



First consignment of supplies under the COVAX facility, arriving at Kamuzu International Airport in Lilongwe. © UNICEF Malawi/2021/Kabuye

Reporting Period: 18-28 February 2021

# MALAWI COVID-19 Situation Report



## Situation in numbers as of 28 February 2021

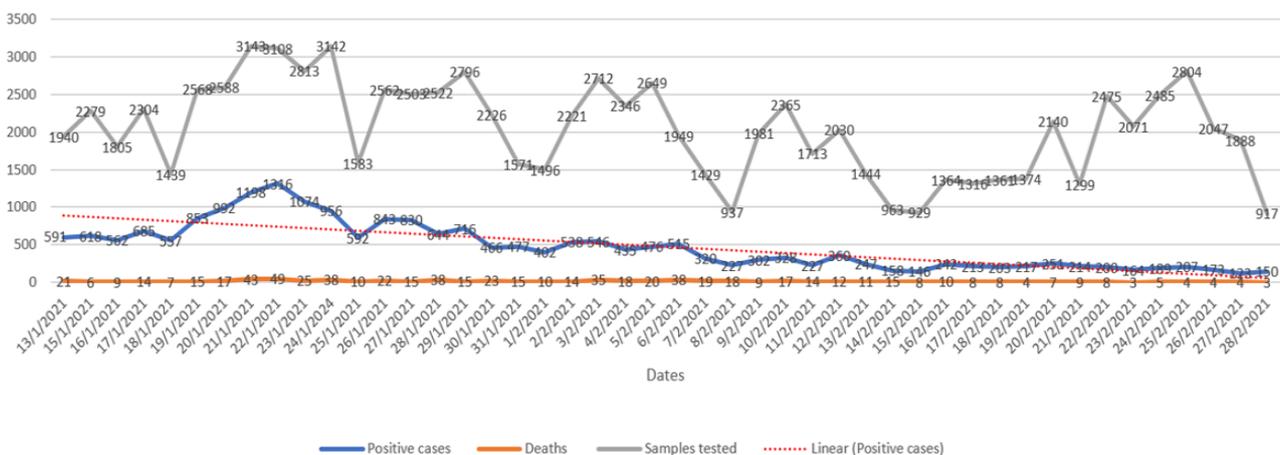
- 31,945** confirmed cases
- 18,874** recoveries
- 91** cases hospitalized
- 1,044** deaths
- 197,924** tested samples
- 11,893** active cases

Source: 2021/02/28, Daily info update, Republic of Malawi, Ministry of Health

### Highlights

- Malawi, on 26 February 2021, received the first consignment of supplies under the COVAX facility, which included 360,000 syringes and 3625,000 safety boxes. Under this facility Malawi is expected to vaccinate 3,800,000 people (20 per cent of the population). The vaccine is planned to be introduced to Malawi within the month of March.
- The COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI) has officially commenced in geographically targeted hotspots in Malawi's four main cities (Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba) with 63,624 beneficiaries receiving the transfers out of planned 199,413. The households are currently receiving transfers for 2 months (January and February 2021) and the remaining 135,789 households will receive support in the coming weeks.
- UNICEF has supported the Department of HIV and Viral Hepatitis with technical review of the guidelines for HIV service delivery in the context of COVID-19. The guidelines are an essential HIV service continuity as they provide direction on how to handle different aspects of HIV service delivery in the context of COVID-19 with the aim of minimising disruptions.

Comparison of cases and deaths



## Situation Overview

As of 28 February 2021, Malawi has conducted 197,924 tests out of which 31,945 turned out positive for COVID-19. Of the positive cases, 25,045 (78 per cent) have been recorded in 2021 alone. Since the beginning of the outbreak, 1,044 deaths have been reported (CFR=3.27) of which 92 have been recorded in the past two weeks bringing the total number of deaths registered in 2021 alone to 856 (82 per cent). Out of the total cases, 96 per cent are locally transmitted. A total of 18,874 cases (59 per cent) have now recovered while 76 cases are under investigation. This brings the total number of active cases to 11,893 across all the 28 districts.

