 20.5% and remained mostly a rural phenomenon, with an incidence of 23.6% in rural as compared to 3.3% in urban areas. Also, in the case of ultra-poverty, women (25.3%) are worse off than men (18.6%) (NSO, 2021). According to the National Statistics Office (NSO) Survey on the Impact of Multiple Shocks on the Most Vulnerable in Malawi between 2019 and 2023, ultra poverty has further worsened by 2.6 percentage points (fig 3). The proportion of Malawians living on less than \$2.15 a day is projected to increase to 72% in 2024 from 71.2% in 2023.⁶³ Two in every three people in Malawi cannot meet their basic needs. ⁶⁴Multidimensional poverty, based on IHS5, is at 61.7% for the total population and 69.6% for children

⁶⁰ [List of Least Developed Countries, United Nations, 2022.](#)

⁶¹ Malawi's poverty line is of MK165,879 per person per year, of which MK101,293 for the food component (NSO, IHS5 Poverty Report).

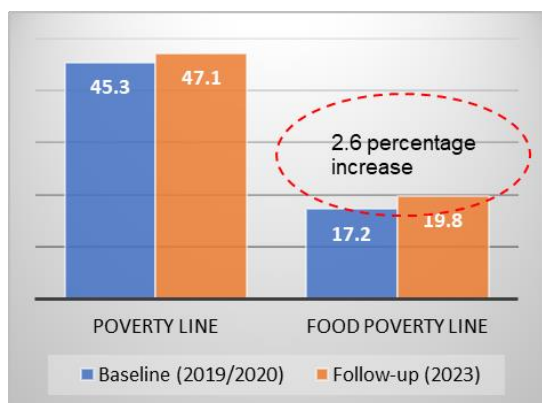
⁶² Malawi's ultra-poor are those with a yearly personal consumption of less than MK101,293 (NSO, IHS5 Poverty Report).

⁶³ The World Bank's Macro-Poverty Outlook (October 2022)

⁶⁴ https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099920006302215250/p174948072f3880690afb70c20973fe214d?fbclid=IwAR2_3zKsSC9F8aVuXHUR6_C7loRv4JDab14AypRFv1hJ5MbJpVOlANy1K_M

(NSO MPI, 2021 and NSO MODA, 2024⁶⁵).

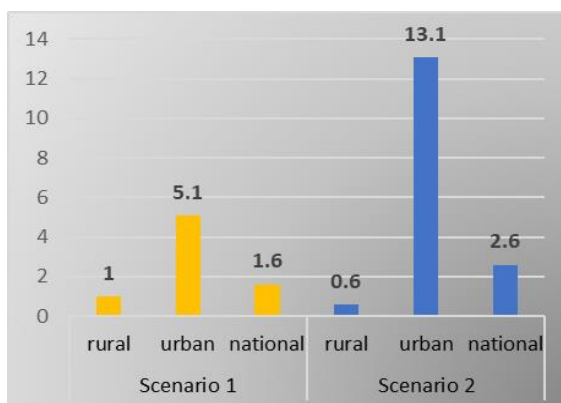
Figure 3: Poverty Rates



Source: NSO, 2023⁶⁶

Applying the Foresight and Rapid Response Modelling System (FARRMS) on the crop and climate data to model impacts of El Niño conditions, the National Planning Commission (NPC) et al (2024) based on two scenarios forecasted that household poverty would increase by 1.6% (scenario 1) and 2.6 percent (scenario 2) (fig 3).

- Scenario 1 projected a maize production decline of 8.3% based on the average impact of all past El Niño years (average over 11 El Niño years) and erosion of household consumption capacities by 3.4%.
- Scenario 2 projected a maize production decline of 20.1%



Source: NPC, 2024⁶⁷

based on the 7 El Niño years with negative yield impacts and a consequent 6.7% decline in household consumption.

In both scenarios, household poverty is projected to increase higher in urban than rural areas. This is largely due to shrinking economic activities reflecting strong dependence on agriculture and consequent impact on industrial productivity and incomes in the urban areas. With a projected decline of 16% based on the Second Agricultural Production Estimates Survey, scenario 2 (with a projected 2.6% increase in ultra poverty) is therefore more plausible. Households affected by El Niño and previous cyclones experience chronic vulnerability. Low production, high prices, and economic downturns erode their

⁶⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/malawi/reports/2023-child-multi-dimensional-poverty-report>

⁶⁶ IHS4 and IHS5 Reports

⁶⁷ National Planning Commission (NPC) et al (2024). Effect of El Nino condition on Malawi's economy

2023/24. Available at: npc.mw/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Examining-Economy-Wide-Impacts-of-the-2023-24-season-in-Malawi-20.11.23-final-inAJ-002-pdf.pdf

resilience, worsening food insecurity and increasing poverty levels.

Incidents of gender-based violence, physical abuse and child-abuse are also most likely to be experienced during crises such as El Niño where societal protection systems fail, while risks increase. In the context of El Niño, acute stress and exacerbations of mental health conditions are likely to result from reduced livelihoods, food insecurity, displacement, flooding, and reduced access to health services. Poverty in Malawi is driven by low productivity in the agriculture sector, limited opportunities in non-farm activities, volatile economic growth, rapid population growth, and limited coverage of safety net programmes. Furthermore, targeting challenges are experienced due to the lack of a systematic approach to collecting, analysing, and utilising sex, age and disability disaggregated data to inform decision making. The combination of high unemployment and underemployment, high levels of inflation as well as floods and forced displacement, is pushing communities into more poverty. Meanwhile, the biggest programme by budget and coverage, the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP), only covers 10% of the poorest beneficiaries in each district, excluding a significant number of vulnerable households.

Meanwhile, the poverty (percentage of population living on less than \$1.90 per day⁶⁸) projections performed using the IFs Model show slow downward trends for the two scenarios, the base scenario which assumes GDP growth rate of 3.3% and the pessimistic scenario which assumes GDP growth rate of 1.5%. However, the baseline scenario presents a slower decline in poverty levels compared to the pessimistic scenario. The rate drops to approximately 55% by 2030 for the base scenario. In contrast, the poverty rate will still be around 62% by 2030 according to the pessimistic scenario, indicating a much slower decline under the less optimistic assumptions. The divergence between the base and IFs projections underscores the critical role of policy choices in determining future outcomes. Under the pessimistic forecast, poverty reduction is slower, signaling a need for targeted, accelerated interventions to achieve significant poverty alleviation by 2030.

⁶⁸ In September 2022, the WB updated the figure at which this poverty line is set from \$1.90 to \$2.15,

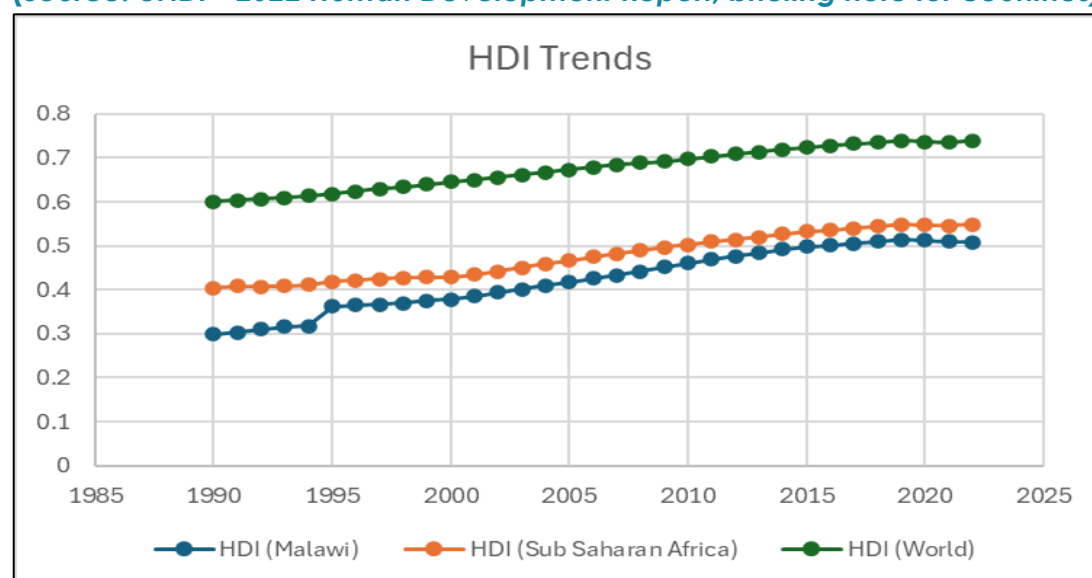
however, the IFs model is still using the old figure of \$1.90 per day.

Against a backdrop of worsening trends in monetary (and multidimensional⁶⁹) poverty, development indexes such as the Human Development Index (HDI) show a very slow progression over the past years, as shown in Figure 4 below. Malawi's HDI value (0.512 in 2022) ranks low, placing the country at 171 in the table of 191 countries. Malawi significantly lags the World average

HDI and also falls below the Sub-Saharan average. The World Bank's Human Capital Index (HCI) reveals a similar trend, with the low HCI values, growing marginally from 0.36 to 0.41⁷⁰ between 2010 and 2020 (World Bank, 2021).

Figure 4: HDI Trend for Malawi, Sub Saharan Africa and the World, 1990-2022

(Source: UNDP- 2022 Human Development Report; briefing note for countries)



The Gender Development Index (GDI) which measures gender gaps in achievements across three basic dimensions of human development between men and women⁷¹ shows that in Malawi, gender gaps are marginally differentiated, with a men's HDI value of 500 versus a women value of 493, or ~0.98% of the men's value. However, the incidence of poverty

and ultra-poverty shows a disproportionate burden on women. Gender-based inequalities in access to and control of productive and financial resources inhibit agricultural productivity and reduce food security. A study by UNEP (2015) measuring the economic costs of the gender gap in agricultural productivity in three African countries—Malawi, the United

⁶⁹ The two multidimensional poverty report are based on IHS4. Updated ones on IHS5 are yet to be developed.

⁷⁰ A child born in Malawi today will be 41 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health (World Bank, 2021)

⁷¹ Health (measured by female and male life expectancy at birth), education (measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and mean years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and older) and living standards (measured by female and male estimated GNI per capita)

Republic of Tanzania, and Uganda—provides further evidence that reducing the gender gap plays a significant role in poverty reduction and improved nutritional outcomes.⁷² The report provides a unique quantification of the costs of lost growth opportunities and an estimate of what societies, economies, and communities would gain if the gender gap in agriculture is addressed. The findings of the report are striking and send a strong signal to policymakers in Africa as well as development partners that closing the gender gap is smart economics. The report asserts that closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity could potentially lift as many as 238,000 people out of poverty in Malawi, 80,000 people in Tanzania, and 119,000 people in Uganda. It has been estimated that the annual gender gap amounts to \$100 million in Malawi, \$105 million in Tanzania, and \$67 million in Uganda. Further, the GII's (the inequality adjusted GDI) level of 0.565 suggests that women fare worse than men in over half of the dimensions considered (due to inequalities in terms of reproductive health, economic empowerment, and labour market opportunities).⁷³ This reflects the fact that women are more likely to be employed in informal employment than men. Women constitute 30% of total wage employment in non-

agriculture in Malawi (NSO, 2017). Unemployment rate is higher among women (26% than among men 14%). In urban areas, the unemployment rate is 28% and the corresponding rate is 19% in rural areas (NSO, 2013). The female labour force participation rate (LFPR) is lower (73%) compared to male LFPR (82%), which means that there are fewer women than men aged 15 – 64 years who are economically active in the total population.

The Malawi DHS of 2015/16 reported that 61% of men who were employed were paid in cash only compared with 30% of women. According to a World Bank study (2021), female wage workers earn 64 cents (512 Malawi Kwacha) for every dollar (800 Malawi kwacha) earned by men which essentially implies that the mean gender pay gap or monthly earnings between men and women is 36.2 percent. More disturbingly, women are far more likely to not be paid for their work compared to men. Specifically, 59% of women reported that they are not paid for their labour compared to 26% of men (NSO, 2017). This is also linked to the fact that women are more likely to be employed in the informal sector (or to be informally employed) and thus suffer from lack of occupational safety and lower health standards and representation in unions.

⁷² [The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda \(2015\)](#) | UNEP - UN Environment Programme

⁷³ See further Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi* CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) paras 32-33; 34-35; and 38-39.

3.2.2 POPULATION DYNAMICS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Malawi's population has significantly grown in the past couple of decades, from 3.6 million people in 1960 to 17.6 million in 2018. The projections by the National Statistical Office estimate that Malawi's population is expected to reach 33.6 million by 2050, as annual growth rates decline from 2.9% in 2018 to 1.7% in 2050.⁷⁴ The country's population size relative to the geographic size of the country makes

it one of the ten most densely populated countries in Africa.⁷⁵ This rapid population growth poses both opportunities (in the form of the demographic dividend from the expanding working population) and challenges (in the form of increasing numbers of dependents that must be fed and cared for).⁷⁶ With limited fiscal space, the high rates of population growth will hinder investment in basic social services and infrastructure and exert pressure on the environment.

3.2.3 SECTORAL INVESTMENTS

In alignment with its development framework detailed in Malawi Vision 2063, Malawi has made investments in policies with varying levels of success aimed at countering poverty and ultra-poverty, improving outcomes in key human capital dimensions such as health, education, WASH, and nutrition and fighting inequalities connected to gender.



However, due to limited fiscal leg room, Malawi has not been able to invest adequately to meet the growing demand for social services. Funding for the social sectors is unevenly distributed and heavily dependent on development partner support.

The proportion of total government spending on essential social services increased from 29.3% in 2023/24 to 31% in 2024/25, education (14.7% from 15.6%) health (9.2% from 8.7%), WASH (3.4% from 1.4%), and social protection (3.7% from 3%). Social Protection, Nutrition and WASH remain extremely dependent on on-budget donor support (over 90%). Social spending plays an important role in achieving the agenda 2030 and the fulfillment of

⁷⁴ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/malawi-population/#:~:text=The%20current%20population%20of%20Malawi,of%20the%20total%20world%20population>.

⁷⁵ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-in-africa>

⁷⁶ <https://massp.ifpri.info/2020/11/20/malawis-population-demographic-dividend-or-curse-a-commentary-on-the-nso's-latest-population-projections/>

economic and social rights and reducing inequalities and poverty. The obligation to ensure the realization of ESC rights through adequate public spending is enshrined within key human rights treaties. It is also

articulated in Agenda 2030—key indicator 1.a.2, *the proportion of total government budgets allocated to social spending* (defined as education, health, and social protection spending)

3.2.2.1 Social Protection

Despite the high levels of poverty and ultra-poverty incidence, Malawi's social protection system does not cover all the population in need.⁷⁷ The Malawi Social Support Policy (MSSP) and Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP) set the building blocks of the country's strategy on social protection. In 2023, the Government of Malawi developed a new National Social Protection Policy and National Social Protection Strategy which was approved in November 2024. Social assistance programmes, cash transfers, public works and school feeding, dominate the social protection sector. Moreover, social protection measures are not adapted to the specific needs of women and the availability of financial assistance and credit for women is limited.⁷⁸ Other programmes include Climate Smart Enhanced Public Works (525,000 households) and school meals. A social protection assessment for PLHIV showed that people living with HIV, at risk and affected by HIV and others eligible, did not have specific social protection

targeting or were not accessing social protection schemes.⁷⁹ Overall, social protection programmes do not reach all households living in extreme poverty, let alone those living in poverty.

Contributory social protection schemes in Malawi are limited in coverage and mainly restricted to the formal sector. The 2013 Labour Force Survey⁸⁰ revealed that 78% of the labour force was in the informal economy which is currently not covered by social protection programmes due to the current design of social protection programmes. The contributory social security programmes include the civil servants' contributory and non-contributory pension schemes, and the Public Service Pension Trust Fund administered by the Ministry of Finance that covers the old age social protection function. The biggest programme by budget and coverage, the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP), covers on average 10% of the population in each district, targeting

⁷⁷ Malawi has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which guarantees the right to social security in Article 9.

⁷⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Eighth periodic report submitted by Malawi under article 18 of the Convention, due in 2019 CEDAW/C/MWI/8 (2021) para 38.

⁷⁹ Access to Social Protection by People Living with, at Risk of, or Affected by HIV in Eswatini, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia: Results from Population-Based HIV Impact Assessments - PubMed (nih.gov)

⁸⁰ A follow up Labour force survey is under way with results expected end of 2024.

the poorest beneficiaries, excluding a significant number of vulnerable households (in 2024, SCTP included 308,000 households).



The country has a compulsory private pension scheme, and, in addition, there is one private health insurance programme called the Civil Servants Medical Scheme, a voluntary-based scheme covering the public sector employees. The country also has an employer liability workers compensation scheme, whose coverage extends to all workers in accordance with the Workers Compensation Act. Refugees, asylum seekers and general foreign migrants are often left out of the national schemes due to their immigration status despite Malawi signing the Social Security Agreement with Zambia in 2003 as well as Zimbabwe and South Africa regarding the portability of pensions.⁸¹ It is crucial to recognise the potential of their contribution to the economy. Social security is also a human right, while investment in social protection is an investment in building resilience.⁸²

⁸¹ Since the early 1900s, Malawi (then Nyasaland) served as a source of migrant labour for Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia), Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) and South Africa and remittance of pension benefits have been ongoing since then. In

In the 2024/25 national budget, a total of MK219.7 billion (approx. US\$129.2 million) which is equivalent to 1.6 times in 2023/24 budget of MK131.7 billion (approx. US\$ 77.4 million). The social protection budget has progressively increased as a share of the total budget, from 3% in 2023/24 to 3.7% in 2024/25, and from 0.9% to 1.2% in relation to GDP. These trends reflect increased donor commitments to the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) and Climate Smart Expanded Public Works Program (CS-EPWP).

The financing of the social protection sector remains a concern with heavy donor-dependence. Donors fund over 90% of the flagship SCTP, raising sustainability concerns over the medium-to-long term. Meanwhile, the flagship social cash transfer programme reaches 10% coverage threshold across the 28 districts, representing only 10% of the poorest labour-constrained households – a very small proportion given that more than 20% of the population lives in extreme poverty. The current inflationary environment significantly impacts the real value of cash transfers, the welfare of beneficiaries, and program costs. While increased allocations to SCTP and CS-EPWP show the government's commitment, rising prices are eroding the purchasing power of transfers. As inflation rises, the MK14,900 monthly cash transfer under SCTP loses value, reducing its effectiveness in meeting basic needs.

the case of South Africa, Malawians working for a large mining company receive periodical payments for the work injuries they have sustained through direct bank transfers available at

⁸² Article 9 of the ICESCR.

This will worsen poverty and vulnerability, as beneficiaries struggle to afford essential goods and services.

3.2.2.2 Education (Including Second Chance Education and Skills Development Education)

While Malawi has been successful in its ability to expand early childhood education to 54% of the 3–5-year-olds through Community-Based Childcare Centres (CBCCs), over half of young children remain unenrolled in pre-school. Meanwhile, the quality of the roughly 13,213 CBCCs varies considerably with many centres lacking key infrastructure and materials required for learning. Furthermore, only 50% of caregivers have received training in providing pre-primary education. In the long run, the benefit of attending pre-school is that children will progress 1.25 more years through the education system, leading to a 13.9% increase in wages as adults.⁸³ For every MWK1 invested in this programme, Malawi will reap MK4.5 in benefits.⁸⁴

The education report of the 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census found that 29.7% of Malawian children aged 3-5 years old attended pre-school. However, there was a big gap between urban and rural children, with 47.4% of children attending pre-school coming from urban areas and 26.9% from rural areas. The official age for primary

school entry in Malawi is six years, and children spend eight years in primary school, from Standard 1 to Standard 8.

With an annual population growth rate of 2.9 percent and just over 700,000 new entrants into Standard 1 each year, the current primary school enrolment as of early 2021 is estimated at over 6 million. The secondary school cycle runs for four years, comprising Form 1 to Form 4. According to the *2024 Education Management Information System (EMIS) report*, there were 1,916 secondary schools in the country (of which 483 were private secondary schools), taking in 538,800 secondary school students.



⁸³ Malawi National Planning Commission Report with technical assistance from the Copenhagen Consensus Center and the African Institute for Development Policy. Cost-Benefit Analysis for Expanding and Improving Early Childhood Education

in Malawi - Technical Report available at https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/sites/default/files/mp_early_childhood_education_report.pdf

⁸⁴ Ibid

As of **2024**, there were 5.4 million children in the country's 7,117 primary schools. Of these, 5,919 were public schools, while 1,198 were private.

As with Early Childhood Education Development (ECED), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) do not fall under the Ministry of Education; TVET falls under the ministry responsible for labour issues. The NESIP 2020-2030 states that Malawi has seven national technical colleges, 17 community technical colleges, 28 community skills development centres and 53 private technical colleges. The NESIP 2020-2030 does not provide numbers of students and instructors in TVET colleges, but data shows that enrolment in this sub-sector is very low. In 2011, students in TVET colleges numbered less than 7,000 (World Bank, 2016).

Recent statistics are showing a decline in some key education indicators in Malawi. For instance, net enrolment at primary level has slightly reduced from 90% in 2020 to 89% in 2024 while completion rate has dropped from 53% to 45% (Education Management Information System (EMIS, 2024). At secondary level, secondary school net enrolment remains very low, although marginally increased from 15.5% in 2020 to 16.8% (16.6% girls, 16.9% boys)

in 2024, (EMIS 2024). Transition rate to secondary level is still low at 49.7% (49.9% girls, 49.6% boys) (EMIS, 2022).

In Malawi, the education sector has been severely affected by extreme weather events.⁸⁵ The passage of Tropical Cyclone Freddy damaged 547 schools—including 484 primary schools and 63 secondary schools—affecting at least 273,388 learners and 586 teachers.⁸⁶ In 2022, tropical storm Ana affected some 476 schools, disrupting the learning of some 398,908 students.⁸⁷ In many cases, even if schools are not destroyed, children cannot attend school because they are used as temporary shelters.⁸⁸ The impact of climate-related disasters in Malawi has disproportionately impacted women's and girls' access to education. In recent years, Malawi has established different strategies/frameworks to address climate change through education. In particular, in 2013 the country developed its *National Climate Change Learning Strategy (NCCLS)*, which was updated in 2021. This strategy aims to address three key pillars: 1) human capacity building; 2) institutional capacity building; and 3) climate change financing, which are closely related to the three proposed areas of technical support. UNESCO is

⁸⁵ Malawi is not only highly vulnerable to weather shocks but is also prone to "adverse climate hazards that include dry spells, seasonal droughts, intense rainfall, riverine floods, and flash floods" (The World Bank, 2022). The country ranked number 5 in the Global Climate Risk Index in 2019 and number 40 (out of 163) when analyzing the children's climate risk index.

⁸⁶ [https://www.bing.com/search?pglt=41&q=Cyclone+](https://www.bing.com/search?pglt=41&q=Cyclone+Freddy+in+Malawi+affected+schools+and+students&cvid=79647667eea84505aaccaca3549b9efca&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIIICAEQ6QcY_FXSAQkxNTE3NWowajGoAgCwAgA&FORM=ANNAB1&PC=WSEDDB)

[Freddy+in+Malawi+affected+schools+and+students&cvid=79647667eea84505aaccaca3549b9efca&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIIICAEQ6QcY_FXSAQkxNTE3NWowajGoAgCwAgA&FORM=ANNAB1&PC=WSEDDB](https://www.bing.com/search?pglt=41&q=Cyclone+Freddy+in+Malawi+affected+schools+and+students&cvid=79647667eea84505aaccaca3549b9efca&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIIICAEQ6QcY_FXSAQkxNTE3NWowajGoAgCwAgA&FORM=ANNAB1&PC=WSEDDB)

⁸⁷ [Tropical Storm ANA Situation Report -15 February | UNICEF Malawi](#)

⁸⁸ [National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020-2030](#)

also currently supporting Malawi with the development of its national framework on education for sustainable development, which sets direction for ESD and Climate Change Education (CCE) in the national education system.

Education is one of the six SDG transitions with potential outsized impact on the achievement of SDGs. Malawi has opportunities to build on the Transforming Education commitments.⁸⁹ These include aspirational goals indicating desired transformations in the long term, with support from the international community, followed by what the Government of Malawi has already committed to, through current policy goals and national vision statements. Under the Transforming Education commitments, Malawi aspires to promote among others, inclusive, equitable, safe, and health-promoting schools; learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development; transforming the teaching profession to make it autonomous, trusted and accountable; digital learning and transformation to expand access to quality and relevant education and strengthening digital literacy in primary and secondary education; and increasing domestic financing for education to at least 15-20% of national expenditure, and at least 4-6% of GDP.

However, national budget allocation to the education sector, MK884 billion (USD505 million) or 14.6% of the total

budget in 2024/25, is a gradual decline from 16.5% in 2021/22 and lags the Dakar target (20%). At 14.6% of the total budget, the education allocation is lower than spending on public debt charges (24.3%), although it remains the largest sector budget. As a share of GDP, the education budget has increased from the 2020/21 levels at 4.2% to 4.7%. The GDP share is in line with the Incheon Declaration on Inclusive Education which recommends governments to allocate between 4-6% of their GDPs to education if they are to achieve SDG 4 (UNESCO, 2017). Although, governments would need to spend more on education to effectively maximise learning outcomes in the post-COVID recovery context.

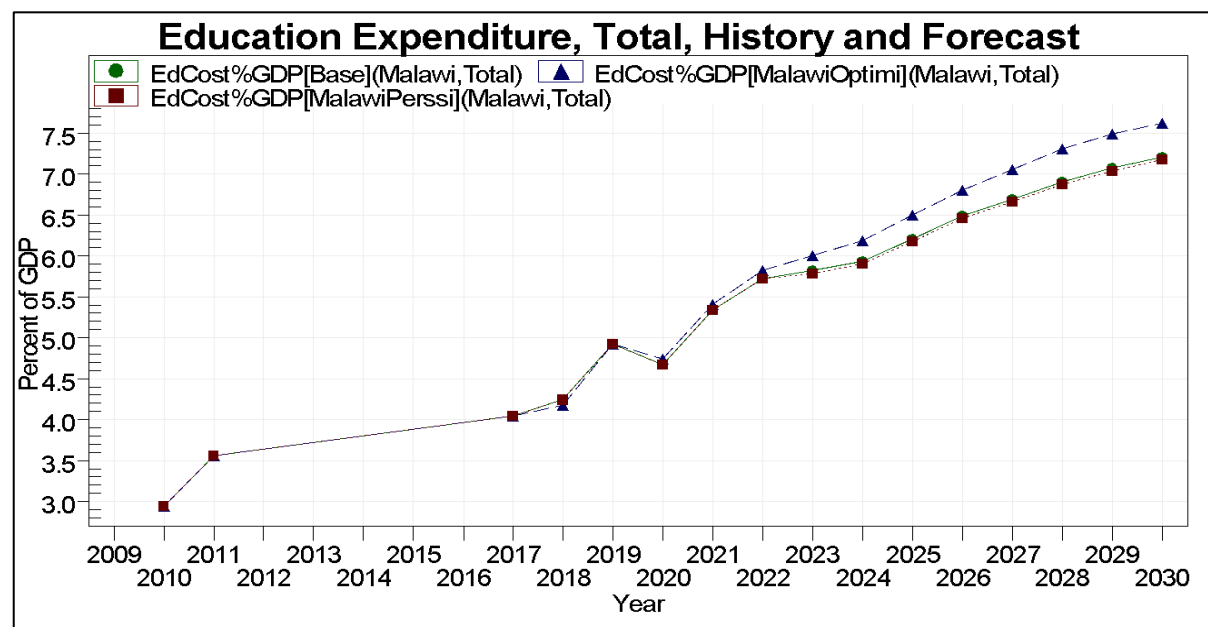
Projected education expenditure based on the IFs is presented in Figure 5. This graph shows trends in education expenditure as a percentage of GDP in Malawi (2009–2030). There is a steady increase from around 3.5% in 2009 to approximately 6% by 2023. The optimistic scenario (blue triangles) projects a slightly higher expenditure trajectory post-2023, reaching over 7% by 2030, while the pessimistic and base scenarios (brown squares and green circles) show slower growth, reaching around 6.5% by 2030. These trends suggest that education investments are growing, but optimistic economic growth could further accelerate educational funding. Policymakers should focus on ensuring that increased education spending is

⁸⁹ [https://knowledgehub.sdg4education2030.org/system/files/2022-](https://knowledgehub.sdg4education2030.org/system/files/2022-09/Malawi_National%20Statement%20of%20Commitment.pdf)

[09/Malawi_National%20Statement%20of%20Commitment.pdf](https://knowledgehub.sdg4education2030.org/system/files/2022-09/Malawi_National%20Statement%20of%20Commitment.pdf)

matched by improvements in education quality and accessibility to maximize the potential benefits for Malawi's development.

Figure 5: Education Expenditure Historical Trends and Forecast – (2009 - 2030)



3.2.2.3 Health

Malawi has made significant progress in key health outcomes over the years. For instance, annual HIV incidence among adults (15-49 years) has declined by one third from 0.28% to 0.19% between 2018 and 2020. HIV incidence declined faster in men while it remains considerably higher in women, at 0.14% and 0.24%, respectively. Total AIDS-related deaths reduced from 23,000 annually to 15,000. Meanwhile, under-5 mortality significantly declined from 232 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 53.87 per 1,000 live births in 2019/2020.⁹⁰ However, about 40,000 children still die

every year from preventable or easily treatable diseases, linked to neonatal

causes (43%), pneumonia (14%), diarrhoea (8%) and malaria (7%). About 40% of the under-five deaths occur during the first 28 days of life, which is largely linked to premature births, infection, and asphyxia, all of which have low-cost solutions. Although maternal mortality registered a significant decline from 1,100 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2000 to 381 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020⁹¹,

⁹⁰ <https://childmortality.org/all-cause-mortality/data?refArea=MWI>

⁹¹ <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/366225/9789240068759-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

it ranks among the highest in the world.⁹²

Maternal Mortality Ratio trend analysis presented in Figure 6 shows that MMR stood at over 400 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015 and shows a sharp decline until around 2017, reaching about 370 deaths per 100,000 live births. Between 2017 and 2023/24, the MMR is projected to decline gradually but remains high, stabilizing around 350 deaths per 100,000 live births. This period represents historical data reflecting some improvements, but the pace of reduction slows after the sharp initial decline. The criminalisation of abortion, except where the life of the pregnant woman or girl is at risk, compels women – particularly those under 25 years – to resort to unsafe abortion, thereby partially contributing to the high maternal mortality ratio. There is a persistently high rate of teenage pregnancies in Malawi. Teenage pregnancy increased from 26% in 2010 to 29% in 2015/16.⁹³



⁹² In 2015, CEDAW had expressed concern about the “very high maternal mortality ratio, in particular among rural women and adolescents, notwithstanding a significant drop from 675 deaths per 100,000 live births before 2013 to 460 deaths per 100,000 live births” Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding*

Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning services, and limited access to modern contraceptives.⁹⁴

Based on the IFs model projections the base scenario assumptions (green circles in Figure 6), the MMR is projected to decline steadily, reaching about 275 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030. This scenario assumes slight improvements in health interventions and economic growth. Similarly, pessimistic Scenario (brown squares) signal that the MMR declines more slowly (and closer to the baseline), around 275 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030. This suggests that without sustained improvements in both the economy and healthcare systems, maternal mortality will remain high.

Meanwhile, the optimistic scenario (blue triangles), where GDP growth is positively impacted by 1.8%, the decline is much more pronounced. The MMR is projected to fall around 200 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030, demonstrating that improved economic conditions and health services can significantly accelerate reductions in maternal mortality. The optimistic projection shows that improved economic conditions can drive better health outcomes,

observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) para 34(a).

