

MALAWI

Here we are in the **Republic of Malawi**, a landlocked country that was formerly known as Nyasaland. Webster Moyo from Ekwendini Hospital is our virtual guide. He shows us the map.



Malawi has an estimated population of 19,431,566 (as of January 2021). The official language is English. Half of the population also speak Chichewa.

The Great Rift Valley runs through Malawi from north to South



and Lake Malawi, also known as Lake Nyasa, takes up about a third of Malawi's area.

We are going to Malawi's capital, Lilongwe. Webster says the country is nicknamed "The Warm Heart of Africa" because of the friendliness of its people.

On the drive Webster tells us in 1891 the area became a protectorate of the UK known as Nyasaland. In 1964, the protectorate was ended: Nyasaland became an independent country under Queen Elizabeth II, and was renamed *Malawi* from the old Chewa name Maravi, which means 'rays of light. '

It gained full independence from the UK in July 1970 (it just turned 50!), and became a totalitarian one-party state under the presidency of Hastings Banda, who remained in this role until 1994.



Hastings Banda

Today, Malawi is a democratic, multi-party republic, headed by an elected president Lazarus Chakwera. He won when the election was rerun last June after the May 2019 Presidential Election was annulled due to massive electoral irregularities. Reforms are happening, but slowly.

Webster tells us Infant mortality rates are high, and life expectancy is 63.

About 9% of the population have HIV/AIDS. There are about 27,000 deaths each year from HIV/AIDS, and over half a million children orphaned because of the disease .

Webster warns us free speech is limited here and you can be arrested arbitrarily on a charge of witchcraft. Although the Malawi Anti-Corruption Bureau attempts to reduce low level government corruption, higher level officials seem able to act with impunity. Malawi used to have one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world but in 2015 they raised the legal age for marriage from 15 to 18. Violence against women, human trafficking, and child labour are ongoing problems.

Elementary school is compulsory, but sadly girls tend to drop out in the secondary years, due to security problems during long walks to school, as girls face a higher prevalence of gender-based violence.



Female unemployment is very high and only Rwanda has a higher gender wage gap than Malawi in all sub-Saharan Africa. Interestingly 20% of the seats in parliament are held by women, despite multiple barriers to female participation in politics.

We are driving through fields and Webster says Malawi is among the world's least economically -developed countries. In the past, they depended on substantial economic aid from the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund . In December 2000, the IMF stopped aid disbursements due to corruption concerns, resulting in a very steep drop in Malawi's

development budget. (In September 2020 the World Bank agreed an \$88 million loan to Malawi, to help small businesses hit by COVID19.)

Malawi has one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world , although the poverty rate is slowly decreasing through the work of the new government .

The country's strong reliance on the precarious tobacco trade places a heavy burden on the economy.



Tea, sugar and coffee plus tobacco make up most of Malawi's export revenue. The government is encouraging farmers towards more profitable crops, like paprika or India hemp and Malawi Gold is, "the best and finest" cannabis in the world for recreational drug use, according to a recent World Bank report.

We are driving into Lilongwe, the capital. Flags are flying everywhere.



the Flag of Malawi. The black stripe represents the African people, the red represents the blood of martyrs for African freedom, green represents Malawi's ever-green nature, and the rising sun represents the dawn of freedom and hope for Africa

Webster offers to buy us lunch – we can choose...



*Usipa, similar to sardines
Fish from Lake Nyasa,
dried and eaten with bread.*



*Nsima (SEE-ma) Roll it into a small ball with
one hand and use it to scoop up vegetables
and meat*



ndiwo (DEE-woh)—a Malawian relish made of greens, tomatoes, and onions



Metal chippie stands beside the road are used to fry potatoes and chicken over a fire. You can buy a small bag of food or eat directly off the stand.

We admire the bank note Webster takes out to pay. (One Kwacha = 5c) Webster tells us.



Baptist minister John Chilembwe led a revolt against the British in 1915. He stood up for farmers' rights. In honor of his work, Chilembwe's face was printed on Malawi banknotes and John Chilembwe Day is celebrated every January.

We ask about the colourful wraps the women wear, and Webster tells us, A [chitenj](#) is a brightly-colored piece of fabric that is worn over a skirt. It can be used as an apron, a basket, a potholder, a baby carrier or a blanket!



We have so many questions Webster has really turned into a tour guide now! He tells us David Livingstone called Lake Malawi “The Lake of Stars “after seeing fishermen’s lamps flickering across the dark water. The lake is home to more species of fish than any other freshwater lake on earth.



Just as we are parting ways Webster shows us [Bao](#), a popular game in Malawi. It's their version of mancala (a very ancient game played by the Greeks and Romans.) Players move pebbles through various troughs on a board in order to capture their opponent’s pebbles. This game can last anywhere from several hours to several days!

We leave him to it and will see Webster at the Hospital soon.