



## THE SMP PRACTICAL GUIDE TO VISITING MALAWI

EDITION 5: 2015



***Practical advice and information for Scottish organisations, community groups or individuals going to work or volunteer in Malawi.***

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Using The Guide.....	3
The Scotland Malawi Partnership - Vision, Mission And Values.....	3
About Malawi .....	4
Geography .....	5
History Of The Scotland-Malawi Friendship .....	5
Weather And Climate .....	7
Accommodation.....	8
Communication .....	9
Life In Malawi.....	10
Culture And Language.....	11
Government of Malawi.....	17
Health .....	19
International Organisations In Malawi .....	24
Money.....	25
Safety.....	26
Sending Goods .....	28
Transport .....	30
Visas .....	31
British High Commission in Malawi .....	32
Further advice and support from the SMP .....	33
Appendix A: Yellow fever letters .....	34

## USING THE GUIDE

This guide aims to provide practical advice and information to Scottish organisations, community groups or individuals going to work or volunteer in Malawi. The guide provides an introduction to the history and culture of Malawi, and offers advice on the practicalities of visiting Malawi. We hope you find the information within the guide useful, we strongly advise visiting the [UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) website for up to date travel, health and other general advice before you travel to Malawi.

## THE SCOTLAND MALAWI PARTNERSHIP - VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

The Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) is an umbrella organisation which exists to inspire the people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in an informed, coordinated and effective way for the benefit of both nations.

The Partnership provides a forum where ideas, activities and information can be shared on its website, through its online mapping tool and its regular workshops, training events and stakeholder meetings. It also publishes good practice guides to harness the expertise of its members on key issues such as school partnerships, volunteering in Malawi and shipping goods to Malawi. By creating a single space for all the organisations and individuals in Scotland currently engaged with Malawi to come together, the SMP helps reduce duplication of effort, adds value to Scotland's historic civil society relationship with Malawi, and contributes towards poverty alleviation in Malawi.

The Partnership has over 700 member organisations and individuals, all of whom have their own Malawi work/connections. The SMP member database and mapping tool are both available online at: [www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/members.html](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/members.html). In addition to its formal membership the Partnership also engages around 150 Malawians in Scotland and about 250 Malawian organisations and individuals with Scottish links in Malawi. They also facilitate a Cross Party Group on Malawi in the Scottish Parliament and work with a number of Scottish Local Authorities.

In 2014 The University of Edinburgh published a report that estimates that the SMP's 700 members contribute over £40 million in time, resources and money to their links with Malawi. This activity benefits over 2 million Malawians (over 10% of the population) and 300,000 Scots. In total, more than 198,000 Malawians and 94,000 Scots are actively involved in links between the two countries, making the SMP one of Scotland's largest communities actively engaged in international linking.

The SMP is underpinned by a historic bilateral civil society relationship based not on 'donors' and 'recipients' but on long-standing, mutually-beneficial community to community, family to family and people to people links. It is a relationship built on trust and mutual respect. This is a new and innovative mode of international development and it is a powerful force for change.

Given the strong community buy-in at both ends of the partnership, this is a model which offers exceptional value for money: the benefits of the SMP's modest inputs have been multiplied many times over, and have trickled down through Scottish and Malawian civil society to bring about real change at a fraction of the cost of conventional 'big aid'.

For further information on how to become a member of the Scotland Malawi Partnership visit: [www.scotland-malawipartnership](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership).

## ABOUT MALAWI



Area: 118,000 sq km

Population: 16.36 million (est. 2013)

Major Ethnic Groups Chewa, Nyanja, Tumbuka, Yao, Lomwe, Sena, Tonga, Ngoni, Ngonde, Asian, European

Official Languages: English, Chichewa (Southern and Central Region), Chitumbuka (Northern Region)

Religions: Christian (82.6%), Muslim (13%), Other (1.9%) None (2.5%)

Independence: 6 July 1964

Parliament: Unicameral National Assembly (193 seats)

Capital City: Lilongwe

Head of State and Government : President Peter Mutharika

GDP: US\$ 3.705 billion (2013, World Bank)

GDP Per Capita: US\$ 270 (2013. World Bank)

Life expectancy at birth: 55 years (2012, World Bank)

Poverty : More than 50% of the population live below the poverty line (2010, World Bank)

Major Exports: Tobacco, Tea, Groundnuts, Sugar, Coffee, Rice, Pulses

Fondly known as: "The warm heart of Africa"



## GEOGRAPHY

Malawi is a relatively small, landlocked country in south central Africa at the southern end of the East African Rift Valley. It shares borders with Tanzania to the north, Zambia to the west and Mozambique to the east and south. It occupies an area of 118,000 Km<sup>2</sup> – around 50% larger than Scotland – although Lake Malawi accounts for a fifth of this. The climate is sub-tropical, with a rainy season lasting from December to April, a cold season in June and July, and a dry season from October to November.

## HISTORY OF THE SCOTLAND-MALAWI FRIENDSHIP

The friendship between Scotland and Malawi was forged by one of Scotland's greatest men. Dr David Livingstone first reached the area known as Malawi in April 1859 and arrived at Lake Nyasa on September 17th, 1859.

It can be argued that Livingstone's greatest achievement was his campaign to end the slave trade along the 1000 miles of Africa's East Coast. His campaign began in Malawi – where the trees under which he held meetings to discuss slavery are now national monuments. He is still remembered in Malawi, and the rest of Southern Africa by the description given to him by Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda: "Africa's first freedom fighter".

The Rev Dr James Stewart, who, after attending the funeral of David Livingstone in April 1874, launched the scheme for the Livingstonia mission in Malawi. The Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland was set up in 1875, followed by the Blantyre Mission of the Church of Scotland a year later. But these were no ordinary missionaries; their mission was not just to preach the Christian gospel, but to develop Malawi through education, medicine and trade, the latter with the Africa Lakes Corporation. Their ambition was to follow Livingstone's dream that the people of Southern Africa and Malawi were treated as equal partners. The Scots in Malawi were defined their role as helping Africans develop Africa for themselves, in direct contrast to Cecil Rhodes who led the expansion of white settlement northwards out of South Africa.

The Livingstonia Central Africa Company headquartered in Glasgow and managed by John Moir and Frederick Moir was established in 1877 and renamed the Africa Lakes Corporation in 1894. Its focus was on trade and transport and established trading posts at locations in Malawi down to the mouth of the Zambezi River and also operated a number of steamboats on Lake Nyasa.

Scotland was instrumental in protecting Malawi as a nation. In the 1880s, Portugese settlers and Swahili slave-traders were determined to carve up the country between them. The Church of Scotland and the Free Church, along with Scottish Liberals and Tories united in their opposition to this and large public meetings were held across Scotland where the campaigners argued that Malawi should be brought under the protection of the British Government to prevent its break-up.

In June 1889, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, a member of the UK Cabinet, presented the Prime Minister Lord Salisbury with a petition signed by 11,000 Scots, and in May 1891, the British Central African Protectorate came into being. It became the Nyasaland Protectorate in 1907.

Perhaps the most famous of all Scotland's missionaries to Malawi was Dr Robert Laws, who headed up the Livingstonia mission for 50 years and laid the framework for Malawi's education and health services. Dr Laws, with other Scottish missionaries, also encouraged the establishment of the Native Association movement. The first one, the North Nyasa Native Association, was set up in 1912 with the aim of supporting Malawian involvement in the political development and governance of their country. Many of the leading members of this movement had been educated at Livingstonia and their ideology would soon stretch into other parts of Southern Africa and inform the intellectual and political development of the African independence movement.

On 1 August 1953, against the wishes of most Malawians and Scots living in Malawi the British government forced Malawi into a federation with former colony of Southern Rhodesia and Northern Rhodesia, a British Protectorate. The Malawian struggle against the Federation culminated in the Central African Federation government declaring a state of emergency in 1959.

Dr. Hastings Banda, the leader of Nyasaland National Congress (later the Malawi Congress Party), who had done part of his medical training at Edinburgh University, was arrested and the NAC outlawed. Scots were outraged. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland that year passed a motion for the “daring and creative transfer of power to the people of Malawi” and ministers left petitions in church vestibules campaigning for Malawi to win its freedom.

The Federation was eventually dissolved in 1963 and Malawi became an independent nation on 6 July 1964. A young Scots lawyer, Colin Cameron who moved to Malawi in 1957 was one of the first members of Malawi Congress Party and was a member of Dr Hastings Banda’s first cabinet. He resigned in August 1964 in protest at Banda’s wish to introduce a Preventative Detention Bill and he was forced to leave Malawi. Hear Colin’s first hand account of his time in Malawi by clicking [here](#).

