Country Profile on Disability
Republic of Malawi

August 2026

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

International Development Center of Japan Inc.
Koei Research & Consulting Inc.

HM
JR
26-073

This study was commissioned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (hereinafter referred to as "JICA") to International Development Center of Japan Inc. and Koei Research & Consulting Inc. Its content is based on literature and online research conducted in Japan from December 2025 to August 2026, and on analysis of questionnaires answered online by stakeholders in the country concerned.

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Abbreviations

CBR	Community-based Rehabilitation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DEC	District Executive Committees
DIWA	Disabled Women in Africa
DoDMA	Department of Disaster Management Affairs
FEDOMA	Federation of Disability Organization in Malawi
GDF	Global Disability Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HSSP	Health Sector Strategic Plan
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labor Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MACODA	Malawi Council for Disability Affairs
MAP	Malawi Against Physical Disabilities
MIP-1	Malawi Vision 2063 First 10 Years Implementation Plan
MoGCDSW	Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare
NACCODI	National Advisory and Coordination Committee on Disability Issues
NDMS&IP	National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TEVET	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

1. Basic Profile

1-1. Basic Indicators[1]

Gross Domestic Product[2] per capita	USD 522.6	2024

Government Expenditures by Sector

Healthcare (% of GDP)	6.50 %	2022
Education (% of GDP)	2.7 %	2022
Social protection[3] (% of GDP)	1.2 %	2022

Population

Total Population	21,655,286	2024
Male (% of total population)	48.8 %	
Female (% of total population)	51.2 %	
Urban population (% of total population)	17.3 %	
Rural population (% of total population)	82.7 %	
Life expectancy (Total)	67.3 years	2023
Male	64.1 years	
Female	70.5 years	

Healthcare

Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population)	21.4 %	2023
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	29.4	2023

Education

Education system[4]		
Primary education	5 Years	
Compulsory education[5]	9 Years	
Adult literacy rate (total)	70.1 %	2020
Male	78.6 %	
Female	62.6 %	

[1] https://data.worldbank.org/indicator（Accessed: 17 January 2026)
[2] Hereinafter referred to as "GDP"
[3] https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/WSPR_2024_EN_WEB_1.pdf (Accessed: 17 January 2026)
[4] The education system in Malawi consists of primary school (8 years), middle school (lower secondary education) (2 years), high school (upper secondary education) (2 years), and university (4 years). Students begin school at age 6. This information is based on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization。Hereinafter referred to as "UNESCO") website (https://download.uis.unesco.org/SDG4/SDG4-Profile-Malawi.pdf) (Accessed: 10 June 2026)
[5] Tuition is free up to the 8th grade of primary education. UNESCO（2020）Universal Periodic Review (Submitted for the 36th Session), https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=8029&file=EnglishTranslation (Accessed: 10 June 2026)

Gross Enrolment Rate		
Primary Education (total)	139.0 %	2024
Male	137.3 %	
Female	140.7 %	
Secondary Education (total)	36.6 %	2023
Male	36.0 %	
Female	37.2 %	
Tertiary Education (total)	2.7 %	2022
Male	3.2 %	
Female	2.2 %	

Employment

Unemployment rate (total)	5.0 %	2024
Male (% of male labour force)	4.2 %	
Female (% of female labour force)	6.0 %	

1-2. Definition of Disability and Indicators on Disability

1-2-1. Definition of Disability

In the Republic of Malawi (hereinafter referred to as 'Malawi'), the Persons with Disabilities Act enacted in 2024 (hereinafter referred to as the 'New Disabilities Act') defines disability as "a long-term physical, mental, psychosocial, intellectual, neurological, developmental or other sensory impairment which, in interaction with environmental and social barriers, hinders full and effective participation in society."

Compared to the definition under the Disability Act of 2012 (hereinafter referred to as the 'Old Disability Act')[6], the New Disabilities Act adopts a "social and human rights approach" that goes beyond the purely medical perspective of simply "having an impairment," and is aligned with the definition set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as 'CRPD')[7].

[6] The Old Disability Act defines disability as "a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." Source: Government of Malawi (2012) *Disability Act (Act No. 10 of 2012; Chapter 33:06)* https://media.malawilii.org/media/legislation/11983/source_file/034281847c6a33c3/2012-8.pdf (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

[7] UNICEF (2025) *Disability Budget Brief Malawi 2025/26*, https://www.unicef.org/malawi/media/12826/file/2025-26%20Disability%20Budget%20Brief.pdf.pdf (Accessed: 27 January 2026)

1-2-2. Indicators on Disability

Number of Persons with disabilities (Age 5 and above)[8][9]	1,556,670	10.4 % of total population	2018
Male	701,484		
Female	855,186		

The most recent census in Malawi was the 2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census, which used the Washington Group Short Questionnaire on Disability Statistics for disability-related items. The census also collected information on the prevalence of albinism in the population[10].

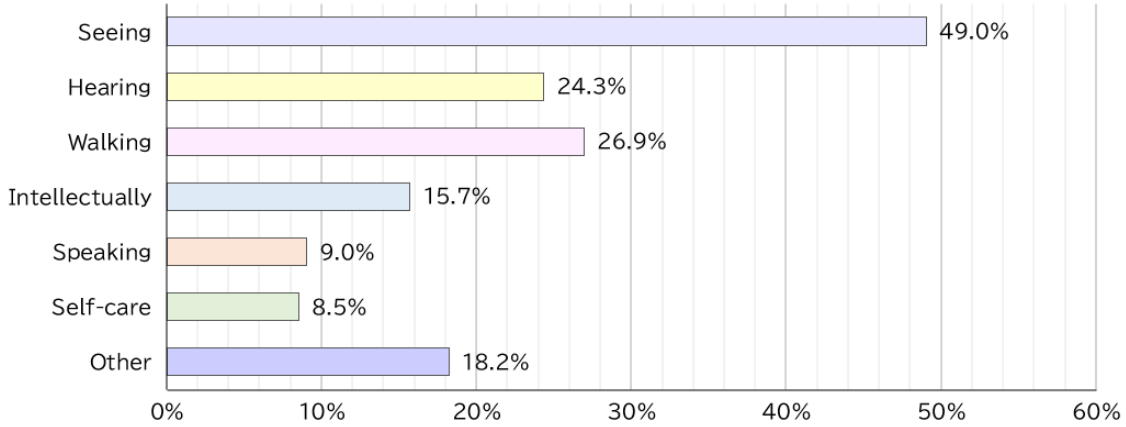


Figure 1 Distribution of Persons with Disabilities by Type of Functional Impairment[11] (Age 5 and above) (2018)

The highest percentage was "Seeing" at 49.0%, followed by "Walking" at 26.9% and "Hearing" at 24.3%. "Other" accounted for 18.2%, and "Intellectually" for 15.7%. On the other hand, "Speaking" was at a relatively low percentage of 9.0% and "Self-care" was at 8.5%.

Source: Created by the research team based on National Statistical Office (2020).

[8] The number of persons with disabilities who have at least one type of disability.

