

MALAWI MONTHLY COVID-19 SITUATION REPORT

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Edna Chamgwera, Chrispine Botha and Derek Lakudzala

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1 Introduction

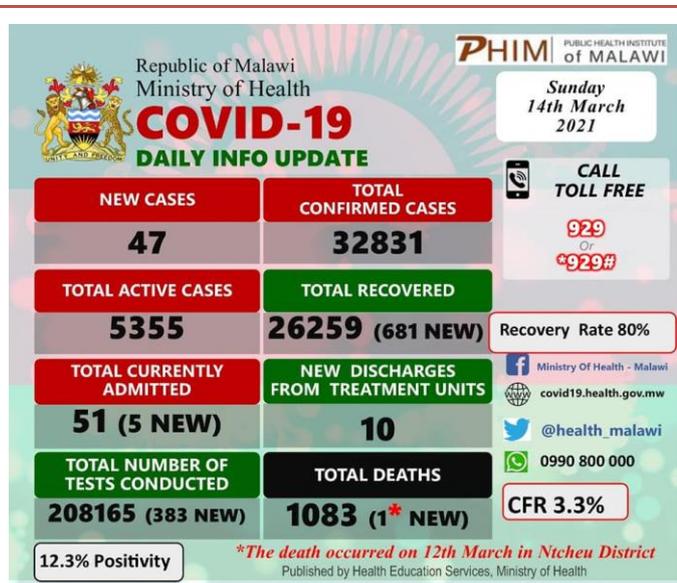
This is the Covid-19 situation update for Malawi as of 11th March, 2021. The report focuses on the situation of the pandemic and developments that have taken place in the country since the submission of the last report on 31st January 2021.

2 Covid 19 Situation

As of 14th March 2021, Malawi had registered an accumulated total of 32,831 confirmed cases and 1,083 deaths (Case Fatality Rate is at 3.30%). Of these cases, 2,084 were imported infections and 30,747 were locally transmitted. Cumulatively 26,259 cases have now recovered (recovery rate of 80%) and 134 were lost to follow-up. This brings to the total number of active cases to 6,747.

As of 14th March 2021 the statistics¹ were as follows:

New Cases	47
Total confirmed cases	32,831
Total active cases	5,355
Total recovered	26,259
Lost to follow-up	134
Total deaths	1,083
Total Numbers of Tests	208,165
Recovery rate	80%



¹ Source: <https://web.facebook.com/malawimoh/photos/pcb.3674669722588516/3674669672588521/>

2.1 Overview of MalawiCOVID-19 Situation by date

Malawi Situation

32,789

confirmed cases

1,082

deaths

Source: World Health Organization
Data may be incomplete for the current day or week.

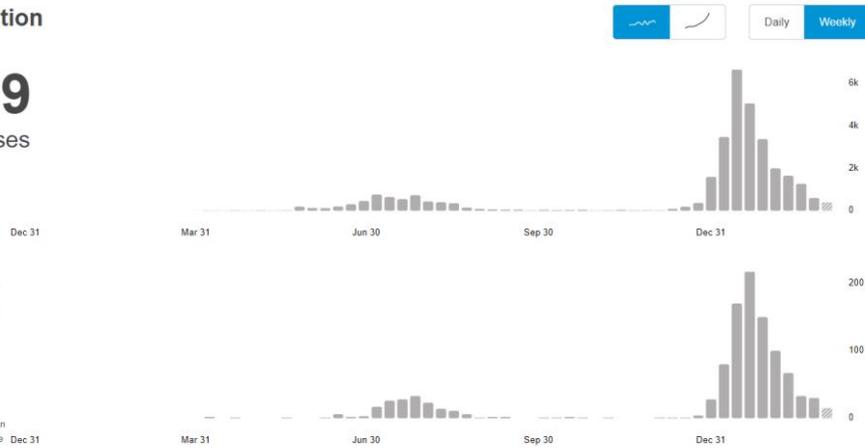


Figure 1: Source: <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/mw>

WHO reports that “In Malawi, from 3 January 2020 to 5:13pm CET, 14 March 2021, there have been 32,789 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 1,082 deaths, reported to WHO.”

The Ministry of Health has advised the public not to be complacent because of the commencement of the immunization exercise since it is just one of the tools in fighting the pandemic². People are encouraged to continue observing the Covid19 preventive measures such as washing hands regularly with soap and water, sanitizing, observing the minimum 1-meter physical distance, avoiding being in crowds and continuing to put on masks. Apart from the opening of schools, all the other measures reported in the January report are still in effect.

2.2 Opening of Schools

The government ordered opening of schools on Monday 22nd February, five weeks after classes were suspended due to a surge in Covid-19 cases. The Presidential Task Force on Covid-19 determined it was safe to resume classes after a drop in the rate of infection. The infection rate was at 30% when classes were suspended but it is now below 10%. The Ministry of Education made money available to schools for procurement of masks, buckets and soap to ensure safety of teachers and learners. The Government also recruited 2,275 auxiliary teachers to ease pressure on permanent teachers.

2.3 Covid 19 Vaccine

Malawi received 360,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine on 5th March 2021. The batch is the first tranche of allocation for Malawi through the COVAX Facility. The State President of the Republic of Malawi launched the Covid-19 Vaccination on 11th March, 2021.

²Source: Ministry of Health

The President also received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine in the country³ demonstrating high level of commitment of him and the government in the Covid-19 fight.