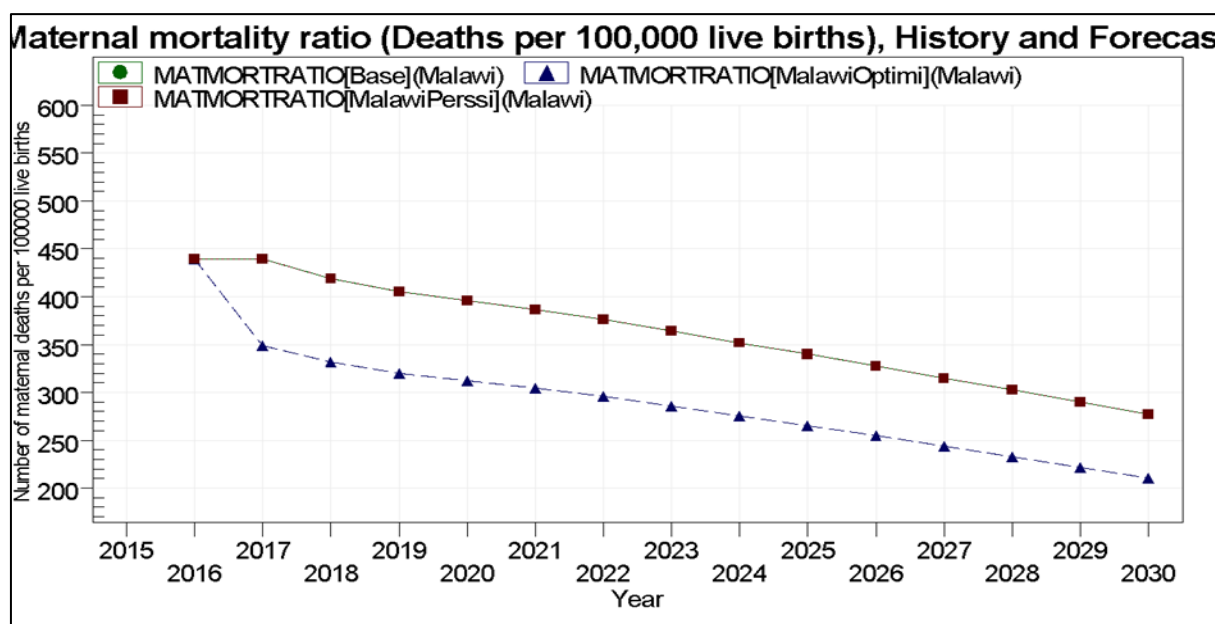
⁹³ Malawi DHS

⁹⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) para 34.*

including maternal mortality reduction. This underscores the importance of multisectoral approaches that not only

focus on direct health interventions but also consider economic development.

Figure 6: Malawi Maternal Mortality Ratio Trends - Historical And Forecasted, 2025 – 2030



The optimistic projections highlight the potential for rapid improvement under ideal conditions of economic growth, although history shows a more tempered pace of change. This suggests that economic growth alone is not sufficient; it needs to be coupled with targeted health investments, especially in maternal healthcare services. The historical data shows that

improvements in healthcare systems, accessibility, and specific maternal health programs play a key role in driving MMR declines.

The 2024/25 health sector budget – excluding WASH – is allocated MK550 billion (USD324 million), which is 1.5 times the 2023/24 revised budget of MK368 billion (~USD216 million).

Excluding the WASH allocation, the on-budget per capita health allocation has stagnated at USD16 and remains far short of the recommended national target of USD78.7 as per the Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) III and USD86 recommended by WHO for LICs to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The 2024/25 health

budget constitutes 9.2% of the total budget and 2.9% of GDP, up from 8.5% and 2.4% in 2023/24, respectively. However, the health budget as a percentage of GDP remains lower than the SADC recommended threshold of 5%. Moreover, Malawi is still below the Abuja Declaration targets for African States which recommends an allocation of 15% of the total budget to health. Additionally, about 95% of the HIV response financing in Malawi is externally funded. To meet the SDG 3 target, Malawi should significantly invest in low-cost high-impact

interventions in the shortest term, including Primary Healthcare interventions like in maternal and child healthcare.



In the long term, the government should increase investments in health financing to meet the Abuja Targets for African States while increasing wider coverage of UHC through PHC.

3.2.2.4 Nutrition

Malawi has made significant progress in reducing acute and chronic undernutrition but stunting (low height for age) remains high among children under-5.⁹⁵ According to the 2019/20 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the prevalence of wasting (weight for height) reduced from 3.8% in 2013/14 to 2.6% in 2019/20, while underweight (weight for age) reduced from 16.7% to 12.8% over the same period. However, stunting is still high, affecting 35.5% of children under-5. This is particularly concerning due to its negative impact on children's growth and wellbeing. Furthermore, the 2019/20 MICS results revealed worsening of indicators related to child diet, with a decrease of exclusively breastfed children from 70% in 2013/14 to 64% in 2019/20. The 2024/25 weighted allocation to nutrition interventions stood at MK16 billion

(USD9 million) representing 45% increase from the 2023/24 budget of MK10.8 billion (USD6 million).

Despite the increase, the visible nutrition budget remains a tiny share (0.3 per cent) of the total government budget and the country's GDP at 0.1 per cent. While the investment case for nutrition is empirically strong, the level of spending is significantly short of the required investments, including World Health Assembly's recommendation for countries to dedicate 1.7% of their national budgets to nutrition as well as the Eastern and Southern Africa Scaling Up Initiatives which recommends a share of 3% of the national budget to nutrition. This insufficient funding for nutrition undermines the government's

⁹⁵ See also Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi* CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5 (2017) para 33(a).

obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.⁹⁶

3.2.2.3 Child Protection

Malawi's children continue to experience high rates of multiple forms of violence. Gender-based violence among adolescents is unacceptably high as one in five girls and one in seven boys experience at least one incident of sexual abuse before the age of 18. Additionally, significant disparities exist based on geographical, wealth and educational dimensions. For example, the MICS 2019/20 revealed that, 46% of rural women aged 20-24 interviewed in the MICS reported that they got married before age 18 compared to 32% in urban areas.



Furthermore, children are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation and trafficking in the search of employment, especially in the context of a dire economic situation and the impact of climate and health shocks that have depleted many households' savings. Access to and availability of the one-stop centres that provide comprehensive service to child survivors of sexual and physical violence, remain inadequate.⁹⁷

These challenges are exacerbated by inadequate funding for child protection in Malawi. The direct child protection budget for 2024/25 has declined by 27% decline from MK1.2 billion (USD706,00) in 2023/24 to MK895 million (USD524,000) in 2024/25.⁹⁸ As a share of national budget and GDP, child protection budget remains tiny proportion at 0.015% and 0.005% in 2024/25 respectively. The 2024/25 budget funding translates to a spending of MK92 (~US\$0.05) per child per year, a further gradual decline from MK121 (~US\$0.10) in the 2023/24.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ CESCR General Comment No. 19 (2007) The Right to Social Security (Art 9) UN doc. E/C. 12/GC19 para 42.

⁹⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5* (2017) para 22.

⁹⁸

https://www.unicef.org/malawi/media/11761/file/UNICEF_ChildProtection_Budget_Brief_2024-25_Final.pdf.pdf

⁹⁹

https://www.unicef.org/malawi/media/11761/file/UNICEF_ChildProtection_Budget_Brief_2024-25_Final.pdf.pdf

3.3 ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION ANALYSIS

Limited economic transformation characterised by heavy dependence on rain-fed agriculture exposes the country to the impact of shocks. The country is highly vulnerable to climate change, with a score of 37.6 and ranking 161st out of 185 countries on the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index in 2021.¹⁰⁰



In the 2023/2024 agriculture season, the El Niño induced drought adversely impacted agriculture yield with crops such as maize (Malawi's staple) registering a decrease of 16 % and leading to acute levels of food insecurity. Beyond the immediate losses in water-dependent sectors like agriculture, secondary impacts manifest through other industries, such as food processing. Consequent impacts would be felt through changes in aggregate output, inflationary pressures, employment contraction and worsening poverty.

3.3.1 GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

More regular and intense shocks have undermined Malawi's sustained and inclusive growth. In 2024 the country's growth estimate is projected to decline to 2.3% from an earlier estimate of 3.2%, in large part reflecting the effects of El Niño on



agriculture production and spillovers to the rest of the economy.¹⁰¹ A more detailed analysis of the damages and losses (D&L)¹⁰² incurred in the agriculture sector resulting from the El Niño has revealed that the loss incurred on crops stands at US\$310 million representing 12 percent of the total crop value of US\$2,9 billion. While for livestock, the total loss is estimated at US\$ 31 million, representing 1.4% of the total value (USD 2,24 billion) for all the livestock. The estimated total crop and livestock loss, which is US\$341 million, represents a 2.4% loss on the country's GDP.

¹⁰⁰ ND-GAIN (Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative). 2021. "Country Index Rankings." Retrieved June 26, 2023, from <https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/>

¹⁰¹ Reserve Bank of Malawi (2024). Financial and Economic Review, Vol (58)(1)

¹⁰² FAO (2024). El Niño Damage & Loss Analysis Report for Crops and Livestock (Draft report)

Figure 7: GDP Growth (Annual %)

Source: Malawi budget statements (various)

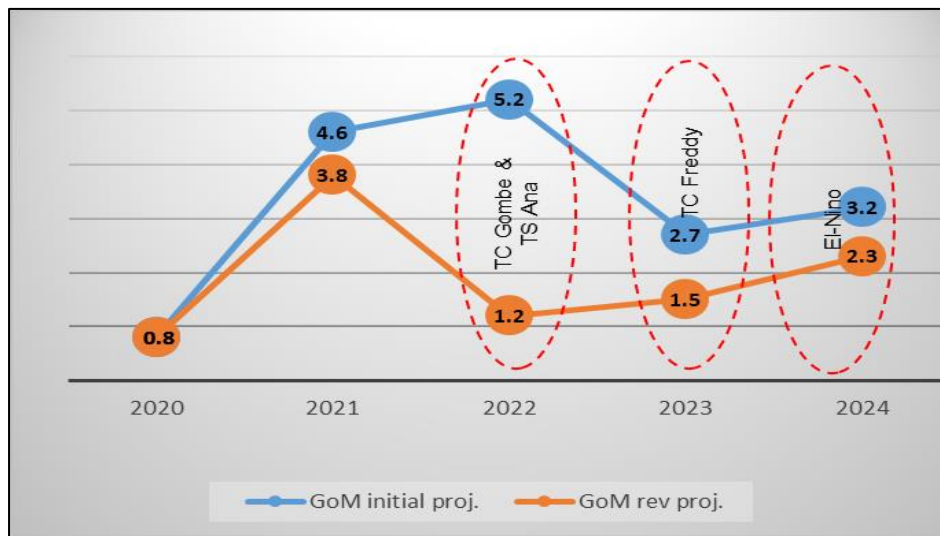


Figure 7 shows initial and revised economic growth projections largely reflecting the impacts of climatic shocks on GDP between 2021 and 2024. In 2023, projected growth of 2.7% declined to 1.5% following the impact of Tropical Cyclone Freddy. Meanwhile, in 2022, growth estimate fell to 1.2% from an initial estimate of 5.2% at the beginning of the year largely due to the impacts of Tropical Storm Ana and Tropical Cyclone Gombe (2022). Total damage for Tropical Cyclone Gombe alone was estimated between 1.5 to 2.7% of GDP. The impacts of climate change on the economy are projected to increase in both frequency and intensity. The 2024/25 cropping season which indicates a high likelihood of La Niña ENSO climatic conditions.¹⁰³ Depending on severity, Malawi could have above average rainfall and a net favorable agriculture season.

However, an intensive La Niña might also increase the risk of flooding and negatively impact agriculture outcomes with spillover effects to the rest of the economy. The National Climate Change Management Policy notes that the agriculture sector is likely to suffer the greatest losses from climate change.

In 2021, the Russia and Ukraine conflict intensified an already challenging global economic climate. The war exacerbated rising global fertilizer and fuel prices, placing additional strain on Malawi's external balances. As a result, Malawi's terms of trade worsened, contributing to an upward pressure on inflation which rose to 25.5% in August 2022 compared to the average annual inflation of 9.3% in 2021. The impact on food prices would be disproportionate on the poor with Ukraine annually exporting 40% of its wheat and corn to Africa and is a

¹⁰³ Nicholson, S (2000) 'Climatic and environmental change in Africa during the last two centuries'

Department of Meteorology, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida 32306, USA.

source market for the World Food Programme that feeds 138 million people in 80 countries, including Malawi. With the crisis disrupting Ukrainian supplies, food prices rose across the continent.

The effects of external shocks combined with poor economic governance linked to mismanagement, corruption, illicit financial flows, and inefficient use of financial resources have significantly exacerbated macroeconomic challenges and reduced the fiscal space necessary for social spending. In addition, poor policy responses have tended to amplify macroeconomic instability, delaying

adjustment, and leading to over-reliance on Official Development Assistance (ODA) through donor-funded interventions. Malawi's foreign reserves remain very low, with little room to absorb shocks. Gross reserves averaged 1 month of import coverage in 2023, and net reserves have been negative for most of the recent years. Malawi's real per-capita GDP barely grew over the last two decades and now lags behind regional peers. Total investment is among the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), averaging 14.9% of GDP since 2000 compared to neighbouring Tanzania at 24.5% and Zambia at 34.7%.



The World Bank Economic Monitor of June 2022 estimated that a price increase of 15% would result in the poverty rate rising by close to 3 percentage points.

3.3.2 INFLATION

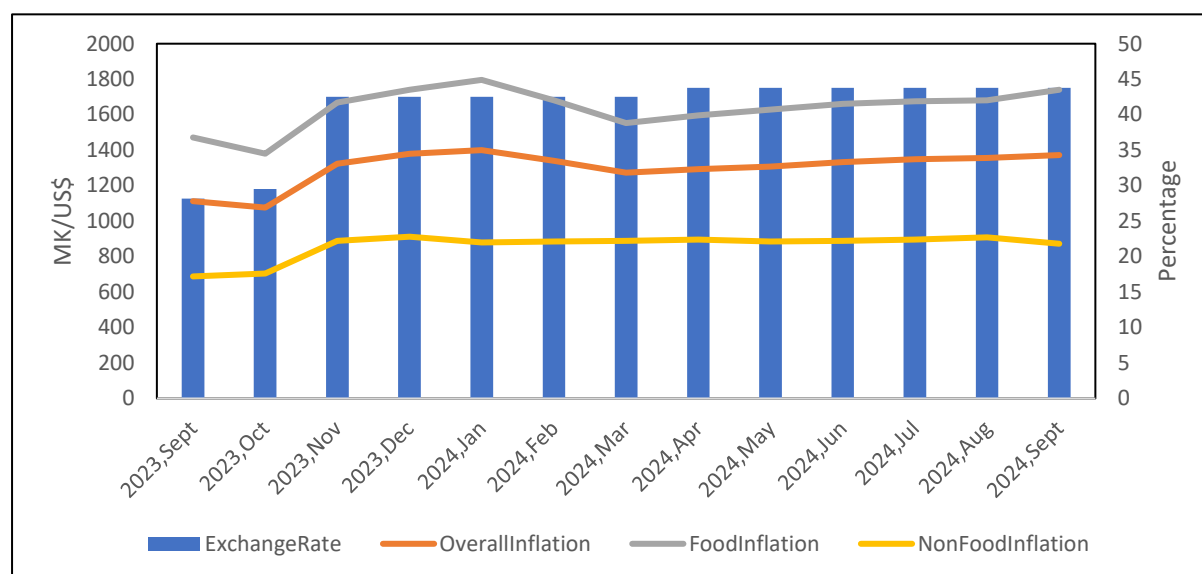
The effects of El Niño are compounding an already dire socio-economic situation following the exchange rate alignment of the Malawi Kwacha by 44 percent against the US dollar in November 2023 which contributed to rising inflationary pressures. The annual food inflation rate rose from 34.5 percent in October 2023 to 41.7% in November 2023 and has since averaged above 40 percent in May 2024 (Figure 8). Consequently, and against stagnant income levels,

households are likely to experience a significant reduction in the purchasing power of nutritious food.¹⁰⁴ Headline inflation is projected to remain high for the entire year 2024 and is largely driven by food inflation, which has averaged over 40 per cent since November 2023. Additionally, monetary financing of the national budget as well as growth in money supply are contributing to increasing inflationary pressures.

¹⁰⁴ MALAWI: El Niño Situation Report, 1st May 2024, Self Help Africa & Save the Children Malawi (Feb. 2024), Cost of Diet Results based on a) National Food Prices

Figure 8: Exchange Range and Inflation Trends

Source: Reserve Bank of Malawi



In 2024, maize prices rose around 160% above the five-year average, while prices for alternative staple foods such as beans and rice were double the prices in 2023.¹⁰⁵ Assessments indicated that 15-40% of households did have inadequate food supply in 2024 which would result in acute food insecurity. This situation disproportionately affects already poor households – 50.7% of the population¹⁰⁶ – who struggle to cope and meet basic needs when faced with rising food prices. The Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) projects 2024 average headline inflation at 30.0%. However, despite the tight monetary stance maintained to tame inflation, the pressures remain elevated. Sources of inflationary pressures emanate from a combination of rising food prices due to weather induced shocks such as El Niño and money supply growth. Therefore, a

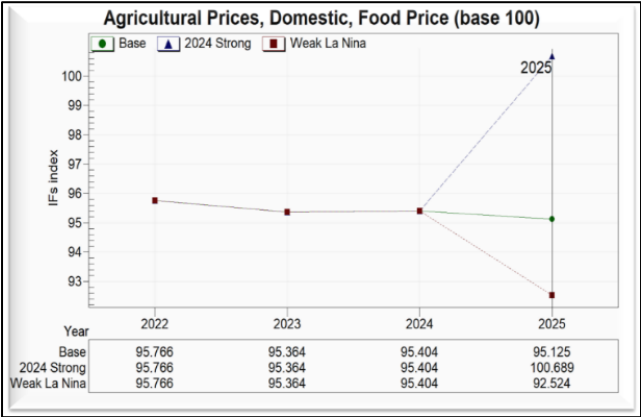
combination of both demand and supply side interventions will be required to keep inflation in check. This calls for joint interventions by both the monetary authorities and fiscal authorities for a long-term solution to inflation control in Malawi.

A significant increase in inflation is having dire consequences for poor and vulnerable households, leading to reduced real incomes. As a result, these households, are forced to make difficult trade-offs, such as cutting back on food purchases, reducing the intake of nutritious items, skipping meals, or eating smaller portions. These adjustments could have negative effects on health and education outcomes as well as exacerbate existing inequalities, including gender inequality. From a human rights perspective, there are concerns that inflation and increased food and fuel

¹⁰⁵ Malawi Price Bulletin, April 2024, Famine Early Warning System Network.

¹⁰⁶ World Bank Poverty Assessment Report, 2019

prices will set back the realisation of economic and social rights and advancement of the SDGs and entrench inequalities for those most left behind.



However, in 2025, inflation is projected to recede on the backdrop of forecasted weak La Niña and improved agriculture season. Based on predictive modelling using the Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) model, a forecasted weak La Niña condition is likely to lead to a drop in food price index from 95.404 in 2024 to 92.524 in 2025 due to increase in production.¹⁰⁷ However, a strong La Niña characterized by a drop in maize production is likely to lead to escalation in food price index from 95.404 in 2024 to 100.689 in 2025.¹⁰⁸ The Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) aims to achieve a medium term target of 5% inflation by 2026, inter-alia, on the back of tight monetary policy stance.

3.3.3 EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK

The 2013 LFS data indicate that employed persons in Malawi remain predominantly engaged in informal employment. Overall, 89% of working persons are in informal employment. Meanwhile, women are more likely to be employed in informal employment than males. However, there are stark differences in involvement in informal employment between urban and rural areas.

The percentage of employed persons in informal employment in the rural areas is overwhelmingly high at 91% compared to 69% in urban areas. Projections based on the IFs modelling results show that under the baseline scenario, informal employment will only drop by 3 percentage points, while the optimistic scenario will see informal employment drop by 6 percentage points by 2030.

¹⁰⁷ National Planning Commission (NPC) and UN Malawi. 2024. Analysis of the Likely Impacts of La Niña and Response Preparedness in Malawi (forthcoming)

¹⁰⁸ Ibid



In Malawi, as in many parts of Africa, women are primarily employed in agriculture and take on a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, resulting in a “double” or “triple burden”. On average, married women in Malawi spend 54.6 hours per week on domestic chores, compared to 14.5 hours for married men. The escalating food insecurity, along with increasing water and energy scarcity due to the crisis, may further elevate the risk of domestic violence for women and girls, as tensions rise within households and communities.

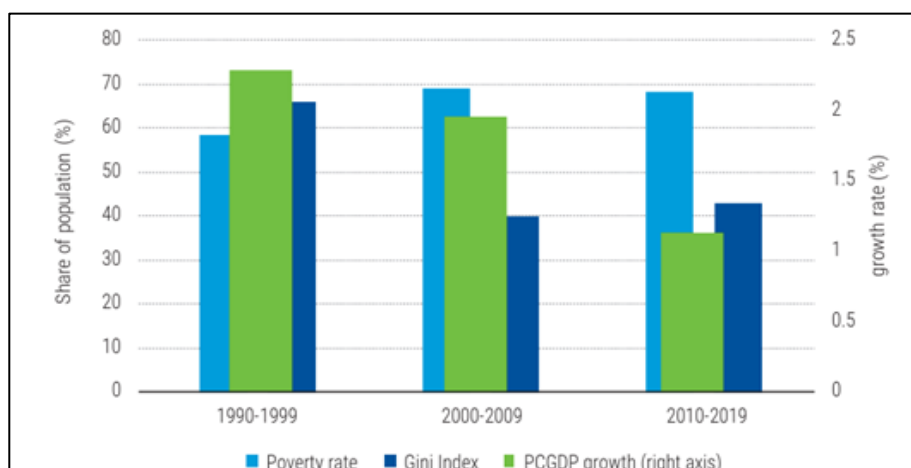
3.3.4 INEQUALITY

Using the Gini coefficient as a different measure of inequality, on average, inequality in Malawi significantly dropped by about 26 percentage points from 0.658 in the 1990-1999 decade to 0.399 in the 2000-2009 decade.¹⁰⁹ However, poverty rates increased by about 10 percentage points during the period while the growth in per capita incomes also declined,

suggesting that while the declining trend in inequality was conducive for translating growth into poverty reduction, the existing high levels of inequality compounded by the compressed growth in per capita incomes were not sufficient for a significant positive outcome in poverty rates.

Figure 9: Poverty Rate and Gini Index

Source: UNCTAD 2024



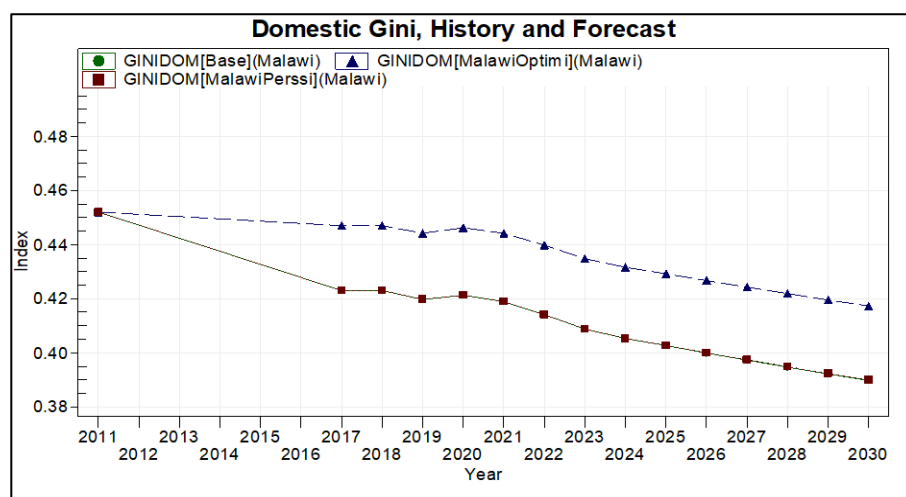
¹⁰⁹ UNCTAD, 2024. Reducing inequality and poverty in Malawi: Policy analyses and options. Reducing inequality

and poverty in Malawi: Policy analyses and options (unctad.org)

Meanwhile, the 2000–2009-decade, shows that the growth in per capita incomes continued to plummet while inequality rose by 3 percentage points and poverty rates remained substantially unchanged at about 68%. This further shows that while the decreasing growth in per capita incomes was not substantial enough to positively influence the direction of poverty, both high levels of initial and

rising inequality further dampened its potency in reducing poverty levels in the decade. Projections show that based on the IFs modelling results under the baseline scenario show that inequality will only drop by 0.035 percentage points to 0.39, while the optimistic scenario will see inequality drop by 0.012 percentage points to 0.439 by 2030.

Figure 10: Gini, History and Forecast



3.3.5 FISCAL POLICY

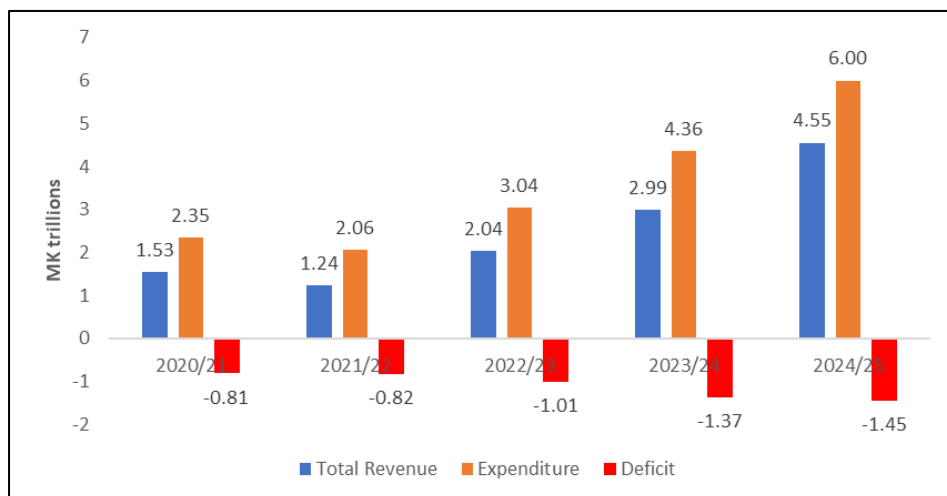
Large macroeconomic imbalances (including fiscal and current account deficits) and unsustainable debt hinder Malawi's efforts and prospects. Budget deficits have remained high, reflecting limited adjustment in spending and low domestic revenue mobilisation. Frequent expenditure overruns, combined with recurring revenue shortfalls, have also contributed to huge fiscal deficits and rapidly increasing high-cost domestic and external debts service costs.



As a result, consistent budget deficits have averaged 8.5% of GDP over the past five years. Weak performance in domestic revenues contributes to revenues missing the revised targets mainly for non-tax revenues such as parastatal dividends. Additionally, spending overruns in compensation for government employees, social benefits, and interest payments, as well as higher-than-targeted spending on fertiliser payments under the Affordable Input Programme (AIP), exert additional pressure on expenditure.

Figure 11: Revenue and Expenditure Trends

Source: 2024/25 Budget Documents



Malawi's budget deficit has been financed mainly by costly domestic borrowing, as external budget support and grants that averaged 5.8% of GDP during 2005-2013 has been much reduced to 1.8% of GDP since 2013. In the short to medium term, a combination of significant development and social spending demands, a heavy debt burden from the past, and significantly reduced on-budget assistance and other grants since 2013 have contributed to ongoing fiscal and current account deficits. Fiscal space challenges are exacerbated by weak public finance management systems, including procurement and expenditure controls and some challenges in effective and efficient tax administration. Fiscal deficits – averaging 8.5% between 2020 and 2024 – have led to unsustainable debt while current account deficits have contributed to diminishing gross international reserves.

The accumulation of public debt driven by increased domestic and external non-

concessional borrowing started after 2013.¹¹⁰ As donors shifted from “on-budget” to “off-budget” financing after the “Cashgate scandal,” compounded by the impact of shocks, the government has increasingly turned to borrowing to cover the deficit. High and unsustainable debt estimated at 91.3%¹¹¹ of GDP limits the government's capacity to borrow on concessional terms. At 7.8% of GDP and 24.4% of the total budget or 32% of total revenue, interest on public debt is the largest expenditure allocation in the 2024/25 national budget, ahead of allocations to all other social and economic sectors. With very limited fiscal legroom, the country has not been able to match investment needs to meet the growing demand for social services. Inevitably, this also affects the capacity of the country to prepare for and respond to climate-related disasters. In November 2023, the country secured an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement with the IMF to help restore macro-economic sustainability through inter-alia, fiscal

¹¹⁰ IMF. Malawi – Debt Sustainability Analysis. 2015
<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/dsa/pdf/2015/dsacr1583.pdf>

¹¹¹ World Bank. Malawi Economic Monitor. July 2024

adjustment and debt restructuring and catalyzing much needed financial support from development partners.

Meanwhile, funding for the social sectors (health, education, water and sanitation, nutrition, social protection) is unevenly distributed and heavily reliant on the support of development partners. The proportion of total government spending on essential social services increased from 29.3% in 2023/24 to 31% in 2024/25, education (14.7% from 15.6%) health (9.2% from 8.7%), WASH (3.4% from 1.4%), and social protection (3.7% from 3%). Whereas

education and health continue to receive a significant share from national resources, social protection, nutrition and WASH remain extremely dependent on donor support (over 90 percent).

Meanwhile, social protection coverage remains very low, despite high poverty levels, with the flagship social cash transfer programme (SCTP) reaching a fixed 10 percent coverage threshold across the 28 districts, representing only 10% of the poorest labour-constrained households – a very small proportion given that 20.5% of the population lives in extreme poverty.

3.3.6 KEY ECONOMIC SECTORS



Slow economic transformation and diversification characterized by heavy reliance on subsistence and rain-fed agriculture, underdeveloped tourism, extractive and manufacturing industries, and narrow financial markets limit the country's growth potential. This is exacerbated by over-exploitation of natural resources coupled with ever-growing households who depend on

natural resources (forests, fisheries, and land) for energy and income.

Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries account for at least 22% of Malawi's GDP (see Table 1 below) and 84.4% of total employment. In total, agricultural products account for 85% of Malawi's exports,¹¹² with tobacco accounting for 50%.¹¹³ Meanwhile, the sector also faces several challenges, including climate variability, inefficient utilisation of productive land, soil degradation, low adoption of modern agriculture technologies and mechanisation, declining productivity and low access to finance. Furthermore, the sector is largely dominated by resource-poor smallholder farmers who account for 75% of the farming population and have challenges to diversify their agricultural production

¹¹² Fitch Solutions. 2023. "Cyclone Freddy to Have Larger Economic Impact in Malawi than in Mozambique." BMI Country Risk, March 17. [https://www.fitchsolutions.com/country-risk/cyclone-](https://www.fitchsolutions.com/country-risk/cyclone-freddy-have-larger-economic-impact-malawi-mozambique-17-03-2023)

[freddy-have-larger-economic-impact-malawi-mozambique-17-03-2023](https://www.fitchsolutions.com/country-risk/cyclone-freddy-have-larger-economic-impact-malawi-mozambique-17-03-2023)

¹¹³ International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2023. From Climate Risk to Resilience: Unpacking the Economic Impacts of Climate Change in Malawi

thereby being vulnerable to weather and climatic shocks. The government provides significant support to agriculture mainly

through the flagship Agriculture Inputs Programme (AIP).

Table 3: Economic Sector Contribution to GDP

Source: Malawi Government, Annual Economic Report, 2024

Industry	2021	2022	2023	2024p	2025p
Agric, forestry and fishing	22.5	22.5	22.3	22	21.6
Manufacturing	12.1	11.8	11.7	11.8	11.8
Wholesale and retail	12.4	12	11.6	11.4	11.3
Financial and insurance	6.3	6.6	6.7	6.9	7.1
Other	46.7	47.1	47.7	47.9	48.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Meanwhile, projections based on the IFs modelling results show that under the baseline scenario, agriculture, value added (%GDP) will drop under both the baseline (16%), and pessimistic scenarios (18%) by 2020. The drop in agriculture value add (%GDP) to a larger extent reflects the impacts of climate change, rather than accelerated economic transformation. Making agriculture sustainable in the light of climate change and rapid population growth will require bold action.

Based on the food systems national dialogues and the diagnostics, there is a consensus that the current food systems are not sustainable and are not meeting the food and nutrition security, environmental sustainability, social economic and territorial balance requirements in Malawi. The national pathway report identified priority actions to address the food systems challenges in the short term (3 years) and medium term (10 years). These priority actions, among

others, seek to enhance productivity and production of diversified and nutritious foods; dietary diversification and consumption of nutrient dense and safe foods; capacity in agro-processing, value addition and utilisation; mitigate food wastage and losses; industrial and domestic waste management; farming practices and sustainable food production systems; distribution of resources and productive assets, as well as address systemic market failures, poor infrastructure, and limited resilience to systemic, multiple hazards, risks, and disasters.

The Government of Malawi is committed to transforming food systems through a multi-sectoral approach that enhances coherence and coordination among various policy-making communities at both national and local levels. To promote coherence and synergies, mechanisms must be established to unify investments by various stakeholders, government, development actors, academics, civil society, and the private sector. In order to

increase agricultural productivity, output, and commercialisation, the government will need to prioritise investment irrigation development through leveraging and enhancing private sector investment. Furthermore, innovative financing mechanisms to mobilise resources to effectively and efficiently finance food systems transformation based on strengths and opportunities will be vital while also developing mechanisms to address the weakness and threats of food systems.