[9] National Statistical Office (2020) *2018 Malawi Population and Housing, Census -Disability Report https://www.nsomalawi.mw/census/2018* (Accessed: 27 January 2026)

[10] National Statistical Office (2019) *2018 Malawi Population and Housing Census*

[11] The percentage of persons with disabilities in the total population

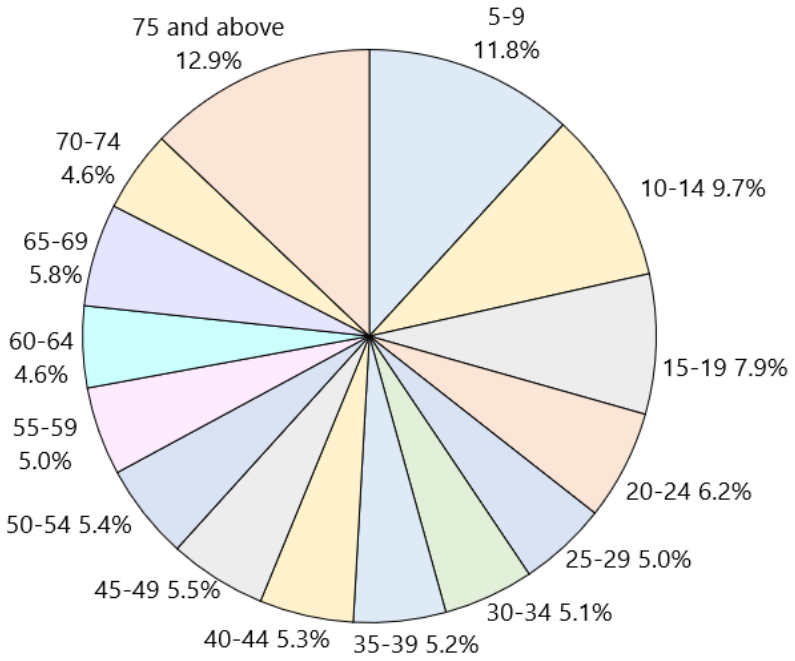


Figure 2 Age Distribution of Persons with Disabilities12 (Age 5 and above) (2018)

The highest percentage was among those aged 75 and above at 12.9%. This was followed by those aged 10-14 at 9.7%, those aged 15-19 at 7.9%, those aged 20-24 at 6.2%. On the other hand, the lowest percentage was among those aged 70-74 and those aged 60-64 at 4.6% each.

Source: Created by the research team based on National Statistical Office (2020).

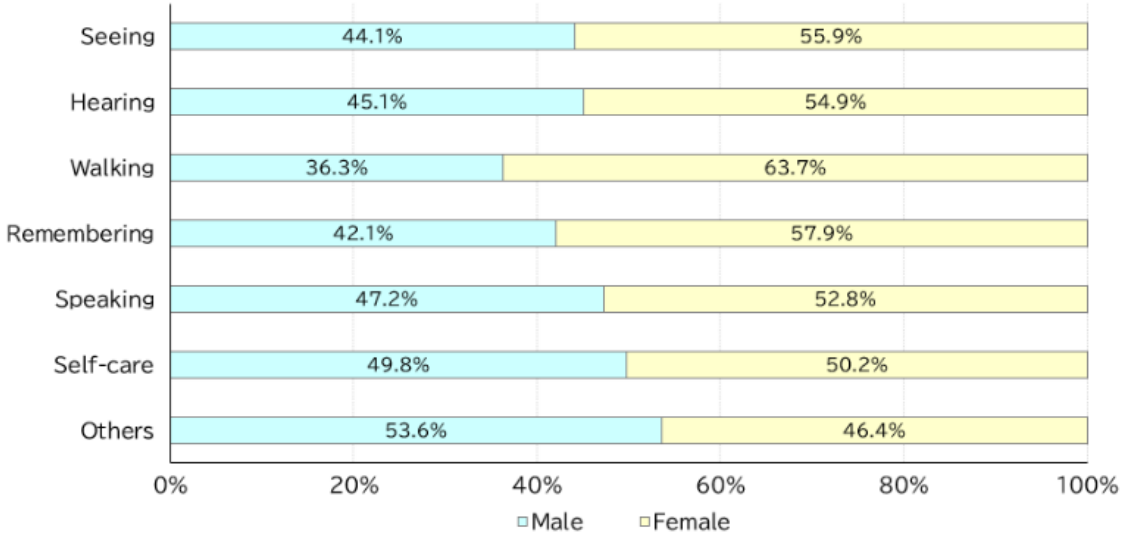


Figure 3 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Gender[13] (Age 5 and above) (2018)

Females scored higher than males in "Seeing (55.9%)", "Hearing (54.9%)", "Walking (63.7%)", "Remembering (57.9%)", "Speaking (52.8%)" and "Self-care (50.2%)" while males scored higher than female in "Others (53.6%)".

Source: Created by the research team based on National Statistical Office (2020).

[12] The denominator is the total number of persons with each functional impairment.

[13] The denominator is the total number of persons with each functional impairment.

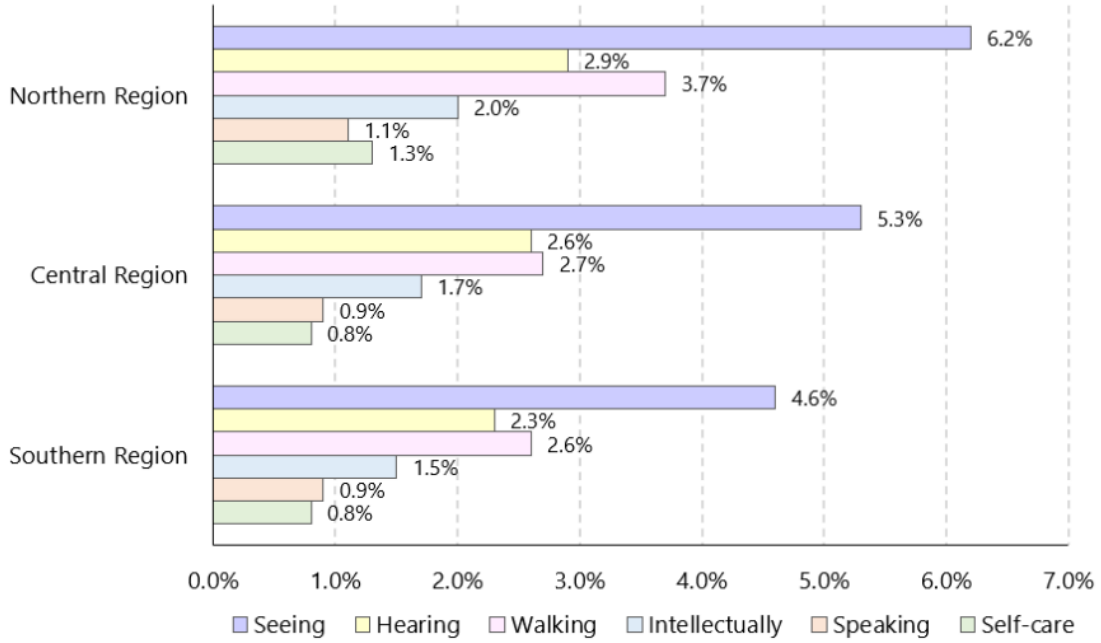


Figure 4 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Residential Area[14] (Age 5 and above) (2018)

In all regions, "Seeing" was the most common impairment, at 6.2% in the north, 5.3% in the central region, and 4.6% in the south. This was followed by "Walking" at 3.7% in the north, 2.7% in the central region, and 2.6% in the south, and "Hearing" at 2.9% in the north, 2.6% in the central region, and 2.3% in the south. "Intellectually" was at 2.0% in the north, 1.7% in the central region, and 1.5% in the south, while "Speaking" and "Self-care" were at low levels of around 1% in all regions.

