

= Malawi =

Malawi (/ m??l??wi / , / m??l??wi / or / ?mæl?wi / ; Chichewa : [malá?i] or [maláwi]) , officially the Republic of Malawi , is a landlocked country in southeast Africa that was formerly known as Nyasaland . It is bordered by Zambia to the northwest , Tanzania to the northeast , and Mozambique on the east , south and west . The country is separated from Tanzania and Mozambique by Lake Malawi . Malawi is over 118 @,@ 000 km2 (45 @,@ 560 sq mi) with an estimated population of 16 @,@ 777 @,@ 547 (July 2013 est .) . Its capital is Lilongwe , which is also Malawi 's largest city ; the second largest is Blantyre and the third is Mzuzu . The name Malawi comes from the Maravi , an old name of the Nyanja people that inhabit the area . The country is also nicknamed " The Warm Heart of Africa " .

Malawi is among the smallest countries in Africa . Lake Malawi takes about a third of Malawi 's area

The area of Africa now known as Malawi was settled by migrating Bantu groups around the 10th century . Centuries later in 1891 the area was colonized by the British . In 1953 Malawi , then known as Nyasaland , a protectorate of the United Kingdom , became a protectorate within the semi @-@ independent Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland . The Federation was dissolved in 1963 . In 1964 the protectorate over Nyasaland was ended and Nyasaland became an independent country under Queen Elizabeth II with the new name Malawi . Two years later it became a republic . Upon gaining independence it became a one @-@ party state under the presidency of Hastings Banda , who remained president until 1994 , when he lost an election . Peter Mutharika is the current president . Malawi has a democratic , multi @-@ party government . Malawi has a small military force that includes an army , a navy and an air wing . Malawi 's foreign policy is pro @-@ Western and includes positive diplomatic relations with most countries and participation in several international organisations , including the United Nations , the Commonwealth of Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) .

Malawi is among the world 's least @-@ developed countries . The economy is heavily based in agriculture , with a largely rural population . The Malawian government depends heavily on outside aid to meet development needs , although this need (and the aid offered) has decreased since 2000 . The Malawian government faces challenges in building and expanding the economy , improving education , health care , environmental protection , and becoming financially independent . Since 2005 , Malawi has developed several programs that focus on these issues , and the country 's outlook appears to be improving , with a rise in the economy , education and healthcare seen in 2007 and 2008 .

Malawi has a low life expectancy and high infant mortality . There is a high prevalence of HIV / AIDS , which is a drain on the labour force and government expenditures . There is a diverse population of native peoples , Asians and Europeans , with several languages spoken and an array of religious beliefs . Although there was periodic regional conflict fuelled in part by ethnic divisions in the past , by 2008 it had diminished considerably and the concept of a Malawian nationality had re @-@ emerged .

= = History = =

The area of Africa now known as Malawi had a very small population of hunter @-@ gatherers before waves of Bantu @-@ speaking peoples began emigrating from the north around the 10th century . Although most of the Bantu peoples continued south , some remained permanently and founded ethnic groups based on common ancestry . By 1500 AD , the tribes had established the Kingdom of Maravi that reached from north of what is now Nkhosha to the Zambezi River and from Lake Malawi to the Luangwa River in what is now Zambia .

Soon after 1600 , with the area mostly united under one native ruler , native tribesmen began encountering , trading with and making alliances with Portuguese traders and members of the military . By 1700 , however , the empire had broken up into areas controlled by many individual ethnic groups , which was noted by the Portuguese in their information gathering . The Swahili @-@

Arab slave trade reached its height in the mid- 1800s , when approximately 20 @, @ 000 people were enslaved and considered to be carried yearly from Nkhotakota to Kilwa where they were sold .

Missionary and explorer David Livingstone reached Lake Malawi (then Lake Nyasa) in 1859 and identified the Shire Highlands south of the lake as an area suitable for European settlement . As the result of Livingstone 's visit , several Anglican and Presbyterian missions were established in the area in the 1860s and 1870s , the African Lakes Company Limited was established in 1878 to set up a trade and transport concern working closely with the missions , and a small mission and trading settlement was established at Blantyre in 1876 and a British Consul took up residence there in 1883 . The Portuguese government was also interested in the area so , to prevent Portuguese occupation , the British government sent Harry Johnston as British consul with instructions to make treaties with local rulers beyond Portuguese jurisdiction .