In the early 1990s when Malawians took the initiative to throw off the shackles of the Banda’s one-party dictatorship, Scots offered significant support to the movement which led to the introduction of multi-party democracy.

In 1994, following the introduction of multi-party democracy and the election of President Muluzi, Colin Cameron was appointed Malawi’s Honorary Consul in Scotland a post he had held until 2010.

In 2000 Strathclyde University – the successor to Anderson College, where Livingstone had studied medicine, launched the Malawi Millennium Project with Bell College, the higher education college closest to Blantyre, Livingstone’s birthplace.

In 2004 the Scotland Malawi Partnership, inspired by Peter West and Dr Andrew Ross and backed by the Lord Provosts of Glasgow and Edinburgh (Liz Cameron and Lesley Hinds respectively) was established to foster links between the two countries.

The first delegation from the Scottish Parliament visited Malawi in February 2005. Scotland’s First Minister, Jack McConnell MSP visited for the first time in May 2005, where he met with Malawi’s President at that time, Professor Bingu wa Mutharika. On 3 November 2005, President Bingu wa Mutharika and First Minister Jack McConnell signed the Co-operation Agreement between Scotland and Malawi.

During President Bingu wa Mutharika’s first term (2004-2009) Malawi was positioned as one of the fastest growing economies on the African continent. The success of the Agricultural Input Subsidy Programme in stabilising food security benefited many of Malawi’s subsistence farmers and inspired broad national support for the President, and secured his re-election. However in President Mutharika’s second term the country was hit by a series of political and economic setbacks largely associated with a more autocratic system of rule. These included: the passing of a series of controversial bills advancing censorship and centralising government powers; an academic impasse which closed Malawi’s universities for much of 2011; the further postponement of local government elections, already six years overdue; the expulsion of the British High Commissioner; 19 fatalities resulting from the police response to public demonstrations in July; continued intimidation of civic society; fuel and FOREX scarcity and high rates of inflation.

Very suddenly in April 2012 President Mutharika suffered a cardiac arrest and died. He was succeeded by Vice-President Joyce Banda, according to protocol laid out in the Malawian Constitution. Malawi elected its 5<sup>th</sup> President Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika on May 20, 2014. Eleven parties contested for presidency. Prof. Mutharika emerged the winner with 36.4% of the vote, defeating incumbent President Mrs. Joyce Banda of

the People's Party (PP) who came third with 20.2%. Dr. Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) came second with 27.8%.

There remains significant potential and commitment for Scotland, as one of Malawi's oldest and most committed partners, to make a unique contribution to bring together and strengthen Malawian civil society. According to research undertaken by the University of Edinburgh in 2014 it is estimated that 198,000 Malawians are actively involved in civil society links with Scotland each year, and that 2million Malawians benefit from these links annually. Supporting these 2 million Malawians to continue to develop civil society partnerships with Scotland remains as important as ever; sharing experience, knowledge and expertise to the benefit of both nations.

To view the Edinburgh University report click [here](#).

## WEATHER AND CLIMATE



Malawi has a sub-tropical climate, which is relatively dry and strongly seasonal. The warm-wet season stretches from November to April, during which 95% of the annual precipitation takes place. Annual average rainfall varies from 725mm to 2,500mm with Lilongwe having an average of 900mm, Blantyre 1,127mm, Mzuzu 1,289mm and Zomba 1,433mm. Extreme conditions include the drought that occurred in 1991/92 season and floods of 1988/89 season. The low-lying areas such as Lower Shire Valley and some localities in Salima and Karonga are more vulnerable to floods than higher grounds.

A cool, dry winter season is evident from May to August with mean temperatures varying between 17 and 27 degrees Celsius, with temperatures falling between 4 and 10 degrees Celsius. In addition, frost may occur in isolated areas in June and July. A hot, dry season lasts from September to October with average temperatures varying between 25 and 37 degrees Celsius. Humidity ranges from 50% to 87% for the drier months of September/October and wetter months of January/February respectively. (Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, Malawi)



## ACCOMMODATION



In most cases, the quality of accommodation is directly related to the price you pay for it, but your money does go much further than it would in Scotland. If you can afford more than budget accommodation, it is worth looking into some tourist lodges, they are often reasonably priced and very comfortable.

You can search for accommodation options through the following portals:

**Malawi Tourism Guide:** [www.malawitourism.com/pages/lodges/index.asp](http://www.malawitourism.com/pages/lodges/index.asp)

**Stay now:** <http://staynow.co.uk/destinations/malawi/hub.aspx>

**Explore Malawi:** <http://www.explore-malawi.com/malawi-accommodation/malawi-city-hotels>

The following travel companies have also been recommended by SMP members:

The Responsible Safari Company:

E-mail: [info@responsiblesafaricompany.com](mailto:info@responsiblesafaricompany.com)

Web: [www.responsiblesafaricompany.com](http://www.responsiblesafaricompany.com)

Wilderness Safaris:

E-mail: [info@wilderness.mw](mailto:info@wilderness.mw)



Web: [www.wilderness-safaris.com](http://www.wilderness-safaris.com)

The Brad Guide for Malawi was written and published by Philip Briggs in 2013, which provides relatively recent reviews of good places to stay for various budgets. It can be purchased online.

Contact the SMP office at [info@scotland-malawipartnership.org](mailto:info@scotland-malawipartnership.org) for further information about recommended places to stay

## COMMUNICATION



## MOBILE PHONES

There are a number of mobile phone networks in Malawi, the most popular are TNM, Airtel and Access. These companies can provide credit for "airtime" (for making calls) and for internet access. It's worth enquiring about phone packaged (known as "bundles") for cheaper call and internet rates. In the main cities you will be able to purchase a sim card, and all over Malawi you will be able to buy phone and internet credit which will enable you to access data on your smartphone, from shops, fuel stations and from vendors at the side of the road.

For further information visit:

[www.africa.airtel.com/wps/wcm/connect/africarevamp/Malawi/#](http://www.africa.airtel.com/wps/wcm/connect/africarevamp/Malawi/#)

[www.tnm.co.mw/](http://www.tnm.co.mw/)

Often Malawians will have 2 mobile phones on different networks, in case one network is temporarily down.

## EMAIL

---

Connectivity in Malawi can be a challenge, with frequent power outages and limited bandwidth. However most large NGOs and government agencies will have access to the internet, and entrepreneurial business have sprung up around Malawi providing internet access for those without a personal or work access. SMP members have found it helpful to text their counterparts in Malawi when they need a reply to an email as emails are not always checked on a daily basis. Both Airtel and TNM sell 'dongles' which can be used with laptops and PCs to access the internet, but they are relatively pricey so not everyone would be able to afford one. Dongles are topped up in the same way at mobile phones with instructions included in the box.

For further information visit [www.access.mw/internet.php](http://www.access.mw/internet.php)

## POST

---

To Malawi:

The following companies charge around the same rates, offer a tracking service, and can get your parcels to Malawi in as quick as 2 days:

FedEx

[www.fedex.com/mw/contact/](http://www.fedex.com/mw/contact/)

DHL:

[www.dhl.co.mw/en/country\\_profile.html](http://www.dhl.co.mw/en/country_profile.html)

Parcel Force

<http://www.parcelforce.com/price-finder>

Royal Mail: this is the cheaper option, but there is not a tracking service and it can take a bit longer.

[www.royalmail.com/price-finder/](http://www.royalmail.com/price-finder/)

Within Malawi:

The Malawi Posts Corporation has a network of over 180 Post Offices across Malawi. For more details on its services and costs visit: <http://www.malawiposts.com/index.html>

DHL and FEDEX are the most common courier and express service sin Malawi. G4S also operate a courier service between major cities.

For post within Malawi, AXA bus services also courier mail between major towns and cities.

## LIFE IN MALAWI

### CIVIL SOCIETY

---

Civil society organisations in Malawi take an active part in national political issues. Civil society in Malawi is made up of Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), human rights groups, youth association and Faith-based organisations (FBOs). Since multi-party elections in 1994 the number of civil society organisations and associations has mushroomed, as Malawi has become a more open and democratic society.

