



TWO-THIRDS IN, ONE-THIRD TO GO: CIVIL SOCIETY'S REALITY CHECK ON MALAWI'S SDGS IMPLEMENTATION

AUGUST 2025

About GAYO

Girls Activist Youth Organisation (GAYO) is an NGO dedicated to empowering girls, young women, and youth. Established in 2007 and officially registered in 2016, GAYO focuses on literacy development, policy advocacy, and water and sanitation initiatives. Its mission is to build a nation where adolescent youth and women are self-sustained, recognizing that the development of the country depends on the literacy development of individuals from childhood to adulthood.

GAYO is actively implementing the Girls Education Advocacy in the Region Phase 2 (GEAR 2.0) project, a transnational,

multi-layered advocacy initiative aimed at strengthening inclusive and equitable education systems for girls and young women in rural and farming communities. The project targets Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, focusing on promoting social accountability in basic education, strengthening civil society's regional and transnational advocacy, and initiating national-level commitment tracking on quality and equitable education. GAYO's involvement in GEAR 2.0 underscores its commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for marginalized girls and young women in Malawi. This report is financed through the project.

About CONGOMA

The Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA) is an umbrella body for NGOs in Malawi, playing a critical role in coordinating and representing civil society organizations. CONGOMA advocates for policies that promote inclusive and equitable access to development, ensuring that the voices of marginalized communities are heard in national development agendas. Through its efforts, CONGOMA contributes to creating a conducive environment for the implementation of development policies that align with regional and international frameworks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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synthesising the information and generating the analysis presented in this report. His efforts have ensured that the findings and recommendations provide a credible platform for policy dialogue and reform.

We also acknowledge the valuable contributions of civil society organisations, Government institutions, and development partners whose on-going work towards the achievement of the SDGs in Malawi informed and inspired this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Malawi adopted an ambitious framework branded Malawi 2063 (MW2063) and its First (10-Year) Implementation Plan (MIP-1, 2021–2030), explicitly aiming to reach lower-middle-income status by 2030 and “meet most of the SDGs.” Yet progress is uneven and fragile, with macroeconomic headwinds such as inflation, weak growth and external financing pressures; recurrent climate shocks; and persistent implementation gaps in laws and policies hampering results.

Headline progress includes continued advances in child survival and education access in earlier years, expansion of malaria prevention, and service coverage improvements in selected areas. But reversals and stagnation are visible in poverty, food security, learning outcomes, WASH quality, and governance metrics. As of 2025, Malawi’s SDG Index score sits around 57/100 (rank ~139/167) consistent with “significant challenges” across multiple goals.

The core problem is not the absence of frameworks; it is weak execution compounded by underfunded mandates, delayed regulations, fragmented coordination, data gaps, and limited accountability. Laws such as the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (PPDA) Act (2025), Gender Equality Act (2013), Access to Information Act (2016, commenced 2020), and the Environment Management Act (2017; effective 2019) exist, but compliance and enforcement are inconsistent.

In view of the foregoing, some of the Civil Society’s priority policy demands for the 2025–2030 are:

- a. Operationalise and finance existing laws through issuing or updating regulations, funding implementing bodies (PPDA, MHRC, Ombudsman, NAO, councils), and enforcing sanctions for non-compliance.
- b. Stabilise the macro-fiscal environment to protect social spending, SDG investments, and local government transfers as guided by the World Bank Malawi Economic Monitor (2025).
- c. Re-balance budgets toward basic services and local delivery in key sectors such as health, education, WASH and social protection with transparent formula-based intergovernmental allocations.
- d. Institutionalise citizen monitoring (community scorecards, procurement oversight, ATI requests) and formally recognise citizen-generated data in SDG tracking.
- e. Localise SDGs by empowering district councils through ensuring timely transfers, providing procurement thresholds, instituting planning autonomy, and enhancing performance-based grants.
- f. Close data gaps by funding the NSO to deliver timely MDHS reports (including the MDHS 2024 report), routine MICS/WASH modules, and disaggregated administrative data.
- g. Strengthen climate-resilient livelihoods by funding the National Resilience Strategy (2018–2030) and align shock-responsive safety nets with disaster risk financing.
- h. Enhance Open Government and natural resource transparency by delivering on OGP 2023–2025 commitments (contracts, licensing, revenue disclosure), especially in mining and upcoming commitments.
- i. Expand gender equality and protection by resourcing the Gender Equality Act’s mandates, GBV response systems, and gender-responsive budgeting.
- j. Improve WASH quality and rural services by pivoting from access counts to safely managed services and water safety, using MICS/JMP benchmarks.

¹ United Nations Malawi (2024). Malawi UN Country Results Report. <https://malawi.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-07/2024%20UN%20COUNTRY%20RESULTS%20REPORT-Version%201.pdf>

² SDG Index (2025). <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/malawi>

³ Government of Malawi (2018). National Resilience Strategy (2018–2030): Breaking the Cycle of Food Insecurity in Malawi. DODMA, Lilongwe. https://drmims.sadc.int/sites/default/files/document/2020-03/National%20Resilience%20Strategy_Final%20Approved.pdf

⁴ Government of Malawi (2023). Open Government Partnership: National Action Plan 2023–2025. Lilongwe. https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Malawi_Action-Plan_2023-2025.pdf

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AIP	Affordable Inputs Programme
API	Application Programming Interfaces
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ATI	Access to information
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSV	Comma Separated Values
DDF	District Development Fund
ECF	Extended Credit Facility
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GAYO	Girls Activist Youth Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESD	Governance to Enable Service Delivery
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
PPDA	Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (Authority)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JMP	Joint Monitoring Programme
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDHS	Malawi Demographic and Health Survey
MEM	Malawi Economic Monitor (World Bank)
MHRC	Malawi Human Rights Commission
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MIP -1	First Implementation Plan
MIS	Management Information System
MMIS	Malawi Malaria Indicator Survey
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
MW2063	Malawi 2063
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAO	National Audit Office
NLGFC	National Local Government Finance Committee
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSO	National Statistical Office

NRS	National Resilience Strategy
OGP	Open Government Partnership
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
VNR	Voluntary National Review Report
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose and audience

This CSO-led desk study is an advocacy tool to influence Government of Malawi's policy and budget choices regarding SDGs in the last stretch to 2030. It consolidates public data and civil society evidence to identify where implementation fails and what specific policy reforms can accelerate progress. The study is primarily intended for policymakers, development partners, and CSOs, but it also serves as an accessible resource for the media and citizens seeking to hold duty-bearers accountable. By bridging evidence with advocacy, it aims to stimulate informed dialogue and collective action towards achieving the SDGs in Malawi.

1.2. Methodology

The study employed a desk review to consolidate evidence on Malawi's progress towards the SDGs. Key national frameworks, including Malawi 2063 (MW2063) and the Malawi Integrated Plan I (MIP-1), were examined alongside official performance reports such as the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) of 2020 and 2022, SDG Acceleration Report of 2023, MIP-1 progress report covering 2023 and 2024, CONGOMA and civil society reports on SDGs, among others. Global SDG dashboards were consulted to provide an international

benchmarking perspective, while sector-specific surveys, including MICS 2019/20, MDHS 2024 Key Indicators, and MMIS 2021 among others, provided disaggregated data on health, education, and social outcomes. Macroeconomic trends were analyzed using the World Bank MEM 2025, and relevant statutes and policy documents were reviewed to assess legal and institutional frameworks. This multi-source approach allowed for an evidence-based assessment of progress, gaps, and opportunities across all SDGs.