Source: Compiled by the research team based on National Statistical Office (2020) and National Statistical Office (2019)

[14] Malawi is divided into three regions: northern, central, and southern. The districts included in each region are as follows:
Northern Region: Chitipa, Karonga, Likoma, Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Rumphi
Central Region: Dedza, Dowa, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Mchinji, Nkhotakota, Ntcheu, Ntchisi, Salima
Southern Region: Balaka, Blantyre, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mangochi, Mulanje, Mwanza, Nsanje, Thyolo, Phalombe, Zomba, Neno

2. Administration and Policy on Disability

2-1. Administration on Disability

The primary ministry responsible for disability-related administration is the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare [15] (hereinafter referred to as 'MoGCDSW'), which leads policy coordination and implementation, coordinates with ministries and relevant agencies, and conducts awareness-raising activities[16]. Under the New Disabilities Act (2024), the Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (hereinafter referred to as 'MACODA') has been established to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities, oversee the implementation of laws, manage databases, and handle support registration.

<Central Government>

Responsible Agencies for Disability

Table 1 Responsible Agencies for Disability in Malawi

Name	Overview
Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW)	Leads the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of national policies, strategies, and legislation (such as the New Disabilities Act) on the rights of persons with disabilities. Also oversees MACODA and the Disability Trust Fund[17] and works to ensure compliance with CRPD and domestic law. It also coordinates the mainstreaming of disability across all ministries and endeavours to formulate and implement plans that include persons with disabilities in the fields of health, education, employment, and social security. In addition, it provides social protection programs for persons with disabilities, including disability allowances, assistive devices, and rehabilitation services, supports community-based rehabilitation [18] efforts, and leads awareness campaigns on the rights of persons with disabilities and non-discrimination [19]. Following the establishment of the Mutharika administration in 2025, the official name was changed to the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare[20].
Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	The primary responsible institution for inclusive education policy is responsible for setting policies and allocating resources to

[15] The ministry was renamed from Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (MGCDSW) in 2020.

[16] Global Disability Fund (2025) *Situation Analysis on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Malawi*

Global Disability Fund, hereinafter referred to as 'GDF' was renamed from 'The United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD)'. This is a global multi-partner trust fund that accelerates CRPD implementation through partnerships among the UN, governments, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as 'OPD'), and civil society.

[17] A fund established to implement disability programs and related services.

[18] Community-Based Rehabilitation. Hereinafter referred to as 'CBR'.

[19] GDF (2025)

[20] https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/component/content/article/79-blog/284-press-release-official-appointments?Itemid=437 (Accessed: 20 August 2026)

	educational institutions nationwide, teacher training, and curriculum improvement. Also implements learning support programs for children with visual and hearing impairments, such as video teaching materials and radio courses. A Special Needs Education Directorate has been established within the ministry to handle the mainstreaming of disability in education[21].
Ministry of Health and Population	Oversees health policies and strategies at the national level and works to strengthen health access for the entire population, including persons with disabilities. Jointly implements the 'health and healthcare access' aspects of disability policy with MoGCDSW, local health bureaus, and development partners. Key activities include: strengthening systems for persons with disabilities to access health services equitably and without financial burden; promoting training and capacity building for health workers on disability; institutionalizing and standardizing inclusive service delivery in medical facilities; and developing specialized centers (e.g., for mental disabilities, epilepsy, albinism, etc.[22]). Following the establishment of the Mutharika administration in 2025, the official name was changed to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation[23].
Ministry of Labour	Responsible for formulating and implementing inclusive labour policies. Supports skills development programs targeting youth and adults with disabilities, and oversees technical and vocational education and training institutions to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness. Also supports the revision of labour-related laws (e.g., Employment Act, Labor Relations Act) to ensure alignment with CRPD. Following the establishment of the Mutharika administration in 2025, the official name was changed to the Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation[24].
Ministry of Transport and Public Works	Oversees the design and construction of accessible public buildings and facilities, including transport terminals, government agencies, and infrastructure projects. Also cooperates with the Malawi Bureau of Standards and the Department of Buildings to comply with accessibility standards.
Ministry of Information and Digitalization	Responsible for ensuring that government websites, electronic services, and applications comply with accessibility standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (hereinafter referred to as 'WCAG'). The ministry integrates accessible formats (screen reader, audio, enlarged text, Braille-compatible content) into

[21] UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report. (nd). *Malawi: Inclusion. Education Profiles.* https://education-profiles.org/sub-saharan-africa/malawi/~inclusion (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[22] Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW), Government of Malawi (2025) *National Disability Policy 2025*

[23] https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/component/content/article/79-blog/284-press-release-official-appointments?Itemid=437 (Accessed: 20 August 2026)

[24] *Ibid.*

	national digital platforms, oversees public broadcasting standards, and ensures that disability-friendly communication tools such as sign language, subtitles, and Braille materials are available. Following the establishment of the Mutharika administration in 2025, the official name was changed to the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology[25].
Ministry of Local Government, Culture and Unity	Monitors the implementation of the National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan [26] by local governments, and oversees whether Village Development Committees and District Executive Committees[27] are reflecting disability considerations in local decision-making. Following the establishment of the Mutharika administration in 2025, the official name was changed to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development[28].
Malawi Council for Disability Affairs (MACODA)	A statutory body responsible for protecting and supporting the rights of persons with disabilities in Malawi, established under the New Disabilities Act [29]. It aims to protect and promote the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities and to realize a disability-inclusive society. Its main roles and functions include protecting rights and supporting law enforcement; registering persons with disabilities, OPDs, and disability support organizations; managing and operating the Disability Trust Fund; and providing services in the areas of rehabilitation, education, empowerment, livelihoods, and social inclusion for persons with disabilities[30].
Ministry of Labour	Responsible for formulating and implementing inclusive labor policies. Supports skills development programs targeting youth and adults with disabilities, and oversees technical and vocational education and training institutions to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness. Also supports the revision of labor-related laws (e.g., Employment Act, Labor Relations Act) to ensure alignment with CRPD.
Ministry of Transport and Public Works	Oversees the design and construction of accessible public buildings and facilities, including transport terminals, government agencies, and infrastructure projects. Also cooperates with the Malawi Bureau of Standards and the Department of Buildings to comply with accessibility standards.
Ministry of Information and Digitalization	Responsible for ensuring that government websites, electronic services, and applications comply with accessibility standards such

[25] *Ibid.*
[26] National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan, hereinafter referred to as 'NDMS&IP'.
[27] District Executive Committees, hereinafter referred to as 'DEC'.
[28] https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/component/content/article/79-blog/284-press-release-official-appointments?Itemid=437 (Accessed: 20 August 2026)
[29] Established in place of the former Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA).
[30] https://macoda.mw/public/about (Accessed: 18 February 2026)

	as the WCAG. The ministry integrates accessible formats (screen reader compatible, audio, enlarged text, Braille-compatible content) into national digital platforms, oversees public broadcasting standards, and ensures that disability-friendly communication tools such as sign language, subtitles, and Braille materials are available.