In 1889 , a British protectorate was proclaimed over the Shire Highlands , which was extended in 1891 to include the whole of present @-@ day Malawi as the British Central Africa Protectorate . In 1907 , the protectorate was renamed Nyasaland , a name it retained for the remainder of its time under British rule . In a prime example of what is sometimes called the " Thin White Line " of colonial authority in Africa , the colonial government of Nyasaland was formed in 1891 . The administrators were given a budget of £ 10 @, @ 000 (1891 nominal value) per year , which was enough to employ ten European civilians , two military officers , seventy Punjab Sikhs , and eighty @-@ five Zanzibar porters . These few employees were then expected to administer and police a territory of around 94 @, @ 000 square kilometres with between one and two million people .

In 1944 , the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) was formed by the Africans of Nyasaland to promote local interests to the British government . In 1953 , Britain linked Nyasaland with Northern and Southern Rhodesia in what was the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland , often called the Central African Federation (CAF) , for mainly political reasons . Even though the Federation was semi @-@ independent , the linking provoked opposition from African nationalists , and the NAC gained popular support . An influential opponent of the CAF was Dr. Hastings Banda , a European @-@ trained doctor working in Ghana who was persuaded to return to Nyasaland in 1958 to assist the nationalist cause . Banda was elected president of the NAC and worked to mobilise nationalist sentiment before being jailed by colonial authorities in 1959 . He was released in 1960 and asked to help draft a new constitution for Nyasaland , with a clause granting Africans the majority in the colony 's Legislative Council .

In 1961 , Banda 's Malawi Congress Party (MCP) gained a majority in the Legislative Council elections and Banda became Prime Minister in 1963 . The Federation was dissolved in 1963 , and on 6 July 1964 , Nyasaland became independent from British rule and renamed itself Malawi . Under a new constitution , Malawi became a republic with Banda as its first president . The new document also formally made Malawi a one @-@ party state with the MCP as the only legal party . In 1971 , Banda was declared president @-@ for @-@ life . For almost 30 years , Banda presided over a rigidly authoritarian regime , which ensured that Malawi did not suffer armed conflict . However , oppositional parties like the Malawi Freedom Movement of Orton Chirwa or the Socialist League of Malawi existed but were founded in exile .

Despite his political severity , however , Malawi 's economy while Banda was president was often cited as an example of how a poor , landlocked , heavily populated , mineral @-@ poor country could achieve progress in both agriculture and industrial development . While in office , and using his control of the country , Banda constructed a business empire that eventually produced one @-@ third of the country 's GDP and employed 10 % of the wage @-@ earning workforce . All money earned by Banda was ploughed back into developing Malawi and was symbolized by the building of a top boarding school called Kamuzu Academy (Eton of Africa) . In Banda 's own words " I do not want my boys and girls to do what I had to do ? to leave their homes and their families and go away from Malawi to get an education " , was the reason for gifting this school to Malawi .

Under pressure for increased political freedom , Banda agreed to a referendum in 1993 , where the populace voted for a multi @-@ party democracy . In late 1993 a presidential council was formed , the life presidency was abolished and a new constitution was put into place , effectively ending the MCP 's rule . In 1994 the first multi @-@ party elections were held in Malawi , and Banda was

defeated by Bakili Muluzi (a former Secretary General of the MCP and former Banda Cabinet Minister) . Re @-@ elected in 1999 , Muluzi remained president until 2004 , when Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika was elected . Although the political environment is described as " challenging " , as of 2009 , the multi @-@ party system still exists in Malawi . Multiparty parliamentary and presidential elections were held for the fourth time in Malawi in May 2009 , and President Mutharika was successfully re @-@ elected , despite charges of election fraud from his rival .

