

## Key Figures | Chronic Food Insecurity | February 2022



**5.4M**

Out of 16.6 million Malawians, approximately 5.4 million people in Malawi face Moderate or Severe chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI Levels 3 and 4) due to abject poverty and recurrent shocks, among other drivers.<sup>1</sup>

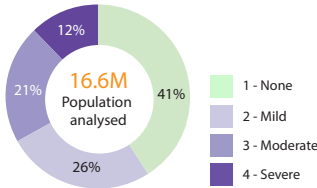


33% of the population is in IPC Level 3 or above.



**70%**

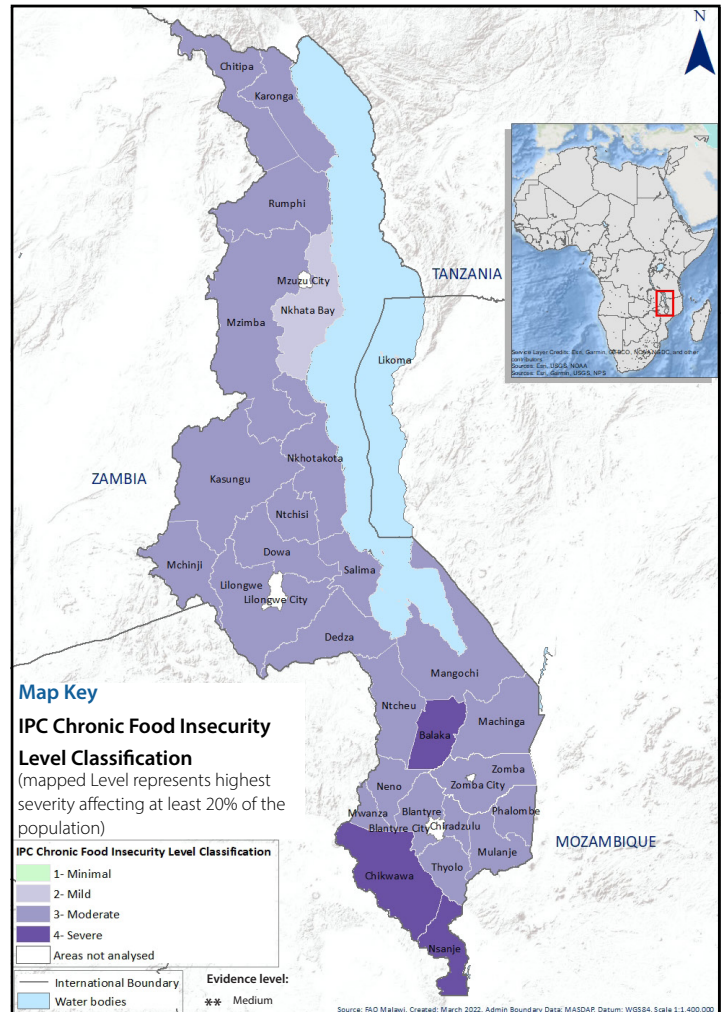
Over 70% of Malawi's population of about 19.1 million people is living below the international poverty line of \$1.90/day



## Overview

Approximately 5.4 million people in Malawi living in rural and secondary urban centres are facing Moderate or Severe chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI Levels 3 or 4) due to abject poverty and recurrent shocks, among other drivers. The February Malawi IPC Chronic Food Insecurity (CFI) analysis found that an additional estimated 4.4 million people face Mild (IPC CFI Level 2) food insecurity, whilst approximately 6.9 million people are food secure. Chronic food insecurity in Malawi, where over 70% of the population of about 19.1 million people is living below the international poverty line of \$1.90/day, is driven by abject poverty, recurrent shocks, poor policies and implementation as well as reliance on weak livelihood strategies.

The report recommends medium to long-term interventions to address the structural causes of chronic food insecurity are necessary, particularly for the country's most vulnerable populations, including subsistence farmers, the elderly, female-headed households and others. Overall for the country, most districts were classified as IPC CFI Level 3 (Moderate), whilst two districts, Nkhatabay and Likoma were classified as IPC CFI Level 2 (Mild). On the whole, most Northern and Central Regions districts were classified as Moderate CFI (Level 3). However, of major concern are districts in the Southern Region, which have the highest proportion of the population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4 (Severe). This is followed by the Central Region. The districts in the Northern Region had the lowest total population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4. Balaka, Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts in the Southern Region were classified overall as IPC CFI Level 4.