Source: Compiled by the research team based on the Government of Malawi (2019)[31], GDF (2025), MACODA website, etc.

National Coordination Committee

Committee Name	The National Advisory and Coordination Committee on Disability Issues (hereinafter referred to as 'NACCODI')
Members	Includes all major ministries, MoGCDSW, and relevant agencies and partners. The committee is chaired by the Chief Secretary in the Office of the President and Cabinet, representing the entire government[32].
Roles[33]	Established under the Old Disability Act as a forum for all key stakeholders related to persons with disabilities to receive reports from government ministries and discuss and deliberate on them. Its main functions and roles are inter-ministerial coordination and advisory; advice on policy formulation and legislative improvement; forum for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation; and reflection in resource allocation and budgeting. Principal Secretaries of key government ministries are the main members, and representatives of development partners and OPDs also participate[34]. The following bodies have been established as technical working groups under NACCODI[35]: National Technical Working Group on Disability Mainstreaming: A specialized working group (comprising ministries, civil society, development partners, etc.) that provides NACCODI with advice on policies and resource allocation. Sector Working Groups on Disability Mainstreaming: Practical groups for promoting disability mainstreaming in each sector such as education, health, and employment. District Disability Mainstreaming, Monitoring & Evaluation

[31] Government of Malawi (2019) *CRPD Combined initial and second periodic reports submitted by Malawi under article 35 of the Convention, due in 2016.* Hereinafter referred to as 'the State Party's Report'.
[32] UNICEF (2020) *A Situation Analysis of Children with Disabilities in Malawi*
[33] Information regarding the activity status of NACCODI could not be confirmed.
[34] UNICEF (2020)
[35] GDF (2025)

	Committees: Committees (in coordination with local administration) that implement and evaluate disability measures at the district level.

<Local Government>

Disability-related agencies

Malawi adopts decentralization as its basic policy, gradually transferring authority and service delivery from the central government to local governments. The administrative divisions consist of three regions (Northern, Central, and Southern)[36] and 35 local councils (28 district councils, 4 city councils, 2 municipal councils, and 1 town council) [37].

Table 2Local Organizations Responsible for Disability-related Matters

Name	Overview
Local Councils (District / City / Municipal / Town Councils)	Local councils are the implementing bodies for various basic public services, including social welfare, in each locality. The DEC[38] composed of directors of local councils, non-governmental organizations [39] , and other ministries coordinate the implementation of disability-related programs[40]. The NDMS&IP[41] enacted in 2018 explicitly defines the role of local councils as 'incorporating disability policy into all local plans and programs'[42]. The 2025 National Disability Policy Implementation Plan designates district councils, together with national-level implementing agencies and committees, as responsible bodies for the following items[43]: · Expansion of community-based inclusive development · Implementation of capacity development based on inclusive education · Establishment of mechanisms for the employment of young persons with disabilities

[36] No regional councils exist; the regions serve primarily as coordination, statistical, and political divisions.

[37] Commonwealth Local Government Forum (2018) *The local government system in Malawi*. CLGF. https://www.clgf.org.uk/default/assets/File/Country_profiles/Malawi.pdf (Accessed: 20 January 2026)

[38] Representative organizations of persons with disabilities operating in the district participate as members. Source: UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023b) *Replies of Malawi to LOI (list of issues) in relation to its combined initial and second reports* and https://participedia.net/case/4996 (Accessed: 20 January 2026)

[39] Non-Governmental Organization, hereinafter referred to as 'NGO'.

[40] UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023b)

[41] See Section 2-2.

[42] Government of Malawi (2018) *National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan (NDMS&IP) 2018-2023* https://www.rodra.co.za/images/countries/malawi/policies/National%20Disability%20Mainstreaming%20Strategy_FINAL%20AND%20PRINTED-2.pdf (Accessed: 20 January 2026)

[43] MoGCDSW, Government of Malawi (2025)

	· Promotion of reasonable accommodation in employment for persons with disabilities, particularly those who are socially marginalized · Promotion of awareness of persons with disabilities in social protection programs · Development of social protection systems for persons with disabilities · Mainstreaming disability in disaster risk reduction and management programs · Promotion of access to justice for persons with disabilities and their families, capacity development of justice system personnel, and establishment of mechanisms to support victims of injustice · Development and design of disability-specific supported decision-making systems · Establishment of systems promoting legal representation for persons with disabilities · Development of guidelines on reasonable accommodation in courts and detention centers · Promotion of equality before the law for persons with disabilities · Promotion of the establishment and strengthening of disability movements, networks, and organizations in advocacy activities Local council members are elected, and they appoint five members representing specific local interest groups. These interest groups may include representatives of OPDs[44].
Area Development Committees and Village Development Committees	At the community level, these committees are responsible for coordinating the implementation of activities to realize the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are supposed to participate as members of these committees, but this is not the case in all areas[45].

2-2. Laws and Policies on Disability

The Constitution of Malawi (enacted in 1994) explicitly states that all people are guaranteed fundamental human rights and freedoms, and disability is included as a protected attribute under the equal protection clause, making discrimination based on disability unconstitutional[46]. The disability-related laws are as follows.

[44] Commonwealth Local Government Forum (2018)
[45] UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023b)
[46] AC Munthali (2011) *Situation Analysis of Persons with Disabilities in Malawi*

Title	Persons with Disabilities Act
Year of Enactment	2024
Overview	A comprehensive law that explicitly codifies the protection and promotion of the fundamental rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities. Enacted as a new law replacing the previous laws (Handicapped Persons Act (1971) and Disability Act (2012)), it constitutes the latest domestic legal framework aligned with CRPD[47]. It promotes the prohibition of discrimination and the implementation of reasonable accommodation in multiple areas of social life, including education and training, medical care, rehabilitation, and employment[48].

Laws and regulations that define the rights and protections of persons with disabilities by field are as follows. Note that education and health laws do not contain explicit provisions targeting persons with disabilities (such as inclusive education or disability healthcare rights), and the New Disabilities Act is the primary legal basis that explicitly codifies the rights of persons with disabilities across each field.

Title	Employment Act
Year of Enactment	2000 (with subsequent amendments)
Overview	A general labour law establishing minimum standards applicable to all workers. While not a law specifically targeting persons with disabilities, disability is included as one of the attributes for which discrimination is prohibited in provisions regarding recruitment requirements, justification for dismissal, prohibition of discrimination, and equal pay[49]. It also encourages affirmative action for disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities[50]. The obligation to provide reasonable accommodation in occupational safety and health is not explicitly stated, and was first clarified in the New Disabilities Act; accordingly, the New Disabilities Act takes precedence in disability employment matters[51].

Title	Child Care, Protection and Justice Act
Year of Enactment	2010
Disability Provisions	A law that comprehensively regulates child care, protection, and justice responses. It comprehensively covers protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and dangerous acts; nurturing and welfare by family and

[47] https://macoda.mw/public/media/news_details/pZhGhdMuKm6Q4wMd9wKppzwPvF3rN1nH7 (Accessed: 27 January 2026)

[48] MoGCDSW, Government of Malawi (2025)

[49] Government of Malawi (2000) *Employment Act (Chapter 55:01).* The prohibition of disability discrimination in employment was stipulated in the Old Disability Act (2012).

