

MALAWI MONTHLY COVID-19 SITUATION REPORT

29th April 2021

Edna Chamgwera, Chrispine Botha and Derek Lakudzala

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1 Introduction

This is the COVID-19 situation update for Malawi as of 29th April, 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 15th March, 2021.

2 Covid-19 Situation

The COVID-19 situation in Malawi has significantly improved since March, 2021. The numbers of new cases, deaths, and admissions to hospitals have declined. The positivity rate has remained stable and below the threshold of 5% over the past four weeks.

As of 29th April 2021, Malawi had registered an accumulated total of 34,062 confirmed cases and 1,148 deaths (Case Fatality Rate is at 3.37%). Cumulatively, 32,023 cases have now recovered (recovery rate of 94%). Total tests conducted are at 231,856 and positivity rate is at 2.6%. This brings the total number of active cases to 757.

<p>As of 26th April 2021 the statistics¹ were as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>New Cases</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total confirmed cases</td> <td style="text-align: right;">34,062</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total active cases</td> <td style="text-align: right;">757</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total recovered</td> <td style="text-align: right;">32,023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total deaths</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1,148</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Number of Tests</td> <td style="text-align: right;">231,856</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recovery rate</td> <td style="text-align: right;">94%</td> </tr> </table>	New Cases	10	Total confirmed cases	34,062	Total active cases	757	Total recovered	32,023	Total deaths	1,148	Total Number of Tests	231,856	Recovery rate	94%	
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¹ Source: <https://web.facebook.com/malawimoh/photos/pcb.3674669722588516/3674669672588521/>

2.1 Overview of Malawi COVID-19 Situation by date-28th April, 2021

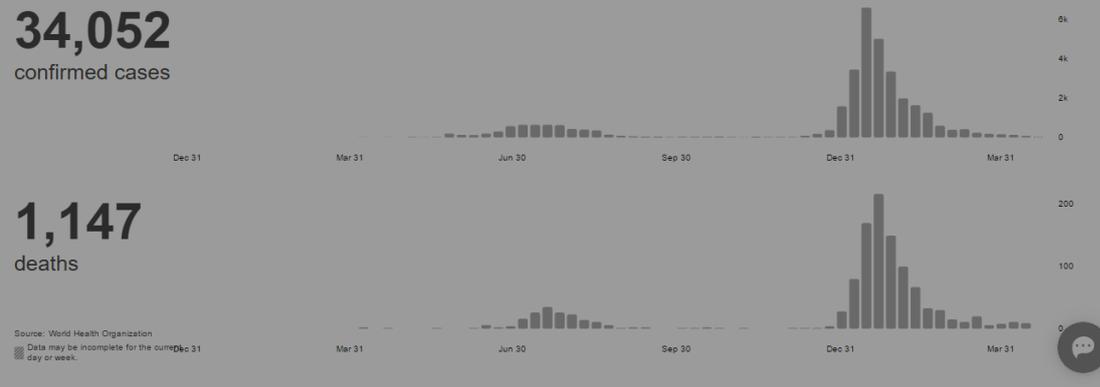


Figure 1: Source: <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/mw>

2.2 Relaxation of COVID-19 Restrictions

Since the infection rate dropped to 3.3%; government has relaxed some of the preventive measures as follows: -

- Businesses operating hours have been extended by two hours from 8.00 pm to 10.00 pm;
- Bars operating hours have been extended by four hours from 8.00 pm to 12 midnight;
- Public transport capacity i.e. minibuses, coaches and standard buses are operating at 75%;
- The maximum number of people who may gather during indoor functions has been increased from 50 to 100 ;
- The maximum number of people who may gather for outdoor functions has been increased from 100 to 200.



People are encouraged to continue observing the Covid19 preventive measures. Regular washing of hands with soap and water, sanitizing, observing the minimum one meter physical distance remain mandatory in most public places. People are encouraged to continue wearing face masks. People are also encouraged to avoid being in large crowds.

2.3 Covid 19 Vaccination Status

The State President of the Republic of Malawi launched the Covid-19 Vaccination exercise on 11th March, 2021. The vaccination started at a high note with many prominent people including the Vice President of the Republic of Malawi, former Presidents, cabinet ministers and members of Parliament, the clergy, chiefs, senior government officials getting vaccinated. The response based on the turn up for the vaccine across the country was encouraging. As of 26th April 2021, a total of 290,344 have so far been vaccinated.