1.3. Study positioning

The study complements, rather than duplicates, Government reporting by applying a people-centred, rights-based lens that prioritises accountability, decentralisation, and civic space. This approach ensures that the analysis reflects the perspectives and experiences of citizens and civil society, highlighting where policies and implementation practices succeed or fall short in meeting the needs of communities. In this regard, CSOs are encouraged to use a summarized version of the issues contained in this report as per **Annex 1: Guide for policy engagement meetings.**

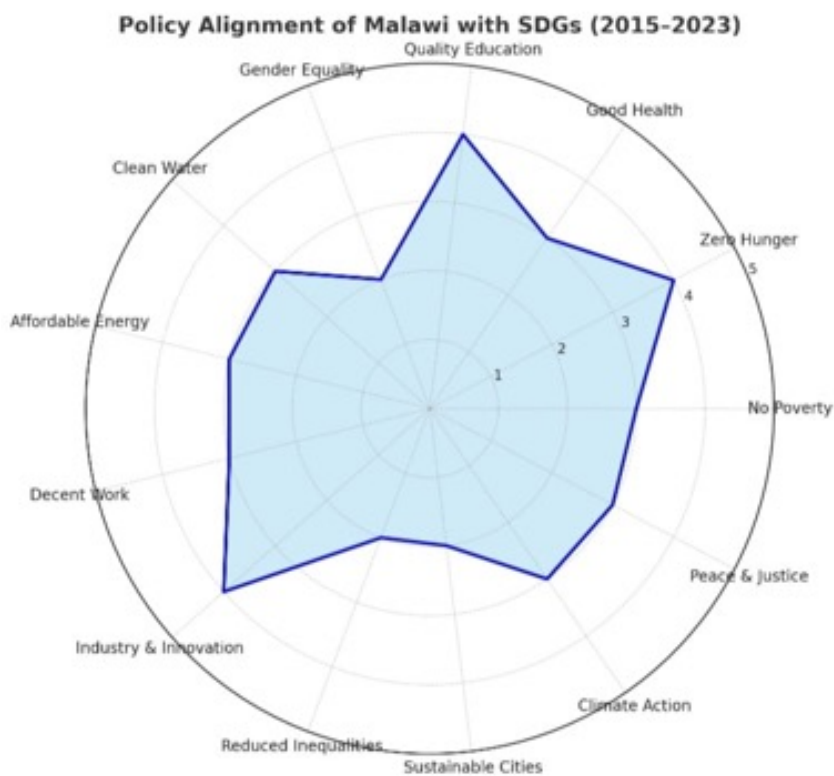
2.0. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

2.1. Malawi 2063 and MIP-1

MW2063 and MIP-1 articulate a clear path to inclusive wealth and SDG progress by 2030 registering around 82% alignment, and embracing African Union Agenda 2063 in most of its targets. As a member, Malawi’s development agenda aligns with SADC’s Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and Vision 2050, but stronger action is needed to ensure effective integration, sustainable economic growth, infrastructure and human capital development.

MIP-1 explicitly targets lower-middle-income status and meeting “most SDGs ,” setting milestones and verification mechanisms. However, alignment is stronger on growth and infrastructure as shown in the radar chart in Chart 1: Policy Alignment of Malawi with SDGs (2015-2023) than on inequality (SDG 10), governance (SDG 16), and partnerships (SDG 17) in practice, as reflected by weak enforcement and limited transparency.

Figure 1: Policy Alignment of Malawi with SDGs (2015-2023) - scale 0–5, where 5 = strong alignment.



The radar chart shows Malawi’s policy alignment with the SDGs is strongest in Zero Hunger, Education, and Industry & Innovation, but weakest in Inequality reduction and sustainable cities.

5. Government of Malawi (2021). Malawi 2063 First 10-Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1), 2021–2030. National Planning Commission, Lilongwe (2021). <https://npc.mw/mip-1-3/>

2.2. SDG performance signals

The SDSN SDG Index (2025) places Malawi around rank 139/167 with a score of approximately 57, signaling colossal shortfalls in poverty, hunger, education quality, infrastructure, and governance. This demonstrates that despite policy commitments and development efforts, many Malawians continue to experience limited access to basic services and economic opportunities. The low ranking underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions, strengthened accountability, and accelerated implementation across critical sectors to get Malawi back on track towards the 2030 Agenda.

2.3. CSO perspective

The frameworks are expansive. The execution in relation to financing, local delivery, and accountability is the binding constraint. Civil

society observes that while policies and plans are well-articulated, their translation into tangible results at district and community levels remains weak. Gaps in resource allocation, institutional capacity, and citizen engagement continue to limit the effectiveness of SDG implementation. Strengthening these areas through targeted support, monitoring, and advocacy is essential to accelerating progress and ensuring that no one is left behind. weak. Gaps in resource allocation, institutional capacity, and citizen engagement continue to limit the effectiveness of SDG implementation. Strengthening these areas through targeted support, monitoring, and advocacy is essential to accelerating progress and ensuring that no one is left behind.

6. SDG Index (2025). <https://dashboards.sdginde.org/profiles/malawi>

3.0. SDG IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW IN MALAWI (2015–2023)

Since adopting the 2030 Agenda in 2015, Malawi has demonstrated commitment to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into its national planning frameworks, including the Malawi growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III) and, more recently the Malawi 2063 together with its MIP-1. The Government has presented two Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in 2020 and 2022,

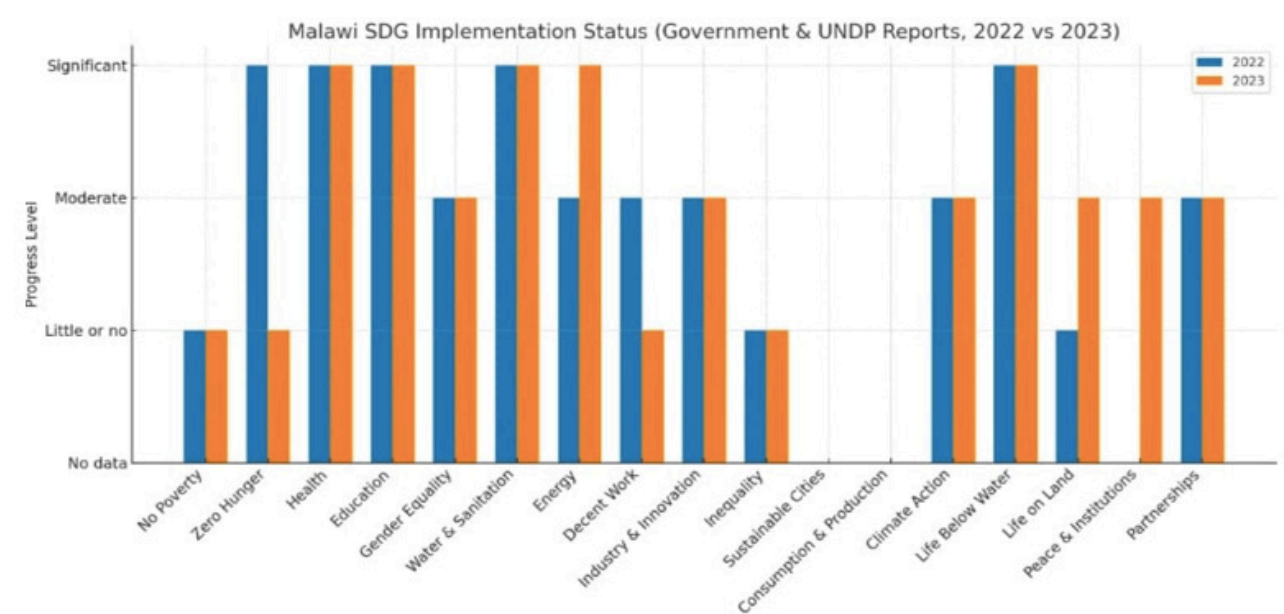
complemented by the United Nations–Malawi SDG Acceleration Report of 2023, which together provide the official record of the country's progress and challenges in implementing the Goals.

Complementing these, civil society, through mechanisms such as the CONGOMA's Citizen Scorecards (2021 and 2022), and the 2023 SDG Midpoint Review has provided independent perspectives that often highlight implementation gaps, especially at

community and district levels. Together, these reports reveal a mixed picture: while Malawi has made progress in areas such as health, education, water and sanitation, and gender, recurrent challenges in poverty reduction, inequality, governance, and climate resilience remain deeply entrenched.