President Mutharika was seen by some as increasingly autocratic and dismissive of human rights , and in July 2011 protests over high costs of living , devolving foreign relations , poor governance and a lack of foreign exchange reserves erupted . The protests left 18 people dead and at least 44 others suffering from gunshot wounds . In April 2012 , Mutharika died of a heart attack ; the presidential title was taken over by former Vice @-@ President Joyce Banda .

In 2014 Joyce Banda lost elections (coming third) and was replaced by Peter Mutharika , the brother of the third elected president of Malawi .

= = Government and politics = =

Malawi is a democratic , multi @-@ party government , currently under the leadership of Peter Mutharika , who defeated former president Joyce Banda in the 2014 elections , despite alleged poll rigging . The current constitution was put into place on 18 May 1995 . The branches of the government consist of executive , legislative and judicial . The executive includes a president who is both chief of state and head of government , first and second vice presidents and a cabinet . The president is elected every five years , and the vice president is chosen by the president . A second vice president may be appointed by the president if so chosen , although they must be from a different party . The members of the cabinet are appointed by the president and can be from either inside or outside of the legislature .

The legislative branch consists of a unicameral National Assembly of 193 members who are elected every five years , and although the Malawian constitution provides for a Senate of 80 seats , one does not exist in practice . If created , the Senate would provide representation for traditional leaders and a variety of geographic districts , as well as special interest groups including the disabled , youth and women . There are currently nine political parties , with the Democratic Progressive Party acting as the ruling party and the Malawi Congress Party and the United Democratic Front acting as the main opposition parties in the National Assembly . Suffrage is universal at 18 years of age , and the central government budget for 2009 / 2010 is \$ 1 @. @ 7 billion .

The independent judicial branch is based upon the English model and consists of a Supreme Court of Appeal , a High Court divided into three sections (general , constitutional and commercial) , an Industrial Relations Court and Magistrates Courts , the last of which is divided into five grades and includes Child Justice Courts . The judicial system has been changed several times since Malawi gained independence in 1964 . Conventional courts and traditional courts have been used in varying combinations , with varying degrees of success and corruption .

Malawi is composed of three regions (the Northern , Central and Southern regions) , which are divided into 28 districts , and further into approximately 250 traditional authorities and 110 administrative wards . Local government is administered by central government @-@ appointed regional administrators and district commissioners . For the first time in the multi @-@ party era , local elections took place on 21 November 2000 , with the UDF party winning 70 % of the available seats . There was scheduled to be a second round of constitutionally mandated local elections in May 2005 , but these were cancelled by the government .

In February 2005 , President Mutharika split with the United Democratic Front and began his own party , the Democratic Progressive Party , which has attracted reform @-@ minded officials from other parties and won elections across the country in 2006 . In 2008 , President Mutharika had implemented reforms to address the country 's major corruption problem , with at least five senior UDF party members facing criminal charges . In 2012 , Malawi was ranked 7th of all countries in sub @-@ Saharan Africa in the Ibrahim Index of African Governance , an index that measures several

variables to provide a comprehensive view of the governance of African countries . Although the country 's governance score was higher than the continental average , it was lower than the regional average for southern Africa . Its highest scores were for safety and rule of law , and its lowest scores were for sustainable economic opportunity , with a ranking of 47th on the continent for educational opportunities . Malawi 's governance score had improved between 2000 and 2011 . Malawi held its most recent elections in May 2014 , with challenger Peter Muthrika defeating incumbent President Joyce Banda .

= = = Administrative divisions = = =

Malawi is divided into 28 districts within three regions :