In the last two weeks, Malawi has started experiencing a reduction in the number of confirmed cases with 5,682 reported compared to period to 2,091 in the previous; a reduction of 63 percent. The positivity rate has however remained unchanged at 16 percent with evidence of flattening the curve. Overall there is reduction in the number of suspects seeking testing in various testing sites. However, out of those that turn up for testing, the proportion that return positive results has not changed thus the sustained positivity rate; refer to below graph:



On 26 February 2021, Malawi received the first consignment of supplies under the COVAX facility which included 360,000 syringes and 3625,000 safety boxes. Under this facility Malawi is expected to vaccinate 3,800,000 (20 per cent) of the population. The target will include front line health workers, high risk population groups such as the elderly and those with co-morbidities. The vaccine is planned to be introduced to Malawi in the month of March. In addition, the MoH is expecting the arrival of 100,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines , provided via the African Union.

## Programme response by UNICEF and partners

### Humanitarian Strategy

UNICEF Malawi is working in the following areas of strategic priority against COVID-19:

- Public health response to reduce coronavirus transmission and mortality
- Continuity of health, education, nutrition and protection services
- Assessing and responding to the immediate secondary impact of COVID-19
- Strengthening Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

UNICEF maintains critical preparedness and response operations, including operational humanitarian access corridors and delivery of services in Health, Education, Child and Social Protection, WASH, Nutrition and Communication for Development (C4D). This is being done to prevent and control infections, ensure continuity of education, promote positive behaviours, prevent transmission and ensure the protection of children rights, especially of the most vulnerable ones.

### Humanitarian leadership and coordination

- To support coordination, the Humanitarian Country Team is holding bi-weekly meetings
- Clusters continue to meet for better response coordination. Information relating to COVID-19 resource mobilization, allocation, programmatic implementation (RM and 5Ws) is regularly being updated. Currently the clusters are finalising the development of the 2021 COVID-19 response plan.

- UNICEF is the co-lead agency for the Education, Nutrition, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Protection Clusters, while also playing a key role in the Health Cluster.

## Malawi COVID-19 Supply Chain

- UNICEF facilitated pre-clearance of the first COVAX airfreight shipment valued at \$14,484 consisting of 3,600 boxes of syringes and 3625,000 safety boxes. The consignment arrived at Kamuzu International Airport on 26 February 2021.
- UNICEF is facilitating the distribution of assorted COVID-19 supplies (PPEs, medical supplies) valued at \$790,594 to targeted district health offices and government central hospitals.

## Summary Analysis of Programme Response

### Public health response to reduce coronavirus transmission and mortality

With funding from the Irish Embassy, UNICEF through Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) has continued to support government with screening of all travellers entering Malawi at Kamuzu International airport (KIA), Mangochi and Songwe border crossing. In the past two weeks, 2,912 travellers (male 1,543; female 1,269) were screened. All travellers entering through KIA had valid negative COVID-19 certificates. In addition, 40 health surveillance officers from Mangochi and Songwe were re-oriented on reporting and referral of COVID-19 cases in schools including training on conducting screening of learners.

### Continuity of health, education, nutrition and protection services

Amidst the increased pressure on the already fragile health system caused by SARS-CoV-2, ensuring continuity of essential health services including for Maternal and Neonatal Health (MNH) is critical. Since the beginning of February 2021, UNICEF has been supporting MoH with lifesaving MNH supplies and PPE which have been distributed to nine of its supported districts and to all tertiary facilities across the country. UNICEF also supported the Department of HIV and Viral Hepatitis with technical review of the guidelines for HIV service delivery in the context of COVID-19. The guidelines are an essential for HIV service continuity as they provide direction on how to handle different aspects of HIV service delivery in the context of COVID-19 with the aim of minimising disruptions. Some of the measures that have been introduced are; encouraging six months disbursement of ARVs for all stable clients, suspension of routine viral load testing except for six months after initiation of anti-retroviral therapy and suspension of non-COVID-19 related health care workers trainings. These measures have been necessary as the ministry is facing a shortage of human resources due to the pandemic.

As efforts in support of the provision of community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to the people affected by COVID-19 continue, 60 case workers and case managers in Zomba district have undergone MHPSS training during the reporting period. Since the beginning of 2021, more than 1,400 people in 3 districts (Blantyre, Mchinji, and Zomba) have been reached with MHPSS by DSWOs, including 423 people (180 children and 243 adults) reached during the reporting period in Blantyre and Zomba districts. This brings the total number of people reached with MHPSS through DSWOs with UNICEF support since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to around 26,300. DSWOs in Blantyre and Zomba districts also facilitated 62 street-connected children to return to their homes with support from UNICEF. This brings the total number of street-connected children supported by DSWO for reintegration in 2021 to 210.