From 2015 to date, progress across the 17 SDGs has been uneven and fragile, with some goals showing momentum while others stagnate or even regress. The 2023 SDG Acceleration Report, supported by UNDP, and the annual progress report for MIP-1 (2023 and 2024) identify five goals (2, 3, 4, 6, and 14) as registering substantial progress, while six others (5, 7, 8, 9, 13, and 17) are at moderate levels.

However, Malawi continues to lag in SDGs 1, 10, and 15, which show little or no progress, and faces persistent data gaps for SDGs 11, 12, and 16, making monitoring difficult. Civil society analysis underscores that policy ambition has not always translated into delivery, largely due to fiscal constraints, corruption, climate shocks, and weak institutional capacity. As such, with two-thirds of the SDG implementation period already elapsed, Malawi’s path to 2030 requires urgent acceleration, stronger partnerships, and better governance if the country is to deliver on the promise of leaving no one behind. **Chart 2: SDG implementation status at two-thirds below, provides more details.** For further details on SDG implementation status and their implication, please refer to *Annex 2: Malawi SDG snapshot for selected indicators*.



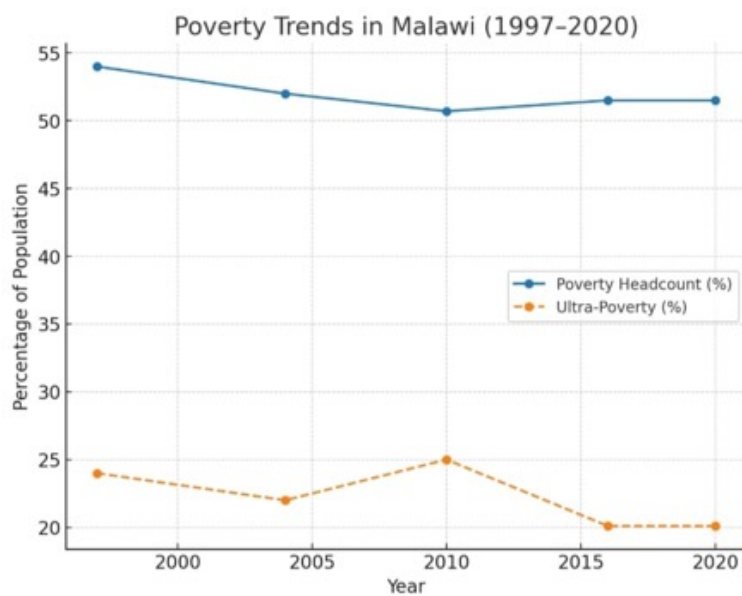
4.0. PROGRESS AND BOTTLENECKS; PEOPLE-CENTRED SDG CLUSTERS

4.1. Ending poverty and hunger (SDG 1 & 2)

a. Status:

Poverty in Malawi remains alarmingly high, with 70% of the population living on less than \$2.15 a day and over half (51.5%) below the national poverty line (IHS5, 2020) as shown by **Chart 3: Poverty Headcount Trend in Malawi (1997–2020)**. Ultra-poverty affects one in five Malawians, mostly in rural areas where poverty rates (56%) are three times higher than in urban areas (18%). Despite modest economic growth, poverty reduction has stagnated due to reliance on subsistence farming, recurrent climate shocks, and limited job opportunities. Persistent poverty undermines progress on health, education, nutrition, and other SDGs; while recent crises or have worsened food insecurity .

Chart 3: Poverty headcount trend in Malawi (1997–2020)



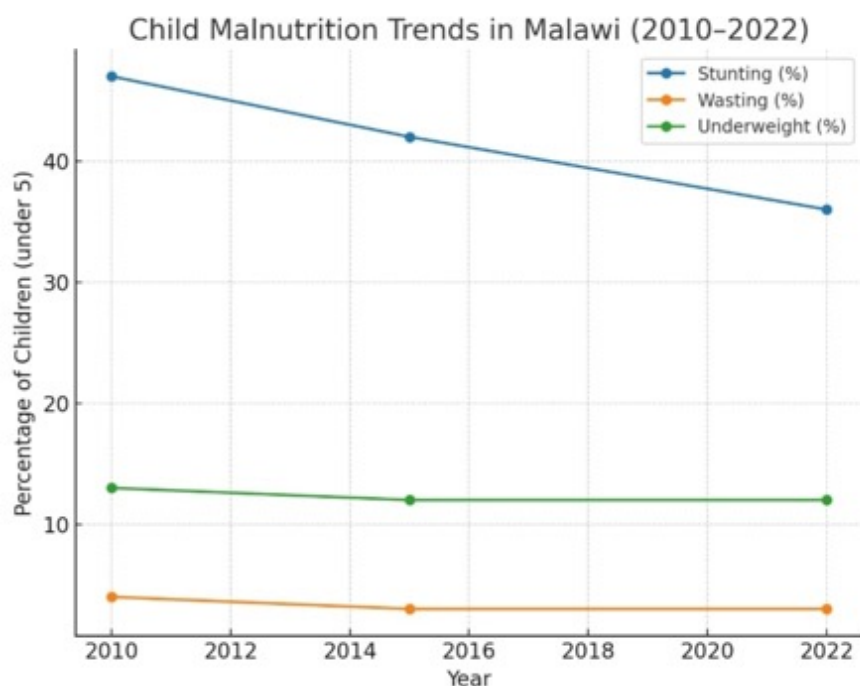
Food insecurity remains widespread in Malawi, with the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC, 2023) estimating that 4.4 million people (about 22% of the population) face acute food insecurity each year, particularly during the lean season. Child malnutrition is equally alarming, with stunting declining from 47% in 2010 to 36% in 2022 (as shown in **Chart 4: Child Malnutrition Trends in Malawi (2010–2022)**), rising to 38% or 39% in 2024; yet remains among the highest rates in Southern Africa; wasting has stabilized at 3%; and underweight prevalence stands at 12%. These challenges are driven by overreliance on maize, recurring climate shocks such as droughts, floods, and cyclones, low crop diversification, and poor agricultural productivity. Policy measures like the Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP) have improved maize access, but their fiscal sustainability and efficiency remain in question.

⁷ NSO (2022). The Second Malawi Multidimensional Poverty Index. Zomba, Malawi

⁸ NSO (2024). Malawi Demographic and Health Survey – MDHS (Draft)

⁹ NSO (2024). Nutrition SMART Survey (13 districts)

Chart 4: Child Malnutrition Trends in Malawi 2010–2022)



b. Drivers

Malawi's high poverty and food insecurity are driven by low and volatile economic growth since 2020, which has limited employment and income opportunities. The agriculture sector remains highly vulnerable to climate shocks such as droughts, El Niño events, and cyclones, while constrained imports of agricultural inputs have further reduced productivity. Frequent macro instability, including inflationary pressures and currency fluctuations, has compounded these challenges, restricting household purchasing power and undermining national development efforts.

c. Bottlenecks

Progress in reducing poverty and enhancing food security in Malawi is further constrained by several systemic bottlenecks. The limited scale of shock-responsive social safety nets leaves vulnerable households exposed to recurring economic and climate shocks. Weak market linkages restrict farmers' access to inputs, credit, and profitable markets, reducing productivity and incomes. Additionally, the slow rollout of resilience programming, despite the existence of the approved National Resilience Strategy (2018–2030), hampers coordinated efforts to strengthen community and household

d. Policy asks

Government of Malawi should fully fund and implement the National Resilience Strategy (NRS, 2018–2030). Disaster risk financing mechanisms should be integrated to ensure timely and effective responses to climate and economic shocks. Furthermore, the real value of social transfers must be protected through indexed, rules-based mechanisms that shield vulnerable households from inflation and cost-of-living shocks. These measures will strengthen social protection, enhance household resilience, and create an enabling environment for sustainable development.