= = = Foreign relations = = =

Former President Hastings Banda established a pro @-@ Western foreign policy that continued into early 2011 . It included good diplomatic relationships with many Western countries . The transition from a one @-@ party state to a multi @-@ party democracy strengthened Malawian ties with the United States . Significant numbers of students from Malawi travel to the US for schooling , and the US has active branches of the Peace Corps , the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention , the Department of Health and Human Services and the Agency for International Development in Malawi . Malawi maintained close relations with South Africa throughout the Apartheid era , which strained Malawi 's relationships with other African countries . Following the collapse of apartheid in 1994 , diplomatic relationships were made and maintained into 2011 between Malawi and all other African countries . In 2010 , however , Malawi 's relationship with Mozambique became strained , partially due to disputes over the use of the Zambezi River and an inter @-@ country electrical grid . In 2007 , Malawi established diplomatic ties with China , and Chinese investment in the country has continued to increase since then , despite concerns regarding treatment of workers by Chinese companies and competition of Chinese business with local companies . In 2011 , relations between Malawi and the United Kingdom was damaged when a document was released in which the British ambassador to Malawi criticised President Mutharika . Mutharika expelled the ambassador from Malawi , and in July 2011 , the UK announced that it was suspending all budgetary aid because of Mutharika 's lack of response to criticisms of his government and economic mismanagement . On 26 July 2011 , the United States followed suit , freezing a US \$ 350 million grant , citing concerns regarding the government 's suppression and intimidation of demonstrators and civic groups , as well as restriction of the press and police violence .

Malawi has been seen as a haven for refugees from other African countries , including Mozambique and Rwanda , since 1985 . These influxes of refugees have placed a strain on the Malawian economy but have also drawn significant inflows of aid from other countries . Donors to Malawi include the United States , Canada , Germany , Iceland , Japan , the Netherlands , Norway , Sweden , Ireland , the UK and Flanders (Belgium) , as well as international institutions such as the World Bank , the International Monetary Fund , the European Union , the African Development Bank and UN organisations .

Malawi is a member of several international organisations including the Commonwealth , the UN and some of its child agencies , the IMF , the World Bank , the African Union and the World Health Organization . Malawi tends to view economic and political stability in southern Africa as a necessity , and advocates peaceful solutions through negotiation . The country was the first in southern Africa to receive peacekeeping training under the African Crisis Response Initiative .

= = = Human rights = = =

As of 2010 , international observers noted issues in several human rights areas . Excessive force was seen to be used by police forces , security forces were able to act with impunity , mob violence

was occasionally seen , and prison conditions continued to be harsh and sometimes life threatening . However , the government was seen to make some effort to prosecute security forces who used excessive force . Other legal issues included limits on free speech and freedom of the press , lengthy pretrial detentions , and arbitrary arrests and detentions . Societal issues found included violence against women , human trafficking , and child labour . Corruption within the government is seen as a major issue , despite the Malawi Anti Corruption Bureau 's (ACB) attempts to reduce it . The ACB appears to be successful at finding and prosecuting low level corruption , but higher level officials appear to be able to act with impunity . Corruption within security forces is also an issue . Malawi had one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world . In 2015 Malawi raised the legal age for marriage from 15 to 18 . Other issues that have been raised are lack of adequate legal protection of women from sexual abuse and harassment , very high maternal mortality rate , and abuse related to accusations of witchcraft .

As of 2010 , homosexuality has been illegal in Malawi , and in one recent case , a couple perceived as homosexual faced extensive jail time when convicted . The convicted pair , sentenced to the maximum of 14 years of hard labour each , were pardoned two weeks later following the intervention of United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki moon . In May 2012 , President Joyce Banda pledged to repeal laws criminalising homosexuality .

== Geography ==

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeastern Africa , bordered by Zambia to the northwest , Tanzania to the northeast and Mozambique to the south , southwest and southeast . It lies between latitudes 9 ° and 18 ° S , and longitudes 32 ° and 36 ° E.

The Great Rift Valley runs through the country from north to south , and to the east of the valley lies Lake Malawi (also called Lake Nyasa) , making up over three quarters of Malawi 's eastern boundary . Lake Malawi is sometimes called the Calendar Lake as it is about 365 miles (587 km) long and 52 miles (84 km) wide . The Shire River flows from the south end of the lake and joins the Zambezi River 250 miles (400 km) farther south in Mozambique . The surface of Lake Malawi is located at 1 , 500 feet (457 m) above sea level , with a maximum depth of 2 , 300 feet (701 m) , which means the lake bottom is over 700 feet (213 m) below sea level at some points .