UNICEF also continues to provide technical and financial support to Malawi Police Service (MPS) to address the increased risks of violence under the COVID-19 situation. During the reporting period, MPS reached out to the public and churches to encourage the people to take responsibilities in

protecting children from violence, including defilement and child marriage. Community radios were also used for sensitization. MPS also oriented the district safe school committees on child protection issues with support from UNICEF through partnership with Save the Children in Nsanje district. Safe school committees play an important role in prevention and response to child protection issues in the communities.

The 50 Community Victim Support Units (CVSU), whose capacity to manage the child protection and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases was enhanced by UNICEF partner Save the Children, continue to provide protection services with continuous supervision from the Save the Children. Rehabilitation work of 11 CVSU buildings is ongoing for the provision of temporary shelter for victims of SGBV.

As cluster co-lead agency for WASH, education, nutrition co-lead protection clusters, UNICEF has been working with the government cluster lead agencies to ensure effective coordination during the response. During the reporting period, UNICEF as protection cluster co-lead, technically supported the discussion to improve the data collection on child marriage and enhance better coordination among health, education, and protection and social support clusters. Similarly, in the education cluster, UNICEF during the reporting period, facilitated interaction between health cluster and the education cluster through a cluster meeting at which Health cluster made a presentation on COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, UNICEF has facilitated the introduction of a regular inter-cluster meetings of Health, Protection and Education Clusters periodically in order to share information and updates and to collaborate on joint interventions to support children in Malawi.

### **Strengthening Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)**

UNICEF continues to offer technical support to the Health Education Services (HES) Department in the revision of the Risk/Crisis Communication and Social Mobilisation Strategic Plan and messages, which is revised from time to time depending on emerging issues. Integrating with other programs e.g. the malaria project implemented by PACHI, communities have been reached with RCCE interventions in Mulanje, Neno and Mzimba districts where the NGO (PACHI) is engaging communities and dispelling rumours using mobile vans and community radio where people phone in and get questions answered by technical staff. In Mzimba district, as a result of interface meetings special roadblocks have been set up to reinforce preventive measures. In addition, the interface meetings with communities have resulted in mobilisation of funds amounting to 2 million Kwacha (approximately 2,500 USD) by communities ('Friends of Neno') to support the district council in preventive interventions.

### **Assessing and responding to secondary impacts of the outbreak**

The COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI) has officially commenced in geographically targeted hotspots in Malawi's four main cities (Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba) with 63,624 beneficiaries receiving the transfers out of planned 199,413. The households are currently receiving transfers for 2 months (January and February 2021) and the remaining 135,789 households will receive support in the coming weeks. UNICEF has provided critical support to the CUCI by supporting programme design and coordination and continues facilitating bi-weekly coordination meeting. UNICEF has also supported beneficiary registration, developing programme communication plan, supporting e-payment delivery, and ensuring an effective grievance and redress mechanism including setting up an innovative Call Centre that is now operational and will transition into a permanent feature of the social protection system.

## Human Interest Stories and External Media

During the reporting period, UNICEF published the following stories:

- [A story on how oxygen cylinders procured with support from UNICEF and FCDO helped with COVID-19 response at Bingu National Stadium Treatment Centre](#)
- [A story on scaling up testing in Malawi during the second wave of COVID-19](#)
- [A story on how provision of safe water is helping with infection prevention at Blantyre Emergency Treatment Unit](#)

## Funding Overview and Partnerships

In 2020, UNICEF received US\$ 17,190,743 contributions from public and private donors against a funding requirement of US\$ 55,600,000. UNICEF wishes to express its sincere gratitude to all partners whose support has been critical in maintaining and scaling up the response to COVID-19 in 2020. As the country continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, funding availability is very critical for UNICEF in particular for demand creation interventions for COVID-19 vaccination uptake and continued RCCE intervention to promote preventive measures. UNICEF therefore looks forward to continued support from donor partners. A response plan for 2021 has been developed.

**Next SitRep:** 17 March 2021

**Who to contact  
for further  
information:**

Rudolf Schwenk  
Representative, Malawi  
E-mail: [rschwenk@unicef.org](mailto:rschwenk@unicef.org)

Fungma Fudong  
Chief of Communications,  
E-mail: [ffudong@unicef.org](mailto:ffudong@unicef.org)

Matteo Frontini  
Community Development and  
Resilience Chief of Section  
E-mail: [mfrontini@unicef.org](mailto:mfrontini@unicef.org)