## Key Drivers



### Poverty

Malawi remains one of the world's poorest countries. More than half of the population lives below the country's poverty line.



### Flooding

Over the last few decades, floods have frequently occurred, causing damage to infrastructure, crops, and livestock and leading to livelihood asset depletion.



### Poor Policy Implementation

Agriculture remains constrained due to ineffective or inadequate implementation of policies on land and livelihood support.

## Recommended Actions



### Social safety nets

Social safety net programs such as cash transfers, school feeding programs, and public works can reduce poverty and are part of the country's current response priorities.



### Improved nutritional practices

The provision of nutrition education at household level and the consumption of nutrient-dense foods is essential. Access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities and practices should be provided.



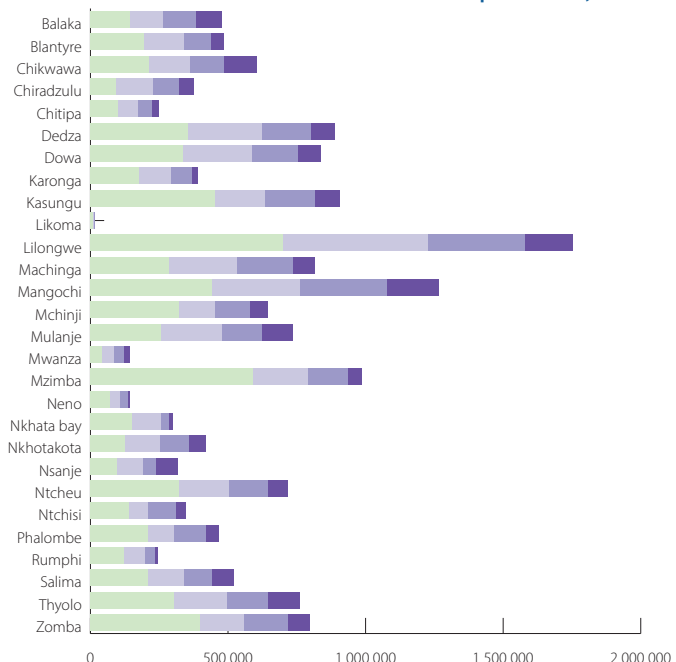
### Land and agricultural policies

Government crop input support should strike a balance between maize and other commodities in order to enhance production and bolster the productivity of other food-security crops and ensure consumption of nutrient dense foods. In addition, the government should continue to meet irrigation targets to lessen farmers' vulnerability to erratic and unpredictable rainfall.

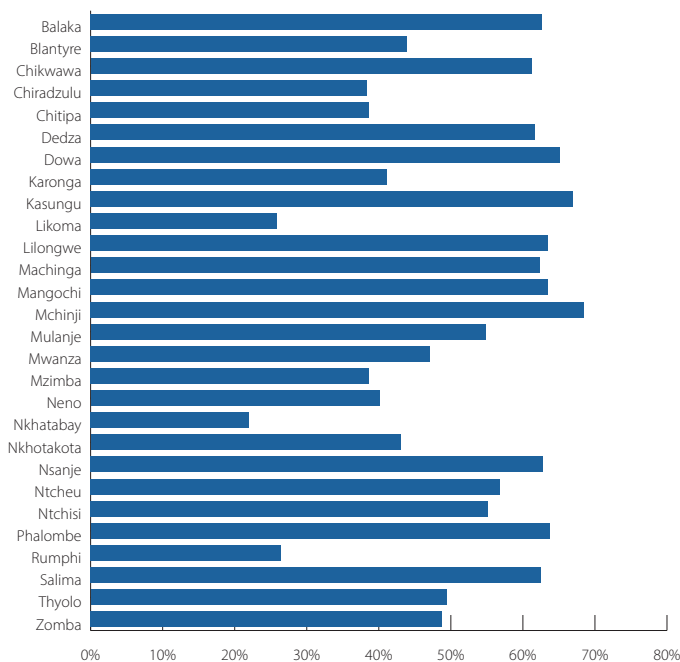
<sup>1</sup> Note that the major urban centres of Lilongwe, Blantyre and Zomba were not covered by this analysis.