In the mountainous sections of Malawi surrounding the Rift Valley , plateaus rise generally 3 , 000 to 4 , 000 feet (914 to 1 , 219 m) above sea level , although some rise as high as 8 , 000 feet (2 , 438 m) in the north . To the south of Lake Malawi lie the Shire Highlands , gently rolling land at approximately 3 , 000 feet (914 m) above sea level . In this area , the Zomba and Mulanje mountain peaks rise to respective heights of 7 , 000 and 10 , 000 feet (2 , 134 and 3 , 048 m) .

Malawi 's capital is Lilongwe , and its commercial centre is Blantyre with a population of over 500 , 000 people . Malawi has two sites listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List . Lake Malawi National Park was first listed in 1984 and the Chongoni Rock Art Area was listed in 2006 .

Malawi 's climate is hot in the low lying areas in the south of the country and temperate in the northern highlands . The altitude moderates what would otherwise be an equatorial climate . Between November and April the temperature is warm with equatorial rains and thunderstorms , with the storms reaching their peak severity in late March . After March , the rainfall rapidly diminishes and from May to September wet mists float from the highlands into the plateaus , with almost no rainfall during these months .

== Economy ==

Malawi is among the world 's least developed countries . Around 85 % of the population live in rural areas . The economy is based on agriculture , and more than one third of GDP and 90 % of export revenues come from this . In the past , the economy has been dependent on substantial economic aid from the World Bank , the International Monetary Fund (IMF) , and other countries . Malawi was ranked the 119th safest investment destination in the world in the March 2011

Euromoney Country Risk rankings .

In December 2000 , the IMF stopped aid disbursements due to corruption concerns , and many individual donors followed suit , resulting in an almost 80 % drop in Malawi 's development budget . However , in 2005 , Malawi was the recipient of over US \$ 575 million in aid . The Malawian government faces challenges in developing a market economy , improving environmental protection , dealing with the rapidly growing HIV / AIDS problem , improving the education system , and satisfying its foreign donors that it is working to become financially independent . Improved financial discipline had been seen since 2005 under the leadership of President Mutharika and Financial Minister Gondwe . This discipline has since evaporated as shown by the purchase in 2009 of a private presidential jet followed almost immediately by a nationwide fuel shortage which was officially blamed on logistical problems , but was more likely due to the hard currency shortage caused by the jet purchase . The overall cost to the economy (and healthcare system) is unknown .

In addition , some setbacks have been experienced , and Malawi has lost some of its ability to pay for imports due to a general shortage of foreign exchange , as investment fell 23 % in 2009 . There are many investment barriers in Malawi , which the government has failed to address , including high service costs and poor infrastructure for power , water , and telecommunications . As of 2009 , it was estimated that Malawi had a GDP (purchasing power parity) of \$ 12 @. @ 81 billion , with a per capita GDP of \$ 900 , and inflation estimated at around 8 @. @ 5 % in 2009 .

Agriculture accounts for 35 % of GDP , industry for 19 % and services for the remaining 46 % . Malawi has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world , although economic growth was estimated at 9 @. @ 7 % in 2008 and strong growth is predicted by the International Monetary Fund for 2009 . The poverty rate in Malawi is decreasing through the work of the government and supporting organizations , with people living under the poverty line decreasing from 54 % in 1990 to 40 % in 2006 , and the percentage of " ultra @-@ poor " decreasing from 24 % in 1990 to 15 % in 2007 .

Many analysts believe that economic progress for Malawi depends on its ability to control population growth .

In January 2015 southern Malawi was devastated by the worst floods in living memory , stranding at least 20 @, @ 000 people . These floods affected more than a million people across the country , including 336 @, @ 000 who were displaced , according to UNICEF . Over 100 people were killed and an estimated 64 @, @ 000 hectares of cropland were washed away .