[50] *Ibid.* The employment quota system itself is not mentioned in the law.

[51] MoGCDSW, Government of Malawi (2025)

	community; and the child justice system (criminal procedures and juvenile court systems). Regarding children with disabilities, it explicitly mandates: the obligation of local governments to register children with disabilities in their area for support purposes (Article 72); and the obligation to provide necessary support to children with disabilities during hearings and rulings in juvenile justice court proceedings (Article 145) [52].

Title	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Act (TEVET Act)
Year of Enactment	1999 (The latest version, including revisions, enacted in 2014)
Disability Provisions	Enacted to promote and systematize/coordinate Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (hereinafter referred to as 'TEVET'), providing a framework for skills development, job creation, and economic growth support. Establishes the Malawi TEVET Authority and its governing board and operational framework. The composition of the board is mandated to include one representative of persons with disabilities[53].

Regarding sign language legislation, the New Disabilities Act stipulates the relevant regulations. The Old Disability Act stipulated that the government was obligated to develop Malawian Sign Language as a national language for persons with hearing impairments and to recognize it as an official language. The New Disabilities Act stipulates that those who publish information to the public must provide it in formats accessible to persons with disabilities (sign language, Braille, augmentative communication, and other methods and formats of communication).

The New Disabilities Act also provides for accessibility-related laws and regulations. Under the Old Disability Act, it was the government's responsibility to implement measures to ensure universal access to all public facilities and buildings used by persons with disabilities. The New Disabilities Act stipulates that owners of facilities and buildings used by the general public must renovate them to comply with universal design standards within five years of the law's enactment.

Disability Policies

Title	National Disability Policy 2025
Year implemented	2025
Overview	The latest national disability policy was officially adopted and announced by

[52] Government of Malawi (2010) *Child Care, Protection and Justice Act*

[53] Government of Malawi (2014) *Malawi Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Act* (Commenced on 1 July 1999), https://malawilii.org/akn/mw/act/1999/6/eng%402014-12-31 (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

	the Government of Malawi in 2025. It sets as its policy goal an inclusive society where persons with disabilities actively contribute to and benefit from national development. The seven main expected outcomes are[54]: 1. Expansion of equitable access to services and opportunities 2. Improved access to assistive technology and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities to achieve independent living 3. Strengthened the capacity of government agencies and local governments to develop, implement, and monitor interventions promoting the rights of persons with disabilities 4. Enhanced resilience and disaster response mechanisms for persons with disabilities and their families 5. Improved social attitudes toward persons with disabilities and their families 6. Strengthened disability-related information for policy and program development 7. Reduction in the incidence of atrocities against persons with disabilities, particularly persons with albinism

Title	National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities
Year implemented	2006
Overview	The first comprehensive disability policy was adopted by the Government of Malawi (then Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly), placing at the center of national strategy the goal of enabling persons with disabilities to escape unequal social participation and enjoy equal opportunities and rights. It later became the foundation of the New Disabilities Act, NDMS&IP, and the National Disability Policy 2025. Its ultimate goal is 'to enable persons with disabilities to have equal opportunities in all aspects of society, realize dignified lives, and participate in society,' emphasizing the rights of persons with disabilities, equal opportunities, social participation, and improved living conditions, with the principles of inclusion (promoting social participation), a human rights-based approach, elimination of discrimination and reduction of barriers, and recognition of the diversity of persons with disabilities[55].

Title	National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy and Implementation Plan (NDMS&IP) 2018-2023
Year implemented	2018
Overview	Previously, disability had not been prioritized in the government's development agenda as a human rights and development issue; however, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III (2017-2022) included the empowerment of persons with disabilities as one of its priority areas. Accordingly, NDMS&IP was formulated to address the challenges of key

[54] Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW) Government of Malawi (2025)
[55] https://rodra.co.za/malawi-docs/22-countries/malawi/62-malawi-updated-country-report (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

	development strategies by advocating for the implementation of comprehensive cross-sector plans to promote disability-inclusive development at all levels. This strategy and plan define the following six priority areas and describe achievements to date, challenges, strategic objectives, outcomes to be achieved in the medium term, and strategies[56]. 1) Access to health services 2) Access to education 3) Access to livelihoods 4) Empowerment 5) Social inclusion 6) Cross-cutting issues: Gender, accessibility, research, HIV/AIDS, children and youth with disabilities, climate change and disaster risk reduction. The lead ministry is MoGCDSW.

Title	Malawi Vision 2063 and First 10 Years Implementation Plan (MIP-1) (2021-2030)[57]
Year implemented	2021
Overview	The longest-term national development plan formulated by the Government of Malawi, serving as a roadmap aimed at inclusive social and economic development. With agriculture, industrialization, and urbanization as its three main pillars, it sets a goal of becoming a prosperous, self-reliant industrialized nation by 2063. It advocates for inclusion as the national vision, with a growth model that encompasses all citizens benefiting from poverty reduction, education, social protection, and more. MIP-1 is the implementation plan for the first 10 years of Malawi Vision 2063 (2021-2030), with the goal of achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter referred to as 'SDGs') by 2030 and transitioning to a lower-middle-income country[58]. MIP-1 includes persons with disabilities as a vulnerable group and includes human rights-based support strategies for vulnerable groups [59]. Monitoring of plan implementation is handled by the National Planning Commission.

Title	National Social Protection Policy 2024-2029
Year implemented	2025
Overview	A comprehensive framework policy on social protection for the Government of Malawi, aimed at reducing poverty and vulnerability. It replaces the National Social Protection Policy of 2012 and was formulated as a five-year roadmap for 2024-2029. Its main aims are: systematization and expansion of support for those vulnerable to poverty and risk; provision of protection and support throughout the life cycle; and

[56] Government of Malawi (2018)
[57] Hereinafter referred to as 'MIP-1'.
[58] https://malawi.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/United%20Nations%20Sustainable%20Development%20Cooperation%20Framework%20for%20Mala%C5%B5i.pdf (Accessed: 20 February 2026)
[59] MoGCDSW, Government of Malawi (2025)

	promotion of coordination, integration, and effective implementation of social protection systems[60]. Equality and social inclusion of vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities are cited as one of its basic concepts, and three strategies for social inclusion of persons with disabilities are listed: 1) improving the inclusiveness of persons with disabilities in social protection programs and projects; 2) promoting access to social protection support for households with persons with disabilities; and 3) promoting disability-inclusive programs in social protection[61]. The lead ministry is the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs.