Meanwhile, the manufacturing sector, still in its early stage, is strongly linked to the country's agriculture sector and Exploitation of these resources and their contribution to the economy also remain minimal due to lack of investment and limitations caused by bottlenecks in mining sector governance frameworks.

The cultural and creative industries (CCI) sector in Malawi, just as in other African countries, is also not well resourced but possesses huge potential to Malawi's development, helping to raise the country's regional and global profile and attracting tourists and even investment. Public investment in this sector remains low and creative industries remain largely informal. Industry competitiveness is

contributing only 11.8% of GDP. The sector's performance is heavily influenced by fluctuations in agricultural output, as it relies on agriculture for a significant portion of its inputs. Key activities in the manufacturing sector mainly involve agro-processing in the tobacco, coffee, tea, and sugar industries. In addition, underdeveloped industry, and infrastructure –energy, water, ICT, and transport – undermine production and distribution of goods and services. Although the services and distribution sector contribute a significant share – 22% of GDP¹¹⁴ – the sector contributes very little to the country's export earnings due to capacity challenges.

The mining sector, despite its significant potential, remains underexploited. Minerals that are assumed to be present in the country are uranium, coal, bauxite, phosphate, granite, graphite, black granite, vermiculite, aquamarine, tourmaline, rubies, sapphire, and rare earth minerals.¹¹⁵

undermined by piracy and poor protection of intellectual property rights and indigenous knowledge, lack of coordination by agencies supporting creative industries, low quality products since most artists do not have formal arts or crafts training and thus rely on natural talent, limited business and marketing skills, inadequate infrastructure support, limited sources of funding, and marginalisation of creative arts in policies and plans.

The Malawi 2063 Agenda also spotlights tourism as a key sector, which can transform Malawi into an economically

¹¹⁴ Embassy of the Republic of Malawi in the United States, 2023, www.malawi.embassy-dc.org/page/economy

¹¹⁵ Embassy of the Republic of Malawi in the United States, 2023, www.malawi.embassy-dc.org/page/economy

prosperous nation, while the MIP-1 emphasizes harnessing the potential of the tourism sector and developing the industry to a level of contribution of at least 11% to GDP. The tourism industry is vital to the overall economy of the country and supports huge numbers of local Malawians through employment and community projects, as well as helping conserve the country's natural resources. Malawi offers an array of tourism resources which include national parks and wildlife reserves; mountains; lakes and islands; wetlands, mountains, agricultural plantations, patches of natural and grown forests across the country, a rich cultural heritage and community life, among others. These provide different types of attractions for a

tourist to enjoy wildlife and nature from different perspectives.

If properly developed and promoted, the tourism industry will greatly contribute to the increase in foreign exchange earnings, creation of employment, and retention of earnings from tourism as well as increased income at household level.



3.3.7 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



Adoption and use of digital technologies in Malawi remain challenging but show signs of improvement. As of 2024, internet penetration has increased to 27.7%, and mobile phone tele-density has risen to 60.1%.

However, despite 84% Mobile broadband Coverage, internet usage remains relatively low due to high service costs and limited market competition.



Furthermore, only 36.5% of Malawians own a mobile phone, with a gender gap of 54% in mobile ownership.

Malawi continues to face some of the highest telecom prices in Africa, partly due to unfavourable taxation in the ICT sector. Additionally, a persistent digital divide exists, particularly affecting rural areas and women. While men are more likely to use the internet, with 18% of men online compared to 7% of women, the gender gap in access to ICT and computer skills remains significant. About 7% of men possess computer skills, compared to just 2% of women.

The high cost of handsets and digital devices continues to be a barrier to broader adoption. Malawi's initiatives including the National Digitalization Policy, Digital Economy Strategy Digital Malawi Project, Inclusive Digital Transformation for Malawi Project, Universal Service Fund initiatives demonstrate a strong commitment to building a digital economy ecosystem. These initiatives combined with a robust ID system that has registered over 98% of adult Malawians are facilitating the adoption of ICT within government ministries and departments, enabling them to provide more efficient and accessible public services to citizens.

However, key challenges remain: low electricity coverage contributing to low access and use of ICT devices in Malawi; high internet prices and high cost of smart devices; lack of digital literacy and skills; persistent gender gap in ICT access and usage with men having higher access and usage than women; lack of competition in the mobile retail market and mobile money services; low mobile subscription penetration and usage (at 60.13 per 100 people in 2022); and sector-specific taxes that pose an obstacle to wider broadband adoption and accelerated economic growth.

3.4 ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE ANALYSIS AND PROGRESS ON GLOBAL COMMITMENTS

3.4.1 CURRENT TRENDS AND SCENARIOS

Climate change and environmental degradation are fundamental drivers of numerous challenges facing Malawi, posing significant risks to efforts in poverty reduction, food security, and economic growth. As a consequence of climate change and environmental degradation, Malawi suffers adverse implications to its terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, which are pivotal to its water as well as its agriculture and food security, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. This is in addition to far-reaching effects on other parts of the country's economy, including the public health sectors, through rising heating and flooding conditions that are not only hostile to human physiology, but also conducive for more vector-borne diseases. At the global level, threats to multilateralism also undermine international efforts for action on climate change and environment, with local level implications that include declining aid and investments in Malawi.

The effects of climate change are mainly felt through the country's agricultural sector. Over 80%¹¹⁶ of the Malawian population rely on agriculture for food security and livelihoods, with many of them being smallholder farmers that depend on rainfall for crops and livestock water needs.

Poor agricultural practices, deforestation for biomass energy, and lack of infrastructure further exacerbate these challenges. Climate change also increases the vulnerability of livestock systems. The loss of livestock can push rural communities into chronic poverty. Mitigating these impacts requires strategies like improved livestock practices, resilient breeds, and enhanced disease monitoring. The fisheries sector also faces risks, with declining stocks due to climate change, overfishing, and poor management. Extreme weather events also damage ecosystems and reduce biodiversity. Additionally, rising temperatures, evaporation, and erratic rainfall patterns threaten Malawi's water supply, livelihoods, and energy production. Malawi's infrastructure, particularly roads and bridges, lacks resilience to extreme weather, leaving it vulnerable to climate impacts.



¹¹⁶ The World Bank in Malawi (2022). Country profile society. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview#:~:text=Economic%20Overview&text=In%20com>

ination%20with%20macroeconomic%20imbalances, gradual%20and%20significant%20risks%20remain

Most of the country's 28 districts are disaster prone. Within the past five decades, the country has experienced over 21 major flooding events and seven droughts. In 2023, Tropical Cyclone Freddy was a devastating event causing over 1,000 deaths and displacing more than 500,000 people. It severely damaged infrastructure, destroying 46,000 homes, 349 schools, and 175 health facilities and WASH facilities, with significant number of boreholes submerged under water compromising quality of drinking water. The economic impact exceeded \$500 million, with over 83,000 hectares of crops destroyed, intensifying food insecurity for 3.8 million people, especially in southern districts like Nsanje and Chikwawa. This was preceded by Cyclone Idai (2019) and Tropical Storm Ana (2022) which inflicted economic damage between US\$500-700 million. More than 60% of the people displaced due to tropical Storm Ana were women. In 2015, the country was affected by the worst floods in 50 years; Tropical Cyclone Chedza affected over 1 million people, displaced 230,000 people and killed 106 people, with another 172 people reported missing. The disaster caused damage worth US\$494 million.¹¹⁷

The 2023-2024 El Niño has had significant impacts on Malawi, particularly on food security and agricultural productivity. The worst dry spell in the region in 100 years caused a reduction in the production of various crops in Malawi, such as maize, which registered a decrease of 16 percent, from 3,509,837 metric tons

registered in 2022/23 to 2,926,190 metric tons in 2023/24 season (and a 14 percent decrease compared to the 5-year average) against a national requirement of 3.8 million metric tons with the deficit being 900,000 metric tons.¹¹⁸ According to the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis,¹¹⁹ in comparison with the past five years, the year 2024 has the highest number of acute food insecure people (5,692,122), followed by the 2023/24 consumption period (4,402,000), the 2022/23 consumption year (3,818,554) and the 2020/21 consumption year (2,617,986).

Future climate change scenarios suggest that Malawi will see increasing climatic variability. Average temperatures may increase by 0.5° to 1.5° Celsius by 2040, and rainfall is predicted to become more unpredictable, with a lower mean number of rainfall days and higher amounts of rainfall per day. As many Malawians already reside within high flood-prone areas, they are very susceptible to being affected by future floods and at high risks of experiencing human loss, loss and damage of infrastructures, and loss of livelihood assets. The 2022 World Bank Country Climate and Development Report indicates that climate change could reduce GDP by 3-9% in 2030, 6-20% in 2040, and 8-16% by 2050) if Malawi stays on its current low-growth development trajectory. The analysis also clearly demonstrates that development, as set out in Malawi's Vision 2063, provides a

¹¹⁷ 2015 PDNA Report
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_397683.pdf

¹¹⁸ Government of Malawi, Ministry of agriculture. The Second Agricultural Production Estimates

¹¹⁹ Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, May 2024 to March 2025, published 5 July 2024.

strong basis for strengthening resilience to climate impacts.¹²⁰

The climate risk assessment report for Malawi, conducted by UNEP, also highlights several concerning trends. Since 1850, Malawi's mean temperatures have risen by 1.5°C, with projections indicating an increase of 1.7 to 4.5°C by 2080, contributing to more frequent and intense heatwaves. The number of days exceeding 30°C and 35°C is rising, particularly impacting maize crops and areas like the Lower Shire Valley and Karonga District. A drying trend, particularly in the North and South, is expected to worsen, while the Central Region may see slight rainfall increases. More extreme weather patterns, including stronger storms and tropical cyclones, are forecasted. This leads to an increased risk of back-to-back crises such as floods followed by droughts or vice versa. Rising evaporation rates are also expected to lower water levels and soil moisture, intensifying water demand. Rainfall projections remain uncertain, necessitating adaptive planning for the future.

Key risks include rising temperatures, more frequent extreme heat events, intense storms, drier winters, and prolonged droughts, signaling a continued drying trend across the country.

Climate change is not just an environmental problem – it acts as a “threat multiplier” interacting with economic and social systems to exacerbate systemic inequalities. Although everyone is affected by the ravages of the climate crisis, the vulnerability of individuals varies depending on their gender, geography, class, ethnicity, and age. Climate change is pushing more people further into poverty, enflaming conflict over depleting natural resources, forcing migration, and compounding pre-existing gender discrimination, and exacerbating sexual and gender-based violence.¹²¹ Women are often dependent on natural resources, and many earn a living in the informal sector, leaving them less able to withstand economic and environmental shocks.

3.4.2 SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

The effects of climate change on Malawi's agriculture sector have significant socio-economic impacts. Between 2010 and 2019, for every three Malawians who escaped poverty, four fell back into it due to weather shocks.¹²² Most smallholder

farmers in Malawi are resource-poor with very limited capacity to contain shocks arising from climate change. In the future, the country is expected to experience increasing climatic variability that will negatively affect agriculture, the environment, water

¹²⁰ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/38217>

¹²¹ [Climate Change is Putting Women & Girls in Malawi at Greater Risk of Sexual Violence - Malawi | ReliefWeb](#)

¹²² https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099920006302215250/p174948072f3880690afb70c20973fe214d?fbclid=IwAR2_3zKsSC9F8aVuXHUR6_C7IoRv4JDaB14AypRFv1hJ5MbJpVOIANy1K_M

availability, energy provision, health and livelihoods, especially the most vulnerable. The country's staple crop, maize, also remains sensitive to temperature and precipitation change, with climate scenarios predicting decreasing yields and heat stress that will also impair livestock productivity.¹²³

The country identified eleven socio-economic sectors as particularly vulnerable to climate change and variability, including:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------|
| 1. Agriculture | 7. Fisheries |
| 2. Water Resources | 8. Forestry |
| 3. Human Health | 9. Wildlife |
| 4. Energy | 10. Industry |
| 5. Infrastructure | 11. Tourism |
| 6. Land Resources | |

The risk of harm is especially high for those sectors of the population that are already marginalised or in vulnerable situations or that, owing to discrimination and pre-existing inequalities, have limited access to decision-making or resources, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and persons living in rural areas. Situations of crisis exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and compound the intersecting forms of discrimination that disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups of women and girls, particularly those with disabilities. Moreover, climate change and disasters, including pandemics, influence the prevalence, distribution, and severity of new and re-emerging diseases. The susceptibility

of women and girls to disease is heightened because of inequalities in access to food, nutrition and health care and the social expectations that women will act as primary caregivers for children, the elderly, and the sick.¹²⁴

Climate change within and across borders will heighten climate-induced migration which will see increased internal and cross-border human mobility, worsening the competition for a scarce land resource that may culminate in tensions among migrants and host communities. In some of Malawi's districts, more and more households continue to move to new areas, seeking better arable land. Fishermen also continue to migrate from place to place in search of

¹²³ The Malawi National Agriculture Investment Plan

¹²⁴ See further 'Statement on human rights and climate change - Joint statement by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural

Rights, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.

better fishing grounds along the shores of Lake Malawi. Often new migrants add to already high inter-communal tensions within communities and challenges related to exploitation, discrimination when accessing services, violence and other human rights concerns are on the rise.

3.4.3 ENERGY / ELECTRICITY



Only **11.4%** of the population is connected to the national electricity grid, with biomass forming 97% of the total primary domestic energy supply (59% is used as firewood, and 41% is converted into charcoal).

Malawi is relatively well endowed with a wide range of energy sources such as hydro, fossil fuels, biomass, solar, and wind, among others.¹²⁵ However, energy shortages remain one of the country's major challenges, limiting its socio-economic and industrial development. A stark urban-rural divide exists, with urban households reporting an electrification rate of 45.5%, while rural households have an electrification rate of just 5.5%.¹²⁶ Malawi's power generation is heavily dependent on weather conditions as about 98% of electricity is generated by hydroelectric power stations. Consequently, low water levels during drought periods and silting during the rainy season disrupt electricity generation.¹²⁷

This overreliance on hydropower for energy provision further increases the country's vulnerability to climate change. For instance, Tropical Storm Ana in February 2022 damaged Kapichira Power Station, resulting in a loss of 30% of the total hydropower generation. In 2020, Malawi was ranked 171 out of 190 countries in the Ease of Doing Business rankings in terms of the procedures, time, and cost to get connected to the electrical grid, and the reliability of the electricity supply and the transparency of tariffs.¹²⁸ The government is currently implementing a National Charcoal Strategy (2017-2027) as part of its wider forest landscape restoration initiatives. The strategy seeks to curb Malawi's challenges of increased deforestation and increased demand of household

¹²⁵ According to the Ministry of Energy, feasibility studies for wind, solar, cogeneration and other potential hydro power sites on other rivers are in progress. [ENERGY DEMAND & SUPPLY – Energy](#)

¹²⁶ 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census

¹²⁷ Government of Malawi. 2018. Malawi Energy Policy

¹²⁸ <https://archive.doingbusiness.org/en/data/exploreconomies/malawi>

cooking fuel, while setting it on a path toward a diversified, sustainable, and regulated household energy sector. It builds on aspects that are drawn from various government policies that include the *National Energy Policy* of 2003 that sought to strengthen its energy sector contribution to the national goals of poverty reduction, industrialisation, and economic growth. The Charcoal Strategy also seeks to reduce deforestation and the associated impacts on rural livelihoods and the national economy. These ongoing government-led initiatives encompass restoration of degraded and deforested land as well as multiple interventions that integrate nature-based solutions, especially by the country's development partners such as the UN system in Malawi jointly with the government.

The Malawi Renewable Energy Strategy (2017) lays out detailed priorities and actions that must be taken for the country to achieve its goal of 'universal access to renewable electricity and a sustainable bioenergy sector'.¹²⁹ The intent is to achieve this through a number of pathways,

including mid-scale renewables investment, clean energy mini-grids, off-grid solar, and bioenergy. The key delivery mechanisms and organisations for this strategy are the Malawi Renewable Energy Partnership Group (MREPG), Malawi Renewable Energy Agency (MREA), Rural Electrification Fund, and external funders and providers of assistance.¹³⁰ This strategy offers significant potential to support the private sector in this sector.



3.4.4 BIODIVERSITY, FOREST AND LAND DEGRADATION

Malawi is endowed with rich and diverse forms of biodiversity, forests, and lands that are closely linked to its national economy. For example, the country's agro-biodiversity in 2010 (the available official data) was estimated to contribute about 40% to the GDP

and more than 90% of employment and merchandise export earnings. For each year between 2001 and 2009, land degradation cost to the country has been estimated in the region of US\$244 million (6.8% of GDP), while poor farming practices that degrade

¹²⁹ Republic of Malawi, 2017, 'Malawi Renewable Energy Strategy' ([link](#))

¹³⁰ Ibid.

croplands for maize, rice, and wheat resulted in a loss of US\$5.7 million per year as at 2015, according to Malawi Government's National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy.¹³¹ The country is home to a diverse range of plants and animals, particularly within its 97 protected areas, 90% of which are forest reserves. Approximately, 6% of its plant species are either endemic or threatened with extinction, with close to 4% of its mammalian species being listed as threatened under IUCN Red List in line with SDG indicator 15.5.1 on Red List Index.¹³²

Malawi faces a cycle of environmental decline and degradation driven by high population growth and high dependency on natural systems with more land being converted to agriculture and more forests being unsustainably harvested for the wood and charcoal fuel supply. Additionally, internal migration is also affecting the environment. The desire for better arable land and better income has led to forest degradation in many

districts in the country. Climate change magnifies these impacts by putting greater strain on land and forests. In particular, both the country's terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems are being modified, degraded and species composition altered due to the unsustainable utilisation and management of natural resources. This is evident in the reduction of tree cover in most forest reserves, as surrounding areas face continuous degradation. For example, Liwonde Forest Reserve in southern parts of Malawi, near the Mozambique border, covers a designated area of 284 hectares but had been reduced to just 70 hectares of the reserve as of 2013.¹³³



¹³¹ National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy https://afr100.org/sites/default/files/Malawi_NFLR_Strategy_FINALv2.pdf

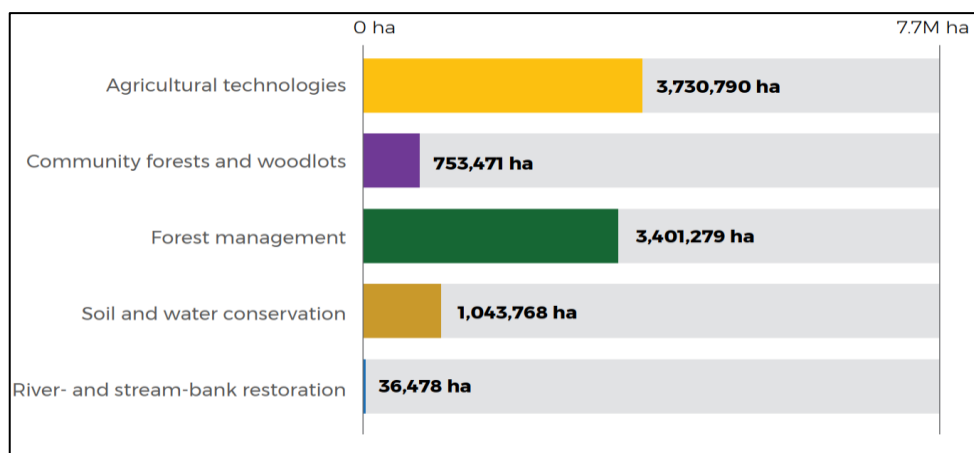
¹³² Malawi's 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020)

<https://www.cbd.int/countries/targets/?country=mw>

¹³³ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): Malawi Country Profile (2022).

Figure 12: Estimated area of opportunity as compared to total restoration opportunity area in Malawi

Source: National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy of Malawi



Over the past 40 years, Malawi has lost half of its forests and woodlands and those that remain are being depleted through over-extraction and frequent uncontrolled forest fires. This places significant strain on the forests and woodlands. Land degradation is widespread and severe with up to 60% of Malawi's land currently affected by soil erosion and nutrient loss, and the country loses around 29 tons of soil per hectare per year. The loss of forest leads to diminished biological diversity and income from nature, and watersheds degradation. The government estimates show about 2.8% annual average loss of forests, representing 250,000 ha of forest cover.¹³⁴ The direct causes of deforestation include agricultural expansion; human settlement; uncontrolled fires; unsustainable harvesting for energy (charcoal and

firewood) and timber requirements. More specifically, the country is rapidly losing two important elements of watersheds: 13% of tree cover was lost between 2000 and 2021 and soil loss occurred at the rate of 0.90-19.8 tons per hectare per year in 2014.¹³⁵



According to the historical Average Revised Universal Soil Loss (RUSLE), the loss has been most prominent in Chitipa, Karonga, east Rumphu, Nkhata Bay, Ntchisi, east Dowa, Dedza, Ntcheu, Thyolo, Mulanje and

¹³⁴ Malawi Government National Forest Policy (2016). <https://www.dof.gov.mw/storage/app/media/Policies%20and%20Strategies/National%20Forest%20Policy%202016.pdf>

¹³⁵ Vargas, R. and Omuto, C., 2016. Soil Loss Assessment in Malawi. Rome: FAO UNEP and UNDP.

west Zomba districts. Heavy rains have contributed to soil loss and are expected to contribute more under climate change, according to a study based on Soil Loss Estimation for South Africa (SLEMSA) (Department of Land Resources, 2021). Catchment degradation coupled with increases in temperatures, erratic rainfall, and drought has exacerbated loss of biodiversity, increased siltation of water bodies, decrease of water and fluctuation in the lake systems in Malawi which threatens the livelihood of millions of dependent people on fishing and freshwater.¹³⁶

Malawi has made significant efforts in building capacity on biodiversity management. The country is presently implementing its second National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP II) for the period 2015-2025, being a policy framework that guides the country's actions to sustainably manage its biodiversity. It's NBSAPII outlines the status of the biological resources in the country while also providing strategies, targets, and actions to be taken to ensure their sustainable management. Its previous NBSAP experienced headwinds, including slow implementation coupled with uncoordinated and poorly monitored targets and priorities, though it managed to register several milestones and successes, including on promotion of species and habitat restoration programmes.

Since the formulation of the NBSAP in 2006, the country's biodiversity issues have been mainstreamed into its policies, strategies, and plans. For example, at the national level, biodiversity has been integrated into its national development strategies. At the local level, biodiversity has been integrated into District Development Plans, including the Lilongwe City Council. Malawi's Forestry Policy has been reviewed and now integrates issues of biodiversity management, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES). Also, the Climate Change Policy has been developed, promoting activities on REDD+, PES, Biodiversity offset and Clean Development Mechanisms (CDM). Malawi also has a full-fledged regulatory entity on forestry matters, dubbed the Department of Forestry. Housed under the country's Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources, the entity was established in 1942, as the leading agency in the administration of the National Forest Policy and the Forestry Act in the country. In 2018, Malawi joined the global BIOFIN partnership. Through working with this entity, the country identified funding needs of US\$93m from 2020-2025 to meet its subnational and national biodiversity targets as laid out in the action plan. This was part of a broader biodiversity funding plan for the country which included a number of strategic biodiversity-related opportunities and funding needs for Malawi to become a leader in

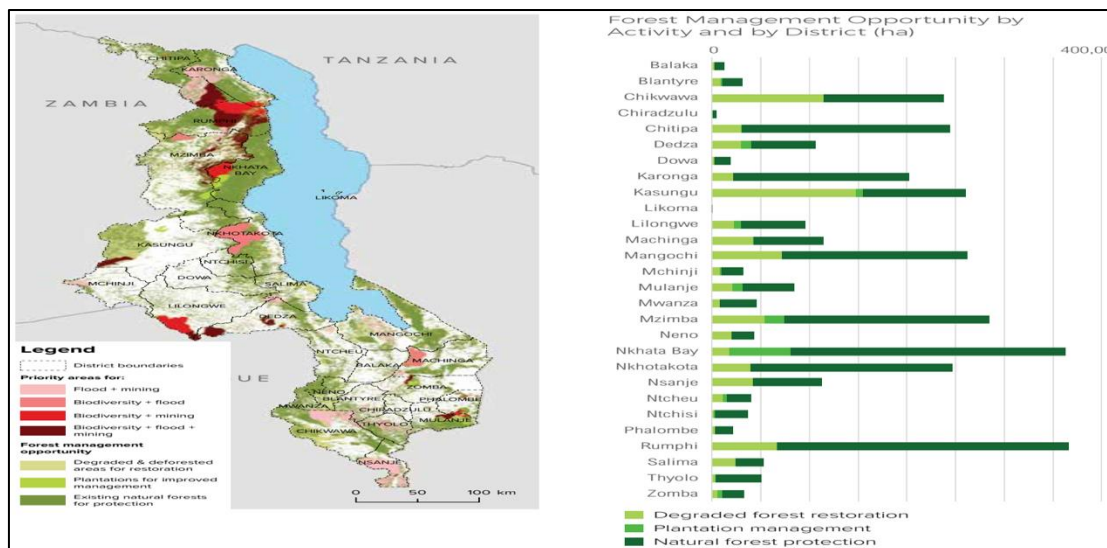
¹³⁶ Government of Malawi and AfDB GEF PIF on sustainable capture fisheries

biodiversity conservation. It is anticipated that the next iteration of

the biodiversity financing plan will be released in the next few years.

Figure 12: Map of opportunity for forest management

Source: National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy of Malawi



3.4.5 POLLUTION AND WASTE MANAGEMENT



Air pollution is a significant environmental and human health challenge in Malawi, placing a heavy burden on the country's public spending and labor productivity due to its negative effects on human health and the environment. The transport sector is the primary contributor to poor ambient air quality, with motorized transport serving as a major source of air pollution in urban areas like Lilongwe.



The 2020 International Energy Agency's report indicates Malawi has an estimated national average access of 13.4% which is far below the list of countries whose electricity access stands below Africa's continental average of close to 42%.

These challenges, however, are mainly geographic, as their incidence and impacts depend on the spatial distribution of economic activities, households, and transport links.

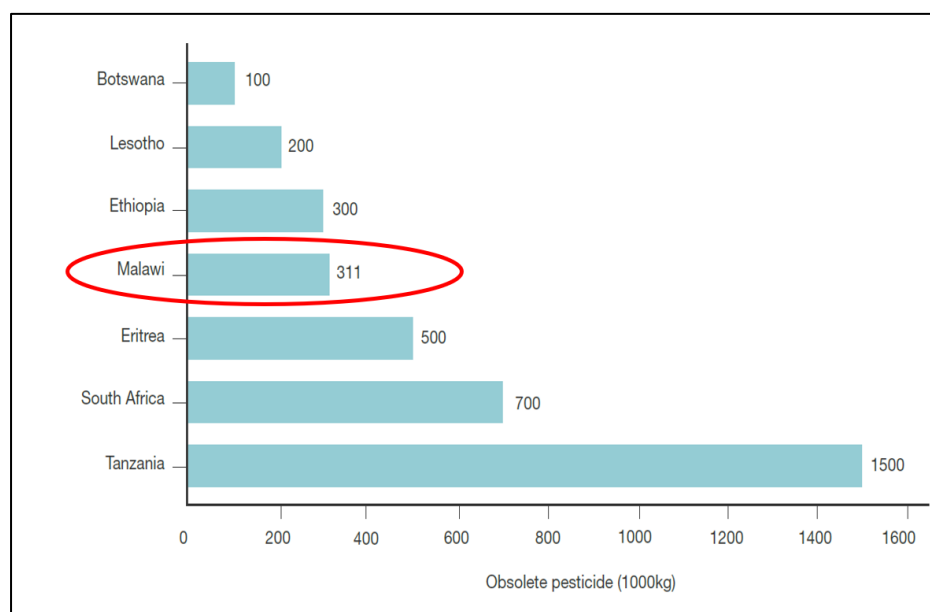
In 2021, the country's rural areas where traditional wood fuel and other forms of biomass energy are the dominant forms of fuels, mean concentration of PM_{2.5} exceeds 30 µg/m³ which surpasses the WHO recommended maximum of 10 µg/m³. These, inevitably, contribute to a continued prevalence of indoor air pollution which continues to negatively impact human health and wellbeing, with disproportionately huge impacts on women and children owing to their social positioning at household levels.

In an effort to boost food production, Malawi has been increasing the use of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. However, this has led to unintended challenges of having to

address rising volumes of pesticides and other agricultural chemicals finding ways into water resources and other ecologically sensitive ecosystems. Most of the growing obsolescence in the country's hazardous agro-chemicals that in turn become hazardous waste are due to its business sector as well as governmental purchase of unsuitable products, poor stock management, inadequate coordination of supply chains and vested commercial interests, among others. Such hazardous waste poses a considerable risk to human health and the environment, in addition to slowing down the country's progress towards SDGs 3, 8, 14 and 15, among others.

Figure 14: Obsolete Pesticide Stocks in Malawi compared to situations in other African Countries

Source: UNEP, 2018



The health of Malawi's environment is a critical foundation for its national development as it is tied to the health and well-being of its people, animals, and plants. It would thus be imperative for the country, in collaboration with its development partners and stakeholders to continually curb the country's susceptibility to impacts of hazardous waste that could not only have immediate impacts on people and environment, but also run the risk of proliferating anti-microbial resistance.¹³⁷ Anti-microbial resistance is identified as a major cause of death around the globe, with the highest burdens in poor countries. It also threatens the health of animals and plants grown for food, with effects on food security, food safety and the environment.

There are opportunities for multi-stakeholder actions in the areas that build on ongoing interventions by the Malawian Government such as its endorsement of the *Global Action Plan on antimicrobial resistance*.¹³⁸ The country is also a signatory to the 2016 *Political declaration of the high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on antimicrobial resistance*. It has also in place a national action plan (NAP) on antimicrobial resistance that incorporates a "One Health" approach for addressing the ensuing challenges.

Additional opportunities include strengthening the country's local mechanisms to accede to and implement the Bamako Convention at the local levels. The Convention is a treaty of African nations prohibiting the import into Africa of any hazardous (including radioactive) waste.

Further actions could focus on enhancing the local capacity of the country's interventions on the rising tide of plastic waste. As urbanization increases, there is a need for stronger momentum toward a robust circular economy. This includes expanding and modernising the existing waste management infrastructural facilities such as those for the collection, transportation, and recycling systems to cope with increasing amounts of waste being generated going into 2030. It would thus be imperative to consider evidence-based policy interventions to stimulate public-private partnerships towards not only managing waste at the country's urban and industrial levels, but also curbing pollution, including in the energy and transportation sectors. This is in addition to creating a fair playing field for the involvement of informal waste pickers, especially for recyclable material as this would also be one way of creating job opportunities at micro-levels.

¹³⁷ UNEP, 2022. Antimicrobial resistance: a global threat. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/emerging-issues/antimicrobial-resistance-global-threat>

¹³⁸ WHO. Global action plan on antimicrobial resistance. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241509763>

3.4.6 INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Malawi's water resources are intricately linked to its national development agenda. The country's combined water and their associated aquatic resources occupy an estimated 20% of landmass¹³⁹ and play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of its populations, in addition to being a key component of its food security, energy, and economic development. These resources are, however, under continuing pressure from local and external drivers of change that include shifting demographics, urbanisation, and climate change.

Most of these factors are surfacing through increased forms of deforestation and uncontrolled bush fires as well as poor land management practices that are often accompanied by soil erosion within and across its boundaries.¹⁴⁰ This is in addition to unsustainable agricultural practices, including conversion of wetlands to farmlands in addition to farming techniques,¹⁴¹ inputs, and irrigation that continue to proliferate pollution of its water resources and aquatic life.

Data as of 2015 shows the country's irrigated total area stands at 104,000 hectares, representing a fourfold increase in size since 1994.¹⁴² Overexploitation of the resources, including through unsustainable extraction of underground water resources¹⁴³ coupled with the adverse impacts of climate change also affect the country's resources' sustainability, including wetlands.

These forms of ecological pressure are evident in the country's aquatic ecosystems that include a periodic drying up of Lake Chilwa – the country's second largest lake located in its southern parts. Key challenges around it include degradation of catchment areas and climate change threatens the survival of multiple species of birds and fish that play considerable socio-economic and ecological roles. Shifting and increasingly unpredictable climatic conditions around the saline wetland lake are continuing to threaten the livelihoods of more than 1.5 million people across the three districts namely, Machinga, Phalombe and Zomba, that depend on it. UNESCO country reports show population

¹³⁹ Malawi's 6th National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020)

<https://www.cbd.int/countries/targets/?country=mw>

¹⁴⁰ Chidammodzi, C., & Muhandiki, V. (2015). Development of indicators for assessment of Lake Malawi Basin in an Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM) framework. *International Journal of the Commons*, 9(1).