= = = Agriculture and industry = = =

The main agricultural products of Malawi include tobacco , sugarcane , cotton , tea , corn , potatoes , sorghum , cattle and goats . The main industries are tobacco , tea and sugar processing , sawmill products , cement and consumer goods . The industrial production growth rate is estimated at 10 % (2009) . The country makes no significant use of natural gas . As of 2008 , Malawi does not import or export any electricity , but does import all its petroleum , with no production in country . Beginning in 2006 , the country began mixing unleaded petrol with 10 % ethanol , produced in @-@ country at two plants , to reduce dependence on imported fuel . In 2008 , Malawi began testing cars that ran solely on ethanol , and initial results are promising , and the country is continuing to increase its use of ethanol .

As of 2009 , Malawi exports an estimated US \$ 945 million in goods per year . The country 's heavy reliance on tobacco places a heavy burden on the economy as world prices decline and the international community increases pressure to limit tobacco production . Malawi 's dependence on tobacco is growing , with the product jumping from 53 % to 70 % of export revenues between 2007 and 2008 . The country also relies heavily on tea , sugar and coffee , with these three plus tobacco making up more than 90 % of Malawi 's export revenue . Because of a rise in costs and a decline in sales prices , Malawi is encouraging farmers away from tobacco towards more profitable crops , including spices such as paprika . India hemp is another possible alternative , but arguments have been made that it will bring more crime to the country through its resemblance to varieties of

cannabis used as a recreational drug and the difficulty in distinguishing between the two types . This concern is especially important because the cultivation of Malawian cannabis , known as Malawi Gold , as a drug has increased significantly . Malawi is known for growing " the best and finest " cannabis in the world for recreational drug use , according to a recent World Bank report , and cultivation and sales of the crop may contribute to corruption within the police force .

Other exported goods are cotton , peanuts , wood products and apparel . The main destination locations for the country 's exports are South Africa , Germany , Egypt , Zimbabwe , the United States , Russia and the Netherlands . Malawi currently imports an estimated US \$ 1 @. @ 625 billion in goods per year , with the main commodities being food , petroleum products , consumer goods and transportation equipment . The main countries that Malawi imports from are South Africa , India , Zambia , Tanzania , the US and China .

In 2006 , in response to disastrously low agricultural harvests , Malawi began a program of fertiliser subsidies that were designed to re @-@ energize the land and boost crop production . It has been reported that this program , championed by the country 's president , is radically improving Malawi 's agriculture , and causing Malawi to become a net exporter of food to nearby countries .

= = = Infrastructure = = =

As of 2012 , Malawi has 31 airports , 7 with paved runways and 24 with unpaved runways . As of 2008 , the country has 797 kilometres (495 mi) of railways , all narrow @-@ gauge , and , as of 2003 , 15 @, @ 451 miles (24 @, @ 866 km) of roadways , 6 @, @ 956 kilometres (4 @, @ 322 mi) paved and 8 @, @ 495 kilometres (5 @, @ 279 mi) unpaved . Malawi also has 700 kilometres (430 mi) of waterways on Lake Malawi and along the Shire River .

As of 2011 , there were 3 @. @ 952 million cell phones and 173 @, @ 500 landline telephones in Malawi . There were 716 @, @ 400 Internet users in 2009 , and 1099 Internet hosts as of 2012 . As of 2007 there was one government @-@ run radio station and approximately a dozen more owned by private enterprise . The one TV station was government owned . In the past , Malawi 's telecommunications system has been named as some of the poorest in Africa , but conditions are improving , with 130 @, @ 000 land line telephones being connected between 2000 and 2007 . Telephones are much more accessible in urban areas , with less than a quarter of land lines being in rural areas .

= = Demographics = =

Malawi has a population of over 15 million , with a growth rate of 2 @. @ 75 % , according to 2009 estimates . The population is forecast to grow to over 45 million people by 2050 , nearly tripling the estimated 16 million in 2010 .