Figure 1: President Chakwera receiving the first Covid-19 Vaccination

The vaccine has already been distributed to all the 28 districts across the country. The vaccination will be rolled out in a phased approach. The government has identified priority groups to be vaccinated from the first batch. These include Health Care Workers, the Police, Immigration Officers, Prison Warders, Malawi Defence Force, Teachers, those 60 years and above and people with underlying health conditions.

The vaccine has come at a time when the general trend of infections has significantly dropped in Malawi from 30% in November 2020 to between 12% and 8%. The country targets to reduce the infection rate to less than 5%, a point at which most restrictions will be eased and life will be back to normal.

3 Covid-19 Civic Education and Awareness Campaigns

The government has increased public awareness and civic education programmes on the vaccine to combat negative perceptions created by unsubstantiated social media reports and news about the vaccine. However, the government has not made it mandatory for people to get vaccinated. The public information messaging is clearly emphasizing the importance and benefits of people getting vaccinated.

³<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/malawi-starts-nationwide-covid-19-vaccination-drive/2172626>

4 Status of Travel restrictions

Despite the significant drop in the infection rate and the roll out of the vaccine, travel to Malawi still remains restricted with a negative Covid-test a condition for entry and departure. The specifics of the restrictions and conditions are as follows:

- Arriving passengers who are eligible for entry are required to submit to the health officials a completed health travelers' declaration form and a negative COVID-19 certificate obtained no more than 72 hours prior to their arrival in Malawi.
- Passengers without a valid certificate are required to have samples collected for COVID-19 testing at their own expense and thereafter proceed on self-quarantine for 14 days. Such passengers are followed up by health authorities during the period under quarantine. Their COVID-19 test results are normally communicated within 3 days.
- Passengers with a negative test result are allowed to proceed on self-monitoring for signs and symptoms, they can mix with others but are required to always use face masks, observe physical distancing, practice hand hygiene. Should they experience any COVID-19 related symptoms, they are advised to contact health authorities at the earliest possible opportunity
- Departing passengers from Malawi, must provide a valid "Travel Certificate" showing that a negative COVID-19 test has been taken at a government designated centre within 72 hours of their departure. The 72 hours count from the time the certificate is issued.
- Mandatory COVID-19 testing may also take place on departure if the departing passengers fail to produce a valid negative test certificate, or if the airport staff judge the passenger to display COVID-19 symptoms. This test will be at the travelers' own expense.

The restrictions specify the necessity to go into quarantine for arriving passengers without valid Covid 19 certificate. In reality the situation may not arise as the airlines will require their passengers to have the certificates before boarding anyway. Passengers arriving with valid Covid19 certificates are able to immediately proceed to their engagements in Malawi without the need for quarantine.

5 Listing and Awarding of Safe Travels Stamp

Malawi has received a safe travel stamp from the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)⁴. The Safe Travel Stamp enables travelers to recognize destinations and companies that have implemented protocols designed by WTTC together with members and health experts, among others. The stamp is seen as an endorsement

⁴ Source: <https://www.malawitourism.com/news-blogs/malawi-awarded-safe-travels-stamp-of-approval-by-wttc/#:~:text=The%20Safe%20Travels%20stamp%20is,COVID%2D19%20and%20similar%20outbreaks.>

of the guidelines that have been designed to rebuild confidence among consumers and also align the private sector behind common standards to ensure the safety of its workforce and travelers as the tourism sector shifts to a new normal.

The government will soon roll out the enforcement of the global standards throughout the sector to consolidate the trust which has been demonstrated by the safety travel stamp. Since the start of the pandemic, Malawi's tourism sector has greatly been hit; leading to loss of jobs and revenue, hence the new development will likely revive the sector.

The Malawi Tourism Council, on the other side, indicated that this is the first step to assure the world that Malawi is a safe destination and ready to reopen to travel by ensuring that global standards and protocols for safety, health and security of travelers and workforce in the travel and tourism sector are in place.

In addition to the safe travel protocols, WTTC has partnered Institution of Occupational Safety and Health⁵ to release a number of guidelines to enable businesses within the travel tourism sector to return to work safely.

6 Government-Industry Consultations

The government recently carried out consultative meetings with representatives of the tourism sector in Mulanje. Some of the establishments consulted told government that they urgently need interim financial support until there is a relaxation of travel restrictions and gatherings. On its part, the government has tied the relaxation to a drop in Covid 19 infection rates below 5%.

The worry of the industry is that it is unpredictable when that drop could occur. In the circumstances, more works needs to be done to establish what kind of assistance Exchange could provide to the sector. The immediate needs of the sector are financial and government action to relax the restrictions.

Informal observations indicate that there has been a significant increase in business-related travel to Malawi. It's probably a matter of time before leisure and tourism travel also pick up, especially following the endorsement.

7 Conclusion

The Tourism sector which contributes about 7% to the GDP is one of the priority sectors of the economy. Travel safety of tourists is therefore among the key factors that attract tourist's visits and investment. Since Tourism is one of the Exchange's focus sectors in Malawi, Exchange could take advantage of this development and explore how it could assist the sector in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Exchange could engage with the Malawi Tourism Council and the Department of

⁵ Source: Times 360 Malawi - free.facebook.com, mw-nation.com

Tourism to explore possibilities of assisting them with international marketing programmes.