¹⁴¹ University of Leiden, PhD Study by Ishmael Kosamu (2017): Sustainable fishing in one of Malawi's biggest wetlands.

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/news/2017/06/sustainable-fishing-in-one-of-malawi%E2%80%99s-biggest-wetlands>

¹⁴² Nielsen, T., Schünemann, F., McNulty, E., Zeller, M., Nkonya, E., Kato, E., ... & Mapemba, L. (2015). The food-energy-water security nexus: Definitions, policies, and methods in an application to Malawi and Mozambique.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2740663

¹⁴³ Mkandawire, T., Mwathunga, E., MacDonald, A. M., Bonsor, H. C., Banda, S., Mleta, P., ... & Lark, R. M. (2020). An analysis of hand pump boreholes functionality in Malawi. *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, Parts A/B/C*, 118, 102897.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1474706519301512>

pressure around the lake is high, with at least 164 people per square kilometers and over 77,000 people living in the wetland itself.¹⁴⁴ During the 2018 dry seasons, Lake Chilwa shrank by close to 60%, forcing most of the dependent fisherfolks to relocate to Lake Malawi to sustain themselves, suggesting the intricate linkages that the country's water resources have on livelihoods and local economy.

Meanwhile, Malawi's policy frameworks for water resources have not evolved at the pace with the evolving water needs and constraints especially the context of extreme weather events. For instance, most of the country's policy frameworks are presently biased towards drought preparedness as compared to flooding preparedness, thus predisposing communities and populations to recurrent and destructive flooding events. These situations halt the country's progress

Water quality and pollution challenges in Malawi represent low hanging opportunities for transformation.



¹⁴⁴ UNESCO Country Reports on World Heritage Convention:
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5604/>

for multiple aspects of SDG 6 on water, especially the integrated water resources management targets, which mandates countries to actualise it by 2030, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate. This in turn affects the country's progress on water security and fulfillment of human rights to water.

UNICEF (2020) country reports¹⁴⁵ indicate that more than 4 million people in Malawi lack access to clean and safe water for their domestic needs. As a result, they must walk further to fetch water, increasing their risk of experiencing violence and harassment. In terms of the enabling environment, institutions and participation, management instruments, and financing for integrated water resources management, Malawi had an overall performance rate of 55% compared to sub-Saharan region's average of 46%.

Relevant interventions include:

- Putting in place mechanisms to foster efficient use of water resources by households, industry, and agriculture.
- Promoting water-saving and reuse, water-efficient technologies in all sectors, while also supporting ecosystem-based measures.
- Boost measures for confronting water quantity issues, such as supporting hazards prevention and climate-change

¹⁴⁵ UNICEF (2020). Water, sanitation and hygiene – Malawi: Safe water for every child
<https://www.unicef.org/malawi/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

adaptation measures based on an ecosystem restoration approach, while also considering any related climate-resilience and cross-border issues.

- Among them are eco-friendly water storage infrastructure, and smart technologies to increase resource efficiency in the water sector.

As the water sector continues to be affected by a continuing decline in the wider state of environment, Malawi has an opportunity to prioritize targeted investments in integrated water management approaches. The strategies should take into account the ecosystems on which the sustainability of water availability and supply are anchored on. This includes wide-ranging policy and regulatory interventions for both the surface and underground freshwater resources, as well as smart and affordable water harvesting systems in its urban and rural areas, all of which should be compatible with current and anticipated climatic scenarios and other environmental perturbations.

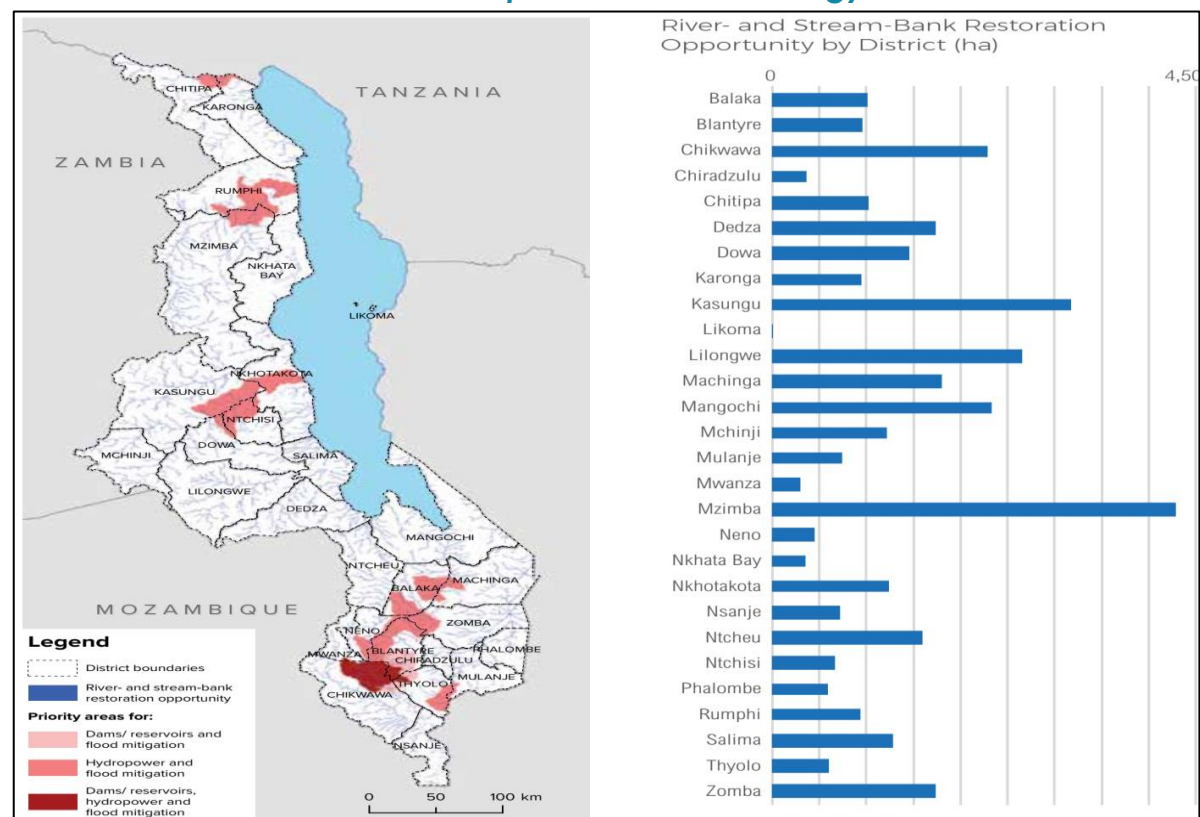
Moreover, there is an essential need to support multi-stakeholder actions towards improving cooperation and mutual understanding among the Lake Malawi basin countries (Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania) through strengthening their capacities for developing regulation for the sustainable management of the transboundary water resources while addressing issues of pollution and

integrated water management. Cooperation within the Lake basin countries is imperative to advance vulnerability assessments and adaptation actions related to climate change and water-related projects around the catchments of the lake. This is in addition to strengthening local-level actions for enhancing the resilience of water supply infrastructure to extreme weather events both in the urban and rural parts of the country. These interventions could complement existing national policies on Malawi's water resources management. The country's National Water Policy (2007) and legislation (2013), for example, acknowledge increasing frequency of extreme weather events, specifically floods and droughts as well as associated water access challenges. This is in addition to recognising temporal and spatial variations in the country's availability of potable water. In response, the policy documents include provisions aimed at addressing these challenges, including associated water access challenges. Key strategies include catchment management, infrastructure water development e.g., community and multipurpose dams to regulate variable water flows and flood control and capacity building in the water sector. Additionally, Malawi is an active participant in the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) through its Ministry of Water and Sanitation. This regional ministerial forum was established in 2002 to promote cooperation, security, social and economic development and poverty eradication among member states through the effective

management of Africa's water resources and provision of water supply services.

Figure 15: Map of opportunity for river-and stream-bank restoration

Source: National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy of Malawi



3.4.7 EFFORTS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The government recognises the challenges climate change and environmental degradation pose and has formulated various policy and legal instruments: the National Climate Change Management Policy, the National Environmental Policy, the Environmental Management Act, 2017, the National Resilience Strategy, the National Disaster Risk Management Policy, National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy, National Adaptation Planning

framework and other policy and legal instruments actions. 'Environmental Sustainability' is one of the seven enablers in Malawi 2063 and strengthening climate and disaster resilience is central to the attainment of all three pillars.

Under the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC, 2021), Malawi has revised the sectoral mitigation and adaptation targets for the next 15 to 20 years. The NDC

demonstrates the commitment of the Malawi Government to meet its obligations towards addressing the challenges of climate change, through both mitigation and adaptation measures. The efforts to address environmental degradation include the National Forestry and Landscape Restoration strategy and

plans to reverse degradation and deforestation. Malawi has also made renewed commitment under the AFRI 100 initiative to restore 4.5 million hectares of land. In line with this thrust, a key priority in Malawi is addressing the energy crisis which is a major driver in the depletion of forestry resources.

3.4.8 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT FINANCING

Information regarding climate change and environment financing in Malawi is scarce. Development partners provide the bulk of the finance for disaster response, climate change and environment of which about 50% is through off-budget support. To enhance harmonisation of aid with the national budget system in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008), the government has intensified efforts to mobilise climate change and environment financing through the

National Climate Change Investment Plan (CCIP). From 2013, CCIP has sought a total Climate Change Investment of US\$954.5 million over a six-year period under the four key priority areas namely, Adaptation Investments; Mitigation Investments; Research, Technology Development and Transfer; and Capacity Development Investments. Five sources were targeted for investments: government, development partners, civil society, private sector, carbon trading.

A National Climate Change Fund (NCCF) has been established to mobilise and progressively upscale climate finance to manage the climate risks in Malawi. A study on domestic sources of climate finance was also conducted to identify potential sources of climate finance leading to institutionalisation of the carbon levy (MK500 per litre of fuel) from 2020. However, the programming of the mobilised funds for climate change initiatives and allocation to the NCCF remains unclear. Additionally, there are ongoing efforts to develop a climate information management system to track climate finance. A Climate Public Expenditure and Investment Review (CPEIR) undertaken in 2018 shows that climate spending jumped dramatically from 2-5% before 2013/14 and has remained at between 9% and 12% of total public expenditure. However, this is largely attributed to large projects in agriculture and irrigation such as spending on the Agriculture Sector Wide Approach.

The Government of Malawi is leading efforts to establish a robust framework for carbon trading. A key part of this effort is the development of an Article 6 framework for international carbon market engagement, informed by a needs assessment. The framework is currently undergoing validation, and

ministerial intervention is being sought to expedite its approval. The government is also in the process of quantifying national carbon stocks, developing a carbon registry, and establishing an Article 6 office, which will manage all carbon trading transactions and related adjustments.

3.5 GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS

3.5.1.1 Developments in election institutions and electoral reforms

Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) in line with its constitutional mandate has embarked on the preparation for the 2025 Presidential, Parliamentary and local government elections. MEC has put in place measures that will allow it to implement key lessons learnt from the 2019-2020 elections which included a more efficient voter registration exercise, sustained stakeholder engagements, improved strategic and crisis communication, securing of sufficient funding from Government of Malawi, more coordinated and efficient election logistics/operations, and strengthened civic and voter education activities.

A new electoral law took, effective from June 2023 has consolidated the framework for presidential, parliamentary, and local elections and established procedures for holding a runoff presidential poll in the event that no candidate secured a first-round majority. These legal reforms were informed by the consequential orders and directives made by the court¹⁴⁶ and the Report of the Law Commission on the Review of the Electoral Laws, 2017. Some of the significant changes include change in the electoral system, from a simple majoritarian, or first-past-the-post (FPTP) system to a two round system where the winner must receive over 50

per cent of the vote, fixing the composition of MEC membership and setting a minimum qualification of Bachelor's degree for members of MEC, shifting of the polling date from the month of May to September of the fifth year after elections and making it a public holiday, and reducing the voting time to start from 6 am and closing at 4 pm instead of 6pm. Progress has also been made to establish an operational framework. Currently, MEC is implementing the Strategic Plan 2023-2028, 2025 General Elections Operational Plan together with a publicized Elections Cycle Calendar. This progress places MEC on a solid footing to best prepare for the scheduled September 2025 general elections in an efficient, effective and transparent manner. While significant progress has been made in establishing a legal and operational framework for the conduct of free, fair, and peaceful elections, building on the foundations laid during the 2019-2020 electoral cycle, challenges remain.

There is an urgent need for a comprehensive, well-coordinated and inclusive civic voter education (CVE) to ensure that eligible voters possess the necessary legally protected registration documents issued by the

¹⁴⁶ Constitutional Reference No. 1 of 2019: Dr. Saulosi Klaus Chilima and Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera v. Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika & the Electoral Commission; and MSCA Constitutional Appeal No. 1 of 2020: Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika & the Electoral

Commission v. Dr. Saulosi Klaus Chilima and Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera; and, the Report of the Law Commission on the Review of the Electoral Laws, 2017

National Registration Bureau (NRB) to register as a voter.¹⁴⁷ The recent electoral law reforms of 2023, now require the use of National ID as the only valid proof of voter eligibility for registration.¹⁴⁸ Concerns have been raised by opposition political parties¹⁴⁹ and other national actors¹⁵⁰ that this legal requirement will deter most Malawians from voting. The lack of accurate information regarding voter registration requirements presents a risk of voter disenfranchisement. While the Electoral body has clarified the issue of voter eligibility proof, controversy continues around the registration requirements.

The introduction of Elections Management Device (EMD) for Voter Registration, Candidates Registration and Management and management of Result Transmission has also raised concerns with national actors about the potential and perceived misuse of the technology. To test the efficiency of the devices, a pilot voter registration was conducted and revealed some inefficiencies which MEC is working on addressing. To counter disinformation and build understanding of the electoral stakeholders of how EMD device functions, MEC held various demonstrations sessions across the country. However, much remains in

terms of ensuring that concerned electoral stakeholders have the capacities, tools to observe the new technology and technical expertise to bring well-founded complaints or conversely for MEC to respond to these complaints. It would be extremely important that MEC communicate as much information as possible to all stakeholders about the technology in use at all stages of the election. It would also be essential that Judiciary has a solid understanding of the election technology in use as Courts will have a greater role to play in managing disputes related to the new technology, should it arise.

While some progress has been made in ensuring female representation at all levels, more work is needed. For example, women representation in Cabinet is at 40% which complies with the 60:40 quota espoused in Section 11 of 2013 Gender Equality Act. Additionally, for public appointments, there have been various appointments wherein women have taken leadership positions. These include the Speaker of Parliament, the Ombudsman, Anti-Corruption Bureau Director General, the Secretary to the Office of the President and Cabinet, and the Inspector General of Police, among others.

¹⁴⁷ Voter registration is planned for rollout in three phases starting from October to December 2024.

¹⁴⁸ Section 4 (12) of the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government Act states that a person who is eligible to be registered as a voter in an election shall, as proof of eligibility, present in person to a registration

officer, proof of his or her national registration issued by National Registration Bureau (NRB).

¹⁴⁹ The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), United Democratic Front (UDF), Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), United Transformation Movement (UTM).

¹⁵⁰ Malawi Law Society as an example.

3.5.1.2 Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

Malawi is generally a peaceful country and has had stable governments since independence in 1964. However, deep-seated social, economic, and political inequalities, tensions, and grievances continue to persist, occasionally leading to conflict and violent incidents, particularly during elections. The 2019 elections and the court processes that led to the nullification of the presidential election have exposed Malawi's vulnerability to socio-economic, political, and religious risks and threats. The social and political violence, conflicts/tensions that resulted from the Civil Society led demonstrations across the country, and the level of violence experienced before the Fresh Presidential Election held on 23 June 2020 have been unprecedented in Malawi's history.

The upcoming 2025 tripartite elections present a particular risk of political and electoral violence. They will take place in a highly competitive, and increasingly polarised political environment with strong regional/ethnic undertones. In addition, the current macro-economic and social context – with approximately 40% of the population in a state of severe food insecurity and spiralling inflation – creates a highly volatile socioeconomic environment.

The pre-election period has already been marked by a mix of politically motivated tensions and mistrust, including of key electoral institutions, notably the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) and the National Registration Bureau (NRB). Over the past two years, the pressure on these two institutions has continued to increase, including in public meetings, press conferences and numerous formal correspondences from opposition parties and other stakeholders on perceived politicization. Opposition political parties have called for resignation of the head of the MEC Commission, Senior Secretariat Staff on the allegations that they are pro-government. Allegations and public criticism of the national ID registration process¹⁵¹ represents a concern for the public confidence of the electoral process. Numerous concerns have been raised around the security of Electoral Management Device (EMD) that is being rolled out for the 2025 election. There has been growing calls to suspend the ongoing voter registration process.¹⁵²



¹⁵¹ The National ID has been designated as the unique form of identification for voters to register. Despite approximately 98% of Malawians over the age of 16 having been registered there has been strong push back by a number of political parties on the work of

NRB and the decision to use the National ID as the only form of identification.

¹⁵² <https://www.247malawi.com/opposition-parties-demand-suspension-of-election-registration-process/>

In 2024, major political parties held conventions to elect leaders for the 2025 tripartite elections. Although the party conventions were mostly violence-free, there were reported incidents of harassment, intimidation, and hate speech. During these elective conventions, some political parties, including the leaders of the two largest political parties and CSOs expressed concerns of the use of handouts¹⁵³ to influence party voters, thereby creating unfair playing field amongst contesting candidates. The rules governing candidate selection within parties are less institutionalized compared to the national election rules, which are constitutionally protected. Internal democracies within political parties remain weak. The absence of conflict/dispute resolution mechanisms and structures within parties, has also made it difficult for political parties in general to manage disputes over leadership succession effectively. The governing Tense Alliances has now fragmented on the heavy weight of intra and inter-party contradictions.

The phenomenon of no-go zones, where certain areas are designated as off-limits for specific political groups to campaign, is not new in Malawi's political landscape. However, a recent trend observed is that certain major political parties are designating the whole region, considered their stronghold, a no-go zone for political

opponents. In contrast to previous electoral cycles, the issues of no-go-areas were mainly limited to the community level and certain chiefdoms. Traditional leaders (chiefs) have also come under criticism for being partisan when it comes to availing political space such as venues for political meetings/ rallies. This was particularly raised as an issue of concern in Reflective Dialogues held by political parties at National and Regional Levels.

The political unease was further exacerbated by the untimely death of the late Vice President in June 2024, following a plane crash that sparked widespread calls for accountability and transparency in the investigation. Both the German investigation and the State Commission of Inquiry are yet to pronounce definitively on the cause of the crash. Whatever final decisions both investigations pronounce, there is likely to be some level of disaffection that could further polarize the political environment. All these point to the fact that there remain longstanding, unaddressed socio-economic and political grievances, that could derail Malawi's efforts at national cohesion and national healing. For this reason, the UN, is focusing attention on supporting the full implementation of Malawi's National Peace Architecture (NPA) and the National Peace Policy (NPP).

¹⁵³ Section 41 (1) of the Political Parties Act provides that a candidate, political party or body or any person contesting or intending to contest in an election under this Act, shall not at any time issue a handout. The Act

further states that parties or person contravening the law will be liable to a fine of K10 million or K5 million or in default serve a five-year jail term

Since 2017, Malawi has made significant progress in developing and operationalizing its National Peace Architecture. The country has formulated a National Peace Policy (2017) and enacted the Peace and Unity Act (2022). The Act paved way for the establishment of the Malawi Peace and Unity Commission (MPUC), and its decentralized entities,¹⁵⁴ as fundamental structures that will foster collaborative partnerships for peacebuilding and conflict transformation across the government, civil society, and different actors at national and district level to sustain peace in Malawi. Eight Commissioners were appointed by the President in late 2023, almost one year after the Peace and Unity Act's enactment.¹⁵⁵ However, the Commission is still in its early stages of establishment and operationalization, with only one full-time coordinator to manage the Secretariat. The Director General and the remaining staff of the Secretariat remain to be recruited. Funding by government was only provided to MPUC in May 2024 to kick start its operation.¹⁵⁶ There is an initial level of goodwill towards them amongst various stakeholders. The degree of trust and competency varies amongst members of MPUC and DPUCs. At the district level, at the time of writing, ten DPUCs¹⁵⁷ out of twenty-eight have

been established. With the country heading into elections in 2025, the pressure is now mounting on MPUC to get up to speed, prove its effectiveness quickly and establish its long-term role and relevance in maintaining peace in the country.

As MPUC establishes itself, existing components of the peacebuilding ecosystem will continue some of the critical work as the political activities focus on elections. It is important to note that, not all potential areas of conflict are in the political arena. Some of the key issues outlined in the National Peace Architecture Document include political intolerance, political patronage, lack of intra-party democracy, electoral malpractices, regionalism/tribalism, political and economic opportunities for women and youth, land issues, extractive industries, socio-economic and development issues, civil liberties and political rights, cultural and religious diversity, and traditional leadership.¹⁵⁸ It is for this reason that a recommendation was made for the UN System to support a MPUC multistakeholder dialogue of the peacebuilding ecosystem to clarify roles and mandates and areas of cooperation.

¹⁵⁴ The Act establishes Twenty-eight (28) District Peace and Unity Committees (DPUC) and one hundred and forty (140) Area Peace and Unity Committees (APUCs) and its secretariat.

¹⁵⁵ Two representatives each from: faith based, traditional leaders, business community, persons with disability, youth, CSOs.

¹⁵⁶ See: [Malawi Peace and Unity Commission starts its activities in the country with a K500 million budget allocation - Malawi Nyasa Times - News from Malawi about Malawi](#)

¹⁵⁷ Through the UN Peacebuilding Fund and SDG-AF funded Projects, the UN, supported by its development partners, established DPUCs in Karonga, Nkhatabay, Kasungu, Salima, Mangochi, Mulanje, Machinga, Thyolo, Nsanje, Nkhosakota. OXFAM in 2024, is supporting the establishment of three more DPUCs.

¹⁵⁸ Government of the Republic of Malawi Office of the President and Cabinet: DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL PEACE ARCHITECTURE FOR MALAWI September 2013

To ensure that MPUC, DPUCs, APUCs perform their role effectively and efficiently, sufficient budget needs to be provided to the Commission to undertake its work, political independence and neutrality of the commission, its members and staff must be ensured, while adequate investments in skills, knowledge, learning from other established bodies with similar functions must be facilitated. Continuous engagement and dialogue with the CSOs are crucial to dispel the fears that these new entities will make the existing organisations engaged in conflict prevention and peacebuilding redundant. Building strategic partnerships based on shared values and common goals will enhance coordination and maximize resources. Targeted programmatic and financial investments must also be made to support youth and women led peace initiatives at the national and local levels. Additionally, Malawi's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security 2021 – 2025 and the National Peacebuilding Policy 2017 – 2024 are undergoing review and an updated policy and plan will be available in the near future. A draft National Action Plan for Youth Peace and Security has been developed and is currently being finalized. These policy frameworks, along with Peace and Unity Act of 2022, are crucial for systematically coordinating efforts for sustainable peace, unity and ensuring meaningful involvement of women and youth in conflict prevention, peace processes and structures in Malawi.



The appointment of the country's first Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) presents a significant opportunity to address long standing concerns related to transparency, fairness, accountability throughout the electoral process. The appointment comes almost six years after the Political Parties Act of 2018 was enacted into law. The ORPP, under the law, is the fulcrum for transparency on political party funding and the legally mandated authority to enforce financial reporting and disclosures by political parties and designated office for public access to records on political party financing. While the establishment of the Office marks a significant milestone, the pressure is now mounting for the quick establishment and operationalization of the Office. It's therefore critical to ensure that the Office receives sufficient resources for its operationalization, including the development of relevant regulations in line with the Act. Massive civic education efforts will be required for political parties and citizens ahead of 2025 elections. In particular, political parties will need to understand their reporting obligations under the Act and citizens, to understand the roles and responsibilities of political parties.

3.5.1.3 Civil Society and Civil Unrest

The risk of civil protests is heightened by a poor economic outlook, marked by high inflation and rising living costs, a foreign exchange shortage leading to fuel scarcity, exchange rate instability, and widespread perceptions of public corruption and a lack of political will to combat it. Dissatisfaction among citizens has already caused several incidents of protests across the country, and it seemingly intensified due to the above challenges caused by unexpected global and national crises. As the country's economy continues to struggle to grow, this will leave the government less able to address social discontent, with unrest more likely to spark business disruption and trigger repressive state responses.

The 2024 elections security needs assessment and the crime and violence hotspot mapping report reveal that violence in Malawi has taken various forms over the years, including domestic violence, political violence, and crime-related violence. The country has a history of political instability, particularly during elections, which exacerbates existing social issues and leads to violent confrontations. Additionally, social issues such as poverty, unemployment, and gender inequality contribute to violence. Violence often spikes during election campaigns, particularly in areas with high political tensions.

The 2019 elections saw significant unrest, including protests and clashes between rival political factions due to political polarisation, lack of trust in electoral processes, and the role of youth in political violence. As the political space is shaping up towards the 2025 elections, similar conflict drivers are already playing out.

According to an Afro-Barometer survey results released in March 2024, nearly nine out of **10 Malawians (89%)** say the country is heading “in the wrong direction,” a 39-percentage-point increase since 2012. The same survey points out that a large majority of citizens offer negative assessments of economic conditions: 85% describe the country's economic situation as “fairly bad” or “very bad,” and 74% say the same about their personal living conditions. Looking ahead, Malawians are pessimistic about the country's economy: Only 16% think things will get better in 12 months' time, while 63% expect them to get worse.

A UNDP supported spatial analysis of the crime and violence hotspot mapping carried out this year also demonstrated a correlation between murder hotspot districts and protest/violence-prone areas across Malawi. The report found that Mzimba, Dowa, Lilongwe, Zomba, Mulanje, Blantyre, and Chikwawa districts are identified as hotspots for both Murder and Violence as it recorded 82-471 murder cases between 2021-2023. Similarly, Mzimba, Kasungu, Dowa, Lilongwe, Mangochi, Zomba, Mulanje,

Blantyre, and Chikwawa districts are identified as hotspots for both Robbery and Violence/Protests as they recorded high robberies and violence between 107-1984 cases. Further, GBV remains a significant issue, with high rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and harmful traditional practices like child marriage due to gender inequality and cultural norms. Mzimba, Kasungu, Dowa, Lilongwe, Mangochi, Zomba, Mulanje, Blantyre, and Chikwawa districts are identified as hotspots for both Rape and Violence/Protests as they scored 18-139 cases in a spatial analysis from 2021 to 2023. The Northern Region- Mzuzu, Mzimba, and Karonga scored high in the reports of violence related

to land disputes and traditional leadership conflicts due to land scarcity, traditional rivalries, and lack of access to justice.

With a large proportion of the population being youthful, there are increasing instances of violence among young people, often related to gang activities and drug abuse due to unemployment, lack of recreational facilities, and social disintegration. Understanding this linkage is crucial when engaging and partnering with young people in a meaningful way to understand, address and promote their priorities in the peace and security context.

3.5.2 KEY LEVERAGE IN THE GOVERNANCE RACE

3.5.2.1 Status of Governance Structures – Legislature, Executive and Judiciary

The distinct status of the three branches of government – the Executive, the National Assembly (Legislature), and the Judiciary – is constitutionally entrenched in sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Constitution. The specification and allocation of responsibilities throughout the Constitution confirms the separation of powers and horizontal accountability between these three branches. However, the governance system in Malawi is singularly presidential and confers wide discretionary powers upon the President.¹⁵⁹ The level of trust in democratic institutions varies. For

example, among the three branches of government, the Judiciary scores highest in terms of public trust (63%) while the Executive scores lowest (28%). The National Assembly scores somewhere in between.¹⁶⁰ The Judiciary in Malawi is guaranteed independence through several provisions in the Constitution, including Section 103. Generally, the Judiciary has been willing to review Executive decisions for compliance with the Constitution and other laws. In appropriate instances, the Judiciary has been able to overturn government actions for contravening the

¹⁵⁹ David Bilchitz, David Landau, eds. *The evolution of the separation of powers in the global south and global north*. (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2018), 206–235

¹⁶⁰ Malawi Country Report 2022 - BTI Transformation Index; <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MWI>

Constitution or other applicable laws.¹⁶¹ However, there have been recent calls for the accountability of the Judiciary underpinned by claims of corruption. The 2024 Afrobarometer results on the Judiciary and rule of law show no change in the perception of corruption in the judiciary, which remained at 30% from 2019 to 2024.

Three bills have been drafted and approved by the Cabinet Committee as part of judicial reforms including: Judicial Service Administration Bill, Constitution (Amendment) Bill and the Courts Act (Amendment) Bill. There is a need to expedite the consideration and enactment of these bills.

3.5.2.2 Decentralisation

Since 1998, Malawi has opted a one-tier decentralised system of government with Local Government Authorities (LGAs) constituting the sub-national tier. LGAs are divided into urban councils (4), municipal councils (2) and district councils (28) with different service delivery responsibilities across the 18 devolved sectors. Decentralisation is entrenched in the country's Constitution (Chapter XIV) and regulated through the Local Government Act and the National Decentralisation Policy.

The implementation of the Local Government Act and of the National Decentralisation Policy in Malawi is meant to strengthen local governments' capacity to deliver social and economic services more efficiently and consolidate democracy through the following.

Hence, the aim of fiscal decentralization is to ensure that LGAs have access to adequate and predictable resources to deliver the mandated services (UNICEF, 2021).

- Devolving administration and political authority to the district level
- Integrating governmental agencies at the district and local levels into one administrative unit through the process of institutional integration
- Workforce absorption
- Composite budgeting and provision of funds for the decentralised services
- Diverting the centre of implementation responsibilities and transfer these to the districts

¹⁶¹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/malawi/freedom-world/2022>

The review of the policy and legal framework of decentralization (with support from UNICEF and USAID over the period 2020-2022) is part of a wider reform of public administration and an attempt to respond to the several challenges and shortcomings that the country's decentralised systems faced since the start of the process in 1998. These challenges have been thoroughly explored by several encompassing studies including supported by the UN, particularly fiscal, political and administrative decentralization areas. Considerable progress for the review of both the Local Government Act (1998) and Decentralization Policy (1998) has been made. The draft Bill awaits to be presented before the Cabinet, while Policy was launched on 02 October 2024.



In terms of expenditure, Malawi's decentralisation process remains incomplete. Several sectors continue to have line ministries retaining competences that are supposed to be devolved according to the sector

devolution plans, particularly those that are linked to significant budgets. Asset devolution has also not happened. In parallel, the devolution of functions and responsibilities has not been informed by cost and financing considerations; most particularly, in Malawi finance does not follow function and many devolved competencies are not properly funded. A UNICEF costing study estimated that the overall financing gap for devolved social sector functions and agriculture is 78%. In other terms, LGAs receive only about between a fifth and a quarter of the funds necessary to carry out their service delivery obligations. This situation also reveals a strong dependency of district councils (rural LGAs) from the fiscal transfers from the center, with about 80% of their budget funded by the center, as opposed to the 10% received by the urban LGAs. The dependency is linked to the constrained revenue generating capacity of most district councils as compared to that of the urban councils. This not only reduces the fiscal space of the district councils as well as their capacity to fund their district development plans, but also their flexibility in dealing with the persistent liquidity issues faced by the central level, which encourages negative coping mechanisms (bank overdrafts, etc.).

Inter-governmental fiscal transfers to local councils have consistently fallen short of the benchmark set in the decentralisation law of 5% of net revenues.¹⁶² While the government has a formula for fiscal transfers to local councils, the government often does not adhere to the allocation formulas, and this leads to huge unequal per capita allocations. The inequitable allocation in per capita fiscal transfers is likely to exacerbate inequalities. Also, due to the amount of development-partner support that is provided off-budget, little is known about the volume or sectoral breakdown of funds that are flowing to specific districts 'out of budget.' Aggregate data is not available to compare the size and effects of these programmes, but anecdotal evidence suggests that there are wide variations across districts.