However, the number of people going for vaccinations is now decreasing. Despite sustained sensitization campaigns being conducted in the country, a lot of people are still not willing to go for vaccination. In order to reach many people, the Ministry of Health intensified efforts and opened many centres for administering the vaccine and also extended the vaccination beyond the identified priority groups to everyone aged above 18. The priority groups included Health Care Workers, the Police, Immigration Officers, Prison Warders, Malawi Defense Force, Teachers, those 60 years and above and people with underlying health conditions. Below are some reasons that have contributed to the decrease in the people taking the vaccine:

- A total of 16,440 doses expired on April 13 and there were unverified rumours that all the doses had expired causing a negative impact on the people going for vaccination;
- The negative information spreading through social media reports about the side effects of the vaccine;
- The drastic reduction of COVID-19 cases in the country may also have contributed to the low turnout for the vaccination.

3 Covid-19 Civic Education and Awareness Campaigns

Government has increased public awareness and civic education programmes on the vaccine to combat negative perceptions created by unsubstantiated social media reports.

To achieve this, government has engaged different stakeholders and opinion leaders including the clergy, political and traditional leaders to raise awareness in their communities that the vaccine is safe. The fear of the government is that if people continue to shun the vaccine, more doses will expire since they do not have long shelf life.

Although the positivity rate has significantly come down in recent weeks, the government keeps on reminding Malawians not to relax but to continue observing all the preventive measures.

4 Status of Travel restrictions

In order to guard against the threat of importation and spread of the new COVID-19 variant from the Indian sub-continent into the country, Malawi has temporarily imposed an immediate ban on all but essential travel to or arrival from three South Eastern Asian countries namely Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The restriction is also extended to Brazil in South America. Essential travel that may be exempted from the restrictions includes Diplomatic and Medical Travel of Nationals, or Non-Nationals.

Those undertaking essential travel to and from these countries shall be required to undergo mandatory institutional quarantine at designated hotels at their own cost on arrival into the country. In addition, the travelers must be in possession of a negative PCR-based COVID-19 test result or certificate for a test conducted no more than 72 hours before arrival in Malawi.

5 Tourism sector consultations

By mid-2020, Malawi had lost over 42 Billion Kwacha in revenue through cancellation of confirmed bookings and an estimated 300,000 jobs out of which 253,000 are direct jobs. The pandemic also affected livelihood of over 20,000 active artists, artisans and practitioners in the arts, creative industries and cultural heritage sector. These make a significant contribution to job creation, tourism and upholding of the virtues of national cultural identity. Likewise, the number of paying visitors to national parks and wildlife reserves, about 85% of which come from outside of Malawi, has also gone down substantially.

The pandemic continues to put more jobs at risk, mainly in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The extent to which the tourism sector averts such negative impact of COVID-19 depends on how quick the contact-intensive sectors that include hospitality, entertainment, and transportation will recuperate from the effects of restricted travelling. Currently, it is not clear if the pandemic represents a permanent shock and there is uncertainty surrounding the recovery of the sector.

According to the Department of Tourism, a number of interventions have been made but are far below what the sector is looking for. UNDP through the growth accelerator intervention is financially supporting a handful of tourism enterprises across the country through matching grants. The African Development Bank (AfDB) through the Department of Tourism is also providing a matching grant facility to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This grant is not directly related to post COVID-19 recovery efforts but comes in handy now that the sector is faced with capital constraints for SMEs due to the pandemic.

In terms of support, the sector is looking for crisis response and management. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for destination marketing could also be welcome.

When contacted, the Tour Operators Association (TOA) indicated that the sector needs a countrywide marketing which should be guided by a good marketing strategy. With the current situation, operators also need to come up with new strategies and tactics such as improving their websites, and promoting destination marketing in order to remain competitive.

6 Conclusion

From this report, the following conclusions can be made:

- That the Malawi COVID-19 situation has significantly improved and the commencing of vaccination may potentially increase confidence in international travel. Exchange can use this window to allow for those programme experts who have received their jab to visit the Malawi programmes to appreciate the operations among the partners post COVID-19.
- That the tourism sector in Malawi is grappling with post COVID-19 effects and require crisis response and management. The sector needs support towards the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for destination marketing. Exchange can take advantage of Frank Cuypers' expertise in destination marketing and strategy development to support the government on how to respond and manage/mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.