For more information on the emergence of civil society in Malawi visit <http://community.eldis.org/.59ee456c/Emerging%20Civil%20Society.pdf>



## CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Culture is a very complicated thing and is often described as in iceberg, the things that you see on the surface (especially as a visitor) are often just a tiny snapshot into that culture and there is a lot more happening that you don't see based on shared history, religion, tradition, upbringing etc.

### INTRODUCTION

---

Just like with any country, the culture of Malawi will be experienced in different ways by everyone. Everyone will be exposed to different experiences, different regions, different tribes and will have different opinions when it comes to culture. Because of this, it is hard to describe the culture of an entire country like Malawi to others and to prepare anyone else for experiencing a culture.

What we have done, however, is to try and put together some information, history and tips that might be of interest to you with regards to the culture of Malawi. There could be varying opinions between the younger and older generations, as well as between rural and urban settlers, on some cultural aspects and their application, and what we have here is just a general overview to give you a glimpse of what to expect in Malawi.

### THE CULTURAL INFORMATION

---

The following are some clues and tips that may help you during your stay in Malawi:

For the most part Malawians are very quiet and reserved people. They are extremely courteous to tourists and very respectful of their elders. They are very friendly towards visitors and would understand if you didn't observe any cultural norms because you are a visitor after all.

Do not be surprised to see people of the same sex holding hands. This is a sign of close friendship and is quite common. Men: a Malawian man will probably hold your hand at some point – it's a warm gesture of love and respect and it should be embraced!

Malawians do not usually hug when greeting each other, it is important to shake someone's hand instead. In rural areas or when talking to someone important, such as a village chief, you might see someone bow and/or hold the elbow of their right arm with their left hand when shaking hands.

Try to take your hand out of your pocket and/or take off your hat when talking to an important person or an elder person, this is a sign of respect.

If you bump into someone say "I'm sorry." (pepani) instead of "excuse me" which might imply that you are telling them to get out of your way.

It is very common for a Malawian to go by two or three different names (surname, baptismal name, village name, nick name - even on passport). It can be very frustrating when trying to find someone's home, so become accustomed to it.

Do not refuse a gift when offered to you even though you might think it is not necessary or that they cannot afford it. To refuse a gift would be considered rude. It says what they're offering is not important, and denies them the joy of giving.

Malawian married couples do not usually sit together during church services, weddings or funerals. However, this separation is not usually expected of expatriates.

You will be offered food and/or drinks almost every time you are in a Malawian's home. Try to eat whatever is offered wherever possible as this is a sign of respect. If you do not wish to eat their food, or if you simply are not hungry, it is customary to give excuses why you can't eat, rather than to simply say you do not want to eat so try to explain that you have just eaten.

Malawians are usually very reserved, therefore it is not common to discuss any sort of private issues in public — such as pregnancy. Telling others that your wife is pregnant is considered boasting. Likewise, it would be considered nosy to ask another man if his wife is pregnant, even if it is very obvious.

Greet everyone before speaking to them — this is very important. Ask everyone, "Muli bwani?" or "How are you?" before doing business with them or telling them something. Never be in too much of a hurry to tell someone, "good morning" and make sure you greet everyone in the group.

Upon entering a room it is customary for the man to go around the room and shake all the other men's hands before you get into a discussion with any one person. Shake peoples' hands even if you do not know them.

Most Malawians do not mind your taking their picture, but it is polite to ask their permission first. Some will ask for money, but please never give anyone money for taking their picture. It is advisable to just move on to another subject.

Dress – Women should wear clothes that do not show or emphasize the thighs (cleavage/bare arms are not seen as inappropriate, it is just thighs). If you are working in rural areas it is advised to wear skirts that are well below the knee rather than trousers. Alternatively you could buy a chitenje (Malawian fabric) and wrap it around your waist to create a long skirt that will cover your thighs.



## ORIENTATION

---

**Identification.** Malawians are part of the large Bantu population that migrated northward from South Africa at around the turn of the twentieth century.

**Linguistic Affiliation.** The most widely spoken language (60 percent of the population) is Chichewa, which originated among the Bantu tribes of South Africa. Five percent of the people speak Yao, and 30 percent speak Arabic. The language of government, industry, and commerce is English, which every schoolchild studies. English is spoken in cities but not so often in rural areas.



## HISTORY AND ETHNIC RELATIONS

---

**Ethnic Relations.** The many tribes generally have gotten along well. However, there is a feeling that people from the north are more intelligent than their southern counterparts, and Banda mistrusted northerners, attempting to keep them out of public office and curtail their enrollment in Kamuzu Academy. Citizens feel a kinship with the neighboring countries and during the civil war in Mozambique created many refugee camps along the borders and fed the refugees with the country's reserves of corn. At that time, Malawi was one of the few African countries that could feed itself.

## URBANISM, ARCHITECTURE AND THE USE OF SPACE

---

Malawi has an agricultural economy, and even in urban areas, each home generally has a small plot of corn. There are three main cities. Blantyre, the commercial centre, Lilongwe, the new capital, replacing Zomba; and Mzuzu in the far north. In 1990, the tallest building in the country was seven stories and the country had only four traffic signals. The vast majority of homes in rural areas are constructed of sticks and mud with either a thatched roof or a roof of corrugated iron. Families tend to build their homes close to each other in a small compound. In cities homes are made with bricks and can be a number of stories high.

## FOOD AND ECONOMY

---

**Food in Daily Life.** Chicken, goat, and an occasional pig dish are used to supplement the standard dish of boiled maize flour called nsima. Nsima is eaten twice a day, usually at lunch and dinner, and is preferred by most people to rice or potatoes. Fruits are plentiful, including mangoes, melons, oranges, bananas, and

pineapples. Vegetables are cultivated but are not popular apart from green leaves such as rape leaves, pumpkin leaves, Chinese lettuce etc.

Soft drinks are quite prevalent, especially Coca-Cola. Alcoholic beverages are mainly beer (there are large breweries in Blantyre and Lilongwe and Mzuzu).

**Basic Economy.** In the last decade, the economy has gone downhill, the value of the Kwacha has declined, and the rate of inflation is high. Though the country is an agricultural economy, there is dependence on foodstuffs supplied by Western nations too.

**Land Tenure and Property.** Land is treated as part of the public domain. A person may settle on a piece of ground, build a home, and grow crops as long as they get the approval from neighbors. After a certain period, they are permitted to register the plot with government and given legal title.

**Commercial Activities.** Malawi's economy is based largely on agriculture, which accounts for more than 90 percent of its export earnings, contributes 45 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), and supports 90 percent of the population. Malawi has some of the most fertile land in the region. Almost 70 percent of agricultural produce comes from smallholder farmers. However, land distribution is unequal with more than 40 percent of smallholder households cultivating very small plots. The country's export trade is dominated by tobacco, tea, cotton, coffee, and sugar. There is very little import trade. Tourism is beginning to build after the collapse of the repressive government of Dr. Banda, and plans are in place to build more resorts and restore the roads.

**Major Industries.** The organisations that produce coffee, tea, and tobacco, such as the British-American Tobacco Company, are replacing their British managers with Malawians. The country produces no manufactured goods for export; thus, the economy depends heavily on agricultural staples. During the years of apartheid, Malawi was the only country in Africa that had diplomatic relations with South Africa. Many South Africans visited the country, and a basic tourism infrastructure was developed. Today there are tourists from many countries who enjoy the country's variety of unique wildlife. There are a number of game reserves and national parks in the country. There is a potential for increased tourism because of the natural beauty and varied topography and because the country is unspoiled and inexpensive.

**Trade.** The major exports are tobacco, coffee, and tea. The country imports electrical appliances, small machinery, and automobiles, primarily Japanese. The balance of trade is favorable. The major trading partners are Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Zimbabwe, Japan, and South Africa.

---

## SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

**Classes and Castes.** People from the northern region have a reputation for being better educated and more skilled in business. For this reason, they have previously been mistrusted by people from the southern two-thirds of the country and efforts have been made to keep them out of government positions. This perception is now changing.

**Dress.** Men dress in a Western style, wearing shirts and trousers, women often wear traditional costumes consisting of two or three chitenjes, which are large pieces of colored fabric used as a skirt, a headdress, and a saronglike wrap that holds a small infant on the woman's back. However, in cities and younger generations in rural areas, you will often see women dressed in Western style too, sometimes with a chitenje wrapped over Western clothes.

---

## GENDER ROLES AND STATUSES

**Division of Labor by Gender.** In a patriarchal society, men do most work outside the home. However, the government is now encouraging women to start their own businesses with the help from local non-governmental organisations and women empowerment groups.