The Government has increased the allocations for intergovernmental fiscal transfers (IGFTs) to LGAs from MK646 billion in 2023/24 to MK738.8 billion in 2024/25. Although this translates to a 14% increase in nominal terms, it marks a 14% decrease in real terms considering the average inflation of over 20%. Additionally, the share of the National Budget allocated to LGAs has declined from 16.7% in 2023/24 to 12.4% in 2024/25. As a percentage of GDP, the share reduced to 3.9% from 4.3% in 2023/24. The substantial reduction in the share of IGFTs to TGE is

due to the significant increase in foreign-financed development budgets (DI) which are largely centrally managed. Planning processes for districts are elaborate and costly, requiring the drafting of Village Action Plans to inform the drafting of each District Development Plan. This is despite villages not being devolved with any competence and thus no human resources and funding to carry out the activities listed in their action plans. Human resources capacity and availability in LGAs are also usually low and extremely unevenly distributed, with several key positions not filled in district councils and a constant capacity drain from the periphery to the center (UNICEF, 2022). Recently, the Guidebook on Local Government System in Malawi has been updated, embracing a gender approach. Gender is now articulated in the village action plans and district development plans that were developed recently. The decentralisation policy and guidebook specifically address males' and females' practical and strategic gender needs in the local government structures.¹⁶³ The combination of incomplete functional decentralisation and lack of adequate financing and capacity in LGAs significantly thwarts the service delivery capacity of most districts. This has negative repercussions on the capacity of Malawi to realise its development objectives as well as the SDGs, given

¹⁶² World Bank, Malawi-Systematic Country Diagnostic: *Breaking the Cycle of Low Growth and Slow Poverty Reduction*, [https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31131/malawi-scd-final-board-12-7-2018-](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31131/malawi-scd-final-board-12-7-2018-12122018-636804216425880639.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

[12122018-636804216425880639.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31131/malawi-scd-final-board-12-7-2018-12122018-636804216425880639.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

¹⁶³ Malawi National Human Development Report, 2021. See further Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7* (2015) paras 26-27.

the extent of decentralisation in key sectors such as health and education.

Despite these challenges, recent policy decisions have shown strong support for decentralization, opening opportunities to enhance service delivery for citizens. These reforms have been largely driven by the need to address widespread public dissatisfaction with service quality and to manage challenges posed by political fragmentation. Key initiatives include the introduction of the Performance Based Grant to the 28 rural District Councils in 2021 (supplementing the District Development Fund) based on performance, as evaluated through the Local Authority Performance Assessment (LAPA) (World Bank MEM, 2022).

Additionally, the first legislative and regulatory reviews of the Local Government Act and the National Decentralization Policy in over 20 years signal a renewed commitment to realizing the benefits of decentralization. However, for decentralization to deepen meaningfully, the cycle of low trust, limited investment, and limited accountability in local governments must be addressed (World Bank MEM, 2022). Historically, concerns about local government capacity have justified centralizing funds or strictly earmarking them through conditional transfers. This approach often reduces local governments to mere implementers of central policies, rather than autonomous governing bodies. Breaking this cycle is crucial to empower local governments as genuine agents of governance for quality and equitable service delivery.

3.5.2.3 Participation

The freedoms of association and assembly are constitutionally guaranteed in Malawi, allowing individuals, civil society organisations and political parties freedom to associate and organise meetings and public assemblies. According to an Afrobarometer survey conducted between December 2019 and January 2020, about 62% of Malawians reported feeling somewhat or completely free to express their opinions.

However, UN treaty bodies have consistently raised reports of journalists and human rights defenders being harassed and/or arrested by police. In 2022, the Committee Against Torture noted “allegations of threats, arrests, beatings, harassment and intimidations against human rights defenders, civil society activists and journalists in the course of their work, including exercising their right to peaceful assembly or reporting on issues of public interest.

It also regrets the lack of information on investigations and prosecutions, including their outcome, and on any protective measures adopted in this regard." For children, the children's parliament provides the most acknowledged structure for participation in national level governance, while the district level structure requires further strengthening and activation.



During the 2019 Tripartite Elections, 54% of voters were women and 74% were youth (under 35).

Malawian citizens generally face few barriers to participating in electoral processes, except for expatriates residing abroad. Provisions are in place to facilitate voting for persons with physical disabilities, including those with albinism. Nonetheless, more could be done to encourage regular and meaningful interface between civil society and State or parastatal organisations and even between parliamentarians and their constituencies. There is often insufficient consultation between these entities when discussing local or national priorities and the formulation of policies and legislation. Apart from limited consultations, there is a lack of mechanisms for providing feedback on performance duty bearers and

government. Creating more opportunities for such an interface would strengthen the social contract. Representation of women in Parliament also remains low, standing at 21% and for local government as low as 14%, as of 2019 when the last parliamentary and local government elections were held.

An encouraging feature is that during the 2019 elections, women's participation increased from 217 candidates in 2014 to 309 candidates for the Parliamentary Elections and from 417 candidates in 2014 to 659 for the local government elections. For the 2025 tri-partite elections, the MEC has announced plans to discount 50% of nomination fees for women candidates to promote inclusivity.¹⁶⁴ In the case of children, low update of birth registration further affects their inclusion in consultation processes especially at districts level. While registration services are available for children of all ages in the district, low awareness of the importance of registration affects the uptake of the service. In general, participation is also affected by the lack of mechanisms for providing feedback on performance duty bearers and government.

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.nyasatimes.com/malawi-electoral-commission-to-implement-50-discount-on-nomination-fees-for-female-aspirants/>

3.5.2.4 Constitutional Bodies and Oversight and Human Right Institutions

a. Anti-Corruption Bureau (ABC)



The current administration made strong campaign promises to combat corruption including commitments to empowering the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ABC) through operational budget increases. While the ABC under its previous director made progress in investigating and charging highly placed business persons and politicians to court for corruption, many of these cases dragged on for long periods or were withdrawn. The case against the late vice president is a case in point. Consequently, attempts were made to arrest the former director general over leaked audio recordings. Subsequently, her tenure was not renewed. While Malawi has a reasonably robust legal framework for fighting corruption the commitment of the government to tackle corruption is weak. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) that ranks 180 nations and territories worldwide according to their perceived levels of public sector corruption showed an increase in the CPI for Malawi from 30 in 2020 to 35 in 2021 and a subsequent decline to 34 in 2022 and 2023.

The results are graded on a scale of 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (very clean) (exceptionally clean). The November 2024 Afrobarometer results also show that 53% of the public think that officials who commit crimes go unpunished and 64% think that powerful people such as political leaders, government officials and other powerful people get too lenient punishment when convicted of crime.

With a score of **34**, Malawi ranks among two-thirds of the 180 countries with scores below 50, indicating significant corruption challenges. According to Transparency International's 2023 Global Corruption Barometer, 66% of the Malawians surveyed thought that the government is doing a poor job of fighting corruption. In October 2020, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development stated that Malawi loses 5% of its total annual wealth to illicit financial flows. In the 2019 financial year alone, Malawi is estimated to have lost over half a billion dollars to corruption, whereas an assessment by the country's Financial Intelligence Agency revealed that Malawi lost approximately \$7.4 million to illegal foreign exchange externalisation over an 11-month period. The key to the country making significant strides in this area pertain to certain legislative weaknesses; a scarcity of operational resources for the main corruption fighting agencies; a lack of data collection and digitized processes that

would facilitate the monitoring and processing of financial crimes and occasionally weak independence of parastatals and judicial instances in undertaking their duties.

b. Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC)

The Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC) is empowered by the Constitution and the Human Rights Commission Act (1998) to promote and protect human rights. It also has legislative responsibilities under the Gender Equality Act (2013) and the Access to Information Act (2020). However, the Commission has consistently lacked sufficient funds and capacity to effectively meet its mandate.

While the government has committed to adequately fund the Commission, the commitments have remained political rhetoric with MHRC failing to fully fulfill its mandate. Notwithstanding its resource constraints, the MHRC maintained a status A accreditation awarded by the United Nations affiliated Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in June 2024. This recognises its full compliance with the Paris Principles, signaling its independence and ability to address human rights issues.

c. National Mechanism on Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF)

Malawi has yet to establish a fully functional National Mechanism on Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF). An NMRF institutionalizes existing inter-ministerial coordination structures or processes around human rights reporting, moving away from ad hoc to sustainable arrangements which facilitate implementation of recommendations addressed to States. NMRFs coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with the international and regional human rights mechanisms (including Treaty Bodies, the Universal Periodic Review and Special Procedures). NMRFs also coordinate and track national follow-up and implementation of the treaty

obligations and recommendations/decisions emanating from these mechanisms. Malawi has ratified all core UN Human Rights treaties, most recently the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in 2022. All reports have been submitted on time except the periodic report in respect of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and its report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) (overdue since 1997). However, follow up to treaty body recommendations still requires strengthening. The country underwent its 3rd cycle UPR in 2020

which opened up opportunities for institutionalising follow up to the UPR recommendations in the work of government, civil society, and UN agencies. The NMRF would be a critical institution to ensure the effective implementation of recommendations. Strengthening and resourcing the recently established National Children's Commission which has the mandate of promoting

fulfilment of treaty obligations as they relate to children and monitoring the implementation of concluding observations would also be key in ensuring fulfilment of treaty obligations. Malawi's next UPR is scheduled for 2025 and national institutions including the Ministry of Justice and MHRC require capacity strengthening and resources to undertake the process.

d. Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman is another key oversight body established under Section 120 of the Republican Constitution. It is mandated to investigate cases of injustice or maladministration.

However, the office faces challenges in that its decisions have been challenged in the High Court, giving a blurred line on where its mandate starts and ends. Just like the MHRC, the Office of the Ombudsman lacks sufficient funding and capacity to effectively meet its mandate.

3.5.2.5 Public Finance Management



The government initiated significant Public Finance Management (PFM) reforms, centered on a comprehensive review of the PFM Act as well as in the design and roll-out of a new Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) in the aftermath of the 'Cashgate' scandal in 2013.

As a result of the scandal, most donors discontinued their budget support, structured around Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) funds for most sectors, and moved their funding off-budget. Currently, most sectoral support is provided through pooled financing mechanisms, such as the Education Services Joint Fund (ESJF) or the Health Sector Joint Fund (HSJF), with Common Fiduciary Oversight Arrangements (CFOA) managed by third party auditors. Efforts to rationalise more fragmented sectoral support, such as in the area of social protection, are also still pointing towards pool funding arrangements that would be at least initially off-budget. However, direct on-budget

support resumed in 2024 by the World Bank (WB), African Development (AfDB) and the European Union (EU) following the granting of the Extended Credit Facility¹⁶⁵ by the IMF.

The government is committed to implementing the Public Finance Management (PFM) “to facilitate the attainment of sound fiscal management within the public service to realize sustainable economic growth and development for the country.” The government is making efforts to ensure the full roll-out and implementation of Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) coverage to all MDAs (Ministries, Departments and Agencies) and Local Councils. The Accountant General's Department is also implementing the Treasury Single Account (TSA) initiative to enhance the organization, structure, and optimization of government bank accounts. Further, the Treasury outlined plans to review Treasury and Desk Instructions to provide clear guidance on processes and procedures at all levels of PFM operations. And to promote a culture of excellence in State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) for better financial management and service delivery,

the government has developed performance evaluation framework. Under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangement (ECF) arrangement with the IMF, the government aspires to restore macroeconomic stability, build a foundation for inclusive and sustainable growth, and address weaknesses in governance and institutions.

However, opportunities remain to strengthen the Public Finance Management (PFM) system particularly in terms of sub-national PFM and budget oversight capacity. Parliament and the National Audit Office are not sufficiently empowered to exert their roles, and the executive remains exceedingly strong all through the process. Furthermore, the IFMIS roll out still presents issues, particularly in terms of commitment controls and fiscal reporting that have not yet been addressed to date. Most recently, the Government of Malawi has developed and currently implementing the Malawi Public Finance Management Strategy 2023-2028 to attain sound financial management and discipline in the public services delivery for sustainable development.

¹⁶⁵ On 21 September 2023, IMF staff and Malawian authorities reached a staff-level agreement on the Second (and last) Review of the Staff Monitored Program with Executive Board Involvement (PMB), and macroeconomic and financial policies and reforms to be supported by a new 48-month financing arrangement under the ECF of about \$174.00 million. The agreement is subject to IMF

Management and Executive Board approval and receipt of the necessary financing assurances. [IMF Staff and the Malawian Authorities Reach Staff-Level Agreement on the Second Review of the Staff Monitored Program with Executive Board Involvement and an Extended Credit Facility Arrangement](#)

3.6 MULTIDIMENSIONAL SDG RISK ANALYSIS

Malawi faces multiple, interlinked, and mutually reinforcing risks to the country's sustainable socioeconomic development path. These risks have become increasingly multidimensional, with knock-on effects among the interconnected security, social, political, environmental, and economic environments. Annex 3 outlines 10 specific risk areas that are likely to have the most negative impact on Malawi's development and the SDGs agenda in the near to the medium term, and the measures to mitigate them.

a. Political and Governance Risks

The turmoil and political impasse that followed the dispute over the 2019 Presidential Election, and the subsequent re-run in June 2020, have highlighted Malawi's vulnerability to governance risks. The election disputes saw civil society-led demonstrations and, at times, led to community-wide violence. The community level activism, particularly mob justice¹⁶⁶ and often violent sporadic demonstrations are concerning. The political discontent reflects long-standing unaddressed governance grievances relating to economic challenges, rising socio-economic inequalities, political grievances,

These 10 risk areas are underpinned by the following five broad categories:

1. Political and governance risks
2. Security risks
3. Climate change and the environmental risks
4. Public health emergency risks
5. Economic risks

Of these, the most severe ones are risks posed by the political and governance situation, public health outbreaks, climate change and the environment, and economic risks. Security risk is rated moderate.

corruption, human rights abuses, and are emerging as a major impediment to the government's efforts at fostering national cohesion, national healing and unity. Many of the grievances have ethnic and religious undertones. Without urgent action to make governance processes responsive to the socioeconomic needs of rights-holders, finding sustainable solutions and mechanisms for peaceful resolution of socio-economic and political grievances both in the immediate and long term, the political and governance risks stand as major impediments to Malawi's development agenda.

¹⁶⁶ CAT. 2022. Sect 41

b. Public Health Emergencies



Malawi's healthcare system remains fragile, and its weaknesses exacerbate the impact of disease outbreaks, pandemics, and disasters. The Malawi suffered significant loss of lives during the COVID-19 pandemic (2686), Cholera outbreak (1768), cyclone Freddy (676). With its weak health systems, the country was unable to cope with the sudden increase in the need for health services. While the resilience of the health system in times of disaster is a cause for concern, it is not much better in normal times, mortality rates remain high. The state of the health system in Malawi is representation of the availability of quality health services and on the other side of the equation there are issues around access and the barriers to achieving universal health coverage.

c. Climate and Environment Risk

Malawi is highly vulnerable to climate-related disasters, including frequent floods and droughts that severely impact socio-economic livelihoods and infrastructure. Forced displacement due to extreme weather events such as floods and dry spells are expected. Climate-induced crises relating to access to water and arable

The Ministry of Health requires substantial support to secure access to and the security of medicines and medical supplies, recruit and retain health workers, improve infrastructure for access to health facilities, and invest in digital tools to bring services closer to the population. In addition, there needs to be a holistic approach to dealing with the looming health financing problem. The current health financing system is not sustainable and does not ensure availability of essential health services. A system that provides financial protection from "out of pocket" costs while funding the good quality health service that Malawians need.

To improve the health outcomes of Malawians, an effective and efficient health system is key. The HSSP III (2023 – 2030) has key reform areas aimed at improving the quality of health services that are available and ensuring barriers to these services are also removed. Health Financing is one of these reforms, a key ingredient to strengthening the availability of quality health services and a major barrier to accessing health services.

land, brought about by droughts, as well as conflicts among community-forestry officials, community-commercial farmers, industries, or companies are set to rise. Climate change threatens progress and reverses efforts in attaining SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14 and 15. In addition, climate change can be seen as a

multiplier threat to economic growth and development, leading to diversion of funds to disaster and humanitarian response and directly pushing vulnerable populations into poverty. Some mitigation measures include investment in risk management, environmental protection, and long-term community resilience. In advancing a green economic recovery, environmental

sustainability, creation of green jobs and investments in key development services such as sustainable energy are key. The UN will need to draw on existing and new interventions and support the government to mainstream climate change and disaster risk reduction into the national and local level development planning.

d. Security Risks

The South African government's crackdown on illegal migrants is likely to affect Malawi, as a significant number of Malawian youths migrate to South Africa in search of better opportunities. Many Malawians working in South Africa send remittances home which contribute to household incomes and the national economy. A sudden loss to these remittances could lead to increased poverty and economic challenges for a considerable number of households especially in highly populated districts of Mangochi and Mzimba where migration to South Africa is at a large scale. Loss of income would increase the likelihood of crimes that would pile pressure on the justice system.

The security and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo remains a security concern for the region and Malawi. For Malawi, continued insecurity and tensions means displacements in DRC and Malawi has been found a haven for asylum seekers despite a recent crackdown on refugees. According to UNHRC Malawi, with a monthly average of 300 new arrivals, 62 percent is from the DRC. An increased influx translates into a protracted situation at Dzaleka Camp with increased risks in infectious diseases, protection and self-sufficiency.

e. Economic risks

The socio-economic context remains fragile characterised by poor economic outlook, unsustainable debt and high debt service costs, high and worsening levels of poverty, inflation, and shortages of foreign exchange. A persistent negative trade balance is putting pressure on forex reserves, exchange rate and inflation.

In November 2023, Malawi re-aligned its exchange rate by 44% to the US dollar, further putting pressure on already elevated inflation on the back of El Nino induced food shortages. Further, the spillover effects of geo-political conflicts have the potential to exacerbate socio-economic challenges, worsening poverty,

inequality, and unemployment, especially among the most vulnerable groups in Malawi, including women

and youth, people with disabilities, the elderly, migrants and children.

3.7 PREVENTION AND HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE LINKAGES

In the context of Malawi, poverty is the key risk to stability with high vulnerability to economic stressors, climate change, and competition for resources. Malawi's economic situation is characterised by poor access to markets, limited infrastructure, and limitation with human capital, with substantive gender inequalities: only 55.2% of all women are literate, compared to 69.8% of all men. Recent global crises have highlighted the country's vulnerability, indicating a slower-than-average recovery. Further, the country remains highly vulnerable to climatic shocks and stresses, which are

increasing in intensity, frequency and unpredictability. (Forced) displacement will add to the pre-existing tensions, facing the risk of stigmatising and excluding migrants in communities even further in terms of access to crucial services and other livelihood activities, leaving them behind and outside the response. Malawi is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee's review and recommendations from Malawi's initial report (submitted 2021) may provide useful guidance on how the ICESCR can be implemented so as to help eradicate poverty.

3.7.1 FOOD SECURITY

El Niño-induced weather patterns in the country have resulted in below-normal rainfall during the 2023/24 season. The dry spells caused a reduction in the production of various crops with maize registering a decrease of 20 percent (and a 14 percent decrease compared to the 5-year average).¹⁶⁷ Significant crop yield losses were also experienced in groundnuts, rice, soya beans, cow

peas, pigeon peas, and sorghum, with losses ranging from 20 percent to 40 percent across affected districts. Many households have experienced drastically lower harvests this year compared to last year, with their supplies expected to last no more than three months. Nearly all affected poor households reported needing assistance, whether in the form of cash or food, to meet their nutritional needs

¹⁶⁷ Government of Malawi, Ministry of agriculture. The Second Agricultural Production Estimates

and to obtain inputs for winter cropping. Meanwhile, food insecurity, like other natural disasters, impacts women and girls disproportionately¹⁶⁸ making it difficult for them to recover and be resilient to such climatic shocks.¹⁶⁹

Malawi's headline inflation rate has been steadily increasing since 2021. A significant contribution to this is food price inflation on the back of El Niño induced drought in 2023 and the devaluation of the local currency in November 2023. The effects of El Niño are compounding an already dire socio-economic situation following the exchange rate alignment of the Malawi Kwacha by 44 percent against the US dollar in November 2023 which contributed to rising inflationary pressures. The annual food inflation rate rose from 34.5 percent in October 2023 to 41.7 percent in November 2023 and has since averaged above 40 percent. Consequently, and against stagnant income levels, households are likely to experience a significant reduction in the purchasing power of nutritious food.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the increased recurrence of animal transboundary diseases such as crop pests is compromising the ability of rural households to diversify their livelihoods and embrace more resilient mechanisms to cope with more recurrent dry-spells and droughts.

Malawi is forecasted to experience La Niña weather conditions affecting the 2024/25 agriculture season. La Niña is the cyclic counterpart to El Niño. However, in contrast to El Niño, La Niña is associated with increased above-average rainfall patterns. This might mean that the country might again be faced with extreme opposite weather conditions. The above average rainfall could result in a net favorable agriculture season and improved food security. Based on predictive modelling, Malawi is forecasted to achieve an 8% increased on cereal production above the baseline (an increase of 346,800 metric tons).¹⁷¹ However, La Niña also typically brings extreme weather to the same regions most affected by El Niño, where people's coping capacities have already been eroded. The above average rainfall with floods, raises the likelihood of disrupted cropping conditions, lower crop yield and consequent food shortages in the affected areas. La Niña could therefore have a positive macro-effect, while exacerbating the negative impacts of El Niño at micro levels and stretch affected communities further, worsening economic and social challenges for women, girls, and other vulnerable populations in affected regions.

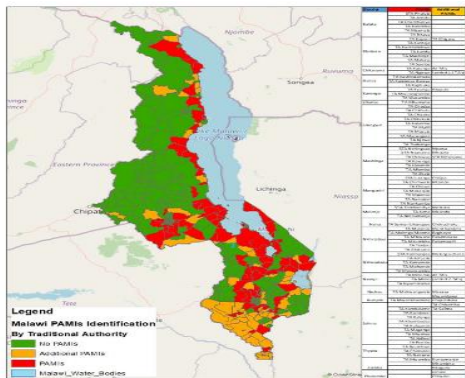
¹⁶⁸ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi* CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) paras 40-41.

¹⁶⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, *Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Malawi* CEDAW/C/MWI/CO/7 (2015) paras 40-41.

¹⁷⁰ MALAWI: El Niño Situation Report, 1st May 2024, Self Help Africa & Save the Children Malawi (Feb. 2024), Cost of Diet Results based on a) National Food Prices

¹⁷¹ National Planning Commission (NPC) and UN Malawi. 2024. Analysis of the Likely Impacts of La Niña and Response Preparedness in Malawi (forthcoming)

3.7.2 CHOLERA



Cholera is endemic in Malawi with seasonal outbreaks being reported from 1998 to 2023. These outbreaks are common around lakeshore districts, Lake Chilwa, lower shire, Blantyre, and Lilongwe cities. A significant population build up in the peri-urban areas where densely populated unplanned settlements emerge will continue to pose major public health emergency response challenges, due to limited access to essential services including clean water and safe sanitation. Occasionally, community by-laws have generated negative effects for early treatment and other universal health service seeking. The southern region, which shares a border with Mozambique, remains the hotspot of the recurrent cholera outbreaks and is impacted by cross-border transmission. Malawi has low population immunity in the districts reporting confirmed cases, including poor capacity for sample collection, transportation, and diagnosis in the affected areas. In 2023 Malawi conducted a cholera hot spot mapping using the Global Cholera Task Force (GTFCC) methodology. During the extensive mapping, 118

priority areas for multisectoral interventions (PAMIs) were identified in

20 of 29 districts. These areas account for almost 90% of all cholera cases in the country and have been prioritized in the 5-year and annual planning by all stakeholders including district councils, for targeted cholera preparedness and response. Inadequate hygiene and sanitation, limited access to safe drinking water

and personal hygiene practices, open defecation, and delay in seeking care are factors which have contributed to the initiation and ongoing spread of cholera. Furthermore, the conditions during annual rainy seasons and after tropical storms and floods (most recently Cyclone Freddy (2023), Gombe (2022) and Idai (2019) contribute to the spread of cholera. Malawi's urban slum conditions and lakeside fishing communities lacking proper WASH and food hygiene practices, further facilitate transmission and inhibit containment.

Malawi is prone to extreme climatic events including frequent tropical cyclones that have battered the country since 2019 (Idai, Anna, Gombe, Freddy), damaging infrastructures and livelihoods critical for sustainable public health safety. Children and women have been disproportionately affected, with disruptions of access to lifesaving services and continuity of essential services including education. The severe flooding from tropical cyclones

also increased the risk of communicable disease outbreaks. In March 2022, on the back of Tropical Storm Ana and Tropical Cyclone Gombe, the Ministry of Health declared a cholera outbreak in Malawi, which—to-date—has been the largest cholera outbreak in the country within the last decade (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2022; acaps, 2022). While the outbreak originally began in March 2022 in southern

Malawi, namely in the Nsanje and Machinga districts, it spread to northern regions, which remained the most affected by the outbreak as of October 2022 (World Health Organization, 2022). As of January 2023, all Malawian districts had been affected by the cholera outbreak, with 28 of the 29 districts reporting cases; since the onset of the outbreak, the total confirmed cases and deaths were 26,888 and 881, respectively (Ministry of Health, 2023).

3.7.4 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Malawi, with a population largely dependent on rain-fed smallholder agriculture, is highly vulnerable to climatic shocks and stresses, which are intensifying in frequency, intensity, and unpredictability. Having a large proportion of its population still located in rural areas and experiencing challenges with its economic growth, more pressure is increasingly being exerted on the already diminishing productive resources. Furthermore, climate change and environmental degradation will increase internal and cross-border human mobility, worsening the competition for a scarce land resource that may culminate in tensions among migrants and host communities. Climate change's impacts are felt disproportionately by marginalised groups in situations of vulnerability, such as women, girls, people with disabilities, and children.

The country's population growth rate of 2.9% annually further strains its already limited productive resources. Moreover, women have limited access to inputs, including land, and to agricultural extension services, technology, and agricultural markets. Only 32% of individual landowners of agricultural land in Malawi are women. Furthermore, the average land holding size of female-headed households is lower than that of male-headed households, at 0.803 ha and 1.031 ha, respectively. Correspondingly, women lag behind men in terms of non-agricultural income sources. Further, due to limited land ownership, smaller plot sizes, and fewer income-generating opportunities outside of agriculture, women in Malawi are less able to diversify their livelihoods and build resilience against recurring environmental disasters.

Approximately, one third of Malawi's land area is classified as forest. However, estimates suggest that 57% of its forests were lost between 1972 and 1992, declining from 4.4 million to 1.9 million ha with an annual loss of 2.8%. An estimated 29 metric tonnes of soil per hectare are lost each year, reducing productivity of cropland. The annual cost of land degradation in Malawi is estimated at US\$ 320 million (7% of GDP). For every dollar invested in restoring degraded land in Malawi, the returns are estimated at US\$ 3 – which is a strong economic argument to combat land degradation. Malawi's National Forest Land-scape Restoration Assessment revealed that key biodiversity area accounted for 12% of the degraded land.

During the last five years, the recurrence of tropical storms and cyclones, floods and erratic rainfall patterns have made agricultural livelihoods riskier to smallholders,

drastically reducing their ability to cope with shocks and limiting the gains obtained from different resilience-building interventions. Compounding this, an increasing pressure on natural resources (soils, water, and forests) is decimating productivity gradually. Over the last 10 years, Malawi has accessed over US\$45 million in emergency funding from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to respond to floods, tropical storms, droughts, and displacement. Between 2015 and 2024, the Southern Region of Malawi was affected by four large-scale flood episodes that affected more than one million persons (2023, 2022, 2019 and 2015) and three major dry periods (2023/4, 2020/21 and 2017/18). The compounding nature of the economic, environmental, and other shocks, erodes the ability to cope with and recover from shocks, including returning from places of displacement, without external support being provided.

3.7.5 REFUGEES

Malawi is a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government of Malawi made reservations to articles of the 1951 Convention relating to freedom of movement, right to wage earning employment, exemption from reciprocity, movable and immovable property, right of association, liberal professions, public education, and labour legislation and social security.

In 2018, the government agreed to roll out the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) under the New York Declaration of 2016. In line with the GCR objectives, the country intends to include refugees into the National Development agenda, adopt the settlement approach and enhance self-reliance for forcibly displaced and stateless persons.

As of 30 September 2024, Malawi hosted a population of 55,829 refugees and asylum seekers, from different countries, at Dzaleka camp. The camp receives a monthly average of 300 new arrivals mostly from the DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda. About 45% of the forcibly displaced and stateless people in Dzaleka camp are women, while children constitute 48% of the population. Malawi has an encampment policy which confines refugees and asylum seekers to Dzaleka Refugee Camp, with limited opportunities for the full enjoyment of their rights. The camp was initially established to host between 10,000 and 12,000 Persons but has now stretched over five times its normal capacity, grappling with several challenges stemming from congestion. In March 2023 the government issued a Directive enforcing its encampment policy and ordering all refugees and asylum seekers living in urban and rural areas to voluntarily return to Dzaleka refugee camp or face enforced relocation. The encampment policy has placed significant strain on the Dzaleka camp, with higher (over 50,000) refugees than carrying capacity. During the enforcement of the Directive those who did not go to the camp (including children) were imprisoned at Maula Central Prison, a maximum-security prison. To decongest Dzaleka Refugee camp, the government has identified a new settlement in Chitipa district. Government and UNHCR joint assessment missions have been conducted and an estimated budget

of 85 million dollars is needed to develop the settlement.

Since 2023, the Malawi Law commission has started the review of the 1989 Refugee Act with financial support from UNHCR. It is expected that the ongoing legal and policy reform to be completed in December 2025 will enable the lifting of some of the key reservations made to the 1951 Convention such as freedom of movement, right to wage earning employment and right to public education. Some of the human rights challenges that refugees face in the

Dzaleka Refugee Camp are lack of freedom of movement, poor sanitation, limited economic and livelihood opportunities, severe overcrowding, lack of access to basic services, and gender-based violence. Criminal networks are active in the camp, where vulnerable men, women, and children are often being exploited for profits within the camp itself or trafficked into other countries in Southern Africa for forced labour and/or prostitution. In 2023, the government in collaboration with UNHCR completed the verification exercise that significantly improved the quality of data, reduced the backlog of asylum applications, and facilitated the issuance of identity documents. Despite that situation, other challenges such as the absence of the Refugee Committee meetings continue to delay the normal processing of asylum claims.

3.7.5.1 Irregular Migration, Migration Management and Diaspora Engagement

As people continue to cross borders, they often fall victim to smugglers and traffickers, exposing themselves to high risks of exploitation, trafficking, GBV, loss of life and other related crimes.¹⁷² The latest developments in this regard concern Ethiopian migrants who are increasingly on the move towards South Africa, entering Malawi often irregularly from Tanzania. When detained by police or immigration officers, they, as well as other undocumented migrants, are often detained in prison, sometimes for six months to two years or more. This includes children being separated from their parents and being exposed to high risks of human rights violations.¹⁷³ In October 2022, the bodies of 25+ male Ethiopian migrants were found in a mass grave in Mtangatanga Forest, Mzimba district, near the route connecting Malawi and Tanzania. With this being one of the few cases reported, the full extent of risks to migrants from the Horn of Africa is suspected to be high. Currently over 500 male Ethiopian migrants, including a high number of minors, are detained in Malawi's prisons due to their irregular status, and having been intercepted while in transit to South Africa in the hope of seeking better economic opportunities. Malawi's Prison Service is overstrained with overcrowding in prisons and increasing food shortages, lack of adequate shelter and

sanitation, as well as limited medical support.

Additionally, well managed migration and the facilitation of safe, regular and orderly migration as committed to by the government through the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the Migration Governance Framework (MiGoF) have multiple accelerator effects to ensure dignity and integrity of all migrants alongside the whole migration process. Migration may be harnessed for significant economic development opportunities. Trade, migration, and cross-border human mobility are inherently interconnected, for without people, the vast majority of goods and services would be unable to cross borders and contribute to economic development. Inadequate and uncoordinated border management remains one of the barriers to trade facilitation, as it can increase delays and lengthen immigration and customs processing times. In addition, insufficient information and data sharing systems between neighbouring countries and the lack of harmonised immigration IT systems as well as infectious diseases such as the COVID-19 pandemic have hampered the facilitation of the movement of people and goods.

¹⁷² Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Malawi* CAT/C/MWI/CO/1 (2022) paras 35-36.

¹⁷³ Committee against Torture, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Malawi* CAT/C/MWI/CO/1 (2022) para 37.

As Malawi, and the African Union (AU) Member States move towards the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), the importance of effective border management policies increases as countries require measures that facilitate and expedite the movement of persons, goods, and services across borders while ensuring that important security concerns are addressed. Effective border management positively impacts cross-border trade, benefiting everyone from small-scale traders to multinational companies by ensuring swift, transparent, and organized processes at border posts. This encourages trade agents to use trade corridors more frequently, leading to increased government revenues, job creation, and overall economic development. Furthermore, it contributes to women's economic empowerment as small-scale cross-border trade is expected to account for around 30-40% of total intra-SADC trade, with an estimated value of US\$ 17.6 billion annually¹⁷⁴.

