

# Malawi



## Introduction

**Background:** Established in 1891, the British protectorate of Nyasaland became the independent nation of Malawi in 1964. After three decades of one-party rule under President Hastings Kamuzu BANDA the country held multiparty elections in 1994, under a provisional constitution, which came into full effect the following year. Current President Bingu wa MUTHARIKA, elected in May 2004 after the previous president failed to amend the constitution to permit another term, has struggled to assert his authority against his predecessor, who still leads their shared political party. MATHARIKA's anti-corruption efforts have led to several high-level arrests but no convictions. Increasing corruption, population growth, increasing pressure on agricultural lands, and HIV/AIDS pose major problems for the country

## Geography

**Location:** Southern Africa, east of Zambia

**Area:** *total:* 118,480 sq km

*land:* 94,080 sq km

*water:* 24,400 sq km

**Climate:** sub-tropical; rainy season (November to May); dry season (May to November)

**Terrain:** narrow elongated plateau with rolling plains, rounded hills, some mountains

**Natural resources:** limestone, arable land, hydropower, unexploited deposits of uranium, coal, and bauxite

**Environment - current issues:** deforestation; land degradation; water pollution from agricultural runoff, sewage, industrial wastes; siltation of spawning grounds endangers fish populations

## People

**Population:** 12,158,924

**Population growth rate:** 2.06%

**Net migration rate:** 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population

**Languages:** Chichewa 57.2% (official), Chinyanja 12.8%, Chiyao 10.1%, Chitumbuka 9.5%, Chisena 2.7%, Chilomwe 2.4%, Chitonga 1.7%, other 3.6%)

## Government

**Country name:** *conventional long form:* Republic of Malawi

**Government type:** multiparty democracy

**Capital:** Lilongwe

**Independence:** 6 July 1964 (from UK)

**Legal system:** based on English common law and customary law; judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court of Appeal; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

**Executive branch:** *chief of state:* President Bingu wa MUTHARIKA

**International organization participation:** ACP, AfDB, AU, C, FAO, G-77, IBRD, ICAO, ICCT, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRC, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, ISO (correspondent), ITU, MIGA, MONUC, NAM, ONUB, OPCW, SADC, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNMIK, UNMIL, UPU, WCL, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, WTO

## Economy

**Economy - overview:** Landlocked Malawi ranks among the world's least developed countries. The economy is predominately agricultural, with about 90% of the population living in rural areas. Agriculture accounted for nearly 40% of GDP and 88% of export revenues in 2001. The performance of the tobacco sector is key to short-term growth as tobacco accounts for over 50% of exports. The economy depends on substantial inflows of economic assistance from the IMF, the World Bank, and individual donor nations. In late 2000, Malawi was approved for relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program. The government faces strong challenges, including developing a market economy, improving educational facilities, facing up to environmental problems, dealing with the rapidly growing problem of HIV/AIDS, and satisfying foreign donors that fiscal discipline is being tightened. In 2005, the anticorruption campaign championed by President MUTHARIKA may help encourage investment and economic growth.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$7.41 billion

**GDP - real growth rate:** 4%

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$600

**GDP - composition by sector:** *agriculture:* 54.8%  
*industry:* 19.2%  
*services:* 26%

**Investment (gross fixed):** 10.7% of GDP

**Population below poverty line:** 55%

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** 12%

**Labor force:** 4.5 million

**Budget:** *revenues:* \$536 million

*expenditures:* \$635.6 million, including capital expenditures of NA

**Agriculture - products:** tobacco, sugarcane, cotton, tea, corn, potatoes, cassava (tapioca), sorghum, pulses; groundnuts, Macadamia nuts; cattle, goats

**Industries:** tobacco, tea, sugar, sawmill products, cement, consumer goods

**Oil - consumption:** 5,400 bbl/day

**Current account balance:** \$-55.5 million

**Exports:** \$503.4 million f.o.b.

**Exports - commodities:** tobacco 60%, tea, sugar, cotton, coffee, peanuts, wood products, apparel

**Exports - partners:** South Africa 13.8%, US 12.3%, Germany 11.8%, Egypt 8.2%, UK 6.8%

**Imports:** \$521.1 million f.o.b.

**Imports - commodities:** food, petroleum products, semimanufactures, consumer goods, transportation equipment

**Imports - partners:** South Africa 43.5%, India 6.8%, Tanzania 4.1%

**Currency:** Malawian kwacha (MWK)

**Exchange rates:** Malawian kwachas per US dollar - 108.894 (2004), 97.433 (2003), 76.687 (2002), 72.197 (2001), 59.544 (2000)

#### **Transportation**

**Railways:** *total:* 797 km

*narrow gauge:* 797 km 1.067-m gauge

**Highways:** *total:* 28,400 km

*paved:* 5,254 km

*unpaved:* 23,146 km

**Waterways:** 700 km

**Ports and harbors:** Chipoka, Monkey Bay, Nkhata Bay, Nkhotakota, Chilumba

**Airports:** 42