Title	National Education Policy
Year implemented	2016
Overview	A national education policy overseeing all aspects of education in Malawi, presenting basic policies on compulsory education, curriculum, and access. The education system is open to all students, and it mentions 'ensuring access to education and equal opportunities for learners with disabilities.' Goals include the implementation and expansion of inclusive education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, and capacity building and facility development for providing adequate support to students with disabilities in higher education institutions[62]. The lead ministry is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Title	National Inclusive Education Strategy 2017-2021
Year implemented	2017
Overview	A national strategy for inclusive education in the education sector formulated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Its goal is to enable learners with diverse needs to enjoy equitable, high-quality educational opportunities in educational participation and learning, to remove barriers that hinder learning participation, attendance, continuation, and achievement, and to establish an inclusive educational environment. It sets eight priority areas: 1) Capacity for inclusive education; 2) Governance and management for inclusive education; 3) Identification and assessment of students with needs; 4) Inclusive education management information systems; 5) Teacher education and motivation; 6) Partnerships for inclusive education; 7) Environment for instruction and learning; and 8) Financing for inclusive education, with goals and strategies, responsible ministries/organizations, and implementation periods defined for each item. It incorporates efforts to improve the educational and learning environment to respond to the

[60] https://www.unicef.org/malawi/documents/national-social-protection-policy-2024-2029 (Accessed: 18 February 2026)
[61] Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, Government of Malawi (2025) *National Social Protection Policy 2024-2029*
[62] Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi (2016) *National Education Policy*

	needs of persons with disabilities as one of the diverse needs[63]. While the strategy presents the budget amounts required to achieve each outcome goal by year, no special budget line item has been created in the government budget for supporting students with disabilities[64]. The lead ministry is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Title	National Education Sector Investment Plan (2020-2030)
Year implemented	2020
Overview	A long-term strategic plan covering the entire education sector, formulated by the Government of Malawi as an implementation plan for education policy. A comprehensive plan from early childhood education to higher education. Within its strategic framework, it aims to 'promote education for all people in Malawi regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, or other discriminatory characteristics,' with plans for the promotion of inclusive education and improvement of facilities considering access by persons with disabilities[65]. The lead ministry is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Title	National Health Policy
Year implemented	2017
Overview	A comprehensive health policy aimed at achieving Universal Health Coverage (hereinafter referred to as 'UHC'). It explicitly states that the target of UHC includes vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. The policy presents the following key objectives and strategic directions[66]: • Improvement of health status: improving health indicators for the entire population (improving infant and maternal mortality rates, addressing infectious diseases and lifestyle-related diseases, etc.). • UHC: all people can access medical services without financial burden. • Priority areas of the health sector: health service delivery systems (strengthening primary healthcare), human resources development and health workforce management, strengthening medicines, medical devices, and infrastructure, health financing, and strengthening health information systems. The lead ministry is the Ministry of Health.

[63] Ministry of Education Science and Technology, Government of Malawi (2016) *National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2017-2021*, https://www.readkong.com/page/national-strategy-on-inclusive-education-2017-2021-3682232 (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[64] UNICEF (2019) *2018/2019 Education Budget Brief -Towards Improved Education for all in Malawi*

[65] Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi (2020) *National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020-2030* https://www.unicef.org/malawi/media/4561/file/National%20education%20sector%20investment%20plan%20.pdf (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[66] Government of Malawi (2017) *National Health Policy -Towards Universal Health Coverage-*

Title	Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) I-III
Year implemented	HSSP I: 2011; HSSP II: 2017; HSSP III: 2023
Overview	A framework for strategically implementing the vision, mission, and priorities of health policy. An overview of Health Sector Strategic Plan (hereinafter referred to as 'HSSP') I-III is given below. None of them explicitly mention persons with disabilities, but they state that the target of health service delivery includes vulnerable people, and are operated as a group that should include persons with disabilities. The lead ministry is the Ministry of Health. HSSP I (2011-2016): The first comprehensive health sector strategic plan, with the main purpose of 'improving health outcomes (improving infant and maternal mortality rates, etc.) and reducing premature death risks by providing high-quality basic health services to all Malawians.' Aims to expand and scale up the Essential Health Package. HSSP II (2017-2022): Formulated as a successor to HSSP I, with the goal of 'ensuring that all citizens can access high-quality, equitable health services.' Aims to deepen the provision of the Essential Health Package and transition to UHC[67]. HSSP III (2023-2030): Based on the achievements of HSSP II, emphasizing comprehensiveness and integration for further achievement of UHC. Develops a Health Benefits Package, an evolution of the conventional Essential Health Package, and presents a service composition that maximizes health effects with limited resources as the implementation plan[68].

Title	National Medical Rehabilitation Policy
Year implemented	2020
Overview	Aimed at improving the quality and access of rehabilitation services throughout the country, with goals including strengthening governance, improving and disseminating service quality, securing financial resources and establishing a service delivery system, securing and distributing assistive technology (assistive devices), and developing information collection and monitoring systems. The policy preface states that 'high-quality medical rehabilitation services should be provided to all Malawians, and this should include persons with disabilities[69]. The lead ministry is the Ministry of Health.

2-3. Measures on Disability

1) Healthcare

The Ministry of Health promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in national health

[67] Government of Malawi (2017) *Health Sector Strategic Plan II 2017-2022 -Towards Universal Health Coverage-*
[68] Government of Malawi (2023) *Health Sector Strategic Plan III 2023-2030 -Reforming for Universal Health Coverage-*
[69] Ministry of Health, Government of Malawi (2020) *National Medical Rehabilitation Policy*, https://www.scribd.com/document/853706087/Malawi-National-Medical-Rehabilitation-Policy-4-2 (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

policies, compliance with CRPD principles, and the securing of UHC that includes persons with disabilities. Health services are classified into three main categories: public facilities, non-profit private facilities, and for-profit private facilities[70]. Public facilities provide services free of charge to residents and account for approximately 78% of health services in Malawi. Health facilities are responsible for identifying persons with disabilities and referring them to more advanced health facilities such as district hospitals, central hospitals, and rehabilitation centers[71].

Regarding rehabilitation, the National Medical Rehabilitation Policy (2020) was formulated to expand access to services. The Ministry of Health provides and oversees clinical services, including access to assistive devices, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and mental health services. MACODA implements activities to improve access to medical care and rehabilitation support for persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, while some rural district hospitals have physiotherapists and rehabilitation specialists, there are serious shortages of personnel and equipment, and service availability and quality vary by region. Even if medical rehabilitation is possible at major central hospitals, district-level hospitals often do not provide regular services[72]. While public services are insufficient, NGOs are conducting rehabilitation and other support activities. For example, Malawi Against Physical Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as 'MAP') supports rehabilitation clinics, physiotherapy, and distribution of assistive devices across the country[73]. However, the State Party's Report states that most patients are not receiving rehabilitation services because MAP discontinued its outreach program[74].

Regarding CBR, it has been demonstrated to have potential to contribute to the empowerment of persons with disabilities and has been adopted as a national strategy under the National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities[75]. It continues to be an important strategy for making it easier for persons with disabilities to access basic rehabilitation and social services, particularly in rural areas and areas that are

[70] Of the 1,060 healthcare facilities in total, 48% are public institutions, 16% are religious organizations operating under the umbrella of the Malawi Christian Health Association, and the remainder belong to other NGOs or the private for-profit sector.

[71] Government of Malawi (2019)

[72] Fielder S, Mpezeni S, Benjamin L, Cary I. (2013) "Physiotherapy in Malawi - a step in the right direction." *Malawi Med J.* 25(3):83-5 https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3859994/ (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[73] MAP began in 1979 to support polio survivors, but since the late 1990s it has expanded to support persons with physical disabilities of all causes. It operates the Kachere Rehabilitation Centre, providing free rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities from all over the country. It also operates the Medical Rehabilitation College, which trains medical rehabilitation professionals (e.g., physical therapists and occupational therapists). One of its core activities was conducting outreach clinics (mobile rehabilitation support), but since 2013, outreach services have been suspended due to financial difficulties. Source: The State Party's Report, https://mwnation.com/map-reflects-on-its-battle-against-disabilities/ (Accessed: 20 February 2026) https://www.facebook.com/mapmw/posts/at-malawi-against-physical-disabilities-map-we-are-dedicated-to-improving-the-qu/783480467344281/ (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[74] Government of Malawi (2019)

[75] Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, Government of Malawi (2006) *National Policy on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities*

difficult to reach.