A large majority of small-scale cross-border traders in the region are women and young girls who constitute 70% of informal cross-border traders, crossing borders daily and providing the backbone for socio-economic development of the nation and sustenance of household incomes and livelihoods necessary to lift the poor from poverty.

¹⁷⁴ Stuart, John (2020): Informal Cross Border Trade in Africa in a Time of Pandemic (online: <https://www.tralac.org/blog/article/14487-informal->

[cross-border-trade-in-africa-in-a-time-of-pandemic.html#_ftn1](https://www.tralac.org/blog/article/14487-informal-cross-border-trade-in-africa-in-a-time-of-pandemic.html#_ftn1))

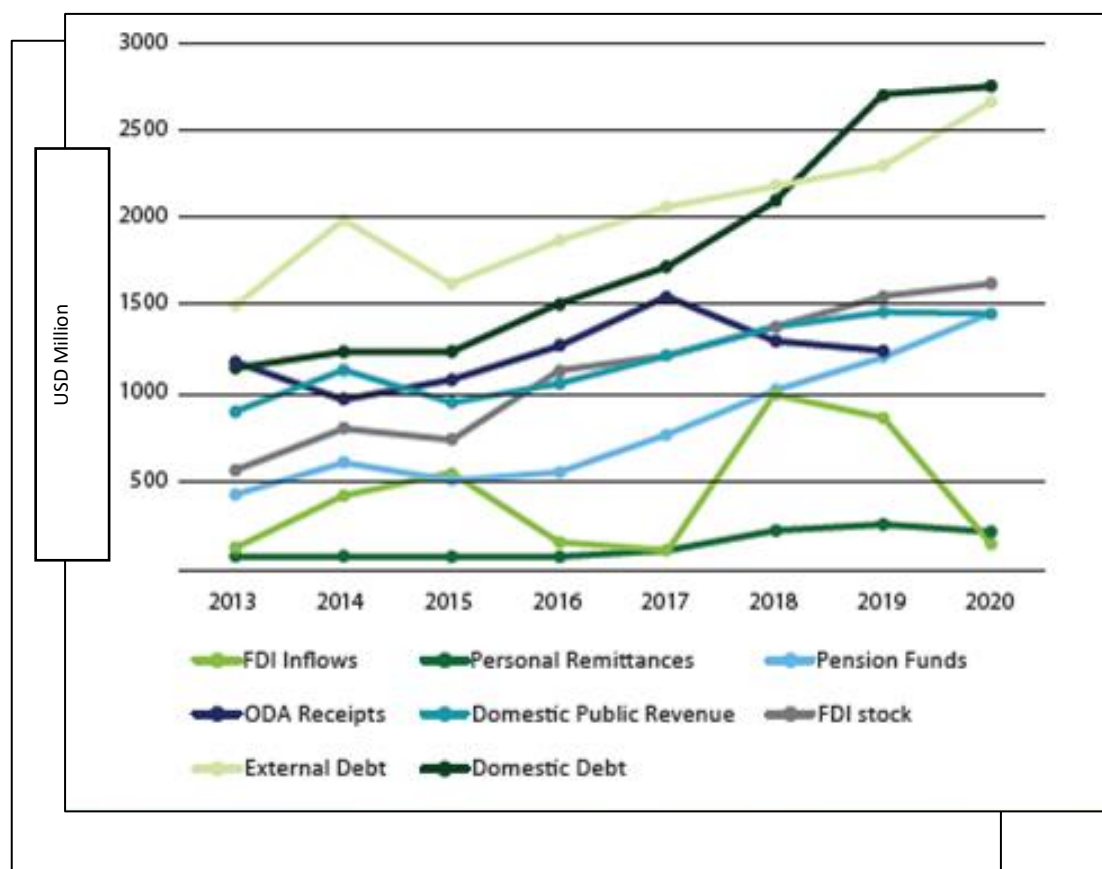
3.8 FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

The government began to implement the country's new long-term vision, Malawi 2063 (MW2063), in 2021 with the aim to create "an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant Nation". The MW2063 is being operationalised by the First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1) of the vision.

The MIP-1 provides costing of the strategies to be implemented by the government and informs the budget for purposes of resource mobilisation. Key sources that financed Malawi over the past few years and its transition is depicted in the Figure below 16. The figure reveals that Malawi's financial flows were dominated by domestic debt, external debt, domestic public revenue (tax and nontax), official development assistance (ODA), personal remittances and pension funds.

Figure 16: Overview of Malawi's financing mix evolution over the past years

Source: Deloitte analysis based on data from MRA, MoF, UNCTAD and WB



3.8.1 OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE (ODA)

Malawi is a major recipient of foreign grants and aid for decades. Official Development Assistance (ODA) has been an important contribution to national budgets and service delivery in Malawi. In 2022 ODA increased to US\$1,345 billion, from US\$1,178 billion in 2021 (higher than the world average at US\$1,147 billion, based on data from 130 countries). Since 2009, Net ODA received % of GNI (USD) have fluctuated between 12.62% and 16.11% per year.¹⁷⁵ In 2024/25 alone, donor contribution is expected to finance up to 90% of the total development budget. The financing of key social and economic sectors is significantly dependent on donor financing – health (56%), WASH (90%), and social protection (94%), mostly

through on-budget support from the World Bank.¹⁷⁶ However, donors suspended direct budget support and withheld US\$150 million in budgetary support and aid grants on account of cash gate issue in 2015. Direct budget support resumed in 2024, notably by the World Bank, African Development Bank and European Union (EU), on the back on an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement with the IMF. The largest donors to Malawi are the United States, the Global Fund, the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank, the European Union United Kingdom, the Nordic countries, Japan, Germany and Ireland; all disbursing between US\$10 and US\$300 million a year in development projects.

3.8.2 FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI)

Current inflows of financing to Malawi fall far short of the requirements to fast-track economic transformation by 2030 or 2063. According to the Reserve Bank of Malawi, FDI recorded in 2022 was US\$188.56 million, representing a 45.6 percentage point increase from US\$129.5 million recorded in 2021.¹⁷⁷ Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows at 13.5 percent of GDP lag other countries in the region, holding back productivity gains. The agricultural sector attracts the most FDI - primarily

from South Africa, Germany and the United States however, the exploration of rare earth elements near Lake Malawi has the potential to attract new investments in the mining sector. Apart from agriculture and minerals, Malawi also offers investment opportunities in agro-processing, manufacturing and tourism. The main investing countries are Australia, China, India, the Republic of Korea, South Africa, the UAE and the UK.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations Development Programme and Government of Malawi. 2021. Report on Development Finance Assessment (DFA) and Local Level Financial Assessment (LLFA) for Government of Malawi. Unpublished

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/malawi/reports/unicefs-202425-budget-briefs>

¹⁷⁷ [FDI in Malawi \(mitc.mw\)](https://www.mitc.mw/)

3.8.3 REMITTANCES

Remittances to Malawi rose by 55 percent to \$217 million in 2021 (pre-COVID19 pandemic level), according to the World Bank.¹⁷⁸ On an annual basis, the WB expects remittances to reach 2.4% of the country's Gross Domestic Product. In 2020, because of COVID-19 impact, remittances inflow to Malawi dropped by 13% to \$189 million from \$217 million in 2019, comparable to the reduction level for Sub-Saharan Africa (12.5%). To promote remittances, the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM) lists several investment opportunities for the

diaspora in the financial sector such as Malawi stock exchange, foreign exchange bureau business and money transfer business operations, among others. Further, the RBM does not subject remittances from Non-resident Foreign Currency Denominated Accounts to exchange control requirements.¹⁷⁹ While acknowledging the potential and positive impact of remittances on the economy, it is imperative to note that the transactional cost of remittances is still highest in sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific Island countries globally.

3.8.4 DOMESTIC PUBLIC REVENUE

The government continued implementing its policies aimed at sustaining and entrenching macroeconomic stability. The bulk of domestic revenues for Malawi comes from tax revenue which accounted for an average of 51.7% of the budget between 2021/22 and 2024/25.¹⁸⁰ However, tax revenue (% of GDP) at 12.78 % in 2022,¹⁸¹ an averaging 12.45% in the last 6 years is too low to adequately finance its budget needs and well below the 20% ratio needed to help countries fast track achievement of the SDGs. In its Domestic Revenue Mobilization

Strategy (DRMS) the country is placing emphasis is on incentivizing the informal sector to bring them into the formal sector for tax purposes,¹⁸² through incentivizing business registration and formalization, increasing financial inclusion (i.e. access to formal credit, banking facilities, promote digital cashless economy and impart financial knowledge), increase connectivity; improve quality of human capital (education and skill levels will provide ground for formalization of the economy) and better access to markets and price discovery.

¹⁷⁸ [Remittances jumped 55% in 2021—report - Nation Online \(mwntation.com\)](https://www.nationonline.com/news/remittances-jumped-55-in-2021-report)

¹⁷⁹ Non-resident Foreign Currency Denominated Accounts (FCDAs), operational as from 2006, are held by among others, the diplomatic community and international organizations. Malawians living abroad are free to open Non-Resident FCDAs with any Bank in Malawi.

¹⁸⁰ UNICEF Malawi (2024), 2024/25 National Budget Brief, From Economic Recovery to Resilience

¹⁸¹ [Malawi Tax Revenue: % of GDP, 2009 – 2024 | CEIC Data](https://www.ceicdata.org/malawi/tax-revenue-%-of-gdp-2009-2024)

¹⁸²

https://www.un.org/ldc5/sites/www.un.org/ldc5/files/malawi_intervention_session_4.pdf

3.8.5 DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL DEBT

Insufficient revenue generation to meet development needs has led to unsustainable borrowing – both domestic and external. As of June 2024, Total public debt stood at MK15.17 trillion (US\$8.75 billion). Domestic debt constituted 52.8%, while External accounted for 47.2%. Multilateral creditors account for 72.6% of the total external debt stock. As of July 2024, the World Bank estimated debt to GDP at 91.3%.¹⁸³ At 7.8% of GDP and 24.4% of the total budget or 32% of total revenue, interest on public debt is the largest expenditure allocation of the national budget for the third consecutive year since the 2022/23 national budget, ahead of

allocations to all other sectors. In November 2023, the country secured an Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement with the IMF to help restore macro-economic sustainability through inter-alia, fiscal adjustment and debt restructuring and catalyzing much needed financial support from development partners. The country is engaged in debt rescheduling negotiations with official bilateral creditors resulting in the signing of official agreements with China EXIM and finalization of terms with other creditors. Discussions, in good faith continued with the commercial creditors (Afreximbank and Trade and Development Bank).

3.8.6 INTEGRATED NATIONAL FINANCING STRATEGY

As part of the Integrated National Financing Strategy (INFF),¹⁸⁴ the latest Development Finance Assessment (DFA) highlights opportunities for improvement in other components of the financing mix. On the domestic front, the Government of Malawi is committed to taking steps to improve revenue mobilisation by reviewing tax policies to maximise the revenue, restructuring public debt, closing leakages, including better management of state-owned enterprises and improving resource allocation efficiency.¹⁸⁵ To enhance domestic private financing, the

government seeks to improve the ease of doing business and to invest in developing bankable projects that will attract investment. To strengthen international financing, the government needs to build a track record of good governance to build donor confidence and strengthen data quality and timeliness for effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E). There are also opportunities under existing multilateral financing for climate protection. Funding available under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol

¹⁸³ World Bank. Malawi Economic Monitor. July 2024

¹⁸⁴ Malawi is currently developing an INFF under the Joint SDG Fund with the support of UNDP and UNICEF.

¹⁸⁵ Malawi INFF. Sept 2022 Draft strategy

being probably the most important source of international financing for climate investments: The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the climate change programmes of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the Adaptation Fund, including the World Bank's Climate Investment Funds and bilateral initiatives.¹⁸⁶



In the context of COVID-19 recovery and debt forgiveness, the UN has advocated for a multilateral debt settlement agreement that includes debt restructuring linked to green debt swaps and buyouts to help countries preserve biodiversity, move away from fossil fuels and curb global warming. The country also needs to ensure a stable macro-economic environment for international investors, improving visibility of Malawi's strategic investment opportunities to foreign investors, improving feasibility studies, and expanding financing sources to include diaspora community and philanthropic organisations.¹⁸⁷ Sustaining the ongoing macro-fiscal reforms, flexibility of the exchange rate, rebuilding foreign reserves, enforcing fiscal discipline, enhancing public financial management, and attaining debt sustainability to achieve macro-economic stability will lay a strong foundation for sustained and sustainable growth.

3.9 STAKEHOLDER / PARTNERSHIP ANALYSIS

a. **Public sector**

The Malawi Government, both at national and local level, has been a key and strategic partner in the implementation of the SDGs in Malawi. The country's long-term development strategy, Malawi 2063, which is operationalised by the first 10-year implementation plan that is 81.82% alignment to the SDGs,¹⁸⁸

demonstrates government's commitment to the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the implementation mechanism of the Pillar and Enabler Coordination Groups (PEGs), coupled with existing government agency mandates and policies provide the opportunity for partnerships with all development actors in Malawi.

¹⁸⁶ UNCTAD.2009. Financing the Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Measures in Developing Countries

¹⁸⁷ Malawi INFF. Sept 2022 Draft strategy

¹⁸⁸ 2022 Malawi's 2022 Voluntary National Review Report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): <https://npc.mw/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Malawi-SDG-VNR-2022.pdf>

Despite these opportunities, the key challenges include:

- (i)** Limited fiscal space, coupled with over-dependence on donors and development partners, constrains the ability of the government to effectively partner and coordinate with all key development actors in Malawi with priority given to partners with substantial resources to finance more visible development initiatives.
- (ii)** High cost associated with engagement of parliamentarians in activities outside of Parliament acts as a major deterrent for strengthening collaboration and partnerships with key development actors. To improve stakeholder management, Parliament will need to improve its collaboration with development partners by negotiating reasonable compensations that have been a major source of misunderstanding (e.g., Daily Subsistence Allowance, and related travel costs).
- (iii)** Government leadership in development coordination is often weak, limiting capacity for oversight of the development work to ensure alignment, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability.
- (iv)** Adverse consequences of the per diem payment culture are diverse. First, at the aggregate level excessive expenditure on travel-related allowances tends to crowd out other, more meritorious activities for which the budget has been provided. Second, per diem payment reflects and feeds an unhealthy institutional culture that appears to permeate the entire civil service and impede the effective implementation of development initiatives and acts as a deterrent for strengthening partnerships development in Malawi.

b. Private Sector

The private sector is becoming increasingly important as a key driver of economic growth and employment. It provides goods and services, generates tax revenues to finance essential social and economic infrastructure, and develops innovative solutions to address development challenges. Malawi aims to create a private sector that is dynamic and competitive to facilitate the structural transformation of the economy and catalyse the development of a vibrant and significant “middle class.”



Key issues affecting partnership with the private sector include:

- (i.)** Private sector development must be at the core of any strategy for economic growth, but currently the private sector is either not growing at all or only growing very slowly.¹ Its basic needs (such as energy, water, access to finance) are not being met. Supporting the private sector to de-risk investments that are green, inclusive, and impactful needs to be prioritised.
- (ii.)** The private sector is becoming increasingly an important player in the development of the agricultural sector in the country. Increasing agricultural productivity and commercialisation and industrialisation is at the centre of the long-term development of the country, and for that to be achieved, the private sector becomes the engine and the hub of growth.
- (iii.)** Private and public sector partnerships are key to addressing key development challenges in Malawi. It is also important to enhance public private partnerships to accelerate investment and sustainable development.

Despite this key role, private and public sectors exhibit weak developmental partnership. Engagement in partnerships is negatively impacted by a government approach that does not look to stimulate or incentivize involvement by multiple sectors in

development work. Unlike other countries in Southern Africa, who have created stimulus through regulation and incentives, there is no legal regulation for any entity working in Malawi to engage in any form of social responsibility.¹⁸⁹

c. Civil Society

Malawi has a strong civil society across different sectors and levels, from the national to the local, including community-based organisations. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) take on a variety of functions in the implementation process of the SDGs. They spur government action through

persistent advocacy and act as watchdogs, holding governments accountable for their commitments. They advise governments on concrete implementation measures to take, building on their experience on the ground, often working with marginalised communities. Civil society organisations also directly support implementation through the role they often play in service delivery and can

¹⁸⁹ USAID Malawi Partnership Assessment, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZRTM.pdf

have an important role in supporting data collection efforts, including marginalised groups.

Some of the main challenges in strengthening and diversifying civil society engagement in SDG implementation include:

- (i.)** There are perceptions that CSOs appear more interested in receiving grants than partnerships. Furthermore, limited financial resources lead to low coverage. Moreover, civil society, although complementing government efforts, tends to use parallel delivery systems that do not often contribute to strengthening the national delivery mechanisms.
- (ii.)** In some cases, some civil society organisations have demonstrated allegiance by siding with specific political agendas. In other instances, civil society leaders have been appointed into political or public positions, using their civil society work as a leverage.
- (iii.)** Due to limited capacities and resources, and weak accountability systems, many CSOs fail to sustain their work on the ground and experience delays in implementation of interventions. In addition, capacity issues and rapid turnover of staff adversely affect the timely implementation of planned initiatives.
- (iv.)** Most CSOs also tend to concentrate their operations at national level and around district centers, due to the challenges of resources, and infrastructure amongst some, which means that most vulnerable in marginalised areas are likely to be left behind including women, girls and PLWDs.

d. Academia

The academia is uniquely placed to lead the cross-sectoral implementation of the SDGs, providing an invaluable source of expertise in research and education in all sectors of the SDGs, in addition to being widely considered as neutral and influential players.



Key issues for consideration for enhancing partnership with academia include:

- (i.)** There are opportunities to deepen collaboration with academia, especially in areas of capacity development, research, innovation and gender and development through implementation of gender policies and strategies. In addition, there are opportunities to enhance the role of academics through continuous curriculum review to align with contemporary developmental needs and skills required.
- (ii.)** There are opportunities to strengthen research leadership. Academic institutions have already been involved in pioneering the National Research Agenda in collaboration with the National Planning Commission. This agenda will gather evidence and data that will enhance innovative and evidence-based decision making for Vision 2063.
- (iii.)** Lack of financial resources undermines the effective role of academia. There is a need to strengthen financing for academic institutions to enhance their capacity and operational independence. Currently, their contribution towards the development discourse with research and innovation has been limited.

e. International partners

Development partners collectively engage across various sectors: ensuring more effective technical coordination in alignment with MW2063 and the SDGs is key to strategic complementarity and impact. In addition, the government has put a number of frameworks that enable high quality development cooperation including country results framework (Malawi National

Adaptation Framework); development cooperation information/data system (Malawi M&E Info System); and national development cooperation policy forum (Pillar and Enabler Groups). Despite having put these in place, Malawi still finds barriers to strengthened development cooperation, including lack of quality, timely data and information on

development cooperation and for M&E.

The European Union, African Development Bank, United Nations agencies, bilateral donors such as FCDO, USAID, Germany, Norway, and China, the World Bank Group, and the International Monetary Fund are among Malawi's key partners. The UN has remained actively engaged in the donor coordination process through existing coordination mechanisms such as the Head of Mission and Heads of Cooperation platforms.



Key issues affecting donor engagement include:

- (i.)** While the overall structure for donor coordination is in place and generally perceived to be satisfactory, there is a generally shared perception among development partners that the government needs to be more in the driver's seat with respect to donor coordination.¹
- (ii.)** It will be important to reinvigorate efforts to ensure that development partners have a common understanding of the constraints Malawi faces, and the main pathways through which those constraints can be addressed.
- (iii.)** The UN can play a key role in establishing country platforms for development partners to dialogue with the government in areas of comparative advantage. The UN can organise a donor forum where advocacy towards these donors is done for them to see the need to still prioritise funding for Malawi.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR UN ENGAGEMENT



The CCA identified four key challenges and associated opportunities that have the most catalytic impact to achieve the SDGs.

These challenges were selected based on their magnitude, the cost of inaction, and their broad impact across multiple sectors (i.e., affecting several SDGs). These formed the basis for broader policy dialogues with government and other key stakeholders. These key challenges include macroeconomic instability, weak governance, harmful cultural practices and negative social norms, rapid population growth, and climatic shocks.

A. UNSUSTAINABLE, UNDIVERSIFIED AND LITTLE INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Malawi remains heavily reliant on subsistence, rainfed agriculture, which limits its growth potential, increases its susceptibility to exogenous and endogenous shocks such as: (i) natural disasters and weather shocks; (ii) trade shocks; (iii) sudden reductions of capital inflows, including aid; and (iv) spillover effects of geo-political events. The agrarian economy is characterised by weak fiscal management and economic policies that have contributed to recurring and increasing fiscal deficits, which have been largely funded by high-cost domestic borrowing and resulted in a

surge in public debt. Malawi's debt is unsustainable.

The rising and unsustainable debt is reducing fiscal space for development spending and risks crowding out private sector investment.¹⁹⁰ The large gaps in per capita fiscal transfers to local councils are likely to exacerbate inequalities. Also, the trade policies, high costs of doing business, deficient enabling infrastructure, and low access to export markets continue to impede investment and commercialisation. Erratic electricity, high interest rates and inflation have discouraged both local and foreign investors. With the backing of the ECF

¹⁹⁰

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview#1>

arrangement, the country is implementing policies to restore macro-economic sustainability through *inter-alia*, fiscal adjustment

and debt restructuring and catalyzing much needed financial support from development partners.

Some of the opportunities to accelerate sustainable and inclusive growth include:

- (i) Increased diversification could reduce vulnerability to shocks. Malawi's agricultural sector is dominated by maize-based systems, with some 99% of smallholders growing maize and relying on a single rainfed season. Consequently, maize production, and the entire sector, suffers from low productivity due to the high risk of climatic shocks. Increasing diversification into other sectors such as legume production, industrial hemp and medical cannabis industry, tourism, and mining would reduce risks of income variability, and crop failure while supporting farming households to build up savings and productive assets.¹⁹¹ Further, increasing investment for women farmers (with implements, technology and inputs) will yield positive

- dividends in agricultural productivity among others.
- (ii) Promoting exports of agricultural products to USA through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which is a non-reciprocal unilateral trade preference programme that provides preferential market access, and duty-free access, into the US for products originating from eligible Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, including Malawi. The five products having the greatest potential for exports to the USA under AGOA and the US-GSP, as identified by the AGOA Response Strategy, are: macadamia nuts, handicrafts, honey, mangoes, and tea. Furthermore, the fast-regional integration of Africa with the entering into force of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) presents opportunities to Malawi which is already an active member of COMESA and SADC and a signatory member of the EAC-COMESA-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area. Malawi has already secured US\$371 million worth of export deals within the AfCFTA



¹⁹¹ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/31929/Malawi%20Economic%20Monitor%209.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

with Angola, Botswana, South Africa, South Sudan, and Côte d'Ivoire to supply various commodities like maize, beans and rice.¹⁹² These initiatives open new markets to Malawi. The timing is opportune for Malawian exporters to explore business opportunities in other promising markets in Africa.

- (iii) The global and national momentum on transformation towards diversified, productive, efficient, inclusive and sustainable food systems offer substantial opportunity to build upon Malawi's commitments to embark on a food-systems transformation that addresses challenges related to food insecurity, malnutrition, agricultural productivity, and poor infrastructure. Hence, this is an opportunity to increase engagement with the private sector through market-led approaches, particularly the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in food supply chains (i.e., input supply, food production, processing and packaging, storage and distribution, food safety, retail, and marketing).

- (iv) The Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF), aims to strengthen Malawi's financing architecture and accelerate the implementation of the national development priorities through the Malawi 2063 MIP-1 and the SDGs. Building on the Development Finance Assessment (DFA), the INFF provides the government with clear policy options to broaden sources of financing for development.



¹⁹² Tena, N. (2021). Malawi \$1billion energy deal to boost economy.

(v) Dialogue Platforms like the Development Cooperation Group (DCG), considered for the role of Technical Oversight Committee for the INFF, play a crucial role in facilitating dialogue on public and private financing for development. E-governance and digitalization are critical to driving economic transformation, yet their full potential remains untapped. To address this, the government has initiated a Digital Readiness Assessment, a comprehensive

effort to evaluate the current state of digital infrastructure and capacity. This assessment will inform the development of a national digital roadmap, outlining key priorities and strategies to advance digital transformation across all sectors. Alongside the roadmap, a capacity-building plan will be developed to ensure that both the public and private sectors are equipped to leverage digital tools effectively.

(vi) As part of its commitment to digital transformation, Malawi has joined the Digital Public Goods (DPG) Alliance, aiming to promote the adoption of open-source technologies that can be shared and scaled globally. Malawi is also a participant in the "50 in 5" initiative, which seeks to accelerate the development and adoption of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) by focusing on delivering 50 key initiatives over the next five years. These initiatives, coupled with increased private sector engagement, will radically transform the economy, enhancing service delivery, improving transparency, and fostering inclusive and resilient growth. With these strategic initiatives, Malawi is poised to leverage technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT),

blockchain, data analytics, and digital platforms across sectors ranging from agriculture and manufacturing to finance, law, and governance. These technologies will enable innovative solutions that reduce economic crimes, streamline public services, and promote sustainable development.

(vii) Harnessing the cultural and creative industries as well as cultural heritage will contribute to economic development and social cohesion. The CCIs and heritage conservation and promotion can create more jobs for young people and women. While the creative sector remains largely informal, its formalisation will enhance the status of the artists. Investing more in the tourism sector will also create more jobs and boost the country's economy.

B. WEAK GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS, POLICIES AND PROCESSES

The country is rich in policies and strategies; however, the implementation of various policies and strategies remains weak, primarily due to politicisation, ineffective oversight and accountability mechanisms, and weak coordination, among others. Challenges in governance are linked to mismanagement, corruption, inefficient use of financial resources, continuity of harmful cultural practices and negative social norms that are

perpetuating inequalities. At the sub-national level, decentralisation reforms have been rolled out in a fragmented, uneven, and incomplete fashion, given that central ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) continue to retain control over expenditure responsibility for a high percentage of development and capital investments.

The opportunities to address these gaps in governance include:

i. Developments in the Democratic

Process: Support to democratic processes and institutions is a critical priority to enable democratic institutions to uphold the principles of good governance and deliver on their mandates. The support will be provided toward the creation of innovative platforms of consultation and information sharing among government, parastatals, and civil society institutions, as well as strengthening their own internal capacities, to allow them to interact more effectively with one another and better represent the interests of the citizens.

Engagements will seek to ensure that a governing system interacts with and is structured by the interests of the rights-holder, to contribute to governance dynamics and effects by strengthening the social contract and the accountability that connects and bonds political

representatives with their constituencies, otherwise said, the people of Malawi. A sustained and rich process of citizen participation should bridge the formal and informal spheres and create new dynamics of interaction and information exchange from the citizens to Parliament - from the periphery to the core of the political system.

The support needs to focus on the following areas:

- Support the Government of Malawi's capacity to hold free, fair, credible, and inclusive elections.
- Assist Parliament in representing its constituents and fulfilling its legislative and oversight mandate.
- Strengthen the capacity of democratic institutions to deliver on mandates.
- Improve participation and representation and ownership in democratic processes including women.

- Strengthening conflict prevention, mitigation, and mediation mechanisms to address potential disputes in democratic processes.
- Create platforms to educate the public in political processes and engage in dialogue.
- Create opportunities, including through legislative reform, for professional development to advance women in political decision-making processes.

ii. **Peace and Social Cohesion:** After the enactment of the Peace and Unity Act (2022), the Peace and Unity Commission is now in place and is in the process of building its secretariat. Measures are underway to give a practical expression to this entity which should go a long way to coordinate state, non-state actors, and other stakeholders to deliver coherent and integrated peacebuilding programmes that help mitigate a relapse into violent conflicts like the post 2019 elections. However, the commission faces challenges in asserting its independence, ensuring sufficient funding for its operation, sufficient capacity to effectively fulfill its mandate and managing the high and unrealistic expectations of stakeholders regarding its ability to find permanent solutions to all types of conflicts within a very short time. The UN needs to work with the government and non-state actors to ensure that National Peace Architecture structures are able to identify, prevent and

respond to potential conflicts at national and district levels, with coordination in early warning systems at the community level.

The support needs to focus on the following areas:

- Activate and support the coordination of the infrastructure for peace at the national, district and community levels.
- Improve capacity to prevent conflict amongst institutions such as border security, immigration and other rule of law actors.
- Establish data tracking / management of early warning systems in communities.
- Engage community groups in conflict analysis, mediation, and peacebuilding activities.

(i) **Decentralisation and empowerment of local government:** It is necessary to empower district and local level institutions to strengthen decentralisation efforts and allow sub-national institutions to effectively plan, budget and deliver quality services. The support to decentralisation efforts needs to focus on strengthening inclusive local governance planning, gender responsive service delivery and oversight functions of the local authorities and local governance structures that are constituents of the communities.

- (ii) **Enhance planning capacities:** Malawi has opportunities to enhance planning through the Population Register, which has already recorded 100% of adults over 16 and approximately 30% of children, each with a unique identifier. This register is being integrated with the National Registration and Identification Database, and the death registration system is currently being updated. Importantly, the Population Register provides disaggregated data by gender and age, making it a powerful tool for targeted and inclusive planning. Once fully developed, this register will serve as the foundation for planning by both the public and private sectors.

E-governance will play a pivotal role in enhancing evidence-based planning, promoting efficient service delivery, and improving financial management. By leveraging digital technologies and high-quality, disaggregated data, Malawi can significantly improve the availability, access, and utilization of data, leading to more informed decision-making that addresses the specific needs of different population groups. This approach will ensure more equitable development outcomes across all sectors.

- iii. **Transparency and accountability:** It is important that technologies and processes to improve transparency and accountability are improved to enable governance institutions to perform core functions well. Therefore, enhancing transformative technologies to improve upstream data gathering and analysis, which will feed into stronger evidence-based planning of relevant MDAs. This is necessary to improve the actual professional capacities and internal work processes of MDAs and enable them to monitor and report on their own delivery performance. These new approaches, such as the utilisation of the biometric national ID card, will lay a foundation of information for further interlinkages and a further push towards greater e-governance in the country's administrative processes. In turn, this is expected to lead to better levels of public service and less cases of graft.

The support needs to focus on the following areas:

- Support the Malawi Vision 2063 priority on improving transparency and accountability in government systems and processes.
- Support the implementation of prioritised public sector reforms.
- Encourage development and scale up public sector innovations.
- Adoption of new technologies and digital platforms to improve oversight of processes and service delivery.

iv. Constitutional bodies and oversight and human rights institutions:

Strengthening oversight mechanisms is crucial for effectively monitoring and responding to human rights protection and promotion. The Support should focus on enhancing the capacity of institutions tasked with upholding human rights, the rule of law, and anti-corruption efforts to prevent, detect, prosecute, and remedy legal and constitutional violations. . The emphasis should be on encouraging the reviews of existing legal frameworks and policies to ensure that they are human rights-based and keep up with internationally recognised best practices and protocols, as well as with Malawi's international legal obligations under the human rights treaties it has ratified. With corruption remaining a national scourge that is obstructing the development ambitions of the country, capacity building on corruption fighting entities, especially on the surveillance, detection and processing of financial crimes and dealing with illicit gains will be a particular priority.

That aside, working on improving monitoring and dealing with human-rights abuses, especially against the most vulnerable elements of society, will be a primordial focus on:

- Strengthen the capacity of the Malawi Human Rights Commission to deliver on its mandate.
- Strengthen the establishment of a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up to facilitate the implementation of human rights recommendations.
- Support the government, MHRC/Ombudsman, and civil society to implement, monitor and report on international commitments
- Support MHRC/Ombudsman to undertake investigations into human rights issues
- Support digital transformation of the justice and security sector to ensure effective systems for monitoring grievances and human rights violations, and enhancing access to justice through the expeditious investigations and disposal of cases
- Provide professional and institutional development support for the justice sector institutions
- Provide subject-matter expertise for legislative reforms

v. Access to justice, human rights and rule of law:

It is important to enhance the capacities of justice and security institutions, and strengthen access to justice, security, and protection services, especially for marginalised groups in situations of vulnerability, including women, children, persons with albinism, persons with

disabilities, irregular migrants, and the LGBTQI persons, older persons, persons deprived of their liberty, and human rights defenders. The support rests on a supply and demand equation that combines enhanced service delivery by resilient justice, security, and human rights institutions with the public's ability to access such services and hold duty-bearers to account.