Malawi 's population is made up of the Chewa , Nyanja , Tumbuka , Yao , Lomwe , Sena , Tonga , Ngoni , and Ngonde native ethnic groups , as well as populations of Asians and Europeans . The official language is English . Major languages include Chichewa , a language spoken by over 57 % of the population , Chinyanja (12 @. @ 8 %) , Chiyao (10 @. @ 1 %) , and Chitumbuka (9 @. @ 5 %) . Other native languages are Malawian Lomwe , spoken by around 250 @, @ 000 in the southeast of the country ; Kokola , spoken by around 200 @, @ 000 people also in the southeast ; Lambya , spoken by around 45 @, @ 000 in the northwestern tip ; Ndali , spoken by around 70 @, @ 000 ; Nyakyusa @-@ Ngonde , spoken by around 300 @, @ 000 in northern Malawi ; Malawian Sena , spoken by around 270 @, @ 000 in southern Malawi ; and Tonga , spoken by around 170 @, @ 000 in the north .

= = = Urbanization = = =

= = = Religion = = =

Malawi is a majority Christian country , with a significant Muslim minority , although the exact figures are disputed . There is limited data with widely varying estimates on religious affiliation in the country . According to the Malawi Religion Project run by the University of Pennsylvania in 2010 , approximately 68 % of the population identify as Christians , 25 % as Muslim and 5 % as " other " . Slightly more dated CIA statistics from 1998 indicate that 82 % of the population was Christian , with 13 % Muslim . The largest Christian groups in Malawi are the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) . The CCAP is the biggest Protestant denomination in Malawi with 1 @. @ 3 million members . There are smaller Presbyterian denominations like the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Malawi and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Malawi . There are also smaller numbers of Anglicans , Baptists , Jehovah 's Witnesses (approx . 89 @, @ 000) , evangelicals and Seventh @- @ day Adventists . Most of the Muslim population is Sunni , of either the Qadriya or Sukutu groups , with few Ahmadiyya Muslims . Other religious groups within the country include Rastafarians , Hindus , Baha 'is (0 @. @ 2 %) and around 300 Jews . Atheists make up around 4 % of the population , although this number may include people who practice traditional African religions .

= = = Health = = =

Malawi has central hospitals , regional and private facilities . The public sector offers free health services and medicines , while non @- @ government organisations offers services and medicines for fees . Private doctors offer fee @- @ based services and medicines . Health insurance schemes have been established since 2000 . The country has a pharmaceutical manufacturing industry consisting of four privately owned pharmaceutical companies . Malawi 's healthcare goal is for " promoting health , preventing , reducing and curing disease , and reducing the occurrence of premature death in the population " .

Infant mortality rates are high , and life expectancy at birth is 50 @. @ 03 years . There is a high adult prevalence rate of HIV / AIDS , with an estimated 930 @, @ 000 adults (or 11 @. @ 9 % of the population) living with the disease in 2007 . There are approximately 68 @, @ 000 deaths a year from HIV / AIDS (2007) . Approximately 250 new people are infected each day , and at least 70 % of Malawi 's hospital beds are occupied by HIV / AIDS patients . The high rate of infection has resulted in an estimated 5 @. @ 8 % of the farm labor force dying of the disease . The government spends over \$ 120 @, @ 000 each year on funerals for civil servants who die of the disease . In 2006 , international superstar Madonna started Raising Malawi , a foundation that helps AIDS orphans in Malawi , and also financed a documentary about the hardships experienced by Malawian orphans , called I Am Because We Are . Raising Malawi also works with the Millennium Villages Project to improve education , health care , infrastructure and agriculture in Malawi .

There is a very high degree of risk for major infectious diseases , including bacterial and protozoal diarrhoea , hepatitis A , typhoid fever , malaria , plague , schistosomiasis , and rabies . Malawi has been making progress on decreasing child mortality and reducing the incidences of HIV / AIDS , malaria and other diseases ; however , the country has been " [performing] dismally " on reducing maternal mortality and promoting gender equality . Female genital mutilation (FGM) , while not widespread , is practiced in some local communities .

= = = Education = = =

In Malawi , primary education is not compulsory , but the Constitution requires that all people be entitled to at least five years of primary education . In 1994 , free primary education for all children was established by the government , which increased attendance rates . Dropout rates are higher for girls than boys , attributed to security problems during the long travel to school , as girls face a higher prevalence of gender @- @ based violence . However , attendance rates for all children are improving , with enrollment rates for primary schools increased from 58 % in 1992 to 75 % in 2007 , while the number of students who begin in standard one and complete standard five has increased from 64 % in 1992 to 86 % in 2006 . However attendance in secondary school falls to approximately

25 % , with attendance rates being slightly higher for males . Youth literacy has also increased , moving from 68 % in 2000 to 82 % in 2007 . This increase is primarily attributed to improved learning materials in schools , better infrastructure and feeding programs that have been implemented throughout the school system .