On the other hand, a UN report points out that CBR programs are also mainly implemented by NGOs in coordination with district councils, and despite their importance, the coverage of CBR services remains limited due to lack of funds and trained personnel, and weak coordination mechanisms[76].

In addition, the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as 'Concluding Observations') expressed concern about the following:

- The lack of specific provisions in policy documents adopted by the Ministry of Health to address prejudice and discriminatory attitudes affecting persons with disabilities;
- Reports of women and girls with disabilities being subjected to discriminatory and dismissive attitudes by health workers when accessing medical care in the areas of pregnancy and sexual and reproductive health. Such attitudes are often fueled by the notion that women with disabilities should not have sexual relationships;
- Barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities, through OPDs, in the formulation of health-related laws and policies (including HSSP II);
- The unavailability of medicines and protective products, including sunscreen, for persons with albinism in health services in general.

2) Education

The Constitution mandates primary education for all children, including children with disabilities[77]. The National Inclusive Education Strategy (2017-2021) was implemented in 2017, and a Special Needs Education Directorate has been established within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to work toward building a comprehensive educational environment including persons with disabilities. The number of enrolled students with special educational needs has been increasing; Table 3 shows the number of students by disability type and education level in 2018 and 2023.

The main model of inclusive education in Malawi is special education units established within regular schools, where students with disabilities can receive specialized instruction and learning support. As of 2020, the number of such units was 60 at the primary education level and 88 at the secondary education level, accounting for 0.8% of all classrooms at the primary level and 1.3% at the secondary level[78]. There are also some 'special schools' that provide

[76] GDF (2025)
[77] Government of Malawi (2019)
[78] LM Banks, X. Hunt, K. Kalua, P. Nindi, M. Zuurmond & T. Shakespeare (2022) "I might be lucky and go back to school: Factors affecting inclusion in education for children with disabilities in rural Malawi", *African Journal of Disability*

instruction to students with disabilities in segregated environments, mainly targeting students with visual and hearing impairments. Reflecting the transition from segregated education to inclusive education, many of these schools are being converted into special education units in regular schools. Even so, according to data from 2016-2017, the overwhelming majority of primary school students with disabilities (98%) and secondary school students with disabilities (93%) attend regular schools without inclusive education resources[79].

Table 3Number of Students with Special Educational Needs by Type of Disability and Educational Level (Unit: Person)

	elementary education		secondary education	
	2018	2023	2018	2023
Hearing impairment and visual impairment	-	370		99
Blind	554	546	846	292
Deaf	3,240	2,760	-[80]	510
Hard of hearing	33,104	28,889	1,424	1299
Learning disability	82,354	103,572	3,367	4,051
Amblyopia	39,262	43,953	348	4,072
Physical disability	13,119	12,647	653	661
Albinism		1,143		287
Children with special educational needs	171,633	193,880	6,638	11271
Total number of registered users	5,187,634	5,298,456	387,569	485,650
Percentage of children with disabilities	3.3%	3.7%	1.7%	2.3%

Source: Compiled by the research team based on UNICEF (2020)[81] and the 2023 Malawi Education Statistics Report[8283]

In addition, the Concluding Observations expressed concern about the following:

- The national inclusive education policy does not cover all types of disabilities and no deadline has been set for a full transition; consequently, segregated education for children with disabilities continues to be provided alongside inclusive education;
- Challenges to inclusive education, such as resistance from teachers and the entire school community, difficulty accessing school facilities, shortage of trained staff,

https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9724077/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

[79] L. M. Banks, X. Hunt, K. Kalua, P. Nindi, M. Zuurmond & T. Shakespeare (2022)

[80] There is no data for 2018, but in 2017 there were 188 persons.

[81] UNICEF (2020)

[82] Ministry of Education, Government of Malawi (2023) *2023 Malawi Education Statistics Report*, https://www.scribd.com/document/777994830/2023-EMIS-Report-Final (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

[83] The data source for both 76 and 77 above is the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

inadequate teaching materials, insufficient water and sanitation facilities, the need to travel long distances to school, road infrastructure issues, and insufficient physical and financial resources;

- Reports that school-age girls and adolescents with disabilities are often unable to attend class for a whole week at a time owing to a lack of access to essential menstrual hygiene products and taboos around menstruation;
- Discriminatory attitudes hinder the educational participation of children with disabilities;
- Lack of measures to track and record the participation status and learning outcomes of children with disabilities in inclusive educational settings.

3) Gender

The Constitution of Malawi guarantees gender equality and the rights of persons with disabilities, and the Gender Equality Act (2014) and the New Disabilities Act (2024, Article 33) mandate affirmative measures to promote the political and public participation of women with disabilities. In practice, the Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (hereinafter referred to as 'FEDOMA') serves on the boards of some public institutions, and women with disabilities have been appointed. In addition, Malawi has a system of reduced nomination fees for candidates with disabilities running for election, which is a particularly noteworthy measure in the region. However, due to deep-rooted prejudice against persons with disabilities and women, in practice, many capable women with disabilities have not yet achieved adequate representation[84]. A UN report also points out that while the Gender Equality Act promotes gender equality, it does not explicitly protect women with disabilities, creating institutional protection gaps that breed discrimination, resulting in the impunity of violence against women with disabilities and other rights violations such as harassment in education by teachers and peers remaining unresolved[85].

The Concluding Observations expressed concern about the following:

- Gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities, access to justice, and economic empowerment are not adequately addressed in disability laws and policies;
- Laws and policies on women and girls, such as the Gender Equality Act 2013, the Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act 2011, and the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence in Malawi (2014-2020), do not adequately address issues affecting women and girls with disabilities;

[84] GDF (2025)
[85] *Ibid.*

- Insufficient budget allocation for disability mainstreaming in public policy by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare (predecessor of MoGCDSW).

4) Vocational Training and Employment

Access and inclusiveness' in vocational training is listed as one of the pillars of the latest TEVET strategic plan (2024-2030), with a goal of promoting equal vocational training for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, by 2030[86]. In the past, there were instances of scholarship programs and quota systems for persons with disabilities implemented by the government and the TEVET Authority[87]. However, it has been pointed out that the TEVET system in Malawi remains male-dominated, and persons with disabilities and other vulnerable students do not have equal access to skills training[88].

In addition to vocational training, skills development and entrepreneurship support for persons with disabilities, job creation, and the expansion of vocational opportunities are identified as priority policy areas in the National Disability Policy. MACODA offers training courses for persons with disabilities to acquire life skills and vocational skills (e.g., knitting, handicrafts and sewing, agriculture and small-business-related skills). Two vocational skills training centers operate in Malawi: the Kamuzu Vocational Rehabilitation and Training Centre in Chiradzulu District and the Lilongwe Vocational Training Centre in Lilongwe, providing training to men and women of various disabilities aged 18-40 from across Malawi, as well as community members without disabilities[89]. There are also examples of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and NGOs collaborating to provide technical and vocational training programs (skills provision and scholarship support) targeting persons with disabilities[90].