¹⁰ World Bank (2024). Malawi Poverty and Equity Brief <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099929301062529471/pdf/IDU-530009c3-daf1-44bd-b97b-0989d78a6022.pdf>

¹¹ World Bank (2025) Malawi Economic Monitor, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/publication/economic-monitor>

4.2. Quality Services: Health, Education, WASH (SDG 3, 4 and 6)

a. Status

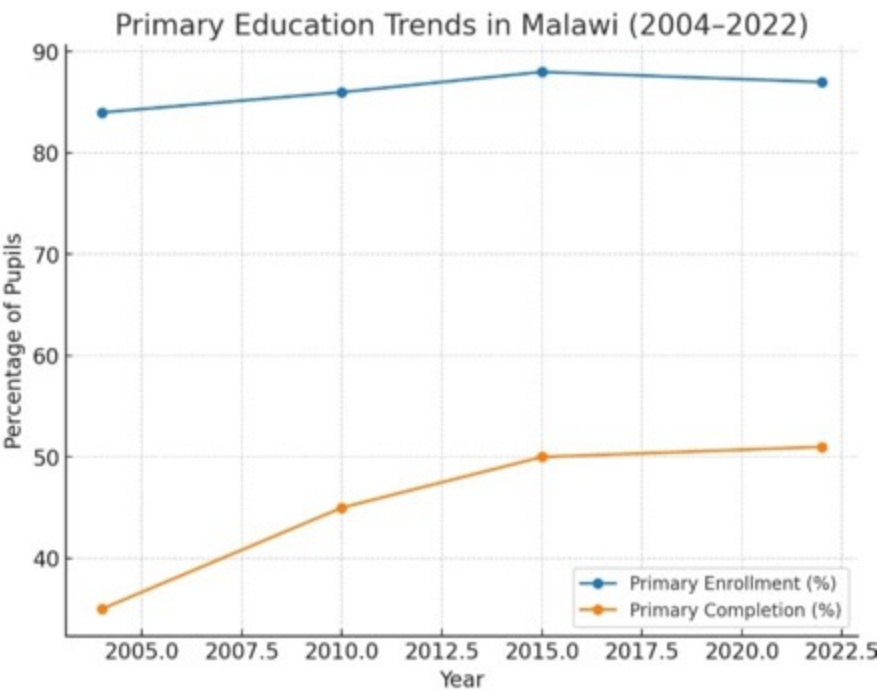
Earlier gains in health, including improvements in child survival and maternal outcomes, are increasingly under pressure, with malaria remaining a major burden, particularly in rural areas as reflected in the MMIS 2021 . Recent health system disruptions, including COVID-19 and cholera outbreaks exposed striking gaps in preparedness, service delivery, and resource allocation.

Access to education has improved, with higher enrolment rates at primary and secondary levels, yet learning outcomes remain low and teacher-pupil ratios continue to strain quality, affecting education completion largely at primary school level as demonstrated in *Chart 5: Primary*

education trends in Malawi (2004–2022). It shows enrollment has remained high (84–88%), completion lags behind (35–51%), pointing to challenges in retention, quality, and transition. Financing for the education sector is often thin, unpredictable, and volatile, affecting the provision of learning materials, infrastructure, and teacher support. Evidence from the VNRs 2020 and 2022 as well as the 2023 SDG Acceleration Report points to mixed progress, highlighting that while access has expanded, the quality and equity of education require urgent attention to achieve SDG 4.

WASH services have expanded, but safely managed services remain limited, particularly in rural areas, with persistent water safety, sanitation, and hygiene gaps as revealed by the MICS and JMP 2019–20) .

Chart 5: Primary education trends in Malawi (2004–2022)



b. Drivers

Key drivers of these challenges include population growth, limited fiscal space for service delivery, and recurring health and climate shocks. In education, unpredictable financing and thin sector budgets reduce the availability of learning materials and infrastructure. Weak institutional capacity, limited human resources, and inadequate supply chains in health and WASH also hinder service coverage and quality.

¹² Ministry of Health (2022). Malawi Malaria Indicator Survey 2021. Lilongwe. https://www.malariasurveys.org/documents/2021_MMIS_Final_Report.pdf
¹³ World Health Organisation (2023). WHO Malawi Country Office Annual Report 2022 . Lilongwe. <https://www.afro.who.int/sites/default/files/2023-11/WHO%20Malawi%202022%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

c. Bottlenecks

Structural bottlenecks include under-resourced health facilities, insufficient numbers of trained teachers, poor learning environments, and gaps in WASH infrastructure and maintenance. Service delivery is further hampered by weak accountability, limited data for planning, and slow adoption of resilience and quality improvement measures. Unequal access between urban and rural areas continues to exacerbate disparities.

d. Policy asks

To accelerate progress in health, education, and WASH, Malawi should protect pro-poor budgets even during fiscal consolidation and place greater emphasis on quality, including improved learning outcomes, service safety, and equitable access. The Government should institutionalise district-level performance compacts that link resources to measurable results and accountability. These measures will strengthen service delivery, enhance citizen trust, and drive the country closer to achieving SDGs 3, 4, and 6.

4.3. Gender, Inclusion and Inequality (SDG 5 & 10)

a. Status

Malawi has made progress with a progressive legal framework, including the Gender Equality Act of 2013, which promotes gender equality and inclusion. However, inequalities persist across multiple dimensions, including gender, income, geography, and social groups, limiting equitable access to opportunities and services. Gaps remain in the prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), and women, youth, and marginalized groups continue to face under-representation in political and decision-making spaces as demonstrated in **Chart 6: Female Representation in Malawi's Parliament (2004–2019)**.

The Chart shows fluctuations, with women's share rising from 14% in 2004 to 23% in 2019, but still far below the 50% SADC target.

Despite progress on poverty reduction in Malawi, inequality remains pervasive and multidimensional. The 2024 Commitment to Reducing Inequality (CRI) Index ranks Malawi 117th globally and 9th in Southern Africa, highlighting the country's weak performance in tackling structural inequality. The tax system is deeply regressive, placing a disproportionate burden on small-scale traders, women in informal businesses, and low-income households, while wealthier individuals and corporations often escape effective enforcement. For example, a woman selling tomatoes may face strict tax inspections, while large businesses benefit from outdated policies, lenient

enforcement, and questionable incentives. This structural imbalance exacerbates social and economic exclusion, reinforcing cycles of vulnerability for women, youth, and rural communities who already face limited access to quality services and decent work opportunities.

Inequality is also compounded by weaknesses in public service delivery and labour rights protections. Malawi ranks third from the bottom in Southern Africa in the public services pillar of the CRI Index, reflecting chronic underfunding of essential services such as health, education, and social protection. Debt pressures and austerity measures have further eroded fiscal space, leaving the poorest Malawians particularly disadvantaged. At the same time, weak enforcement of labour rights, where over 60% of workers lack adequate protection has left informal and low-wage workers, especially women and young people, without bargaining power. These dynamics show that inequality in Malawi is not only about income disparities (with a Gini Index of 0.5), but also about unequal access to justice, opportunities, and social protection, limiting progress toward inclusive and sustainable development.

Resourcing for gender and inclusion machinery is insufficient and inconsistent, reducing the effectiveness of policies aimed at addressing inequality. Structural barriers, cultural norms, and limited social protection measures further entrench disparities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that address both gender and broader societal inequities.