Because Malawi produces no manufactured goods for export, it has an agricultural economy. Both men and women are involved in agricultural activities in Malawi.

There are a few women in governmental positions. Inside the home, women dominate when it comes to household chores.

**The Relative Status of Women and Men.** When a family returns from the market or from gathering firewood or drawing water, women and children carry the burdens. The man leads the way, smoking if he can afford tobacco, with the rest of the family trailing behind. In a culture that separates the sexes in most aspects of life, three-quarters of literate persons are men. Usually, men eat separately from women, using the only table in the house. The woman serves the meal to the man, often on her knees. At weddings, it is customary for the bride to serve food to the husband's parents in that position.

## MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND KINSHIP

---

**Marriage.** Some tribes have dowries, which are to be paid to the bride's parents or the groom's parents, depending on the tribe. Dowries are usually in the form of livestock, such as cattle, goats, or chickens, but may consist of grain or land. With the reduction in the numbers of livestock in the country, cash dowries are now common. Larger women often are favoured as brides because they appear to come from a well-to-do family that can provide a significant dowry and seem strong enough to carry heavy loads. Polygamy is practised occasionally by a few tribes.

In some tribes, females undergo an initiation ceremony at the onset of puberty or menstruation and just before marriage. It often consists of very explicit instructions on the sexual aspect of marriage. Divorce is becoming more common and is very difficult on the wife, who must go back to her family and hope it will take her in. The husband receives all the couple's possessions.

Father and Mother-In-Laws are given special respect by the two getting married throughout the marriage.

**Domestic Unit.** Families are quite close and often live in adjoining houses. Elderly persons are taken care of by their children, and usually the oldest members of a family have a strong voice in running the household and raising the children. Especially important is the uncle; male adolescents ask advice first of the uncle, who is also influential in the selection of a bride.

## SOCIALISATION

---

**Infant Care.** Infants usually are carried on the mother's back, facing inward. Mothers conduct many activities with their babies in attendance: shopping, carrying water, hoeing a garden, and dancing in a ceremony. Separate rooms or cribs for infants are almost nonexistent because most houses are small and include many family and extended family members.

**Child Rearing and Education.** The average woman will bear five to six children, less than half of whom will live past the age of five years. Children are raised under strict family control, usually by the mother, until they leave home. They are expected to help with the chores of daily living. Most tasks are done by female children, such as carrying water, cleaning the home and washing dishes, and going to the market. Half the population over the age of fifteen can read and write, but Secondary education is reserved for those who can afford

school fees and uniforms. Most children have to end their education before high school to help tend the fields or care for younger siblings.

Higher Education. College or even vocational training has historically been rare. However, there are now a number of colleges and Universities who are building up good reputations for this and technical colleges are becoming more common. However, those able to afford it usually send their children abroad for higher education. The preferred destinations are the United Kingdom and the United States. Advanced degrees are usually obtained overseas.

## ETIQUETTE

---

Verbal greetings are accompanied by a handshake. This is done with the right hand, with the left hand gripping the right forearm to show that one is not armed. Stopping to talk on the street is customary, and the conversation continues even after the parties go their separate ways. Although residents are gregarious, they respect other people's privacy in a crowded country where private space is at a premium. A person approaching someone's house will often cry Odi, Odi to announce his or her presence. Any visitor almost always is offered a drink and perhaps something to eat. Eating usually is done without utensils, only with hands.

## RELIGION

---

**Religious Beliefs.** Fifty-five percent of the people belong to the Church of England but there are also Methodists, Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists. Twenty percent of the population are Muslim, and 20 percent are Catholic. There is a small Hindu presence.

**Rituals and Holy Places.** Most larger towns have a Christian church and a Muslim mosque. Most major cities also have a Hindu temple. In rural areas, animistic religion is practiced.

**Death and the Afterlife.** Because of the short life expectancy, the growing incidence of AIDS and other diseases, and the high infant mortality rate, death is a constant presence. Employers give workers time off for funerals, and funerals and mourning can last several days.

## MEDICINE AND HEALTH CARE

---

There are hospitals as well as a school of Medicine and several schools of nursing. Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Blantyre is the largest in the country. Medicine men and women provide health care for many people, especially in rural areas, using traditional or folk medicine. They work out of the home or from a clinic, using natural medicines such as roots, herbs, and potions. Medicine men base their healing on the assumption that most illnesses are caused by supernatural powers and that supernatural powers are required to cure them. The individual may fall ill after offending one of the gods, through witchcraft or sorcery, or through the unprovoked attack of an evil spirit. The task of the curer is to diagnose the disease and then apply the spiritual remedy, such as retrieving a lost soul, removing a disease-causing object, or exorcising an evil spirit. Often medicine men are called on to help in areas not considered medical problems in the West, such as finding a wife or lover, conceiving a child, and helping in business matters.

Medicine men are also sought out to cure illness and to aid in such tasks as finding a wife.

Yellow fever and malaria are prevalent, and the country has one of the highest incidences of AIDS in the world. Despite some efforts by the government, it has been difficult to lower the rate of AIDS because of long-standing social mores.



## FUNERALS

---

There is a lot of social and financial support given to bereaved families during funerals. This includes spending time with the bereaved families or individuals from the time the death occurs to burial, and even beyond that. Funerals have open invitations and the community looks at you differently if you do not attend funerals in your area of residence.

## LANGUAGE

---

English is the official working language in Malawi. Chichewa is spoken across the Central and Southern Region, and Chitumbuka in the North. However there are also several other tribal languages spoken across Malawi.

Each year the SMP runs Language and Culture Workshop for its members. These workshops are particularly useful if you're traveling to Malawi for the first time, however, anyone is welcome to attend. For further information on the next round of workshops, email [info@scotland-malawipartnership.org](mailto:info@scotland-malawipartnership.org).

## GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI



## MALAWI'S VISION 2020 – AN OVERVIEW

---

Since its independence in 1964, Malawi has attempted to address various development issues through a mixture of state intervention and private enterprise. From the 1970s onwards, development planning approaches involved medium term plans over 10 year periods. The economy performed well until the 1980s when it slowed down due to external factors such as the global oil crisis, regional instability and drought. Even though Malawi's economic growth rates compare well to other sub-Saharan countries, its progress towards long term development goals has been slow.

In order to strategically address the development priorities, **Malawi's Vision 2020** was initiated under President Muluzi, and adopted by subsequent governments. Its main objective is to provide the Malawian Government, the private sector and the people of Malawi with a long term strategic development path. The Vision is based on a long term multi-sectoral approach of development including social, political, technological and economic aspects of development. Following nationwide consultations, network activities and national workshops, Malawians agreed on the following Vision Statement:

“By the Year 2020, Malawi as a God-fearing nation will be secure, democratically mature, environmentally sustainable, self-reliant with equal opportunities for and active participation by all, having social services, vibrant cultural and religious values and being a technologically driven middle-income country”.

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS II) is the overarching medium term strategy for Malawi designed to attain Malawi’s long term aspirations as spelt out in its Vision 2020.

The purpose of the MGDS II is to serve as a single reference document for policy makers in Government; the Private Sector; Civil Society Organisations; donors and partners, and the general public relating to socio-economic growth and development priorities for Malawi. The Government of Malawi spearheads the implementation process, with key stakeholders complementing its efforts by aligning and harmonizing their own programmes and activities to in line with the MGDS’ priorities. The strategy covers a period of five years from 2011 to 2016. It follows the successful implementation of the country’s medium term strategy, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) between 2006 and 2011. The objective of MGDS II is to continue reducing poverty through sustainable economic growth and infrastructure development.

Click here to download the MSGS II: <http://bit.ly/MalawiGDSII>

The Malawian Parliament is situated in Lilongwe. Click here to visit its website: [www.parliament.gov.mw/](http://www.parliament.gov.mw/)

## LOCAL AUTHORITIES

---

There has always been a regularised system of local authorities in Malawi. Enshrined in the 1995 Constitution, local authorities were for the first time elected in 2000 and served their five-year term. Since 2005, however, no further local elections took place. While the hope was to combine the local elections with national elections in 2009, various issues, including fraud allegations against the electoral commission, caused their postponement. The next round of local elections is currently scheduled for 2014, as part of tripartite elections.

