

Malawi



Photo Credit: Radio Airfare Official Lilongwe, Malawi

Malawi is a landlocked country located in southern Africa. It covers an area that is just a bit smaller than the state of Pennsylvania; its population is about one and a half times of that state's. The capital city is Lilongwe and the official language of is English but the dominant one is Chewa (say CHEE-wah).

Although primary education is free in Malawi, it is not compulsory. Only 67% of the population can read and write. Dropout rates are higher for girls than boys due to the risk of gender-based violence during the long walks to school.

Infant mortality is very high (about 33/1,000 births compared to the US' rate of about 6/1,000) and life expectancy at birth is low. Currently, a person born in Malawi can expect to live about 65 years. Lack of access to good medical care also contributes to the crisis—there is only one doctor for approximately every 20,000 people.

While most people (about 92%) have access to indoor running water, more than 60% of all Malawians do not have indoor toilets. This exposes the population to illnesses that are quickly spread from person to person, such as dysentery. Easily dealt with in western cultures with good sanitation and health care, simple dysentery can be a killer without either in place.

Nutrition is a problem: almost 12% of children under the age of 5 are underweight.

In Malawi, the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) is called the Holy Childhood Association (HCA). Members from Holy Rosary Parish in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe gathered to plant trees. The children planted over 2,000 donated seedlings showing that membership means caring for each other and for our common home - the earth!

Info

Population 21,279,597

Religion 77.3% of Malawians identify as Christians
(17.2% of all followers of Jesus are Roman Catholics)
14% say their religion is Islam
18.7% are Animists or practice no religion

In the late 19th century, Catholicism was introduced to Malawi by a society called the Missionaries of Africa, nicknamed "The White Fathers" for the color of the cassocks they wore. The Church grew quickly: in less than 50 years, the first local clergy were ordained priests to serve their own Church.

*FamilySearch.org/Malawi_Church_Records

Other data Malawi has 205 parishes that make up 8 dioceses.

mca
missionary childhood
association

Saint John's School in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe, Malawi is an impressive recipient of help from members of the Missionary Childhood Association. It is the only school in the area - five thousand children from thirteen surrounding villages attend Saint John's in two sessions. In a partnership between the government and the Church, the state pays the teachers' salaries, and the Church provides the facilities, the teaching materials, and uniforms.

Why spend the funds on uniforms? It's so students feel equal to their peers in other villages and schools. Every government school student in Malawi must wear a uniform. If their parents cannot afford one, (or the school fees, the textbooks, the pencils, etc.) their children are denied entrance. Students in Malawi look forward to wearing a uniform – it shows others that they go to school and are getting an education. A school uniform is a great source of pride.



Through the Missionary Childhood Association – one of The Pontifical Mission Societies (TPMS) - children get an education and are helped to understand the intrinsic value of it.

The students know not that all children are as blessed.

Two students in the school really stand out. They represented the student body when a group from the Pontifical Mission Societies in the USA visited in December 2023 as “Best Boy and Best Girl.” Lawrence and Florence not only model great behavior to their peers they are the top grade earners as well.



In their comments to the visitors, they talked about leaky roofs and cracked walls that scare the students, especially the little ones, in the rainy season – they fear the walls will collapse on them.

Lawrence and Florence listed the problems of Saint John's School: substandard housing for teachers, a lack of textbooks, and workbooks. (Look behind them in the picture above to see lessons written out on large pieces of paper and taped to the walls.)

They finished their speeches with a polite plea: “We'll be glad if these things could be put into people's consideration. Thank you for listening.”

Students at Saint John's School are counting on Missionary Childhood members to pray and sacrifice on a regular basis so that conditions continue to improve at their school.

How will you show them you are listening?