

# Country Profile On Nutrition

07/2024

MALAWI

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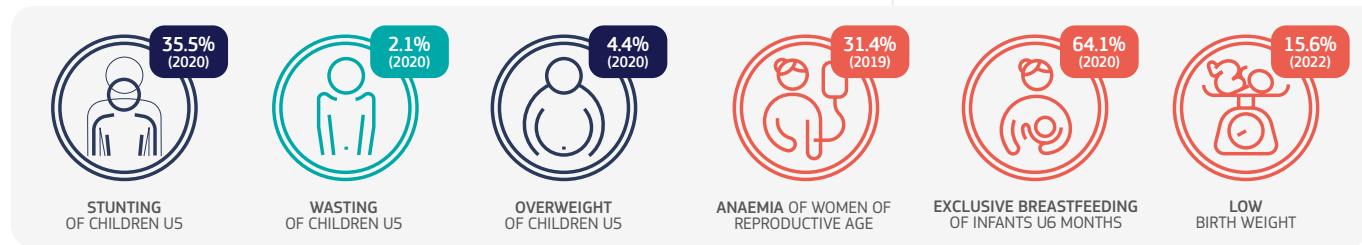
### Nutrition situation in Malawi

#### AT A GLANCE

Malawi has a relatively small but young population of 21.2 million people<sup>1</sup>, with over 80% under 35 years old. Despite strong annual economic growth since 2006, Malawi has a very high – and persistent – prevalence of stunting amongst children under-five: a marginal decrease from 37% in 2016<sup>2</sup> was seen in 2020 (35.5%). Nearly 60% of the working-age population were stunted as children. Malawi's high levels of undernutrition have led to estimated losses of USD 597 million per year due to increased healthcare costs and lower labour productivity<sup>3</sup>. High national poverty rates (exceeding 50%<sup>4</sup>), persistent prevalence of HIV/AIDS, insufficient dietary diversity<sup>5</sup>, early marriage and gender inequality are the main challenges.

Female farmers produce an estimated 70% of food for household consumption, and women perform 50-70% of all agricultural tasks in the country<sup>6</sup>, yet their access to land tenure, education and finance remains limited. Malawian diets are typically high in grain and sugar. While overweight in children has not increased, prevalence is high in women of reproductive age (21%<sup>7</sup>). Malawi's dependence on rain-fed agriculture and its policy focus on maize production has restricted dietary diversity and made the country very vulnerable to food insecurity and climate change. Malawi has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.579 and is ranked 148 of 166 countries in the 2022 index<sup>8</sup>.

#### DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

#### NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

- Malawi was one of the first countries to join the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in 2011 and its mechanism of multi-sectoral coordination for nutrition was seen as a model example.
- A national nutrition committee is chaired by the MOH permanent secretary, with the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS functioning as secretariat. The committee includes technical specialists and development partners. It is replicated at district level, where committees contribute to district development plans.
- A comprehensive Malawi National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy (MNMSNP) 2018-2022 is under implementation. The Government is reviewing the MNMSNP and a new policy 2024-2030, which takes into consideration SUN Strategy 3.0 and commitments to food systems in Malawi, is at advanced stage.
- Budget lines for nutrition have been created by the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, Health and Gender as well as through local government financing committees at district level.
- A donor group and a UN Forum on Nutrition are actively engaged in sharing information on programme research, planning and reviews.
- Mandatory salt iodisation was introduced in 1998 and the fortification of oil and maize and wheat flour were mandated between 2012 and 2015. Between 40% (maize flour) and 99% (salt) of these food products are currently fortified based on the national standards<sup>9</sup>.