There are 39 single tier local authorities (assemblies) in Malawi, which include 27 district assemblies (predominantly rural), 3 city assemblies, 1 municipal assembly, and 8 town assemblies. Individual districts have on average 320,000 people, with the capital of Lilongwe being the largest district. The largest city assembly is Blantyre. Each of the 860 wards in the country has one representative (councillor) in its respective assembly. In addition to elected voting members, assemblies also have non-voting members, including traditional authorities within the area and members of the national assembly, whose constituents fall under the local council.

There has been some devolution of authority from central government to district assemblies in the delivery of public services such as health, education, natural resources, or community services and the process is still underway. Decentralization is one of the strategies and objectives of the Malawian government under the 2020 Vision, as well as the National Decentralisation Programme I and II. The central government provides the majority of the funding for local assemblies (60%), followed by revenues from property rates and rents (20%). Each district also develops its own District Development Plan, which prioritises specific development issues pertinent to the area.

On 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014 Malawi held its first ever tripartite elections- voting not only for members of parliament and the president, but also local government representatives. 62 ward councillors and 192 members of parliament (MPs) were elected throughout Malawi. The citizens of Malawi will look to local government to represent their interests and will expect to see the long-awaited benefits of sustained interaction with local officials on issues that matter in their daily lives. To achieve this there will need to be decentralised resourcing to give capacity for local action.

## HEALTH

This section should not be considered comprehensive, and is not intended to replace consultation with a qualified doctor.

When travelling to any foreign country, it's important to check all the latest health-safety information pertaining to your destination. It is HIGHLY advisable to speak to your General Practitioner about any individual or family history risks that may affect your travel (e.g. heart conditions, diabetes, etc.) and to assess the availability and legality of medications abroad.



It is obligatory that you obtain comprehensive travel and medical insurance covering medical evacuation before travelling. You should check for any gaps or situations that are not covered in your policy and be sure that these are not activities you'll be undertaking while abroad. Healthcare standards, particularly in the rural areas, are generally poor in Malawi. The country also has a very high HIV/AIDS infection rate. Unprotected sex carries an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections including HIV. Carry condoms with you if there is any possibility you may be sexually active while abroad. If working in a health care setting, or anywhere where there is a risk of exposure to blood or blood products, consider carrying your own spare protective gloves and post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV infection - antiretroviral drugs taken after contact with HIV infection that can reduce the chance of becoming HIV positive.

For more current information, please refer to [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) a service run by the British NHS.

### DISEASES THAT CAN BE PICKED UP

---

There are many diseases, prevalent in Malawi, that a traveller should be aware of and take precautions against:

Malaria - from mosquitoes bites

Salmonella – from food

E coli – from food and drinks

Hookworm – via skin, bare feet

Bilharzia/Schistosomiasis - water-borne, via skin

Katayama – fatal form of Bilharzia/Schistosomiasis

Cholera – water, and foods washed in infected water

Typhoid – from food and water

Rabies – from animal bites

Hepatitis – A, B, C, E

Other worms from undercooked meat

## COMMON SENSE

The list above is not exhaustive, and the travellers should exercise common sense to avoid becoming ill or injured while in Malawi. Simple procedures that can keep you healthy are:

Avoid putting hands near mouth, eyes and nose. Many diseases are contagious (picked up through touch). These areas above all have, what are termed, mucous membranes, and diseases can pass through these more easily than skin.

Use alcohol gel frequently, especially after shaking hands, visiting lavatories, touching door handles, before eating etc. It's very cheap and can be bought readily in any pharmacy or supermarket but always wash hands as soon as you can with water and soap

Wear flipflops. Intestinal worms have a variety of ways of being picked up, including via soles of feet. Don't walk in bare feet, and wear flipflops in showers.

Avoid insect bites by covering up, especially at night. Many flying insects require blood to reproduce. As they attempt to suck blood, they inject an anti-coagulant in their saliva that prevents the host's blood from clotting. The parasites that cause malaria and other such diseases are to be found in their saliva. Keep covered, especially around dusk. Wear socks and long trousers in the evening. You can also be bitten around the head without realizing.

Iron your clothes. Don't put on clothes that have been left to dry, without ironing first, as the tumbu fly lays its eggs on wet cloth and the larvae can burrow under the skin.

Stay away from stray animals that do not belong to someone you know. Dogs, cats, monkeys can be carriers of rabies, and other diseases. Hippos, crocodiles must be avoided if near Lake Malawi as they are extremely dangerous.

## IMMUNISATIONS

---

All routine vaccinations should be up-to-date before you travel—it is **essential check with your General Practitioner (GP) or a travel clinic**, as well as the organisations you'll be involved with in Malawi, to determine the medical treatment necessary in the specific location of your travels. The following recommendations outline some of the vaccines you may have to have.

Immunisations against **Polio, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Typhoid, Hepatitis A and Rabies** are recommended for all travel to Malawi for whatever length of time.

Vaccines for **Tuberculosis, Cholera, Hepatitis B, and Meningococcal meningitis** are often advised for those visiting for longer than one month, or travelling to remote locations.



**Tuberculosis** is most commonly transmitted via droplet infection (sneezing or coughing). Immunisation is recommended for all volunteers who will be living in rural communities. Most UK citizens will have received the BCG immunisation as children, but make sure to confirm this.

**Cholera** is spread through contaminated food and water, and is more common in floods and rainy seasons. Vaccination is recommended for volunteers who may be unable to take precautions (e.g. working in remote areas or in refugee camps).

**Hepatitis B** is a highly infectious virus and transmission often occurs without any obvious route of infection. Blood-to-blood contact, infected needles or sexual transmission carry a high risk of transmission, and it can lead to jaundice and liver failure. All travellers staying for a month or more or working with children or in health care should be immunised.

**Rabies** is endemic in most African countries. The rabies virus is transmitted through the saliva of infected animals and transmitted to humans through bites, scratches or contact of saliva with broken skin and is always fatal once symptoms commence. It is recommended to get vaccinated before departure for all travellers, as treatment and prevention are more complicated without it. All travellers who have possibly been exposed to the rabies virus, whether by bites, scratches or other exposure, should seek medical advice without delay (even if pre-exposure vaccine was received). This also applies to travellers in low risk areas in case other animal-transmitted infections are present, or the animal may have strayed across the border from an endemic country. Those who have already had a rabies course before departure should have two further doses of rabies vaccine. This is a belt and braces policy to further reduce the risk of rabies because it is always fatal once it enters the nervous system. Prevention for those *not* previously vaccinated is more complex and difficult to obtain in many developing countries. Those going to high risk areas that are remote from medical care should seek vaccination before departure.

Some vaccinations are administered over an extended period of time (from one to three months) because they have several doses and therefore it is worth planning your immunisations enough in advance before your departure.

## MALARIA

---

**Malaria** is widespread in Malawi and present all year long. You should seek advice about suitable anti-malarial tablets before travelling. Speak to your travel clinic, general practitioner, or coordinating volunteer organisation about which anti-malarial treatments are suitable to you and possible reimbursement of cost from your organisation.

Malaria can still occur despite appropriate prevention, and therefore you should promptly seek medical care in the event of a fever or flu-like illness in the first year following your return from travelling to a malaria risk country.

The best procedures for avoiding infection are:

**Taking malarial propholaxis (anti-malarials) prior to, during and after your visit:** There are a number of malarial propholaxis: Larium, Doxycycline and Malarone, all have some side-effects. Your practice nurse should be able to advise you on the most up to date requirements, and the cost. Take extra tablets with you in case you are sick i.e. vomiting, and lose protection for even a day. Ensure that they are taken at the prescribed time, roughly at the same time every day, if they are to be taken daily. Continue to take them on your return; you must finish the course. It may seem you have not been bitten, but you could have been. Not everyone reacts to the insect's saliva in the same way; some develop large red spots, some have no reaction at all. The incubation period for some diseases can be several weeks, so you won't know you've been infected until as

much as eight weeks after the event. If you have been sick, and have vomited, you may have lost some or all of the potency of the anti-malarial. Ask the pharmacist to advise you on this i.e. taking a second dose in a single day.

**Keep covered**, especially towards dusk.

**Sleep under treated mosquito nets** when possible

Take a good insect repellent, preferably with DEET.

## YELLOW FEVER

---

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travellers having transited more than 12 hours through the airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission.

Some members have experience being asked to show a yellow fever certificate even if they have not come from a country with risk of yellow fever, and did not transit for more than 12 hours through the airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Some members have been told they will receive a fine if they do not have a yellow fever certificate, regardless of which route they came into Malawi. This should not be the case.