¹⁵ OXFAM (2025). Commitment to reducing inequality index. Malawi County Profile. Lilongwe, Malawi.

b. Drivers

Persistent gender and social inequalities in Malawi are driven by structural, economic, and cultural factors. Low female participation in formal employment and limited access to productive resources aggravate income and opportunity disparities. Traditional norms and practices continue to influence decision-making, often restricting women's, youth's, and marginalized groups' voice and agency. Additionally, unequal distribution of public services and social protection measures deepens regional and socio-economic disparities, leaving vulnerable populations behind.

c. Bottlenecks

Progress on gender equality and reducing inequality is constrained by weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding for gender machinery, and fragmented coordination across ministries and agencies. Enforcement of legal frameworks, such as the Gender Equality Act, is often inconsistent, while monitoring and accountability mechanisms remain underdeveloped. Limited data on marginalized groups and gaps in social protection

coverage hinder targeted interventions. Together, these bottlenecks slow efforts to close gaps in representation, access to services, and protection from violence.

d. Policy asks

To accelerate progress on the two SDGs, the Government should strengthen funding and capacity for gender and inclusion machinery, ensuring consistent implementation of existing legal frameworks, including ring-fencing funding for GBV response and gender-responsive budgeting across ministries. It should institutionalize mechanisms to monitor inequalities, improve representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making, expand targeted social protection measures, and strengthen enforcement of equality provisions and workplace protections. Addressing entrenched cultural norms through public awareness and community engagement will be key to reducing systemic inequalities. These actions will promote inclusive development, protect vulnerable groups, and ensure that Malawi advances toward its SDG commitments equitably.

4.4. Jobs, Livelihoods, Resilience (SDG 8, 9 and 13)

a. Status

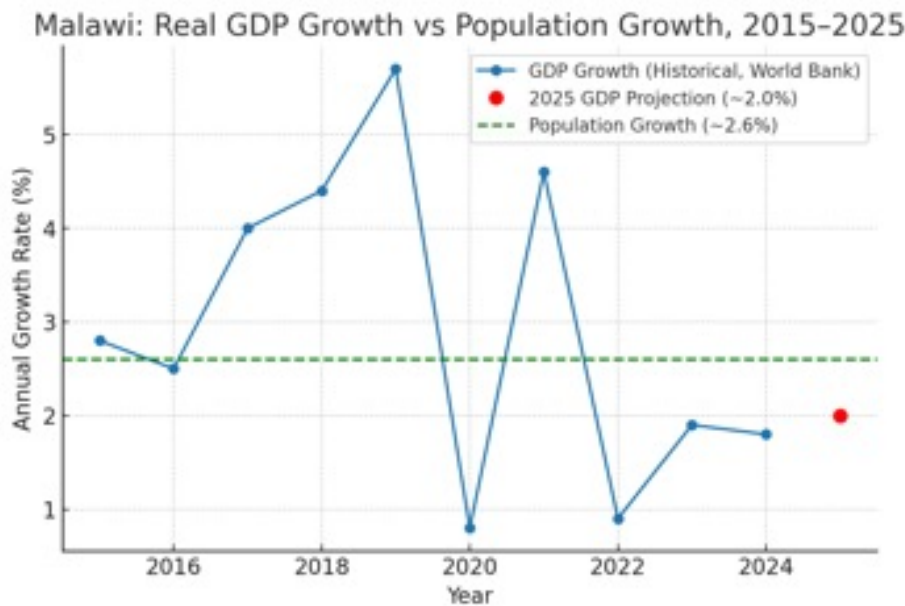
Economic growth in Malawi slowed over the past four years as revealed by **Chart 7: Real GDP Growth vs Population Growth, 2015-2025**. Coming from a growth rate of 1.8% in 2024, World Bank projects Malawi economy to grow by 2%, IMF 2.4% matching UNDP forecast in 2025. This is below the population growth rate of 2.6% resulting in decline in per capita income. The private sector is constrained by foreign exchange shortages, import bottlenecks, and challenges in energy and logistics, as highlighted in the World Bank Malawi Economic Monitor. Recurrent shocks, including droughts and cyclones, continue to undermine agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. Investments in resilience, as outlined in the NRS remain insufficient to meet current needs.

¹⁶ ILO (2024). Revising and strengthening the gender policy of the Tea Association of Malawi (TAML) <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/Malawi%20%20Gender%20-%20PRINT.pdf>

¹⁷ World Bank in Malawi <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview>

¹⁸ IMF (2025). IMF Staff Completes 2025 Article IV Mission to Malawi. <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2025/06/04/pr-25175-malawi-imf-completes-2025-art-iv-mission>

¹⁹ Sabola, T. (2025). United Nations predicts 2.4% growth in 2025. Daily Times, Blantyre. <https://times.mw/united-nations-predicts-2-4-gdp-growth-in-2025/>



b. Drivers

Key drivers of weak employment and livelihoods include macroeconomic instability, limited access to productive inputs, and underdeveloped infrastructure. Climate variability and recurrent natural disasters worsen vulnerability, particularly in agriculture-dependent communities. Low diversification in private sector activities and reliance on import-dependent value chains further limit job creation. These factors collectively hinder sustainable economic growth and the creation of resilient livelihoods.

c. Bottlenecks

Structural bottlenecks include inadequate financing for SMEs, weak value chain integration, and insufficient support for climate-resilient agriculture. Regulatory and institutional gaps constrain responsible mining and investment in productive sectors. Limited coordination between public and private actors slows the implementation of resilience and employment-enhancing interventions. The capacity to scale resilience programs and mainstream climate adaptation across sectors remains underdeveloped.

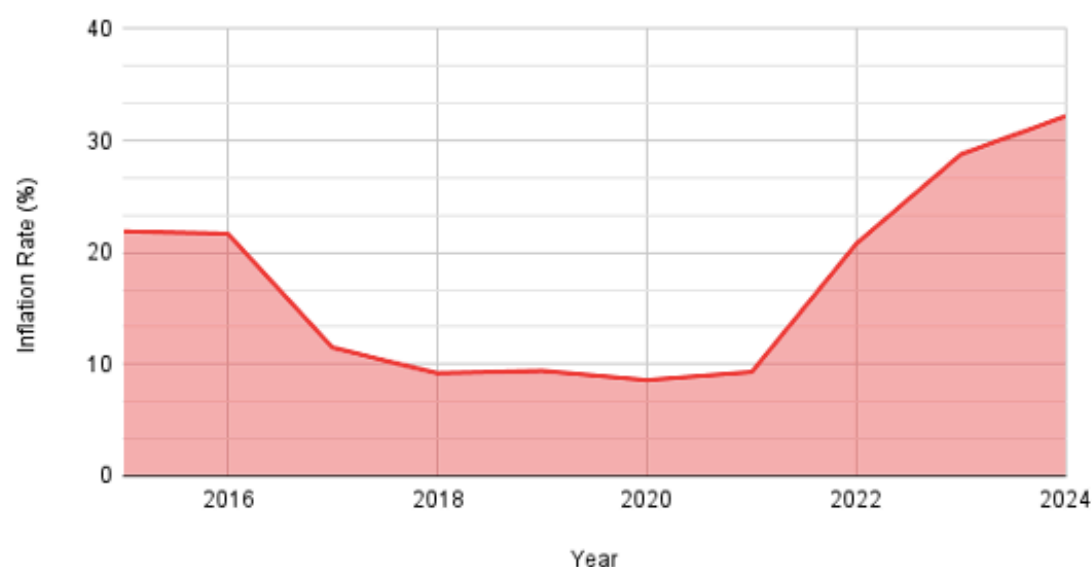
d. Policy asks

To strengthen jobs, livelihoods, and resilience, Government should restore macroeconomic stability and improve the business environment for private sector growth, which will eventually reverse the worsening inflation in Malawi as indicated by Chart 8: Annual Inflation rates in Malawi (2015–2024). Responsible mining and value chain development should be promoted, alongside policies that crowd-in private investment and stimulate sustainable entrepreneurship. Climate resilience should be mainstreamed in SME support and rural development programs. These measures will help increase incomes, diversify livelihoods, and reduce vulnerability to recurrent shocks.

²⁰ World Bank overview for Malawi (April 2025) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview>

Chart 8: Annual inflation rates in Malawi (2015-2025)

Annual inflation rates in Malawi (2015-2024)



4.5. Governance, Peace and Partnerships (SDG 16 & 17)

a. Status

Malawi has taken important strides in transparency and governance, with the Access to Information (ATI) Act commencing in September 2020. However, implementation remains uneven across ministries and agencies, limiting timely public access to critical budget, procurement, and policy data. Despite reforms under the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets Act of 2024, procurement leakages and rent-seeking practices continue to undermine value for money. High-profile corruption cases, including misuse of public funds and procurement fraud, have eroded public trust in institutions and slowed service delivery.

