

Country Profile: Malawi

Most Malawians rely on subsistence farming, but food supply is precarious and the country is prone to natural disasters of extremes, from drought to heavy rainfalls - putting it in need of thousands of tonnes of food aid every year.

HISTORY

For three decades Malawi's destiny was tied to its totalitarian president-for-life, Kamuzu Banda. In the mid-1990s under popular pressure, elections were held, and he lost - giving Malawians a taste for multi-party democracy. His successor, Bakili Muluzi, removed many of the repressions of the Banda years, but the leadership was accused of corruption. Social problems persist, including poverty and the high rate of HIV-Aids infection.

RECENT SITUATION

Malawi has been pushed by world financial bodies to free up its economy. Since the mid-1990s it has privatised many state-run corporations. Its single major natural resource, agricultural land, is under severe pressure from rapid population growth. A programme to tackle HIV-Aids was launched in 2004, with President Muluzi revealing that his brother had died from the disease. Malawi boasts a variety of landscapes, from wetlands and lakes to mountains and forests. National parks and game reserves beckon visitors. More than half the population lives below the poverty line. Moves are under way to exploit uranium reserves to boost meagre export earnings. Until January 2008, Malawi was one of only six African countries to maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan rather than China.

FACTS

- **Full name:** Republic of Malawi
- **Population:** 13.9 Million (UN 2007)
- **Capital:** Lilongwe
- **Area:** 118,484 sq km (45,747 sq miles)
- **Internet domain:** .mw
- **International dialling code:** +265
- **Major religion:** Christianity
- **Major languages:** Chichewa, English (official)
- **HDI value*¹:** 160. Malawi (0.493) [1. Norway (0.971)] (2009)
- **Human Poverty Index (HPI-1)*²:** 160. Malawi (28.2) [21. UK] (2007)
- **Life expectancy at birth (years) :** 48 (UNICEF 2007)
- **Probability of not surviving past 40 (%):** 44.4%
- **Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births):** 71 (UNICEF 2007)
- **HIV prevalence (% aged 15-49):** 11.9 (UNICEF 2007)



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Education

- **Combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (%):**
 - **124. Malawi (63.1)** [1. Australia (113.0)] (2005)
- **Adult Literacy Rate: (% ages 15 and older): 72** (UNICEF 2007)

Economy and Trade

- **GDP per capita:** No. of people lived below the national poverty line. (PPP US\$):
 - **174. Malawi (667) (4th Lowest)** [1. Luxembourg (60,228)] (2005)
- **GNI Per Capita:** US \$160 (World Bank, 2006)
- **Gini Coefficient *³:** **66. Malawi (39)** [126. Denmark (24.7)] (2007)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 Malawi kwacha (MK) = 100 tambala
- **Main exports:** Vanilla Tobacco, tea, sugar, cotton
- **CO₂ emissions share of world total (%): 0.0 (2004)** [0.0 (1990)]

Water, sanitation and nutritional status

- **People without access to an improved water source (%): 24** (UNICEF 2007)
- **Population using improved sanitation (%): 60 (2006)** [47 (1990)]
- **Population Undernourished (% of total population): 35 (2002-2004)** [50 (1990-1992)]

Politics

- **Government:** United Democratic Front (UDF)
- **President:** Bingu wa Mutharika
 - President Mutharika has taken a tough anti-corruption stance and quit his party.
- **Year Women received right to vote:** 1961
- **Internally displaced people (thousands, 2006): n/a**



*¹ The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income).

*² The Human Poverty Index for developing countries (HPI-1), focuses on the proportion of people below a threshold level in the same dimensions of human development as the HDI.

*³ The **Gini coefficient** is most prominently used as a measure of inequality of wealth distribution. A value of 0 represents absolute equality, and a value of 100 absolute inequality.

*⁴ Rankings are out of a total of 177.