Please feel free to print out a copies of the letters in Appendix A to show airport staff that the Government of Malawi has recognised you do not need a yellow fever certificate unless you are coming from areas with risk of yellow fever transmission or having transited more than 12 hours through the airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission.

## TRAVEL CLINICS

---

MASTA is a network of 51 travel clinics in the UK. Some of the clinics in Scotland include:

### Ark Occupational Health

213 George Street

Aberdeen

AB25 1HY

### Davidsons Mains Medical Centre

5 Quality Street

Edinburgh

EH4 5BP

### Other travel clinics:

Adventure & Tourism Travel Clinic

[www.adventuretravelclinic.com/](http://www.adventuretravelclinic.com/)

TrExMed Travel Clinic Edinburgh

<http://trexmed.co.uk/>

Health Link 360

[www.healthlink360.org/](http://www.healthlink360.org/)

The Travel Clinic (Glasgow)

4 Arran Court, Glasgow Airport, PA3 2ST

The Travel Clinic (Ayrshire)

Ayrshire Central Hospital, Irvine, Ayrshire

For more current information, please refer to [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) a service run by the British NHS.

## SWIMMING

---

**Health experts strongly advise against any skin contact with fresh water in Malawi** e.g. ponds, lakes and rivers. Swim only in protected chlorinated swimming pools, not in Lake Malawi. Avoid drinking infected water. Wear protective footwear when walking in soil, especially if it is damp or water logged. Water for washing can be treated by heating water to 50 degrees C for five minutes or leaving to stand for 48 hours.

If travellers are concerned that they may have been exposed to bilharzia (schistosomiasis), they should seek medical help on their return. Those who have been knowingly exposed can be screened by having a blood test after return but if there are no symptoms this should be delayed for 6 weeks after the last possible exposure so as to allow the time for the development of antibodies.

For more current information on any of the above, please refer to [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) a service run by the British NHS

## FOOD AND WATER

---

Be wary of water. Tap water may be untreated, especially outside the city, so only use bottled water for drinking and brushing teeth. If you are given ice with a drink it is likely to have been made with tap water so be aware of this. Some water sources for washing hands in certain buildings may also not be treated, so it's best to use alcohol gel after washing.

Be careful of what and where you eat. Beware of roadside food stalls (even if the food is safe the implements such as skewers may not be), and food provided by cheap lodges (\$5/night). Outbreaks of **gastro-intestinal infections and cholera** occur (spread through contaminated food or water), especially during the rainy season (December to March). Typhoid and Hepatitis A are spread through contaminated food and water. Avoid unwashed salads, cold rice, uncooked produce, as we are unsure of where they have come from. Some grow produce in untreated sewage. Don't eat pre-peeled fruits. Unpeeled fruits will also harbor bacteria, so care must be taken when peeling, to prevent transferring the organisms from the skin into the flesh. If fruits could be blanched in boiling water for 20 seconds, most pathogenic organisms would be killed.

### **IF YOU ARE ILL**

If you do find yourself ill, you should make note of:

What you have eaten from the day before

When you ate

Was there anything unusual? – taste, smell, texture, animals, insects present

Were you bitten, did you touch any animals?

Are any others complaining of the same symptoms

Onset of symptoms – how long after you ate did you feel unwell?

What are the symptoms?

Drink plenty of fluids; sweet drinks like coke and orange juice are high in sugar and will provide energy. A pinch of salt will also provide you with the necessary salt you may lose in sweat. You need to keep hydrated.

Take Imodium/Boots version, paracetamol, bandages, mosquito net, alcohol gel, Diarrholyte, a safari pack if one is available.

Superdrug and other pharmacies also sell sterile first aid kits which include a sterile needle.

Blood transfusion packs can also be bought.

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN MALAWI

There are a large number of actors and agencies, local and international, engaged in development work in Malawi. The Scottish Government has been an active player since 2005, administering the Scottish Government's International Development Fund 'Malawi Programme'



The Scottish Government IDF Fund supports civil society partnerships between Scotland and Malawi in the following strategic areas:

- Civic Governance
- Sustainable Economic Development
- Health
- Education
- Renewable energy

The Scottish Government's Malawi Programme complements the priorities set out in the MGDS, and the efforts of other local and international development actors.

For information on all the Scottish Government-funded projects up until 2013 visit: [www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/documents/70-SGMalawiDevProg2008-16version1.0.pdf](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/documents/70-SGMalawiDevProg2008-16version1.0.pdf)



For the most up to date information on Scottish Government funding for Malawi visit <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/International/int-dev/Maps/Malawi>

For information and contact details of SMP members working in Malawi, further information and contact details of Government of Malawi representatives, international donor agencies and NGOs, as well as local and international community programmes visit [www.scotland-malawipartnership.org](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org) or email [info@scotland-malawipartnership.org](mailto:info@scotland-malawipartnership.org).

## MONEY

The Malawi unit of currency is the kwacha (abbreviated to MK internationally; K locally). The kwacha is divided into 100 tambala. Practically speaking, only the kwacha is used. Banks in the towns are open weekdays and Saturdays generally from 0800 to 1300. Mobile banks operate along the Lakeshore and in more remote areas (check days/times locally). Avoid black market currency traders.



For the latest rates visit: [www.fmbmalawi.com](http://www.fmbmalawi.com)

Credit cards are accepted in major hotels, travel agencies, and the like, but it is advisable to have a different form of currency for general use. Traveller's cheques or cash are advised as means of exchange and it may be useful to carry a limited amount of US dollars or UK sterling as a negotiable form of currency. For security reasons, it is recommended that you inform your domestic bank about your travel plans abroad to ensure you have access to your account when travelling.

Any bank or Forex office, will exchange sterling, dollars or euros into kwacha. If using sterling, you should use English notes and not Scottish notes. It is worth shopping around for the best rate. Often the best rates are found at the Bureau de Change and not at the national bank.

ATMs are found outside most banks. Most major towns have banks. Most transactions happen using cash. Check if you can pay at your hotel using a card. Plan ahead, and take multiple cards if you will have to pay large amounts in cash, to ensure you will be able to withdraw the necessary amount.

Cheques can take a long time to clear.

There is no limit to the amount of foreign currency brought into Malawi but it must be declared and accounted for on departure. Since 2011 there has been a shortage of forex in Malawi, this has fuelled a black market for foreign currency, it is therefore advisable to have appropriate paperwork accounting for your forex.

## TRANSFERRING MONEY TO MALAWI

---

There are two advisable methods of transferring money:

**Bank-bank:** Banks charge around £15-30 for money transfers. In order to affect the transfer you will need the name of beneficiary/ account holder, the name and address of the bank, the account number and the SWIFT code.

Western Union transfer costs £20 for a £250 transfer

Consider sending larger sums of money less frequently in order to avoid bank charges, but only if deemed appropriate by your Malawian partner.

If you are planning to be in Malawi for a significant amount of time, or for transferring money to your partners in Malawi, it may be worth considering opening a Malawian account. If you decide to open a bank account in Malawi, you may wish to speak with your Scottish bank as to their preferred partner. Transfers are relatively easy to manage as the banks in Malawi have good infrastructure—this may take slightly longer than a transfer in Europe, but is normally faster than a transfer in the US.

There are no British banks present in Malawi, but some institutions there include: National Bank (Malawian), Standard Bank (South African/Chinese) and Nedbank (South African). National Bank has received positive testimonials from SMP partners, as has Standard Bank for its personal accounts. Opening company accounts should not require too much red-tape, but individual accounts do require Temporary Employment Permit (TEP), or Temporary Residency Permit (TRP) in Malawi, passport copies, passport pictures, completion of some forms, and a 4 to 6 week waiting period.

In terms of transfer fees, it is worth discussing waivers or reductions with your British bank. Bank of Scotland is occasionally flexible in this area and others may respond similarly if asked. Once in Malawi, expect to pay some (small) fees.

An organisation in Malawi wanting to receive foreign payments needs 2 accounts: A Foreign Currency Denomination Account (FCDA) and a kwacha account

The official foreign currency is \$, but an FCDA account can be set up in £ if all transactions are likely to be £ (You can make a payment in £ to a \$ account, but the amount received would depend on the exchange rate on the day)

You can make payments from a UK bank to an FCDA account in Malawi, but there will always be charges involved.

Malawi banks do have BIC codes (Bank Identifier Code), but they do not have IBAN numbers (International Bank Account Numbers), so you need address details of both the Malawi bank and of the recipient in order to do a transfer.