On the partnership front, the reactivation of the

OGP is promising, but meaningful progress depends on the delivery of commitments in open contracting, beneficial ownership disclosure, and natural resource governance. Malawi has also signed on to international debt relief frameworks and continues to benefit from concessional support through the IMF ECF, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), and regional platforms such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and SADC governance protocols. To accelerate progress on SDG 16 and SDG 17, Malawi must leverage international and regional partnerships while at the same time strengthening domestic anti-corruption enforcement and deepening civic participation, ensuring that governance reforms translate into real accountability and inclusive development.

b. Drivers

Drivers of weak governance include limited institutional capacity, insufficient political will, and low awareness among citizens and public officials about transparency mechanisms. Corruption risks and entrenched bureaucratic practices continue to undermine accountability. The increasing involvement of civil society and development partners has created momentum for reforms, highlighting opportunities for joint oversight.

²¹ World Bank's Malawi Economic Monitor: Navigating Uncertainty (July 2025) <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099071125090031718/pdf/P509269-452e5442-6e5c-4190-9ab0-a67b5ba41161.pdf>

c. Bottlenecks

Major bottlenecks include inconsistent enforcement of ATI provisions, inadequate disclosure of procurement and contract data, and slow implementation of OGP commitments. Weak coordination between Government and CSOs reduces the effectiveness of accountability initiatives. Limited monitoring capacity and data gaps hinder evidence-based governance reforms.

d. Policy asks

Government of Malawi should strengthen governance by fully enforcing the Access to Information (ATI) Act across all ministries and agencies, publishing procurement and contract data in open formats, and delivering on Open Government Partnership (OGP) commitments with joint oversight. Government should take decisive action against corruption, ensuring that public resources reach citizens as intended. In line with SDG 17, Government should build stronger partnerships with civil society, development partners, and the private sector to mobilise resources, enhance transparency, and promote accountability. These measures will reduce leakages, improve service delivery, and restore citizen trust in public institutions.

5.0. POOR IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

5.1. Why this matters

Malawi's legal and policy stock is comparatively strong for a low-income country. The challenge is operationalisation through regulations, financing and capacity; and enforcement covering compliance and sanctions.

Below are some examples:

a. Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Assets (PPDA) Act (2025)

On paper: Stronger PPDA Authority established to regulate, monitor, and standardise procurement; and updated regulations exist (2020).

In practice: Persistent non-compliance, weak publication of contract data, and limited use of open contracting tools reduce value for money.

CSO Demand: Publish all major tenders and contracts; empower PPDA with resources and independence to sanction breaches and run systemic audits as PPDA's mandate.

b. Access to Information (ATI) Act (2016; commenced 11 Sept 2020)

On paper: Established oversight, proactive disclosure duties.

In practice: Slow compliance by MDAs; limited proactive publication of datasets (budgets, procurement, extractives).

CSO Demand: Annual ATI compliance league tables; mandate "open by default" datasets, including budget execution and procurement.

c. Gender Equality Act (2013)

On paper: Prohibits discrimination; promotes women's representation and GBV protections.

In practice: Underfunded gender machinery; limited enforcement in workplaces; GBV case backlogs.

CSO Demand: Scale gender-responsive budgeting; fund GBV one-stop centres; strengthen MHRC and Ombudsman oversight.

d. Environment Management Act (2017; effective 1 Nov 2019)

On paper: Comprehensive environmental standards and EIA requirements; cross-sectoral governance.

In practice: Capacity and enforcement gaps (e.g., e-waste, mining impacts, land use) .

CSO Demand: Fund enforcement units; publish EIAs and compliance reports; link licensing to open data under OGP's extractive transparency.

e. Decentralisation and Local Government

On paper: MW2063/MIP-1 envision localisation and council leadership.

In practice: Late/insufficient transfers; limited procurement thresholds; capacity constraints; fragmented vertical programmes.

CSO Demand: Predictable, formula-based intergovernmental fiscal transfers; performance-based grants tied to SDG service delivery.

5.2. Systemic roots of poor implementation

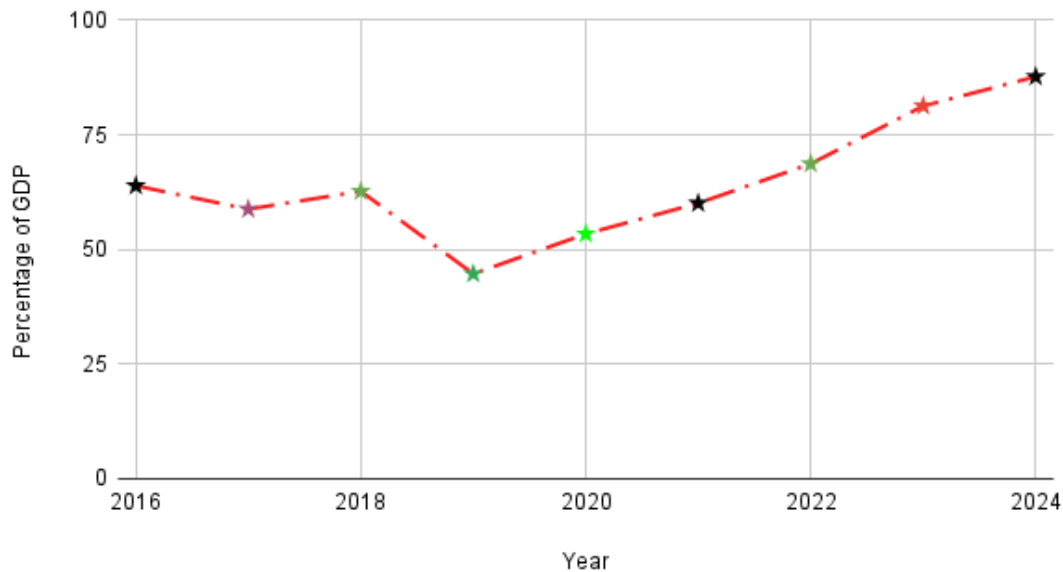
a. Financing gaps

Malawi's development budgets remain chronically underfunded, with heavy dependence on donor grants and loans to sustain even basic services. The persistent build-up of arrears, such as unpaid suppliers under the Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP) and delays in payments to contractors on infrastructure projects erodes service delivery and undermines confidence in Government systems. Debt servicing has further weakened financing mechanisms for development projects as Government struggles to service the loans which continue to grow as demonstrated in **Chart 9: Malawi public debt percentage to GDP (2016-2024) below.**

²³ World Bank's Environmental and Social Systems Assessment (ESSA) for the Malawi Fiscal Governance Program for results (February 2024) <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099021524155024966/pdf/P1813711a4868d0371be3a1d6cb7dc9469f.pdf>

²⁴ Global Economics <https://tradingeconomics.com/malawi/government-debt-to-gdp>

Malawi public debt percentage to GDP (2016-2024). Source: Global Economics



b. Institutional fragmentation

Overlapping mandates among ministries, departments, and agencies dilute accountability and delay implementation. For instance, overlaps between the Ministry of Local Government, the National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC), and District Councils have complicated coordination of decentralised service delivery, while weak monitoring and evaluation frameworks across sectors mean that results are rarely measured or acted upon.

c. Capacity constraints

District councils, which are at the frontline of service delivery, often face acute staffing shortages in technical areas such as procurement, engineering, auditing, and monitoring and evaluation. As a result, programmes like Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and District Development Fund (DDF) are implemented with limited technical oversight, increasing risks of substandard works and poor value for money.

d. Accountability deficits

Enforcement of rules remains weak, with mismanagement and procurement irregularities frequently flagged by the Auditor General but rarely leading to sanctions. Furthermore, despite the rollout of the Access to Information (ATI) Act in 2020, many ministries and councils still fail to proactively disclose budgets, procurement plans, or project performance data, reducing space for citizen oversight.

e. Politicisation

Implementation of programmes is often coloured by partisan interests, as seen in the politicisation of the AIP and constituency-level projects where targeting and enforcement have sometimes favoured political constituencies. Selective application of procurement laws and leniency toward politically connected actors weaken trust in the impartiality of state institutions.