Adopting a Human Rights-Based Approach to development includes:

- Conducting a causal analysis of development challenges
- Role pattern analysis to identify the duty-bearers and rights-holders
- Capacity gap analysis to empower duty-bearers to discharge their duties and rights-holders to claim their rights

By increasing public confidence in the sector, support is designed to be catalytic, strengthening state-society relations and creating an enabling environment for development. Malawi faces a **shortage of qualified lawyers**, prompting discussions on reforms to allow paralegals to provide representation in lower courts. There have been discussions around reforms that would allow paralegals to provide representation services in the lower courts. The UN would explore opportunities for support in this area. The UN needs to engage at national and subnational levels, ensuring that solutions are put in place to ensure that traditional justice mechanisms are rationally applied to ensure the

accessibility of justice in remote areas. The focus should be placed upon bringing about normative change, not only by strengthening transparency, accountability, and oversight mechanisms and by enhancing performance management of national institutions, but also by empowering civil society actors to enhance the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights and support survivors of SGBV to access justice and interrelate with traditional justice mechanisms. Digital justice and the establishment of e-courts have gradually enabled the justice system to fast-track cases and secure the release of incarcerated persons by facilitating bail applications remotely.

The specific areas requiring support include:

- Strengthening justice mechanisms to reduce case backlog and arbitrary detention through online case management and e-courts.
- Supporting the drafting, reviewing and implementation of key legislation to strengthen core functions of governance and rule of law, with particular attention to human and women's rights issues.
- Increasing the oversight capacity of key rule of law institutions.
- Increasing awareness-raising and education about human rights, for rights-holders to claim their rights, and for duty-bearers to discharge their obligations.

vi. Gender equality and women empowerment – The UN and its stakeholders need to take into consideration the following opportunities:

- The State has enacted several laws and policies to address harmful practices with the aim of eliminating prejudices and practices that violate the rights of women and children.
- Strengthen implementation of existing national laws and policies that have also been adopted at local level with some traditional leaders being champions for eradication of harmful practices.
- Strengthen existing community structures including referrals such as community victim support units, community paralegals, child protection officers, village committees and chief councils to serve as avenues where women and girls can lodge complaints.
- Strengthen implementation of Male Engagement Strategy to achieve gender equality, protect women and girls from violence, prevent HIV and improve sexual reproductive health
- Increase education and awareness-raising on sexual and reproductive health rights, and enhance access to modern contraceptives.
- Reform the economy to address gender inequalities through women's economic empowerment.



C. INADEQUATE AND UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF INVESTMENTS IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Government of Malawi has made progress in prioritizing that the education and health sectors consistently receive a lion's share of the national budget. However, the budgets for the education and health sectors have been below the 20% Dakar Commitment on Education for All by the African Union and the 15% Abuja Declaration target for African States. Other sectors such as nutrition, social welfare/ protection, WASH, science, technology, and innovation continue to receive sub optimal investments. Since Malawi is a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, it has an obligation to carefully justify the introduction of any deliberately retrogressive measures, such as decreasing budget allocations to economic and social rights. Malawi continues to have both financial and technical resource constraints to provide adequate and quality social services and create jobs for urban residents. Given the status quo, Malawi's continued rapid population growth will significantly increase the social sector investments and worsen the country's ability to meet the basic social service needs.

Some of the opportunities to consider include:

- (i) Private and public sector partnerships (PPP) – Acceleration of PPP is needed to ensure investment in human

capital. However, while the enabling legislative and regulatory framework is in place, it is not fully enforced as government employees working in PPP institutions lack the necessary skills and capacities to guide PPPs through the project life cycle.

- (ii) The Generation Equality campaign both at global and national levels offers a greater platform to accelerate efforts in the Decade of Action and Delivery (2020-2030) in advancing Gender Equality. Malawi is a co-lead of Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership, and the country made commitments to change the status quo. Enhancing accountability on such commitments can help ensure some strides are realised as far as GEWE is concerned.
- (iii) The youth bulge, if properly harnessed, can present an opportunity. To attain this, however, there is a need to address challenges which young people disproportionately face, including: high unemployment; inadequate competitive technical skills for the labour market; limited access to productive

assets; lack of technologies and financial resources; stigmatisation and discrimination of youth with disabilities; high unmet contraceptive needs especially in the rural and hard to reach areas, youth-at-risk who may be associated with cliques and gang activity.

- (iv) Supporting safe, orderly, and regular migration for everyone; promote low-cost diaspora remittance flows for development.
- (v) Progressively realise the economic, social, and cultural rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or justify any retrogression, and implement the

recommendations that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights will issue following its review of Malawi's initial report under the Covenant.

- (vi) Implementation of the Malawi Transforming Education commitments to promote inclusive, equitable, safe, and health-promoting schools; learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development, transforming the teaching profession to make it autonomous, trusted and accountable; digital learning and transformation; and increasing domestic financing to at least 15-20% of national expenditure, and at least 4-6% of GDP.

D. CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ENERGY

Key SDGs which are affected by the climatic shocks and environmental degradation are SDG 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14 and 15.

Malawi is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, which are becoming more frequent and intense. Floods, strong winds, dry spells, cyclones, earthquakes, and landslides continue to disrupt livelihoods, damage infrastructure, and displace large numbers of IDP, reversing progress, particularly in the infrastructure and energy sectors. These natural disasters, especially the recent cyclones, have reversed the gains made, especially in

the infrastructure and energy sector. Environmental degradation is worsened by the increasing population growth which exerts high dependency on natural systems with more land being converted to agriculture as there are no alternative livelihood opportunities. Also, more forests continue to be unsustainably harvested for the wood and charcoal fuel supply as there are limited clean and affordable energy sources. Malawi also suffers from overfishing, widespread soil erosion and degradation from unsustainable

agricultural practices, and the overexploitation and illegal trafficking of wildlife. The combined effects of population growth and climate change are increasing food insecurity, environmental degradation, and poverty levels in the country.

The sector is characterised with the following challenges: Inadequate coordination within and between government and development partners; limited financing, limited preparedness and early warning systems, insufficient levels of awareness about climate change in sectors; limited institutional capacity, insufficient technical capacity (science, data, information and knowledge management, mainstreaming); policy commitments not sufficiently reflected in planning and budget processes, including in other sectors; absence of “whole of government” approach, weak multisectoral approach (with climate change too siloed in environment), and low adoption of climate SMART technologies. Some of the opportunities to be harnessed include:

- (i) The 2024/25 forecasted favourable La Niña weather conditions offer opportunities for improved agriculture harvest.
- (ii) The existence of the National Climate Change Fund that has mobilised funds since 2020 to manage the climate risks in Malawi. However, a lot needs to be done to channel the mobilized funds towards climate change initiatives.

- (iii) A robust carbon trading framework offers significant benefits for Malawi by creating economic opportunities and supporting climate action. It enables Malawi to monetize its carbon assets through international carbon markets, generating revenue for sustainable development projects like renewable energy and reforestation. The framework also enhances the country's capacity to engage in global climate agreements, particularly under the Paris Agreement's Article 6, attracting private investment in low-carbon technologies and job creation. Additionally, it supports emissions reduction efforts, boosts climate resilience, and helps finance conservation projects, aligning Malawi's development goals with global climate objectives.

- (iv) Investing in resilience to mitigate against climate-induced weather shocks. The opportunity cost of not investing in adaptation and mitigation measures will be widespread over time, in terms of foregone public investment in more productive areas. In view of this, government and development partners need to utilise existing local government structures to improve early warning systems, implement measures to reverse land degradation, ensure safe areas of living for communities in flood-prone areas to decrease the risks of forced migration, promote climate SMART technologies, and strengthen adaptation and disaster risk response systems.
- (v) Scale up innovations such as parametric and weather index microinsurance, and proven and successful climate SMART technologies
- (vi) Explore new opportunities on green debt financing to use the proceeds to exclusively fund environmental-friendly interventions.
- (vii) Increased engagement with the private sector to promote alternative renewable and clean energy sources. However, emphasis should be placed on scaling up affordable alternative renewable and clean energy sources.
- (viii) Ensure meaningful participation of marginalised groups in situations of vulnerability, including women, people with disabilities, and children.

OTHER CROSS-CUTTING OPPORTUNITIES

(a) Existing policy and legal

frameworks: The MW2063 First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP- 1), well aligned to the SDGs as per IPRT findings, presents an opportunity to fast-track the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure Malawi meets most of the goals by 2030. However, it is crucial that the sectoral strategic plans and district development plans are well aligned to the MIP-1. Furthermore, the availability of sectoral policies and strategies are opportunities to harness. Nonetheless, implementation of

these needs to be enforced and accelerated.

(b) Pillar and enabler coordination groups (PECGs) and existing district structures:

The establishment of the PECGs provides an opportunity to enhance coordination among stakeholders in the planning, implementation, and reporting in line with the MIP-1 pillars and enablers. Furthermore, Malawi's local government system comprising local councils and its committees at community level are opportunities to domesticate the SDGs through the formulation of local

development plans that are aligned to the national priorities as outlined in the Malawi 2063 and MIP-1.

(c) Data for development and

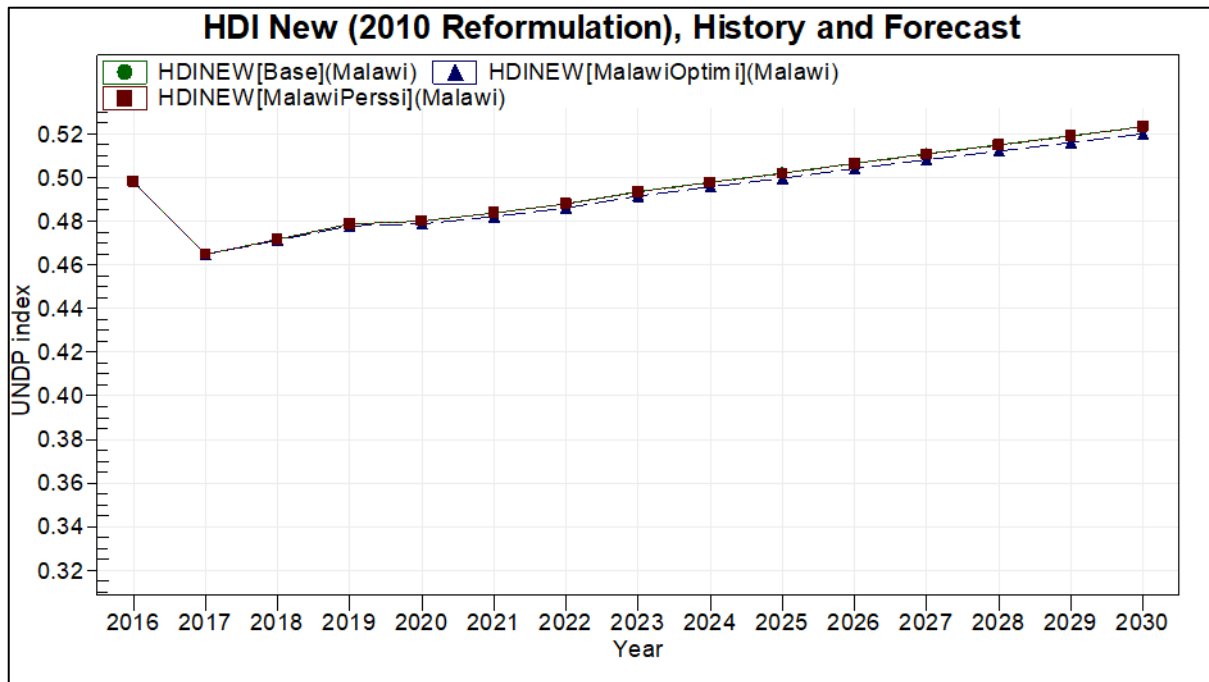
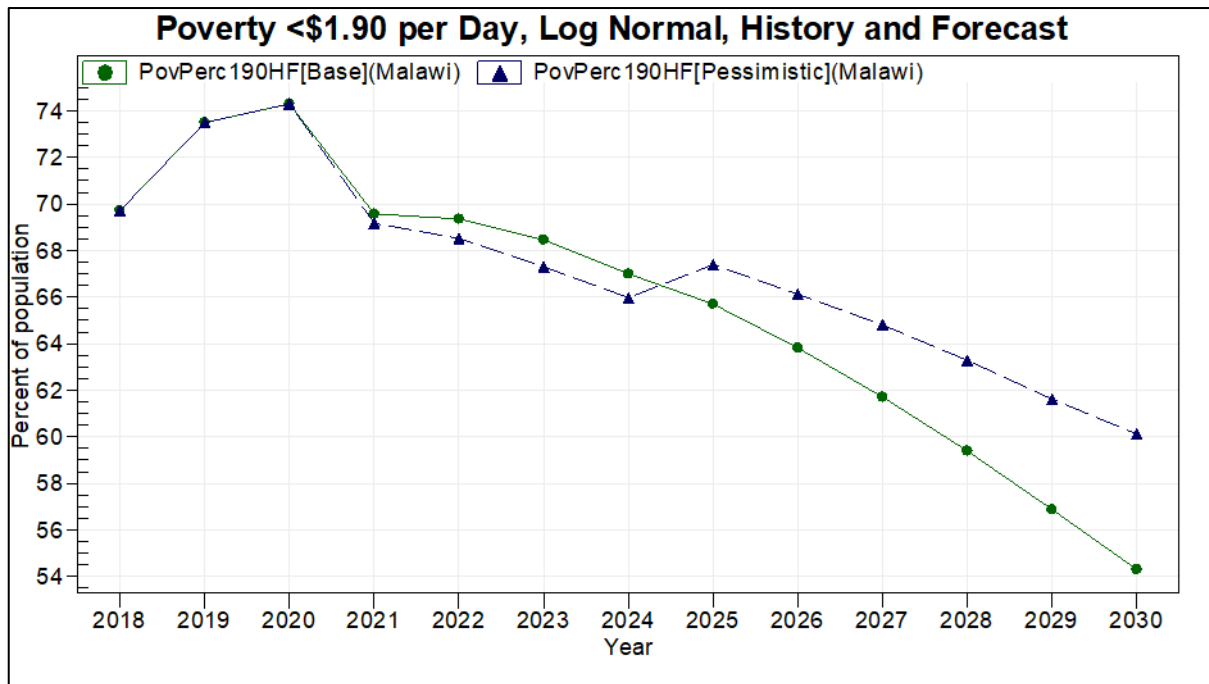
digitalization: The 2019 – 2023 National Statistical System Strategic Plan is an entry point for the stakeholders to achieve coordinated, harmonised, relevant, timely, quality, and accessible statistical information and services. The government through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs has embarked on a reform agenda aimed at strengthening the government wide M&E system which, among other issues, emphasises on the establishment of a Harmonised National Management Information System that links with other selected existing data systems and support the Government of Malawi to collect, aggregate, and disseminate data and information. All these initiatives are important to ensure that there is a supply of high-quality disaggregated data that meets the needs of all stakeholders and reporting obligations at global, national, and sub-national levels. Additionally, E-governance and digitalization have not been fully harnessed to improve business operations and transparency, hence leveraging digitalization will radically transform the economy and forge new

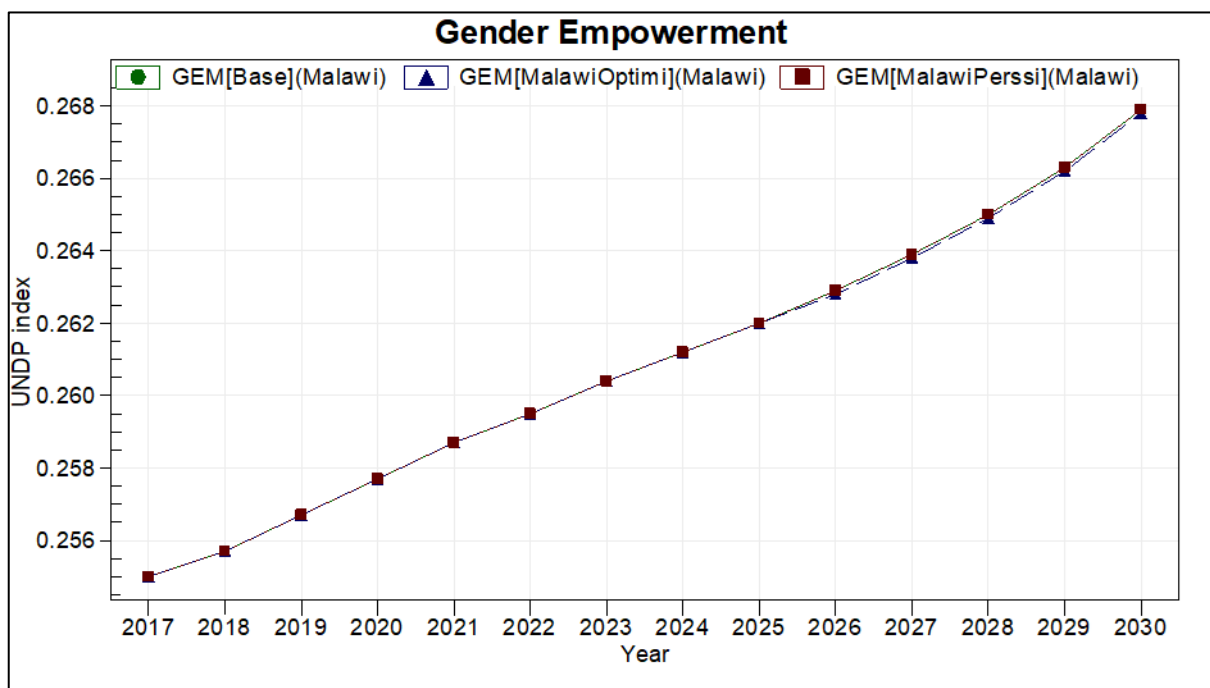
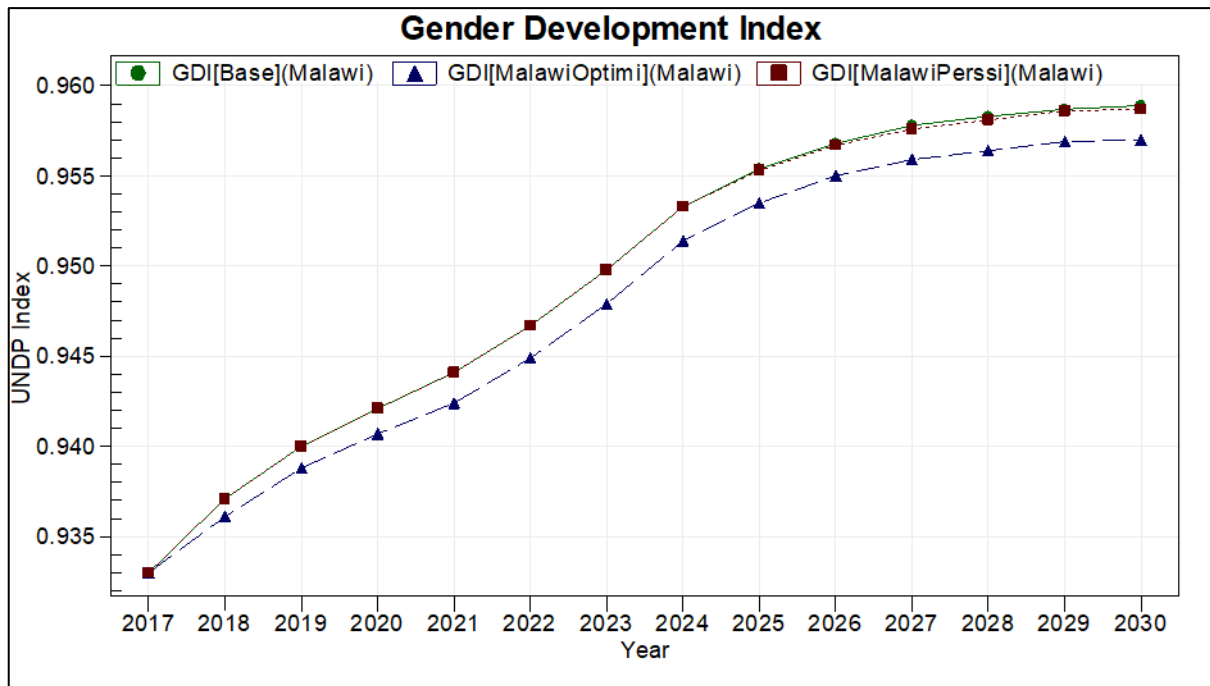
pathways to inclusive resilient growth. The e-Govt is conducting the Digital Readiness Assessment (DRA) for Malawi to assess the country's preparedness for digital transformation, which has the potential to significantly improve access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. The DRA will examine Malawi's digital landscape across five key areas: Government, Digital Public Infrastructure, Connectivity, Regulation, Economy, and People. A central focus is on Digital Inclusion, ensuring that all Malawians, particularly underserved and vulnerable communities, can access and benefit from digital advancements, with the goal of leaving no one behind in the country's digital future. The digital revolution, as evidenced by the interlinked ecosystem of the National ID with MDAs and the private sector, has potential to improve service delivery and reduce economic crimes. Many MDAs have already incorporated the National ID into their operations, enabling both online and offline verification and authentication processes. Key examples include the Affordable Input Programme of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, the Unified Beneficiary Registration, and various financial institutions.

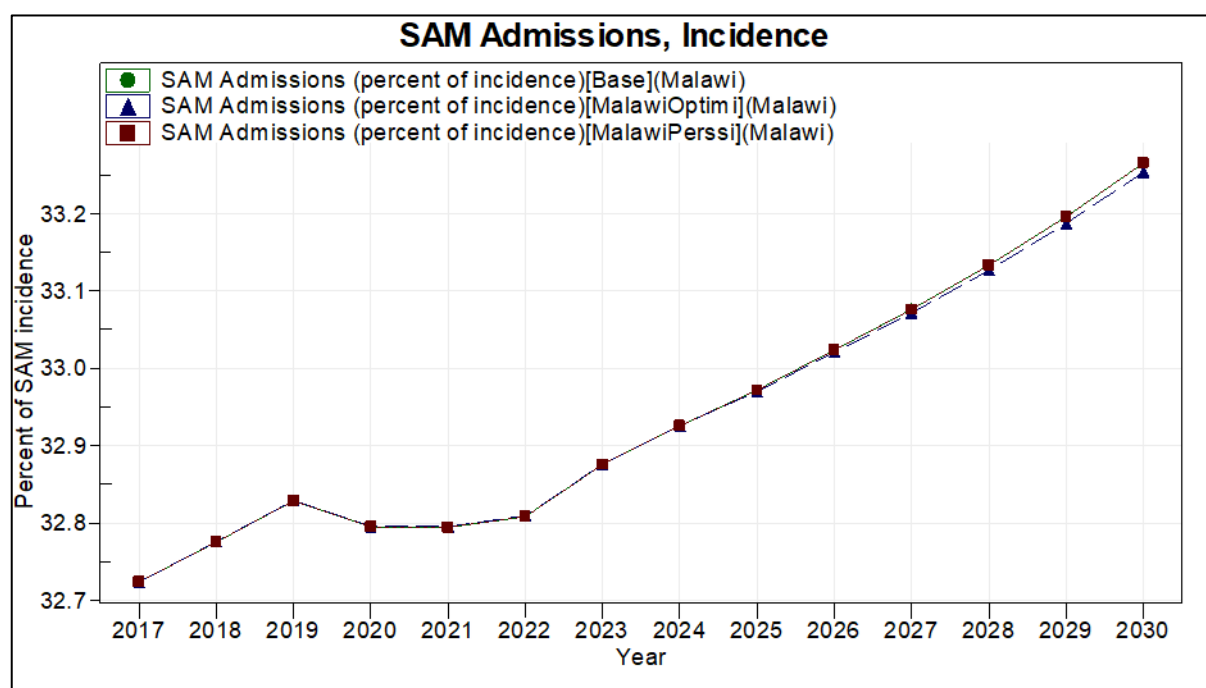
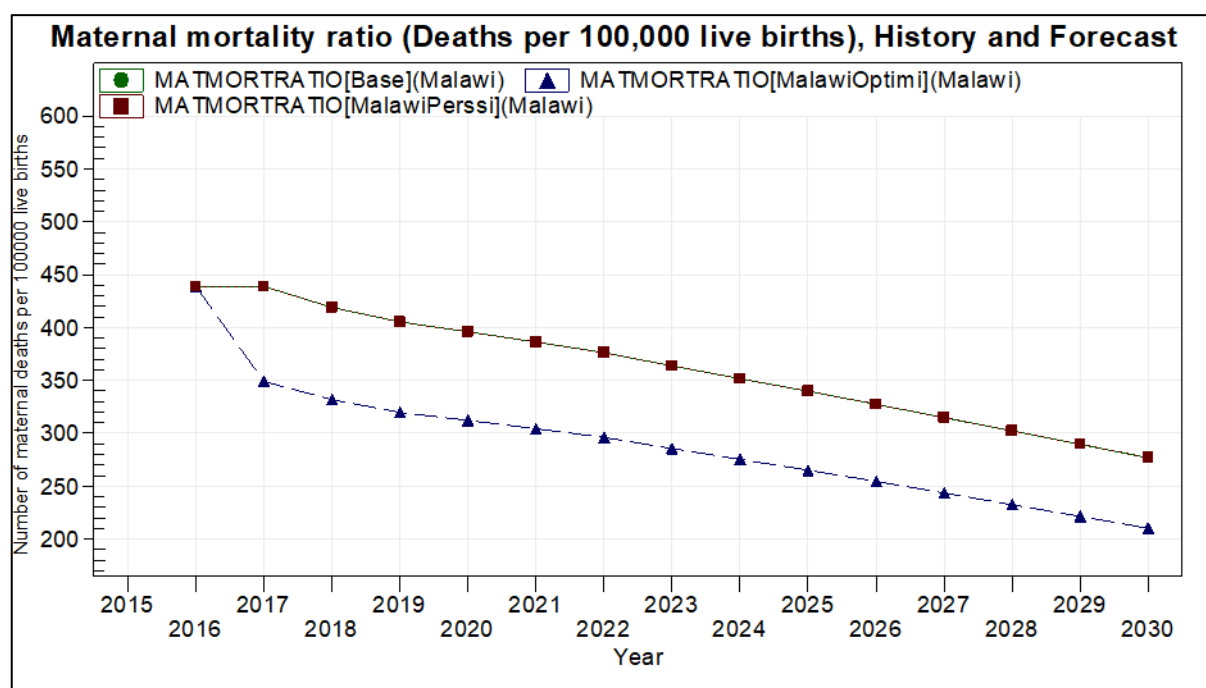
ANNEXES

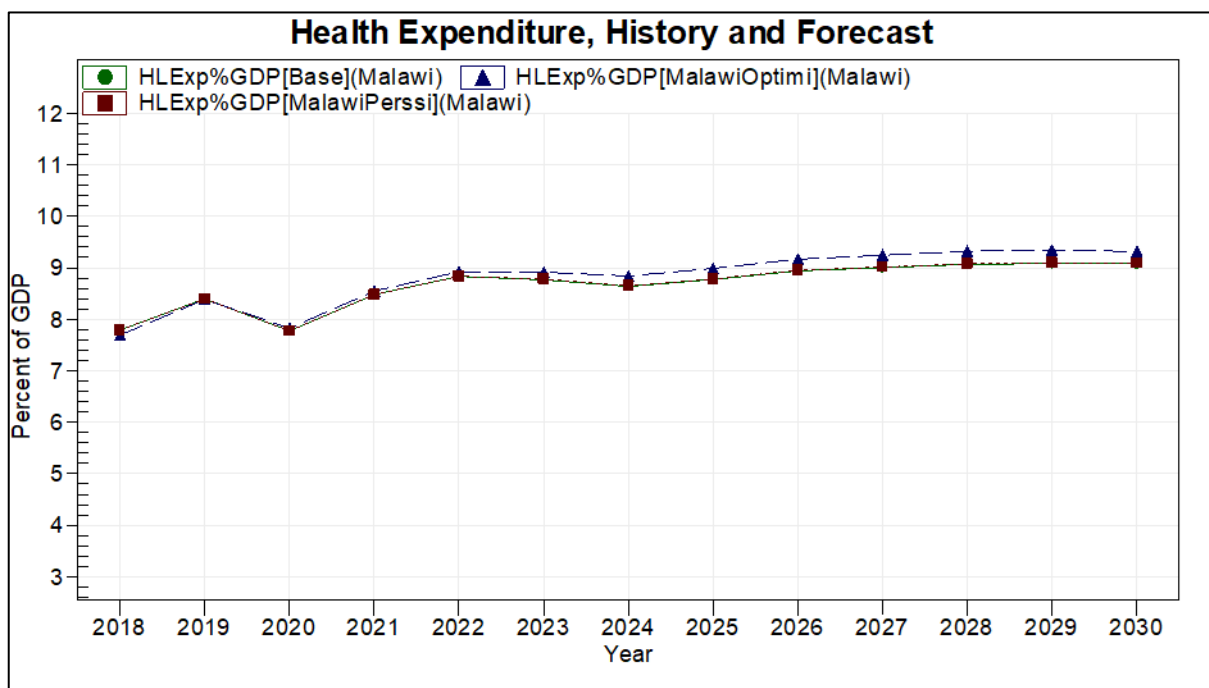
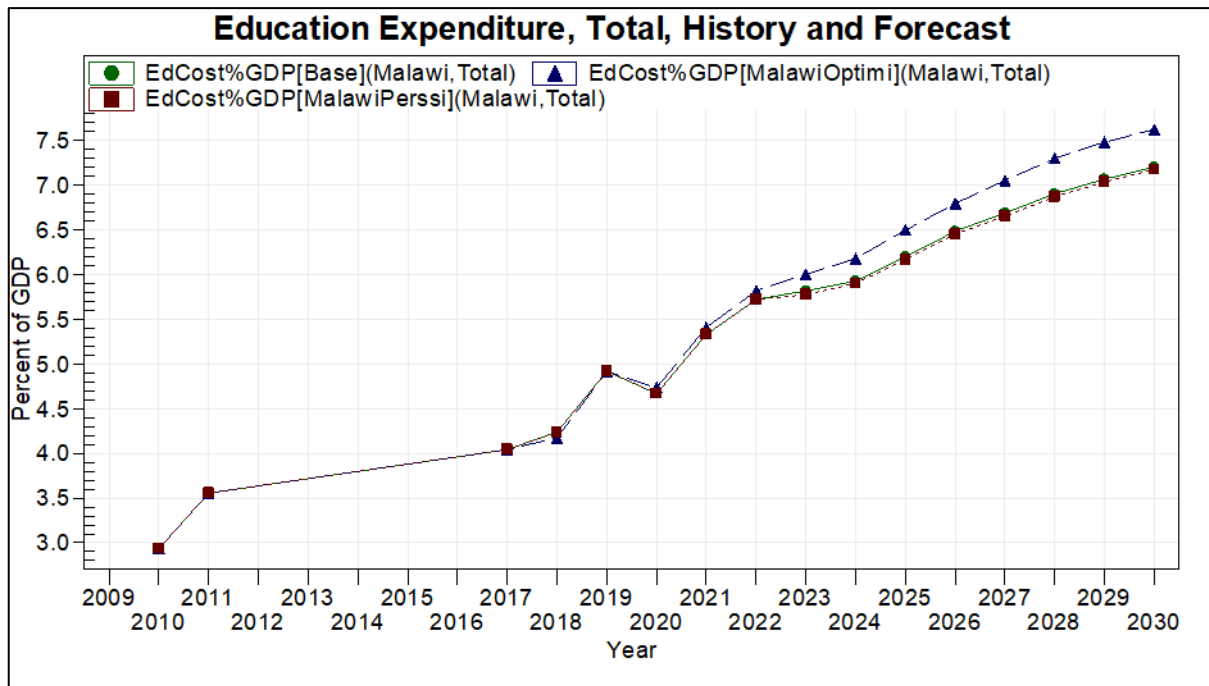
Annex 1: Results of the International Futures (IFs) model