## SAFETY

For the most up to date advice on safety and security in Malawi visit the Foreign and Commonwealth website at [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/malawi](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/malawi).

THIS PAGE IS NOT REGULARLY UPDATED.

## CRIME

---

Most visits to Malawi are trouble-free, but you should take sensible precautions to protect yourself from muggers and bag-snatchers. Most thefts from visitors take place around the main bus stations in Lilongwe and Blantyre, and at the main ports for the Ilala ferry, which now only covers the northern part of the Lake from Nkhata Bay. Avoid walking around quiet areas, especially after dark. Leave valuables and cash in a hotel safe, where practical. Keep copies of important documents in a separate place. Report any thefts to the police as soon as possible.

There have been several outbreaks of violence in market areas involving protestors throwing rocks and the police responding with tear gas. Take extra care in market areas.

Lock car doors and keep windows closed. Armed carjacking is a risk, especially for drivers of four-by-four vehicles. Don't offer lifts to strangers and look out for obstructions in the road ahead.

Be cautious if over-friendly people approach you offering to act as guides or selling goods, or who claim to know you and ask for a lift. Don't accept food or drink from strangers; people have sometimes been robbed after eating drugged food.

House burglaries, including by armed gangs, are becoming increasingly common in urban areas. There has been an increase in break-ins in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Limbe, including violent assaults on residents. Review your security systems and watch out for anything unusual.

Seek security advice from the Mulanje Mountain Club if you intend to climb Mulanje Mountain.

## ROAD TRAVEL

---

Driving in Malawi can be hazardous. Always wear a seatbelt and avoid travel after dark. Potholes, animals, abandoned vehicles and cyclists can cause serious accidents, as can vehicles travelling at night without lights.



Malawi has a very high rate of fatalities on the road. Travel between towns by public minibus or pick-up truck isn't recommended; vehicles are often in poor condition and overloaded. Emergency services are basic. Larger coach services do run between the major towns and are more reliable.

The Malawi Police Service has introduced breathalyser tests, and regularly stops vehicles for speeding. There are speed cameras on the main roads. Drivers caught drink driving or speeding can have their licences and vehicles confiscated on the spot. Convicted drivers face a fine and/or imprisonment. The blood alcohol limit is 0.08g per 100ml of blood, the same as in the UK.

Fuel shortages have occurred in the past in Malawi causing very long queues at fuel stations (people often queue for 24 hours or more). If you arrive by road from neighbouring countries, consider bringing additional fuel having checked reports

When driving in Malawi you should carry a valid driving licence at all times; you may need to produce it at police check points. You can drive using a UK driving licence for up to 90 days or an [International Driving](#)

Permit for up to one year. Slow down in all built-up areas. Traffic police often place speed cameras where there are no signs showing the speed limit. The police can impose on the spot fines.

## POLITICAL SITUATION

---

Monitor local media and avoid all demonstrations. You can sign up to the UK Government's "Foreign Travel Advice Malawi" for updates on travel advice and safety and security alerts.

## SENDING GOODS

Every year many tonnes of charitable items are sent out to Malawi from countries such as Scotland. We get lots of enquires from members and the public about how they can send unwanted items to Malawi.

For some projects and partnerships there are a handful of essential items which simply cannot be sourced in Malawi and must be specifically imported for this purpose. However, we strongly encourage *all* members to think critically about what they plan to send and how they plan to send it.



Listening to our friends in Malawi it's clear that there are a great many inappropriate donations arriving in the country, whether it be electrical equipment that doesn't work or isn't fit for purpose, technical items which can't be maintained, educational items which don't compliment the curriculum, or items which are otherwise available locally whose donation can undermine local economies. Sadly, much of the equipment sent to Malawi never makes it to the intended recipient because of poor planning, and an underestimation of the costs, complexities and difficulties of importing goods into a small land-locked country like Malawi.

We encourage members to ask themselves ten quick questions when thinking of sending goods to Malawi:

**(1) Is it needed?** Have the items you wish to send been specifically requested in Malawi? What is your primary motivation - that (for example) you have some second-hand items which you are loathed to throw away and would prefer others to use, or that the goods have been specifically requested? We always say that collecting donations in Scotland is the easy bit, sending them effectively, sustainably and responsibly is much,

much harder. Simply having goods and not wanting them isn't a good enough reason for sending them to Malawi.

**(2) Is it appropriate?** Are you confident that what you propose to send will really work well in Malawi? Is it robust, water, heat and termite resistant? Is there the power, connectivity and expertise available locally to run and maintain these items? Are they culturally appropriate? Will they survive the journey and storage, or are they perishable?

**(3) Is it cost effective?** How much will it cost to send the container to Malawi, adding in all the costs along the way (including in Malawi), and factoring in import duties? We recommend members then divide this total cost up by item, so you have a sense of how much it is costing for each donated item. We recommend that members then go back to their Malawian partners, telling them frankly and honestly what the costs are and asking whether these goods are worth this much to them, or if they could achieve the same ends more effectively if the funds were available locally. Our friends in Malawi are endlessly resourceful and can achieve incredible ends, often with limited resource: for example, for the price of sending one "free" second-hand hospital bed, local Malawian carpenters could be employed to produce 20 more basic beds locally.

**(4) Is it sustainable?** Have you considered the environmental impact of getting the goods to Malawi? Malawians are already feeling the effects of climate change, this will only worsen in years to come. It will be the most vulnerable in the developing world who will pay the price for unsustainable actions of those in the developed world. This is an issue of climate justice. In this context, we must always assess the environmental implications of our work.

**(5) Will it get there?** Sadly, lots of containers never make it to their intended final recipients, often because they don't clear port or require greater taxation than expected. In almost every case it is essential to have someone on the ground who knows the systems and can ensure the shipment gets through. This is not an easy job. Local knowledge is everything.

**(6) Who 'owns' the donation?** This may sound funny but it's a hugely important question. If it's a donation which no one owns, it's unlikely to reach the intended beneficiaries and is far more vulnerable to getting stuck in bureaucracies, or "disappearing" after it arrives. Often the best systems involve the Malawian partner identifying the goods they require, these items being costed up (including all transport and taxation costs) and the Malawian partner then actually paying a proportion of these costs, per item. This may seem strange, even uncomfortable, but it ensures the goods sent are really what is most required, it ensures there's someone to receive the goods locally, and it ensures the goods appear on official budgets and inventories from the very beginning. Someone owns them.

**(7) What is already in Malawi?** In recent years some of the best Scotland-Malawi projects haven't sent goods to Malawi but instead have helped undertake stock-takes of unused equipment already in Malawi, assessed why these goods aren't in use and looked at what is required to make them operational. This has sometimes involved specific spare parts be sourced, adapters found, instructions emailed, or expertise found to instruct on usage and maintenance.

**(8) Can the goods be sourced locally?** Local goods might seem expensive or sub-standard at first but have you considered all the costs and risks involved in shipping from Scotland? Have you considered that buying locally helps not just the communities you're working with but also all those Malawians involved in the supply chain, as your funds cycle around the Malawian economy creating a multiplier effect.

**(9) How will the goods be distributed?** It is extremely hard to design and implement an effective local distribution system from 6,000 miles away. There are a huge number of practical but also cultural and political considerations. Why have you selected that community to benefit? What impact will this have on other nearby communities? How will you identify individuals and assess need?



**(10) How do you know if you've got it right?** What feedback do you get from the communities you have worked with? How do you know the items you sent arrived at the right place and are being used by the intended beneficiaries? Do you know that everything was received, that it met expectation, and how long it lasted for?

If members are able to answer all of these questions and are still confident that sending goods is the best next step, we invite them to read the Partnership's Practical Guide to Sending Goods to Malawi (<http://bit.ly/ShippingGoodsMalawi>) for more advice on what to do, how to do it and who to best connect with.

## TRANSPORT

### AIR

South African Airways, Ethiopian Airways and Kenya Airways are the main flight providers into Malawi from the UK via Johannesburg, Addis Ababa and Nairobi. There are Malawian Airline flights from Lilongwe to Blantyre, from Blantyre to Harare, from Blantyre to Johannesburg and from Lilongwe to Dar es Salaam. between Lusaka, Harare, Dar Es Salaam, Lilongwe, Blantyre.

### BUS

Long distance buses tend to leave at early hours in the day. They get full quickly and leave once full, therefore you should plan to arrive early. Bus services are subject to frequent change, and bus stations are notoriously unsafe and theft is common. Keeping an eye (and hand) on all belongings should prevent any incident.