5.3. Policy asks

a. Leverage OGP 2023–2025 to lock-in open contracting, beneficial ownership, and extractives transparency

This is an opportunity to anchor reforms into Malawi's National Action Plan so they outlive political cycles. Civil society should press for binding milestones that address corruption risks in procurement and natural resource governance.

b. Pair PPDA enforcement with citizen procurement monitoring

Strengthening the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority (PPDA) oversight alone is not enough without grassroots vigilance. Linking formal enforcement with district CSO monitoring builds pressure for compliance and exposes malpractice early.

c. Use ATI to compel proactive release of sector performance data

Despite the ATI Act, access to information is often reactive and delayed. CSOs can demand proactive disclosure of budgets, audits, and performance reports to enable real-time accountability in education, health, and infrastructure, among key sectors.

6.0. LOCALISATION OF SDGS: DISTRICT-LEVEL DELIVERY

6.1. Why localisation matters

Most SDG-relevant services are delivered locally. Councils require timely, adequate, and flexible resources; stronger planning and M&E; and tools for community oversight. Yet in Malawi, intergovernmental fiscal transfers are often delayed and unpredictable, undermining district implementation. Strengthening citizen engagement in local development committees ensures SDGs translate into visible improvements in service delivery.

6.2. Illustrative approaches

a. Community scorecards for health/WASH facilities tied to district compacts.

These tools can empower citizens to provide feedback on service quality and accountability at facility level. In Malawi, piloting scorecards under GESD has already exposed malpractices, showing their potential to strengthen district compacts. Expanding their use can create positive spill-over effects into CDF and DDF-funded projects.

b. Participatory budgeting and procurement transparency portals.

Engaging citizens in budget deliberations helps align council spending with community priorities. In Malawi, few districts effectively operationalise this, often leaving decisions in the hands of technocrats and councillors. Developing user-friendly online procurement portals can build trust and curb leakage.

c. District M&E plans aligned to MIP-1 with routine public dashboards.

Councils often prepare M&E reports for compliance but rarely for citizen use. Public-facing dashboards would allow communities to track progress against SDG and MIP-1 targets. This can also incentivise districts to improve data quality and consistency across sectors.

6.3. Policy asks

To make localisation a reality, Government of Malawi must guarantee councils predictable resources and stronger accountability frameworks. This means adopting fiscal rules for on-time quarterly transfers, setting procurement thresholds that curb leakages, and embedding citizen oversight in council by-laws. These reforms would end chronic funding delays, empower councils to plan effectively, and give communities enforceable rights to demand transparency, ensuring that SDG commitments translate into tangible results at the local level.

²⁵ Kayamba-Phiri, F. (2023). Lessons from Developing District-Level M&E Plans to Implement the National Resilience Strategy. Learning Brief. Produced by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Titukulane RFSA. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0ddff537-4d6f-4875-9e06-0335548b5e26/content>

7.0. FINANCING THE SDGS

7.1. Macroeconomic reality

The World Bank MEM (July 2025) describes Malawi as having a “deep and protracted crisis,” with 2025 GDP projected growth of 2% as insufficient for income gains amid fiscal imbalances, inflation, and constrained external financing. Safeguarding social sector spending, particularly in health, education, agriculture, and WASH, while simultaneously restoring macroeconomic stability is essential to halt the erosion of basic services, protect the most vulnerable, and preserve Malawi’s human capital gains. Mounting domestic arrears continue to crowd out private sector activity, further limiting job creation as revealed by United

Nations Malawi in its Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023).

Exchange rate volatility and rising debt service obligations are eroding fiscal space, leaving fewer resources for SDG investments.

Malawi is in debt distress . Public debt is approximately around 86% of GDP , with external arrears accumulating. This unsustainable obligation is eroding fiscal space for SDG financing. Interest payments now consume more than 30% of domestic revenues, crowding out health, education, agriculture and other essential sectors . The country currently relies on debt restructuring talks and concessional support to avoid a full-blown fiscal crisis.

7.2. SDG financing bottlenecks

- a. Development budgets executed below plan; arrears crowd out social outlays. “Children lose classrooms while resources sit in unpaid arrears.”
- b. Leakages from weak procurement oversight reduce value for money. “Every kwacha lost to inflated contracts is a clinic or borehole denied.”
- c. Limited domestic revenue mobilisation and narrow export base. “Malawi cannot finance tomorrow’s SDGs on today’s shallow tax base.”

7.3. Policy asks

- a. Publish a medium-term SDG financing map; and ring-fence pro-poor outlays in consolidation. Also, track and publicly report quarterly execution to ensure transparency and corrective action.
- b. Enforce PPDA (publish contracts; sanction non-compliance). Complement enforcement with citizen-led monitoring at district and facility levels to detect irregularities early.
- c. Expand climate/disaster risk financing aligned to NRS. Integrate these funds into district budgets to ensure local-level resilience investments are predictable and responsive.

²⁶ IMF Malawi Staff Report 2024

²⁷ Phiri, F. (2025). Reuters ‘Malawi lowers 2025 growth forecast as inflation spurs protests’ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/malawi-cuts-2025-growth-forecast-inflation-spurs-street-protests-2025-02-28/>

²⁸ World Bank Debt Sustainability Analysis 2023 <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099013024111094893/bosib155b0b1f0053192b21d124a5329907>

8.0. DATA, MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

8.1. Data gaps and SDG targeting

Lags in household surveys and limited quality of administrative data constrain precise SDG targeting in Malawi.

The MDHS 2024 Key Indicators are available, but the final report is due in 2025, while MICS 2019/20 continues to underpin WASH, child, and gender

indicators. Sector reports from WHO and other programs provide useful insights but are not integrated into a unified, open national dashboard. Without timely, disaggregated, and accessible data, policymakers and civil society cannot effectively monitor progress or direct resources where they are most needed.

8.2. Policy Asks

a. Fund NSO and sector MIS to deliver annual open datasets (CSV/API)

Adequate funding will enable NSO and sector ministries to produce timely, machine-readable data for health, education, WASH, and other SDG-relevant areas. This enables decision-makers and civil society to analyse trends, identify gaps, and track implementation progress efficiently. Integrating these datasets across sectors can also facilitate predictive planning and evidence-based resource allocation.

b. Recognise citizen-generated data in VNR updates and MIP-1 reviews

Valuing data collected by communities, NGOs, and local councils strengthens the evidence base and provides a more accurate picture of on-the-ground realities. Including citizen-generated insights helps highlight disparities, monitor service delivery, and prioritise interventions that matter most to vulnerable populations. It also encourages greater civic engagement and accountability at all levels.

c. Mandate proactive disclosure under ATI with a central open data portal

Ensuring all ministries, departments, and agencies regularly publish budgets, audits, and sector performance data can increase transparency and reduce opportunities for misuse. A central portal will allow citizens, journalists, and researchers to access standardized information in one place. This will build trust in Government reporting, enable real-time monitoring, and empower civil society to advocate for corrective action where needed.