Education in Malawi comprises eight years of primary education , four years of secondary school and four years of university .

There are four public universities in Malawi namely ; Mzuzu , Lilongwe University of Agriculture and natural Resources , University of Malawi and Malawi University of Science and Technology . Besides these , there are also private universities like ; Livingstonia , Malawi Lakeview , Catholic University of Malawi , MIM etc . The entry requirements is six credits on the Malawi school Certificate of Education certificate which is equivalent to O levels .

In 2016 , the Malawi eHealth Research Centre in partnership with Mzuzu University and Luke International will establish Malawi 's first fully dedicated eHealth Research Centre . This new research facility will contribute to improve health and social outcomes for communities in Malawi , by enhancing the quality of research and education in eHealth and healthcare .

= = Military = =

Malawi maintains a small standing military of approximately 25 000 men , the Malawian Defence Force . It consists of army , navy and air force elements . The Malawi army originated from British colonial units formed before independence , and is now made up of two rifle regiments and one parachute regiment . The Malawi Air Force was established with German help in 1976 , and operates a small number of transport aircraft and multi purpose helicopters . The Malawian Navy has 3 vessels operating on Lake Malawi , based in Monkey Bay .

= = Culture = =

The name " Malawi " comes from the Maravi , a Bantu people who emigrated from the southern Congo around 1400 AD . Upon reaching northern Lake Malawi , the group divided , with one group moving south down the west bank of the lake to become the group known as the Chewa , while the other group , the ancestors of today 's Nyanja , moved along the east side of the lake to the southern section of Malawi . Ethnic conflict and continuing migration prevented the formation of a society that was uniquely and cohesively Malawian until the dawn of the 20th century . Over the past century , ethnic distinctions have diminished to the point where there is no significant inter ethnic friction , although regional divisions still occur . The concept of a Malawian nationality has begun to form around a predominantly rural people who are generally conservative and traditionally nonviolent .

From 1964 to 2010 , and again since 2012 , the Flag of Malawi is made up of three equal horizontal stripes of black , red and green with a red rising sun superimposed in the center of the black stripe . The black stripe represented the African people , the red represented the blood of martyrs for African freedom , green represented Malawi 's ever green nature and the rising sun represented the dawn of freedom and hope for Africa . In 2010 , the flag was changed , removing the red rising sun and adding a full white sun in the center as a symbol of Malawi 's economic progress . The change was reverted in 2012 .

Its dances are a strong part of Malawi 's culture , and the National Dance Troupe (formerly the Kwacha Cultural Troupe) was formed in November 1987 by the government . Traditional music and dances can be seen at initiation rites , rituals , marriage ceremonies and celebrations . Soccer is the most common sport in Malawi , introduced there during British colonial rule . Basketball is also growing in popularity .

The indigenous ethnic groups of Malawi have a rich tradition of basketry and mask carving , and some of these goods are used in traditional ceremonies still performed by native peoples . Wood carving and oil painting are also popular in more urban centres , with many of the items produced being sold to tourists . There are several internationally recognised literary figures from Malawi ,

including poet Jack Mapanje , history and fiction writer Paul Zeleza and authors Legson Kayira , Felix Mnthali , Frank Chipasula and David Rubadiri .

Malawian cuisine is diverse , with tea and fish being popular features of the country 's cuisine . Sugar , coffee , corn , potatoes , sorghum , cattle and goats are also important components of the cuisine and economy . Lake Malawi is a source of fish including chambo (similar to bream) usipa (similar to sardine) , mpasa (similar to salmon and kampango) . Nsima is a food staple made from ground corn and served with side dishes of meat and vegetable . It can be eaten for lunch and dinner .