It is inadvisable to use “public” minibuses or *matola* (pick-ups) no matter how persuasive the price or the driver, Malawi has very poor road accident figures, often minibus-related.

**AXA Executive Coach Line** is highly recommended, with air conditioning and refreshments. Some of their routes include:

Blantyre – Lilongwe via Zalewa and Ntcheu

Blantyre – Mzuzu via Zomba and Lakeshore

Blantyre – Karonga via Mzuzu

Lilongwe – Karonga via Mzimba and Mzuzu

Contact them at AXA offices, next door to Blantyre Post Office or Behind Game at Lilongwe Old Town

Website: [www.agmamalawi.com/axa](http://www.agmamalawi.com/axa)

Email: [agma@malawi.net](mailto:agma@malawi.net)

Telephone: +265 (0)1 876 000/ 874 254/ 913 364; NB: Phone numbers change regularly so best to go to the office to get latest contact details and prices.

Fax: +265 (0)1 872 497

## VISAS

The following information was accurate as of June 2013. For the most up to date information on visa requirements, please visit the Malawi High Commission Website at: [www.malawihighcommission.co.uk](http://www.malawihighcommission.co.uk).

### 1. Tourist Visas

British nationals do not require visas for tourist visits, they are usually granted 30-day tourist visas on arrival. A maximum of two 30-day extensions can be arranged at a cost of MK 6,000 each (i.e. the maximum stay is 90-days, this would cost a total of £45 or MK 12,000). You can obtain your visas in government offices in Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Zomba.

Tourist visas are eligible for:

- (a) Scottish tourists who will be doing no work or volunteering.
- (b) Scots visiting Malawi as tourists who will be volunteering, on an unpaid basis, in Malawi for a period under 90 days. For example, student volunteers helping in a hospital, or a school link visiting, and volunteering at their partner school in Malawi.
- (c) Scots employed in the UK who spend short periods working in Malawi. Their job is located in the UK, as is the company or charity they work for, but they continue to be paid while in Malawi. For example, someone working for the Church of Scotland, visiting their partners in Malawi to discuss projects together.

### 2. Temporary Employment Permits and Temporary Residency Permits

Expatriates applying for Temporary Employment Permits and Temporary Residency Permits should do so through their respective employer before taking up employment. Failure to do so could be viewed as working illegally, which may lead to arrests and deportation. The Malawian employer should always consult the Immigration Department before engaging the expatriates for more information.

Visa applications (including TRPs and TEPs) are received on Mondays only and collected on Thursdays. Applicants can apply for any visa depending on the nature of the visit, subject to assessment.

A renewal of a Temporary Residence Permit is permitted. The application should be submitted to the Immigration Department a month before the expiry date to give time to process the paper work.

Applicants for renewal can book an appointment with the Chief Immigration Officer, Permit Officers or Regional Immigration Officers for further information regarding extending the TRP.

### 3. General advice

For any type of entry into Malawi, passports should be valid for at least 6 months from the proposed date of entry.

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries require documentary evidence of parental responsibility before allowing lone parents to enter the country and/or before permitting the children to leave the country.

It is also recommended that you register with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office LOCATE service: [www.locate.fco.gov.uk/locateportal/](http://www.locate.fco.gov.uk/locateportal/) prior to your departure. This service allows the office to provide you with most recent updates about the situation in Malawi, as well as to contact you and your family in case of an emergency.

It is recommended that you store the original copy of your passport in a secure location but always carry around a photocopy of your passport and visa in case you are checked by local authorities. If you do lose your passport contact the British High Commission immediately.

For more information on tourist visas, and work permits please contact the Malawi High Commission in London: General enquiries line: +44(0) 20 8455 5624, [malawihighcom@btconnect.com](mailto:malawihighcom@btconnect.com) or [www.malawihighcom.org.uk](http://www.malawihighcom.org.uk).

*The information above was accurate as of June 2013. For the most up to date information on visa requirements, please visit the Malawi High Commission Website at: [www.malawihighcommission.co.uk](http://www.malawihighcommission.co.uk).*

## BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION IN MALAWI

### LILONGWE:

Address: Off Convention Road, PO Box 30042, Lilongwe 3

Telephone: +265 (0)1 772 683

+265 (0)1 772 701

+265 (0)1 772 182

+265 (0)1 772 027

+265 (0)1 772 123

+265 (0)1 772 400 (out of hours emergencies only)

Fax: +265 (0)1 772 657

Email: [bhclilongwe@fco.gov.uk](mailto:bhclilongwe@fco.gov.uk)

Website: <http://ukinmalawi.fco.gov.uk/en/>

Office Hours: GMT: Mon-Thurs 05:30-10:00/ 11:30-14:30, Fri 05:30-10:30

Local Time: Mon-Thurs 07:30-12:00/ 13:30-16:30, Fri 07:30-12:30



BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION, LILONGWE ★

Visa enquiries:

Tel: +265 (0)1 772 427

Email: [lilongwevisa@fco.gov.uk](mailto:lilongwevisa@fco.gov.uk)

Passport/consular:

Office hours: Mon-Fri – 8.00 – 11.00

Email: [Passport@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Passport@fco.gov.uk)

#### BLANTYRE

British Honorary Consul

Savjani & Co.

Hannover House

Hannover Avenue

PO Box 2790

Blantyre

Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 0730 – 1200, 1330 – 1700

Tel: +265 (0)1 824 555

Email: [savjani@globemw.net](mailto:savjani@globemw.net) or [savjani@malawi.net](mailto:savjani@malawi.net)

#### **UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office can be contacted when unable to reach British representation in Malawi directly.

General Enquiries: 020 7008 1500

Services for Britons Overseas: 020 7008 0210 (office hours only)

#### **FURTHER ADVICE AND SUPPORT FROM THE SMP**

##### **Other SMP Practical Guides:**

SMP “Practical Advice and Support on *per diems*”: <http://bit.ly/SMPPerDiems>

SMP “Common Challenges, Shared Learning”: <http://bit.ly/SMPCommonChallenges>

SMP “Practical Guide to Shipping Goods to Malawi”: <http://bit.ly/ShippingGoodsMalawi>

SMP “Practical Guide to School Partnerships”: <http://bit.ly/SchoolPartnerships>

For further advice or specific queries, or for more information on joining the Scotland Malawi Partnership contact [info@scotland-malawipartnership.org](mailto:info@scotland-malawipartnership.org).

## APPENDIX A: YELLOW FEVER LETTERS

Telegram: MINMED, Lilongwe

Telephone: 0 1 789 400  
Fax: 0 1 789 431

Communications should be addressed to:  
The Secretary for Health



### MINISTRY OF HEALTH

DD (m) Tele mte  
Reply please quote Ref Med.....  
Ministry of Health  
P.O. Box 30377,  
Lilongwe,  
Malawi

Ref. No. MoH/MED/2/9

6 November 2013

His Excellency The High Commissioner,  
Malawi High Commission,  
36 John Street,  
HOLBORN,  
London, WC1N 2AT.



Dot

Your Excellency,

#### UK TOUR OPERATORS AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES ON YELLOW FEVER VACCINATIONS

I have the honour to write to you, Your Excellency, with reference to your letter Ref. No: LC3/11/15 requesting for information on yellow fever vaccination requirements for Malawi.

Please find the attached summary of the yellow fever vaccination requirement in Malawi.

The information we have through the World Health Organization website (<http://www.who.int/ith>) is that South Africa is not a yellow fever endemic area. We suggest that the tour operators can also get an updated yellow fever vaccination requirement from the South Africa High Commission. Some non yellow fever countries may require travellers coming from a non yellow fever country but who have spent more than 12 hours in transit at the airport in a yellow fever endemic country to have proof of vaccination.

Please do let us know if more information is needed.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Charles Mwansambo  
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH



Ref. No. MoH/MED/2/8



5<sup>th</sup> November, 2013

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH

### YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS FOR TRAVELLERS TO MALAWI

Malawi is not a yellow fever endemic country. In line with the world Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, the International Health Regulations (2005), the following are the yellow fever vaccinations requirements for travellers to Malawi.

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travellers over 1 year of age arriving from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission (yellow fever endemic country).

Yellow fever vaccination certificate is not required for travellers arriving from non yellow fever endemic country except when such travellers have transited more than 12 hours at the airport of a yellow fever endemic country on their way to Malawi.