

Ireland's Partner Countries

Factsheet



Malawi

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeast Africa, bordered by Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. Malawi is one of Ireland's partner countries.

Malawi's landscape consists of a long narrow plateau, with rolling plains and hills. Its best known physical features include: Lake Malawi/Nyasa, some 580 km long, Lake Malawi National Park and the Chingoni Rock Art Area. The climate is largely subtropical, with a rainy season from November to May, and a dry season from May to November.

Formerly a British protectorate, Malawi gained independence in 1964. After three decades of authoritarian rule, the first free multiparty elections were held in 1994. Current President, Dr Bingu Wa Mutharika, was elected in 2004, and again in 2009. He has responded effectively to food shortages and increased Malawi's agricultural output.

Development in Malawi

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. It continues to struggle to overcome decades of underdevelopment, with high rates of population growth and HIV and AIDS, poor infrastructure, food insecurity and 85 per cent of the population dependent on subsistence farming. Development in Malawi is dependent on the effective use of national resources and international aid, which finances around 40 per cent of the Government spending.

Malawi still relies heavily on agriculture, which accounts for 90 per cent of export revenues. Maize is the main subsistence food crop and tobacco is a major export. The country has experienced severe food shortages and famine in its recent past, partly due to an increase in drought and heavy rainfall that caused failed harvests, particularly in the south. However, since 2005 the Government, with international help, has been successful in dramatically improving the food security situation.

Progress has been made since 2007 in achieving economic growth, and improvements have been made in education, healthcare and environmental protection. However, the Malawian economy remains vulnerable to global economic conditions and depends on good annual rainfall for food production.

Major challenges include rapid population growth, weak governance, and HIV and AIDS. Improving basic services and infrastructure is crucial for Malawi's development and to protect those most vulnerable to poverty and hunger.

Irish Aid's poverty reduction work in Malawi

Ireland's support to Malawi started during the food security crisis in 2002, and Malawi became Ireland's ninth official Partner Country in 2007. In 2010, Irish Aid's bilateral support programme was over €15.5 million. The goal of the Irish Aid Programme in Malawi is to help to ensure that supplies of food are more secure and people are less vulnerable to poverty.

Irish Aid contributes to food productivity, nutrition and strengthening governance systems. An example is support for the Government's *Farm Inputs Subsidy Programme* which has greatly improved food security. In 2009, only 10 per cent of households faced food insecurity, compared with 38 per cent in 2006. Ireland also supports the cultivation of the 'Irish Potato' which helps farmers to diversify their crops and has resulted in improved potato yields among 7,000 smallholder farmers.

In March 2010, the Irish and US Ambassadors signed a three-year agreement to support the Malawian Government in fighting hunger and food insecurity and €1.5 million was provided by Ireland to support this agreement. Irish Aid also provides assistance to nongovernmental and missionary organisations working in development and humanitarian work in Malawi.

Comparison table

Source: UNDP, 2011 ¹	Ireland	Malawi
UNDP Human Development Index Rank (of 187 countries)	7	171
Population	4.5 million	15.4 million
GNI (Gross National Income) per capita	US \$29,332	US \$753
Life expectancy from birth	80 years	54 years
Number of doctors per 100,00 people²	310	<5
HIV prevalence³ (15-49 years)	0.2%	11.9%

¹UNDP Human Development Report 2011 (November 2011)

²UNDP Human Development Report 2010 (November 2010)

³UNDP Human Development Report 2010 (November 2010)

Facts about Malawi Did you know...?

Full name:	Republic of Malawi
Head of State:	President Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika
Capital:	Lilongwe
Area:	118,484 sq km
Major languages:	Chichewa (official), English (official), Chinyanja, Chiyao
Major religions:	Christianity, Islam
Monetary unit:	Malawian kwacha
Main exports:	Tobacco, tea, sugar, cotton, coffee, groundnuts

Find out more

www.irishaid.ie - Learn more here about Irish Aid's work in Malawi

www.undp.org – the United Nations Development Programme in Malawi

www.concern.net and www.trocaire.org – Both Concern and Trocaire work in Malawi and have background information about the country on their websites



Irish Aid is the Government's programme of assistance to developing countries, and is administered through the Development Cooperation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

You can visit the
**Irish Aid Volunteering and Information Centre,
27 - 31 Upper O'Connell Street,
Dublin 1.
Phone number: 01 854 69 20**

Organised visits to the Centre, including workshops, are available for school and college groups by arrangement.