While monetary poverty is one of the crucial elements considered in the CFI analysis, the complexity of the socio-economic context offers numerous additional parameters that must be factored in while detecting CFI, such as formal and informal safety nets, the importance of subsistence farming in granting access to food also to the poorest segment, market integration as one element that may at times not allow full availability and access even to those who are not poor, among others. For this reason, we notice a partial consistency between CFI prevalence and poverty, with some deviation in terms of severity and magnitude in numerous districts

**Number of people in Chronic Food Insecurity by district | February 2022**



**Percentage of poverty rates by district | 2020**



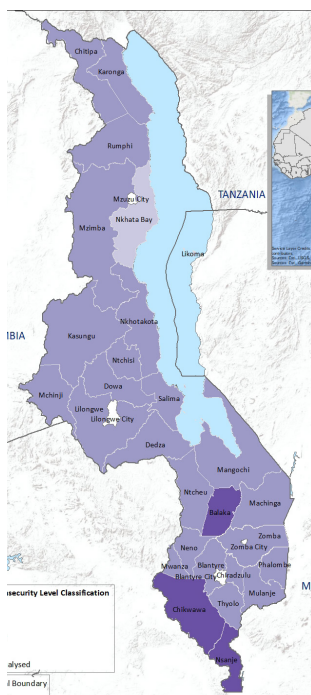
**Chronic Food Insecurity by district | February 2022**

Overall, most districts in the Northern and Central Regions of Malawi were classified as Moderate CFI (Level 3). However, a concern is districts in the Southern Region, which have the highest proportion of the population in IPC CFI Level 4 (Severe). The Central Region follows this. The districts in the Northern Region have the lowest total population classified as being in IPC CFI Level 4. Balaka, Nsanje and Chikwawa Districts in the Southern Region were classified overall as IPC CFI Level 4. Overall for the country, most districts were classified as IPC CFI Level 3 (Moderate), whilst two districts, Nkhatabay and Likoma were classified as IPC CFI Level 2 (Mild).

**Poverty rates by district | 2020**

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than half of the population lives below the national poverty line, with 51.5% living in poverty in 2017 and 50.7% in 2020. Due to poverty, more than a quarter cannot consume the recommended daily amount of food (Quantity) and with adequate dietary diversity (Quality). The three districts classified in Severe Chronic Food Insecurity (IPC CFI Level 4)—Nsanje, Balaka, and Chikwawa—are amongst Malawi's poorest, with poverty rates of 62.8%, 62.7%, and 61.2%, respectively. Low agricultural productivity, limited opportunities in non-farm activities, volatile economic growth, rapid population growth, inadequate coverage of safety net programs and targeting challenges are all factors that contribute to poverty in Malawi.

**Chronic Food Insecurity  
Feb 2022**



**Comparison of Chronic and Acute Food Insecurity**

Chronic food insecurity and vulnerability to shocks are high in almost all districts, highlighting the need to put in place measures to help mitigate or lessen the impact of these shocks, as their occurrence will almost certainly lead to an increase in acute food insecurity. An area or household can experience acute or chronic food insecurity, or both, simultaneously. Recurrent acute food insecurity is frequently linked to chronic food insecurity in a bi-directional cause-and-effect relationship. On the one hand, households classified as chronically food insecure are more likely to experience acute food insecurity when shocks occur. In contrast, those experiencing recurrent acute food insecurity crises may deplete their livelihood strategies or assets, or both, and are more likely to experience chronic food insecurity.

**MAP KEY**

**IPC Chronic Food Insecurity Level Classification**  
(mapped Level represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - None
- 2 - Mild
- 3 - Moderate
- 4 - Severe

**MAP KEY**

**IPC Acute Food Insecurity Phase Classification**  
(mapped Phase represents highest severity affecting at least 20% of the population)

- 1 - Minimal
- 2 - Stressed
- 3 - Crisis
- 4 - Emergency
- 5 - Famine

**Projected Acute Food Insecurity  
Jan - Mar 2022**