9.0. CROSS-CUTTING: GENDER, YOUTH, CLIMATE, GOVERNANCE

a. Gender

Fully apply the Gender Equality Act; integrate gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in the MTEF; and fund GBV response. Strengthening gender machinery at district and community levels ensures policies translate into tangible protection and empowerment for women and girls. Collecting sex-disaggregated data across sectors will improve monitoring and guide targeted interventions to reduce persistent inequalities.

b. Youth

Expand skills development, apprenticeships, and digital public works linked to local service delivery. Investing in youth employment will address high underemployment and harness the demographic dividend. Partnering with private sector and civil society can scale mentorship, entrepreneurship, and innovation opportunities for young Malawians.

c. Climate

Mainstream the National Resilience Strategy (NRS) across agriculture, infrastructure, and social protection. Strengthening climate-smart practices in districts will reduce vulnerability to recurrent shocks like droughts and floods. Integrating climate considerations into planning and budgets ensures sustainable development and resilience for both rural and urban communities.

d. Governance

Deliver OGP commitments on open contracting, beneficial ownership, and extractives; strengthen enforcement of the Environment Management Act. Building stronger oversight mechanisms and citizen participation at both national and district levels will improve accountability. Regular reporting and accessible public data will empower Malawians to track Government performance and advocate for corrective action where needed.

10.0. RECOMMENDATIONS: CALL TO ACTION (2025–2030)

a. Enforce what's on the books

Finance and operationalise PPDA, ATI, Gender Equality, and Environment Acts; and publish annual implementation scorecards. Consistent enforcement will reduce selective compliance and improve citizen trust. Regular scorecards will allow stakeholders to identify gaps and demand timely corrective action.

b. Stabilise and protect

Ensure macro-fiscal stabilisation while maintaining floors on priority social spending. Protecting pro-poor budgets safeguards health, education, and social protection programmes against fiscal shocks. This approach ensures that growth benefits reach vulnerable population even during economic downturns.

c. Localise

Implement rule-based council transfers, performance-based grants, and citizen oversight embedded in by-laws. Strengthened local governance enables councils to plan effectively and deliver SDG-relevant services. Active community participation ensures accountability and improves resource allocation at the district level.

d. Open Government now

Implement OGP 2023–2025; publish contracts, licenses, EIAs, and resource revenues. Transparency in natural resource management and public procurement strengthens governance and deters corruption. Open data empowers civil society and communities to monitor compliance and advocate for reforms.

e. Close the data gap

Fund MDHS 2024 finalisation and routine MICS-style modules; open data by default. Timely, disaggregated, and high-quality data is essential for evidence-based policy and targeting. Integrating multiple sources, including citizen-generated data, provides a more accurate picture of progress and gaps.

f. Resilience first

Scale NRS pillars and shock-responsive systems to break the hunger-poverty cycle. Investments in climate-smart agriculture, disaster risk financing, and social protection improve household coping capacity. Strengthening resilience at both district and community levels ensures sustainability of development gains.

g. Gender mainstreaming

Integrate GRB in all sectors; fund GBV services and enforcement. Targeted interventions empower women and girls while addressing entrenched inequalities. Collecting sex- and age-disaggregated data ensures that policies respond to real needs.

h. Procurement integrity

Publish end-to-end procurement datasets; enable joint PPDA-CSO audits. Transparent procurement systems reduce leakages and ensure value for money. Independent audits and citizen monitoring create accountability and deter malpractice.

i. Service quality over counts

Track safely managed WASH and learning outcomes, not only access. Focusing on quality ensures that increased access translates into real improvements in health, hygiene, and education. Measuring outcomes drives evidence-based resource allocation and policy adjustments.

j. Co-create reforms

Formalise Government-CSO policy dialogues with time-bound commitments and public trackers. Structured engagement triggers mutual accountability and encourages the Government to follow through on promises. Public trackers enable citizens to monitor progress and advocate for timely corrective actions.

11.0. CONCLUSION

Malawi has the right plans and laws to meet much of the SDG targets by 2030. The decisive factor now is implementation with accountability: financing the mandates already passed; publishing data and contracts; empowering districts; and partnering with citizens. With these reforms, Malawi can still register meaningful SDG gains in the final stretch.

However, financing gaps, weak data systems, and fragmented institutions continue to limit progress and leave vulnerable populations behind. Strengthening local governance and ensuring predictable, rule-based resource transfers will enhance service delivery at the community level. Transparent procurement, proactive disclosure under the ATI Act, and full operationalisation of OGP commitments will reduce corruption and improve public trust. Mainstreaming gender, youth, and climate considerations across all sectors will ensure that development is inclusive and resilient.

Civil society engagement remains critical to monitor, advocate, and co-create solutions with Government. Urgent, coordinated action now can turn current risks into opportunities, putting Malawi on a credible path to achieving the SDGs by 2030.

ANNEXTURE

ANNEX 1: GUIDE FOR POLICY ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

1.0. Problem Statement

Malawi has progressive laws and frameworks supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), yet implementation is weak. Poor enforcement of laws, weak accountability, and macroeconomic instability (inflation, forex shortages, and debt stress) are eroding basic service delivery in health, education, agriculture, WASH and social protection.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) recognise that without urgent reforms, Malawi risks missing the SDGs and losing gains already made in poverty reduction, gender equality, and governance.

2.0. Solution Bundle: 8 Priority Asks

- a. Enforce laws and policies: close the gap between legislation and implementation.
- b. Stabilise the macro-economy: protect social spending from fiscal shocks.
- c. Localise the SDGs – integrate targets into District Development Plans with predictable financing.
- d. Open data and contracts: publish procurement and budget information “open by default.”
- e. Invest in resilience: strengthen systems for climate adaptation, food security, and disaster preparedness.
- f. Close data gaps: strengthen routine surveys and administrative data to track SDG progress.
- g. Mainstream gender equality: accelerate enforcement of the Gender Equality Act and target 50% representation.
- h. Prioritise service quality, not just access: education, health, agriculture and WASH services must deliver results.

3.0. Immediate Actions

- a. Cabinet: Issue a circular mandating proactive disclosure lists under the Access to Information (ATI) law, with “open by default” status for budget and procurement data.

b. Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority (PPDA)

- . Require publication of all contracts above threshold in an open portal.
- . Announce and schedule compliance audits.

c. Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs /Treasury

- . Ring-fence health, education, WASH and other key sectors’ transfers for local councils.
- . Publish quarterly disbursement releases.

d.National Statistical Office (NSO), Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education

Publish a data release calendar for household surveys and administrative datasets (e.g., MDHS 2024, Annual School Census, WASH service quality).

e. OGP Steering Committee: Launch a public tracker on 2023–2025 OGP commitments (natural resources, beneficial ownership, extractives transparency).

4.0. Why Act Now?

- a. Malawi has only one-third of the SDG timeline left; delays now will be irreversible.
- b. Transparency and accountability measures are low-cost, high-impact reforms.
- c. Early wins in open contracting, budget transparency, and social spending protection will restore public trust and unlock donor confidence.

ANNEX 2: MALAWI SDG SNAPSHOT FOR SELECTED INDICATORS

a.SDG Index (2025): Score ~57/100; Rank ~139 of 167 countries

Malawi sits in the bottom tier of global SDG performance. Progress is too slow to meet 2030 targets without structural reforms.

b. Poverty: ~70% of Malawians live under \$2.15/day (2019 basis)

Poverty is widespread and stubborn, trapping nearly 7 in 10 citizens in extreme poverty. Inequality and recurrent shocks undermine inclusive growth.

c. Economic Growth: Projected at ~2% for 2025; per capita incomes still declining

With population growth above the GDP growth at 2.6%, Malawi's economy is shrinking in real per-capita terms, eroding household resilience and fiscal space.

d. Health: Malaria remains the top killer; health system shocks from COVID-19 and cholera (2021–2022) exposed fragility

Despite vaccine rollouts, service disruptions have reversed child and maternal health gains. Malaria alone accounts for 30–40% of outpatient visits annually.

e. WASH: Safely managed water and sanitation lag; quality of services remains low

Only 25% of Malawians have access to safely managed drinking water, and less than 15% use safely managed sanitation. Service reliability and contamination risks are major concerns.

f. Governance: Mixed progress — transparency reforms vs. weak enforcement

- Access to Information Act commenced in 2020, but compliance remains limited.
- PPDA Act (2025 update) mandates open contracting, but implementation is slow.
- Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan 2023–2025 is active, but monitoring is weak.
- With this, Malawi has the right laws, but delivery lags far behind promises.

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