



PHOTO: USAID/MALAWI

MALAWI

CLIMATE CHANGE COUNTRY PROFILE

The vast majority of Malawians rely on small-scale, rain-fed agriculture, making them highly dependent on weather patterns. Climate change increasingly exacerbates droughts, flooding, and inconsistent rainfall—contributing to food insecurity and threatening to derail progress toward Malawi’s goal of self-reliance.

Cyclones, floods, and droughts have long been a constant occurrence across Malawi’s landscape. In recent years, however, climate change, natural resource depletion, and a rapidly growing population have intensified the impact of these events, leading to catastrophic results. Since 2019, tropical cyclones have killed more than 1,000 Malawians and destroyed countless homes and crops. At the same time, droughts have reduced food production and threatened biodiversity and livelihoods in Malawi’s lakes and rivers. Flooding in 2023 contributed to Malawi’s largest cholera outbreak on record, which killed more than 1,700 Malawians.

USAID plays a critical role in providing life-saving assistance in the immediate aftermath of disasters, as well as helping them adapt to changing weather patterns and build resilience to future climate events. USAID supports Malawians to adopt climate-smart technologies and practices—including improved seed systems, climate-smart irrigation, renewable energy, and improved natural resource management. USAID also partners with the Government of Malawi to accelerate transition to renewable energy and promote enabling policies for market-led, climate-smart solutions.

Government of Malawi Climate Priorities

Malawi is a party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Government of Malawi is committed to taking urgent action to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. The country has several strategies that articulate the country's Climate priorities, including Malawi 2063, which highlights environmental sustainability as one of the cross-cutting enablers required to achieve a more wealthy and self-reliant nation. Malawi has a National Climate Change Management Policy which was adopted in 2016 and provides strategic direction on integrating climate change into development planning through adaptation, mitigation, technology development and transfer, and climate finance. In 2021, Malawi developed a National Adaptation Plan Framework to align efforts to address climate change, with a goal of reducing the vulnerability of Malawians, ecosystems, and socio-economic development to the effects of climate change through adaptation and mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building. Malawi's NDC commits to a combined unconditional and conditional contribution of 51 percent reduction in GHG emissions by 2040 and ten strategic adaptation actions across three pillars: (i) institutional framework, (ii) knowledge, technology and financing and (iii) resilience of the most vulnerable.

USAID's Climate Change Program: Objectives and Results

USAID takes an integrated approach to addressing climate change, leveraging programming across all sectors to contribute to shared priorities of adaptation, renewable energy, and climate-smart solutions. USAID interventions strengthen local governance to achieve more resilient communities and systems, and advance a more inclusive private sector that drives adaptation and diversification into more sustainable and climate-smart agriculture. Additionally, USAID's programs promote resilience among youth and vulnerable populations through workforce development programs that increase livelihood opportunities and help build the capacity required for a green economy.

Adaptation

In partnership with the Government of Malawi (GoM), private sector, civil society, and think-tanks, USAID supports vulnerable communities to adapt to more frequent weather-related shocks and helps foster more resilient landscapes, infrastructure, health systems, and agriculture. USAID also supports the Malawi government to operationalize their resilience-building strategies and plans such as the National Resilience Strategy, the National Forest Landscape Restoration Strategy, and the National Charcoal Strategy.

Key Results and Programs

- Diversification of natural resource-based enterprises (forestry, fisheries, and agriculture).
- Upscaling the use of climate resilient crops, high-yielding short season seeds, climate-smart agricultural practices, and new technologies to boost yields and improve water and soil management.
- Wider adoption of sustainable watershed management and assisted natural regeneration and reforestation and diversification of livelihoods.
- Construction of soil and water engineering structures such as swales, check dams, and gully reclamation.

Renewable Energy

Through Power Africa, USAID provides technical assistance and transaction advisory services that boost the production and transmission of clean energy. USAID also supports decentralized power systems, such as mini-grids, off-grid solar powered health clinics and pharmacy-in-a-box systems, and solar home systems, that provide renewable electricity to populations that are not yet connected to the national grid.

Key Results and Programs

- Transaction advisory services to the GoM on the development of 350 MW Mpatamanga hydropower project, which has the potential to double the country's generation capacity.
- Mobilization of more than \$15 million of public-private finance toward the \$1.3 billion Mpatamanga hydropower project.
- Expansion of Malawi's capacity to operate the Mozambique-Malawi regional interconnection system.

Natural Climate Solutions

USAID supports the implementation of Malawi's Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) programs. Through its engagement and leadership in the donor space, USAID and the U.S. Department of State support the Government of Malawi's climate ambitions.

Key Results and Programs

- Capacity building for prosecutors and magistrates to strengthen enforcement of forestry and fisheries regulations by promoting harmonized sentencing guidelines for forestry and nature-based crimes.
- Support for the development of the National Forest Inventory which culminated into the development of the National REDD+ Strategy. USAID supported the GoM to update its NDC in 2021, which advances REDD+ and Carbon Project Development.
- Institutionalization of the National Greenhouse Gases Inventory Management System, key in the development of Malawi's Third National Communication and first Biennial Update Report to the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Establishment of the National Forest Monitoring Unit to assess and monitor changes in biomass stocks and forest cover. Supported micro-, small-, and medium-enterprises that promote alternative energy and fuel-efficient technologies resulting in both urban and rural areas.
- Landscape restoration and carbon sequestration initiatives, which addressed deforestation and forest degradation.