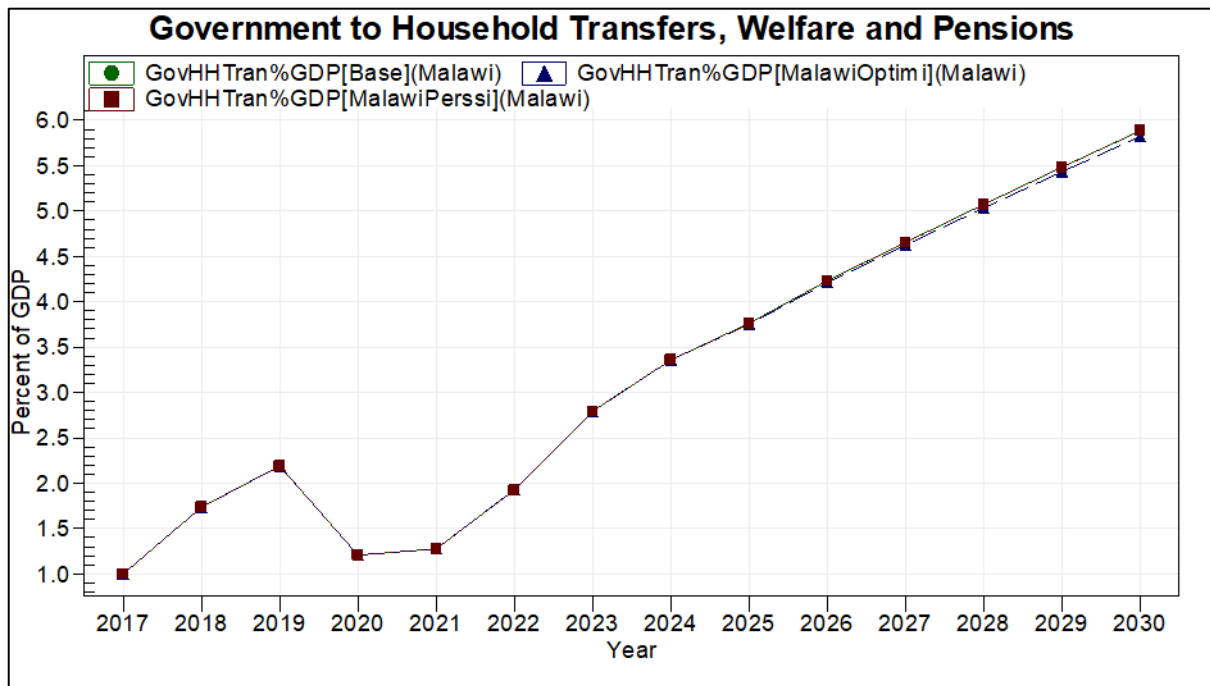
1. Social development and exclusion analysis



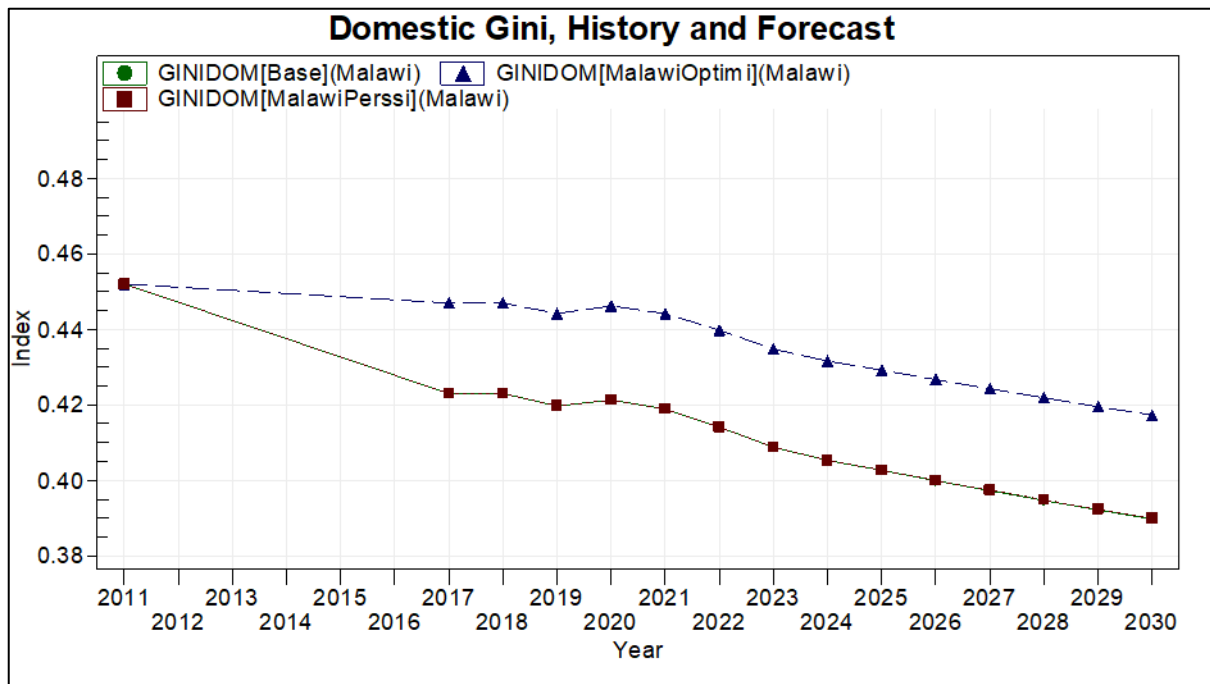


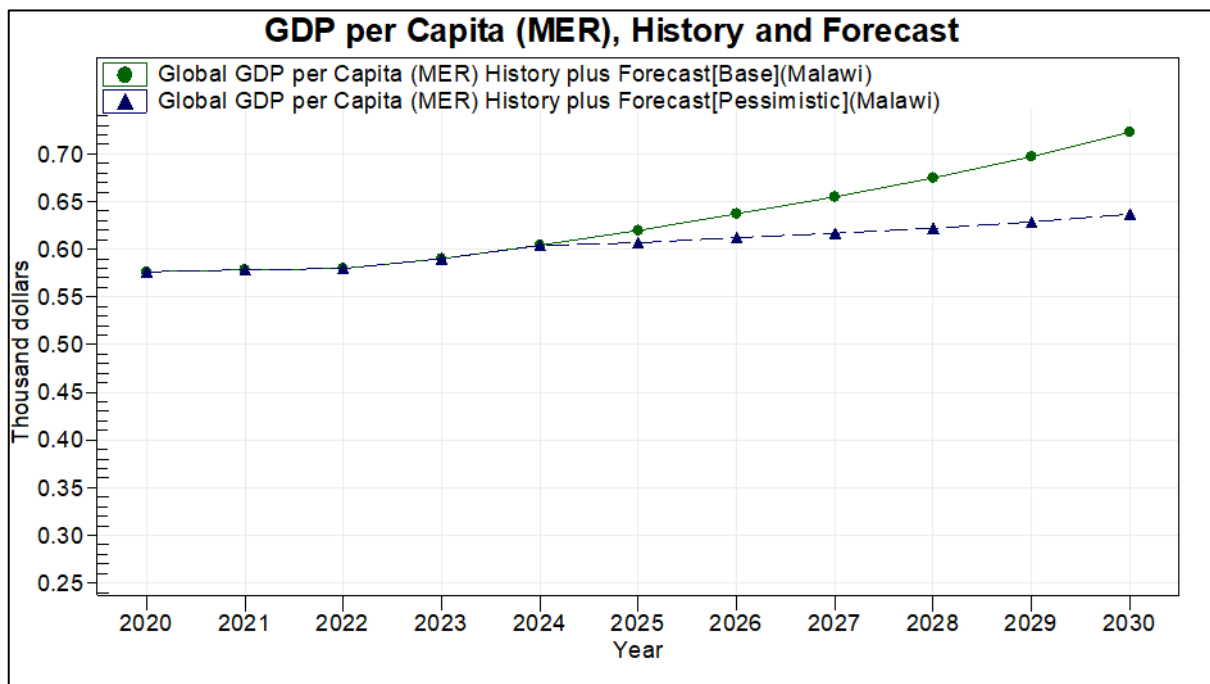
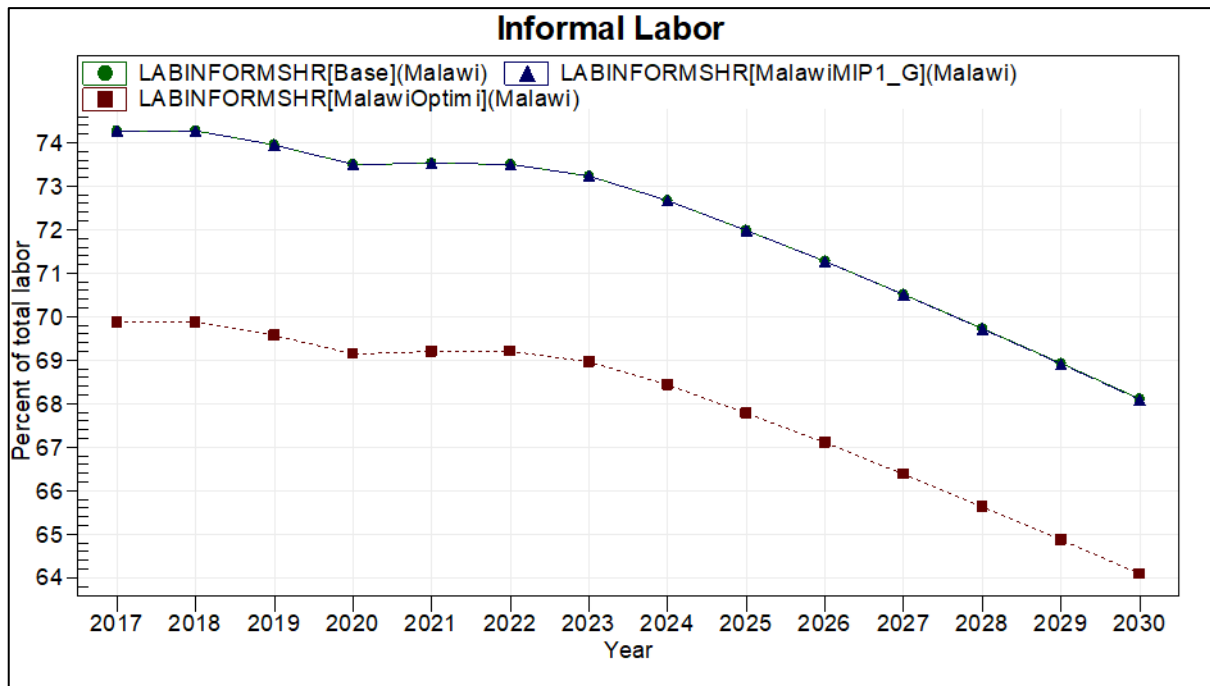


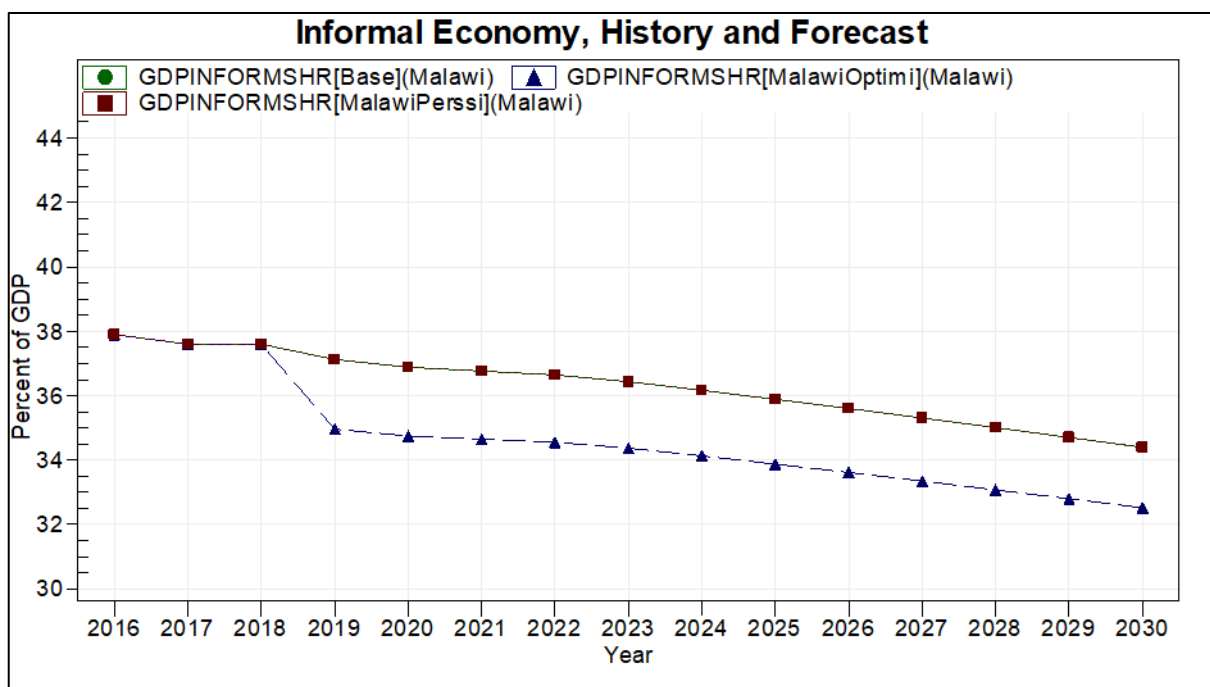
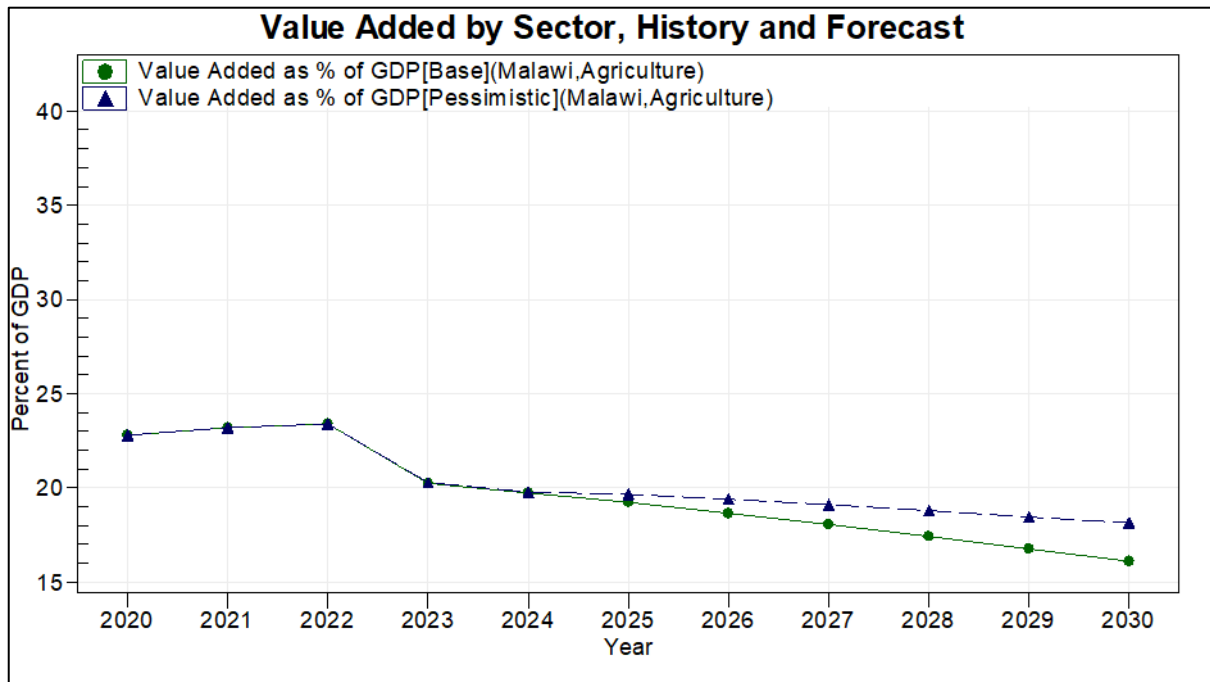


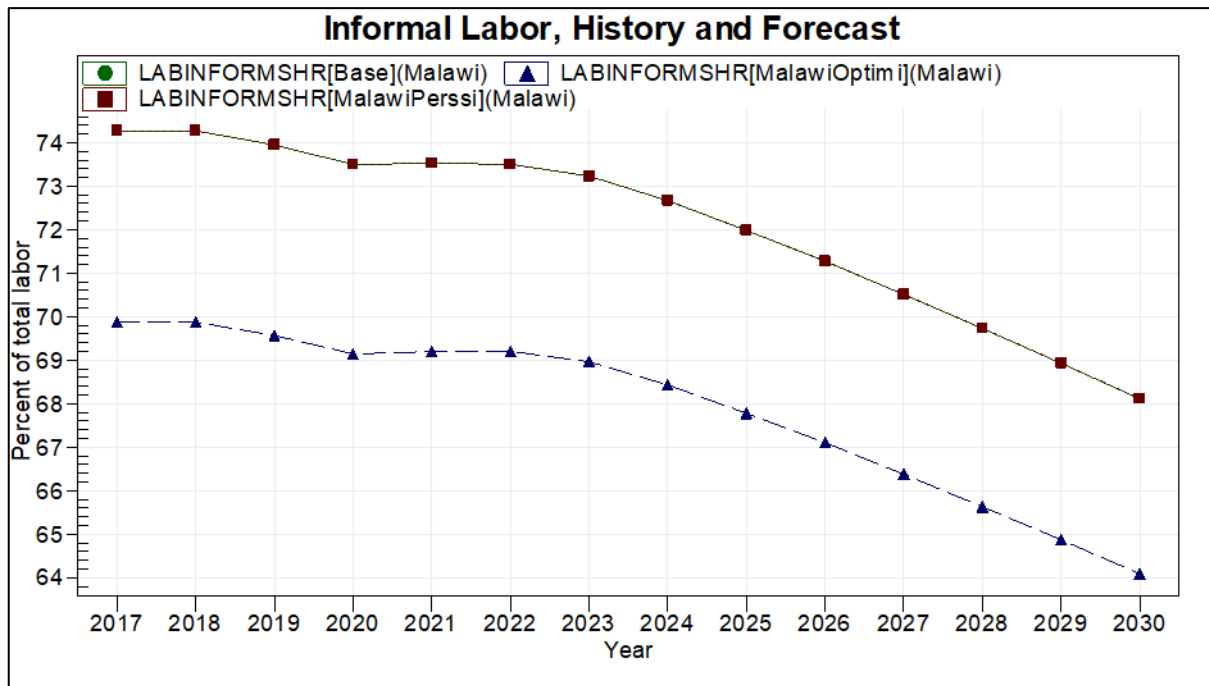


2. Economic transformation analysis

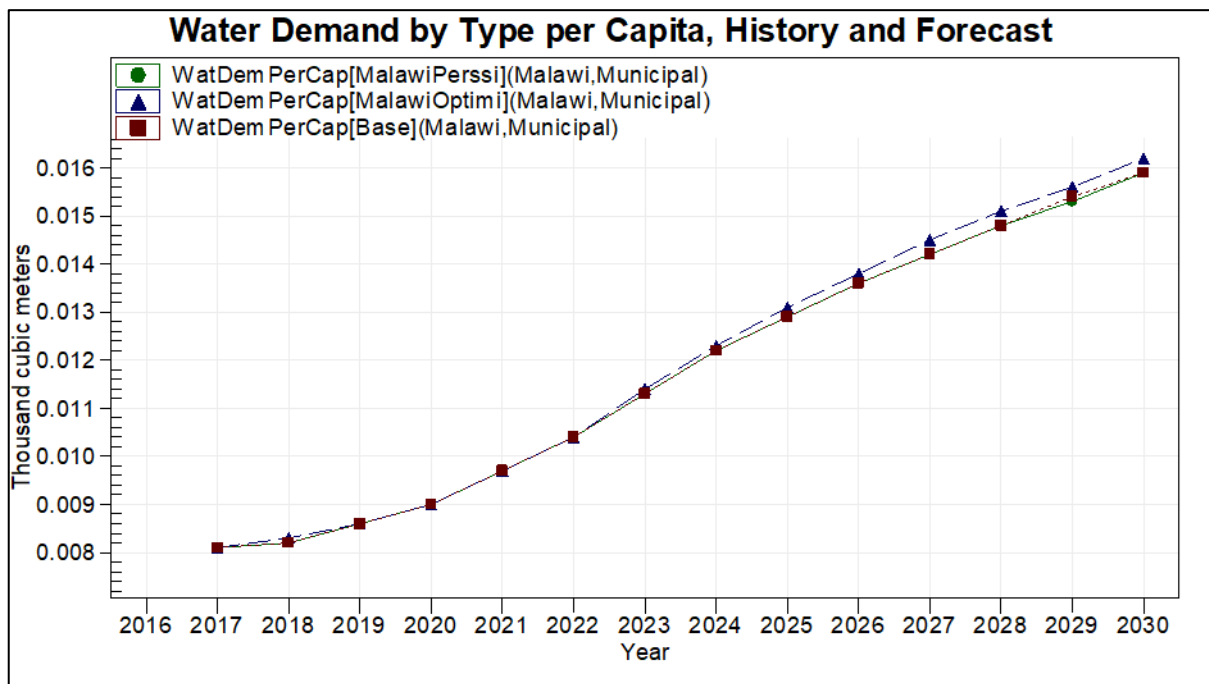








3. Environment and climate change



Annex 2: List of Stakeholders Consulted

No	Stakeholder category	Name of stakeholder
1	Government	Ministry of Homeland Security
2	Government	Ministry of Education
3	Government	Ministry of Agriculture
4	Government	Ministry of Justice
5	Government	Ministry of Gender
6	Government	Ministry of Labour
7	Government	Ministry of Youth
8	Government	Ministry of Health
9	Government	Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change
10	Government	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
11	Government	Ministry of Finance
12	Government	Office of the President and Cabinet
13	Government	Department of Disaster Management Affairs
14	Government	National Registration Bureau
15	Government	Malawi Police Service
16	Government	Malawi Human Rights Commission
17	Government	Malawi Electoral Commission
18	Government	National Statistical Office
19	Government	National Planning Commission
20	Government	Malawi Investment and Trade Centre
21	CSO	OXFAM
22	CSO	Plan International
23	CSO	Action Aid
24	CSO	World Vision International
25	CSO	The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
26	CSO	Centre for the Development of People
27	CSO	Malawi Network of People Living with HIV / AIDS
28	CSO	NGO Coalition on Child Rights
29	CSO	Paralegal Advisory Service Institute
30	CSO	Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi
31	CSO	Federation of Disability Organisation in Malawi
32	CSO	Malawi Economic Justice Network
33	CSO	Gender and Justice Unit
34	CSO	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
35	Development partners	Norway
36	Development partners	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
37	Development partners	European Union
38	Development partners	Flanders
39	Development partners	Germany

No	Stakeholder category	Name of stakeholder
40	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
41	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Technical, Entrepreneurial Vocational Education and Training Authority
42	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Standard Bank
43	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Telekom Networks Malawi
44	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Employers' Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM)
45	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Teachers Union of Malawi
46	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Malawi Congress of Trade Unions
47	Academia, private sector and professional associations	Women in Agri-Business

Annex 3: Multidimensional SDG Risk Analysis Framework

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
SDG 16 & 17	Political stability	Risks to the stability of established political and government structures in the country resulting from politically driven factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to political system/government and democracy consolidation. Politically compromised government/institutions Irregular changes to governance structures or principles. Compromised electoral competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corruption that will compromise campaign promises. 	5	5	RC Advocacy Engagements	Immediate-long-term
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited formal-sector employment opportunities for the growing youth population leading to recruitment to political movements. 	3	4	Deepen UNCT, and DPPA joint analysis and support for peace and dialogue infrastructure and processes at all levels	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged or widespread social unrest or disruptions caused 	4	4		

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment towards implementation of the electoral reforms 	by economic challenges.			Electoral support	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepening regionalism, ethnicism and religious polarisation. 	4	3	Support the creation of youth and women-centred livelihood opportunities at the local level.	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deep-rooted or antagonistic political polarisation leading to the over-politicisation of national development issues 	5	3	Sustained advocacy towards the implementation of the	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
							electoral reforms Civic education and transforming social norms	
SDG 16 & 17	Democratic space	Risks to democratic and human rights institutions, and to civil and political rights resulting from shrinking civic space, exclusion, repression, and intimidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undue limits on democratic rights or freedoms • Constraints on civil society, rights actors or rights institutions • Active repression of civil society, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrictive policies/legal framework on media, human rights and civic activism including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limits to rights to peaceful assembly and expressions. ○ The closure/outlawing of human rights entities 	4 3 4	3 3 4	UN advocacy and support for civil society dialogue and engagement Support civil society	Immediate-long-term

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
			rights actors, and the media.	<p>due to non-adherence to the NGO amendment law.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Censorship and lack of access to information 			<p>strengthening</p> <p>Advocate for policy/legal reforms</p>	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of commitment/implementation of policies/legal regime for meaningful participation or representation (for women, youth and PWDs) 	4	2		
SDG 1, 5, 10 & 17	Social cohesion, gender	Risks to social unity and equality resulting from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discriminatory practices ● Power imbalances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prejudice on the basis of race, belief and ethnicity. 	3	2	Joint UNCT support for peace and	Immediate-long term

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
	Gender equality and non-discrimination.	direct and indirect discrimination, horizontal inequalities, and demographic trends.	within society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender-based violence Demographic pressures (youth bulge). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grievances based on ethnic and religious lines. Hate speech in the public domain. Unmanaged urbanisation and existence of slums Unequal rights afforded to minority groups/women. Social exclusions /stigmatisation of minority groups (LGBTQI+, PWA). 	4	3	dialogue infrastructure and processes Targeted local/community based social dialogue, conflict prevention Support regular assessment and analysis exercises at local levels Strengthen human	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
							rights and protection mechanisms at the local level	
SDG 16 & 17	Internal Security	Risks to the security of the country, people and infrastructure that may impact the ability of the international community to deliver effectively as a result of security issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal conflict and insecurity Regional/Cross-border insecurity, including border disputes Climate-related disasters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Cross-border insecurity 	3	4	Support security sector reform processes, including professionalism of security and rule of law institutions and actors	Immediate-long-term
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil unrest including demonstrations, protests against 	4	4	Support socio-economic	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
				economic challenges and corruption			risk mapping and analysis at national and subnational levels	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election and post-election violence 	4	4		
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food insecurity 	4	3	Support public sector reforms especially financial management systems	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate-induced forced displacements 	4	3	Advocate and support food	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
							systems transformation and diversification	
SDG 16 & 17	Justice and rule of law	Risk to the fair, effective and comprehensive implementation and application of the principles of justice, the rule of law and accountability from issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak and compromised oversight institutions. Security forces who act outside of or do not respect the law. Ineffective and incomplete implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak/challenged human rights and accountability institutions (i.e., ACB, MHRC, NMRF, and Office of the Ombudsman (OoO)) 	4	3	Support rule of law sector strengthening	Immediate-long-term
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ineffective and incomplete implementation and application of the principles of justice, the rule of 	4	3	Joint UNCT support to accountability institutions, systems and processes	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
			tion and application of the principles of justice, human rights, the rule of law and accountability.	<p>law and accountability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of public trust/citizen perception of unprofessionalism of MPS officers. 			UNCT support for the implementation of human rights and the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Mechanisms Support access to justice, including using digital technologies to improve	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
							justice delivery and transparency	
SDG 16 & 17	Displacement and migration	Risks to the population and to the stability of the country, resulting from pressures associated with displacement and/or migration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement of people within and outside the country and from its neighbors • Level of rights and protection afforded to migrants • Social, economic, cultural, environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased migration into Malawi induced by the violence in Mozambique, climate and the global economic crisis (including using Malawi as a transit to South Africa) 	4	3	Support decentralisation and investment in local economic opportunities	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of rights and protection afforded to migrants. 	3	2	Support creation of youth and women centered livelihood	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
			al impact of migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A growing xenophobic attitude towards refugees, migrants and asylum seekers 	4	2	opportunities	
SDG 3 & 17	Public Health	Risk to the population, the economy and stability of the country resulting from actual and emerging health emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase in preventable or treatable health issues (incl. due to climate change impacts) Epidemics, pandemics and infectious diseases (including due to climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-emergence/outbreak of diseases like polio and cholera 	4	4	Health systems strengthening	Immediate-long-term

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
			change impacts)					
SDG 12, 13,14,15& 17	Environment and climate	Risks to the ecology of the territory, its ecosystem and its people resulting from issues associated with the environment, climate and natural resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing frequency and intensity of natural hazards or extreme weather events Severity of ecological damage and climate impacts High economic reliance on climate sensitive sectors and high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dry spells and drought. 	4	5	Agricultural systems transformation	Immediate-long-term
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perennial floods and heavy rains and cyclones. 	4	4	Support research in crop diversification	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyclones and rainstorms 	4	4		
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destruction of infrastructure for power generation, road network and social services. 	4	4	Support research and investment in renewable energy	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deforestation 	3	3		

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
			<p>exposure of productive assets to climate risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of/inadequate climate action plans and strategies • Absence or non-implementation of climate legislation and policies • Poor health of ecosystems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate-related disasters (cyclones, floods, drought) 	4	3	<p>Support DRR/preparedness and contingency planning</p> <p>Support investment in clean energy economy and climate smart agriculture</p> <p>Support ecosystem restoration and</p>	

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
							biodiversity conservation, including transboundary cooperation	
SDG 8 & 17	Economic Stability	Risks to the economic, financial and fiscal stability of the country which could impact governance, social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Macro-economic volatility Economic underdevelopment Economic inequality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currency devaluation or hyperinflation Deep-reaching austerity measures 	5	5	Support GoM, businesses to take advantage of opportunities under AfCTA by supporting	Immediate-long-term
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to pay public sector fair wages 	4	4		
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible financial crisis / 	5	4		

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
		cohesion, or people's ability to satisfy their needs		<p>economic/debt distress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collapse of key employers and industries, especially small-scale businesses 			industrialisation, standardisation.	
					3	4	Support investment in wealth creation and livelihood opportunities at local level (SMEs)	
SDG 16 & 17	Regional and Global influences	Risks to the stability, safety and prosperity of the country as a result of the actions of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International tensions • Fragility in neighbouring countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spillover of conflict or criminal actors from outside (the insurrection in northern Mozambique). 	3	4	Support Malawi regional and subregional	Immediate-long-term

SDG	Risk area	Description	Scope/specific risks	Examples of risk factors / Drivers (not exhaustive)	Likelihood (1 – 5)	Impact (1 – 5)	Response, mitigation	Time horizon (short, medium, long term)
		external actors or the influence of external events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanctions, exploitation, or dependencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-border organised crime due to border porosity. Human/child trafficking Risk of violent extremism in Malawi Donor flight due to focus on the Russia/Ukraine war. 	3	2	engagements (peace & security, regional trade)	
					4	2		
					2	4		
					3	4		

Annex 4: List of Partners

SECTOR	PARTNERS
Public sector – National level	Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change, Ministry of Lands, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Gender Community Development and Social Welfare, National Statistical Office, Malawi Bureau of Standards, Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Trade and Industry and various district councils, National Planning Commission (NPC), Department of Water Resources, Department of Disaster Management Affairs, Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, Department of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Homeland Security (Malawi Police Service), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Child Justice Forum, Malawi Judiciary, Malawi Law Commission, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Youth and Sports
Public sector – Local level	Nkhata Bay, Mzimba; Ntchisi; Dowa; Dedza; Salima; Mangochi; Machinga; Mulanje; Chiradzulu; Chikwawa and Nsanje
Private sector	Various private companies, including those in agricultural inputs sub-sector, cooking oil sector, Standard Bank of Malawi Limited, Internet providers, Airtel, TNM, MTL and the MCCCCI, SACCOS
National human rights institutions	Malawi Human Rights Commission, Office of the Ombudsman, Independent Police Complaint Commission
Civil society	NGOs (both local and international), CISANET, Farmers Union of Malawi, NASFAM, SWET, WRM, THP, FUM, AECDM, WESNET, Nkhoma Synod, Blantyre Synod, World Vision International, World Relief, Save The Children, NGO CCR, Malawi Girl Guides Association (MAGGA); Family Planning Association of Malawi (FPAM); Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO); Girls Network (GENET); Armref; ActionAid Malawi; Ntchisi Organisation for Youth Development (NOYD); FOCESSE; Nayuchi AIDS Support (NANES)

SECTOR	PARTNERS
Academia	<p>Public universities: Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Malawi University of Science and Technology, University of Malawi, Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences, Mzuzu University, Kamuzu University of Health Sciences.</p> <p>Private universities: University of Livingstonia, Catholic University, UNICAF, Malawi Assemblies of God University</p>
International partners	FCDO, Irish Embassy, Royal Norwegian Embassy, EU, Flanders, KFW, USAID, World Bank, Embassy of Iceland, Embassy of Ireland, KOICA, SDC
UN agencies	UNFPA, WFP, WHO, IFAD, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, UN Women, UNESCO, UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, OHCHR
Foundations	Gavi Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Special groups	Women, adolescents, youth, people living with disability, chiefs, children, the elderly, the poor including the ultra-poor
Legislative	Parliament of Malawi
Media	Media Institute of Southern Africa – Malawi Chapter (MISA Malawi), Spotlight Media Network, Association of Environmental Journalists in Malawi (AEJM), individual media houses, Association of Women in the Media (AWOM), Media Council of Malawi, Blantyre Press Club, Bwaila Press Club, Nyika Press Club, Association of Community Radio Stations in Malawi