#### Example of EU support

'Afikepo' ('let the children develop to their full potential' in Chichewa language) is a joint effort between the Government of Malawi, the EU and other development partners to address undernutrition through a multi-sectoral, integrated approach. It follows a holistic 'four pillars' approach adopted by the National Nutrition Committee in 2015, including:

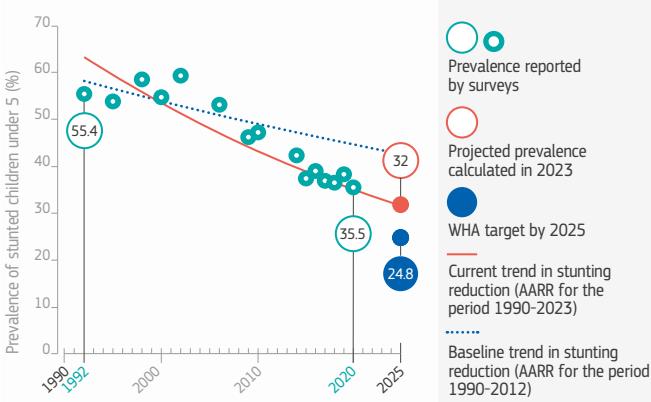
- nutrition-sensitive agriculture and improved maternal, infant and young child feeding and care practices;
- primary health care, therapeutic care, support and treatment;
- integration of behavioural change communication among communities, learners, professional and frontline workers through nutrition education;
- governance, capacity-development, research, fortification, monitoring and evaluation.

The EU is contributing EUR 86 million (2017-2024) to address pillars 1, 3 and 4 to support interventions in 14 districts. The programme monitors not only the impact on nutrition outcomes, but also the individual dietary diversity of women, adolescent girls and children.

Afikepo has close links to the EU-financed KULIMA programme, which also mainstreams gender and builds the capacity of smallholder farmers; and the SUN initiative to strengthen nutrition governance at district level.

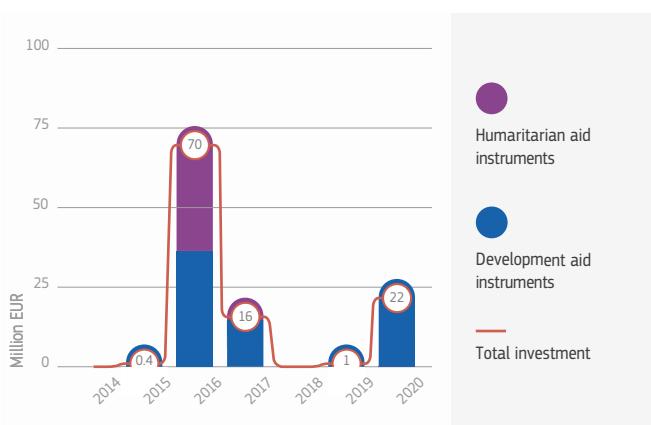


## Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



### TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED

The MNMSNP 2018-2022 included the commitment to reduce stunting amongst children under five to 30% by 2022. While data is not yet available for 2022, it seems unlikely that the target was met. The rate in the decline of the number of children stunted accelerated from 0.95% in 2012 to 2.07% in 2022. If this trend is maintained, some 1.04 million children are expected to be stunted in 2025, representing 32% prevalence and not reaching the WHA target of 24.8%. Although Malawi has experienced a general decrease in the prevalence of stunting since 1990, the absolute number of stunted children has increased due to population growth, a trend common in the region.



### EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – A TOTAL OF EUR 109 MILLION

The most significant nutrition investment has been through Afikepo (featured above) to which the EU contributed EUR 70 million in 2016 (with additional funding of EUR 16 million in 2020).

The EU also addresses malnutrition through its support to a national social support programme, investing EUR 5 million in resilience building interventions that have a strong focus on both nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive activities from a total of EUR 73 million, and through two regional funding facilities:

- on resilience (PROACT 2019) to increase food and nutrition security for vulnerable households; and
- on inclusive and sustainable value chains and food fortification.

No funds were committed in 2021, but an additional EUR 71.5 million was committed in 2022 through the initiatives Greening and Growing Malawi (Ulimi ndi Chilengedwe m'Malawi or UCHI, EUR 56.5 million) and Support Agricultural Diversification, Value Addition and Commercialisation in Malawi (EUR 15 million), which both have a 'Significant' nutrition objective<sup>10</sup>.

## Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

Malawi developed a [National Position Paper on Building Healthier, Sustainable and Equitable Food Systems for a Better Malawi](#) for the 2021 UN [Food Systems Summit](#). Key priorities include: Action Track 1: Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all - Promote production of nutrient rich foods; Action Track 2: Shift to sustainable consumption patterns - Develop logistics infrastructures and capacity to support modernised food transportation systems across the country to reduce food loss and waste and extend produce shelf-life.

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The EU has mainstreamed nutrition in its Multi-annual Indicative Plan for Malawi 2021-2027, in particular through the first and third priority areas relating to green and resilient rural transformation and human development and social inclusion. The strong emphasis on gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment is also conducive to achieving better nutrition outcomes. Furthermore, the EU and Member States' Team Europe Initiative 'Green Growth for Malawi', focuses on agro-ecological value chain development, environmental protection and nutrition.

Afikepo in conjunction with KULIMA, focused in areas of high malnutrition, and the UCHI programme will build on its achievements to improve food and nutrition security while increasing agriculture commercialisation and resilience of food systems (a budget of EUR 10 million is planned for nutrition). The programme includes activities to strengthen information systems on food and nutrition security at district level, and enhance policy dialogue and advocacy at the national level to achieve more resilient food systems. The EU will step up its support to school meals to enhance nutrition, education and economic outcomes of communities, investing EUR 27 million to reach 400 000 children in primary schools and 13 000 children attending early childhood development (ECD) centres.

Additionally, the EUR 73 million SoSuRe (Social Support for Resilience) interventions continue to make effective linkages with Afikepo in the promotion of climate-smart techniques; formation of backyard gardens; creation of care groups; and enhanced financial inclusion for poor and vulnerable households. The programme will support children aged 3-6 years to access ECD services.

The Gender Responsive Social Protection (EUR 59.0 million) programme will promote social and behaviour change (SBC) activities that include nutrition interventions at paypoints. The action aims to integrate social protection services more seamlessly with other essential services such as SBC, education, healthcare, and nutrition (with focus on nutrition education to cash transfer beneficiaries). Nutrition education will be mainstreamed in most capacity building trainings. Furthermore, pay points will be utilised as a platform for message-dissemination and awareness-raising.

1 - UNDESA World Population Prospects 2022 population estimate January 2024.

2 - National Statistical Office (NSO) [Malawi] and ICF. 2017. Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16. Zomba, Malawi, and Rockville, Maryland, USA. NSO and ICF.

3 - Hettinger, Patrick Shawn. Malawi Economic Monitor: Strengthening Human Capital Through Nutrition (English). Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. 1 December 2019. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/403401576093803229/Malawi-Economic-Monitor-Strengthening-Human-Capital-Through-Nutrition>

4 - Poverty at national level was estimated at 50.8% in the Fifth Integrated Household Survey (IHS5-2019/2020), reported in the Government of Malawi's Malawi Poverty Report 2020 National Statistical Office (NSO), August 2021; 56.6% of people from rural areas were poor compared to 19.2% in urban areas; and 20.5% of the population lived in extreme poverty. Based on the international poverty line (equivalent to US\$1.90 per person per day) adopted by the World Bank the incidence of poverty in Malawi was reported as 68.5% in 2018.

5 - Only 8.7% of Malawian children aged 6-23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet (MAD) (MICS 2019/2020). National Statistical Office. 2021. Malawi Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019-20, Survey Findings Report. Zomba, Malawi: National Statistical Office.

6 - <https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2019/the20Gender20gapcompressed.pdf>

7 - Ibid.

8 - UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2022. Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping Our Future in a Transforming World. New York.

9 - [https://fortificationdata.org/country-fortification-dashboard/?alpha3\\_code=MWI&lang=en](https://fortificationdata.org/country-fortification-dashboard/?alpha3_code=MWI&lang=en)

10 - Data in this section excludes some regional, global and policy/research/information commitments that could not be disaggregated by beneficiary country. Data for 2022 are preliminary. The European Commission applied the methodology of the SUN Donor Network for nutrition resource tracking 2014-2020 and OECD DAC's nutrition policy marker from 2021 onwards.