A UN report[91] points out that while the Employment Act prohibits all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities, actual employment opportunities tend to remain limited.

In addition, the Concluding Observations expressed concern about the following:

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[86] TEVETA, Government of Malawi (2024) *Strategic Plan 2024-2030*

[87] Nyasa Times (2024) 'Malawi govt offers scholarship to persons with disability; TEVETA to give vocational training.' https://www.nyasatimes.com/malawi-govt-offers-scholarship-to-persons-with-disability-teveta-to-give-vocational-training/ (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[88] UNESCO (2018) P*olicy Brief -Making Technical and Vocational Training Work for Women and Vulnerable Students in Malawi: Improving Access and Success*

[89] https://www.macoda.mw/public/programs/training_centers (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[90] Skills acquisition support for persons with disabilities, including tailoring and sewing training in Mchinji District. Source: https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/step-empowers-people-disabilities-through-skills-training (Accessed: 20 February 2026)

[91] GDF (2025)

- The limited scope and lack of implementation of provisions on the employment of persons with disabilities in general employment and equal opportunity laws;
- The delay, following the review of the Old Disability Act, in adopting the persons with disabilities bill, which proposes to strengthen provisions on the employment of persons with disabilities;
- The lack of effective and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the development of employment policies, in particular in the preparation of employment strategy and the ongoing review of the Old Disability Act;
- The prevalence of negative attitudes among employers regarding the rights of persons with disabilities and the slow progress made in raising awareness of the rights, capabilities and potential of persons with disabilities;
- Insufficient education and vocational training for persons with disabilities, which prevents their access to employment;
- The lack of accurate data and statistical information disaggregated by sex and age concerning the level of education and training and employment status, impedes appropriate planning.

5) Social Security, Social Service for Persons with Disabilities

Malawi's main social protection system is the National Social Protection Policy, centered on the Social Cash Transfer Programme targeting low-income and impoverished households, which supports the livelihoods of vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities[92]. As of September 2022, the program provided support to 297,138 households in all 28 districts, bimonthly or monthly, equivalent to approximately 7% of the total household population[93]. As of 2019, approximately 28% of recipient households were households with persons with disabilities[94].

The National Disability Policy mentions securing a fair, multi-sectoral social protection system to contribute to the resilience of persons with disabilities, and lists raising awareness of persons with disabilities in social protection programs, building social protection systems for persons with disabilities, and mainstreaming disability in disaster risk reduction and

[92] Other programs in this area include public works programs, fertilizer application subsidy programs, school meal programs, village savings and loan programs, and small-scale finance programs. Source: International Labour Organisation (2016) *Social Protection in Malawi: Assessment Based National Dialogue Brief*, https://www.ilo.org/africa/information-resources/publications/WCMS_493330/lang--en/index.htm (Accessed: 20 February 2026) The State Party's Report does not mention the "small-scale finance program," but instead mentions the "steel plate and cement subsidy program for vulnerable households."

[93] UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023b)

[94] S. Lous (2024) *Securing Disability Rights through Inclusive Social Protection in Malawi,* Center for Inclusive Policy

management programs as strategies[95]. Based on the New Disabilities Act, MACODA provides rights protection and law enforcement support, registration of OPDs and disability support organizations, management and operation of the Disability Trust Fund, and services in the areas of rehabilitation, education, empowerment, livelihoods, and social inclusion for persons with disabilities[96]. However, there remains a gap between government services and the needs of persons with disabilities, and NGOs and community-level support organizations are providing practical welfare services[97]. Capacity building, awareness raising, and rights advocacy activities in cooperation with international organizations (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women) and NGOs (CBM, etc.) are also being implemented[98].

On the other hand, while the cash transfer system includes households with persons with disabilities as targets, it has been analyzed that the system is not sufficient to meet disability-specific needs: it does not reflect the additional burden specific to persons with disabilities (care and assistive device costs, etc.); persons with disabilities can be excluded from support targets even if not judged to be below the poverty line; households are the target and there are cases where persons with disabilities cannot benefit as individuals; and housing support for persons with disabilities is not a target[99].

6) Transportation and Urban Development (including accessible urban planning)

Malawi's National Transport Policy, which came into force in 2015, directs facility development for transport users including women, children, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities, but no specific proposals are made on how these provisions will be implemented and monitored[100]. Regarding access to public spaces, the narrow scope of current regulations and weak enforcement are challenges for the needs of persons with disabilities, and it has been pointed out that due to financial constraints, the government is forced to compromise on standards for persons with disabilities[101]. In the government's replies to the list of issues (hereinafter referred to as 'Replies to LOI') from the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities submitted in 2023, the government reported that it is

[95] MoGCDSW, Government of Malawi (2025)
[96] https://www.macoda.mw/public/ (Accessed: 20 February 2026)
[97] MAP provides medical rehabilitation services and assistive devices, while NGOs such as Butterfly Space operate community-based disability centers offering educational support, literacy classes and vocational training, microfinance groups, and medical consultations. FEDOMA, as a national organization, oversees 12 member organizations and conducts activities supporting education, health, advocacy, awareness, and rehabilitation for persons with disabilities. Source: https://www.fedomamw.com/projects (Accessed: 20 February 2026)
[98] Government of Malawi (2019)
[99] S. Lous (2024) and UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023a) *Concluding observations on the combined initial and second periodic reports of Malawi*
[100] GDF (2025)
[101] *Ibid.*

formulating Malawi Standards for accessibility and usability of the built environment through the Malawi Bureau of Standards, and that these standards are scheduled to be published in the Official Gazette shortly[102].

The Concluding Observations also expressed concerns about: the absence of public plans or programs to improve accessibility in all areas covered by the Convention; measures taken by public and private stakeholders being limited to the physical environment, such as the installation of ramps; the lack of mandatory accessibility criteria in public procurement at all levels; and the absence of measures to assess accessibility barriers at the community level. As countermeasures, it recommended enacting legislation to ensure the right of persons with disabilities to access, on an equal basis with others, the physical environment, transportation, information and communications (including Information and Communication Technology, hereinafter referred to as 'ICT'), etc.; developing national action plans; revising construction standards; and other measures[103]. In response to those points, the National Disability Policy 2025 mentions difficulties in information access and the physical environment including buildings, roads, transportation, and various indoor and outdoor facilities as barriers faced by persons with disabilities, and lists as strategic plans the introduction of standards to improve equitable access to information and the physical environment, institutionalization of accessibility checking functions, and provision of information and communications in accessible formats[104].

7) Information Accessibility

The New Disabilities Act stipulates that persons with disabilities have the right to access ICT on an equal basis with others, and that those who publish information must publish it in means and formats accessible to persons with disabilities, including sign language, Braille, and other augmentative and alternative communication means[105]. MACODA also promotes the use of sign language, Braille, augmentative communication means, and other communication means and formats accessible to persons with disabilities[106].

The National Disability Policy has as a principle the establishment of information accessibility so that it can be used by all people, alongside accessibility of infrastructure such as facilities and social activities. Strategies for improving equitable access to information (and

[102] UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023b)
[103] UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023a)
[104] MoGCDSW, Government of Malawi (2025)
[105] Government of Malawi (2024) *Persons with Disabilities Act*
[106] https://www.macoda.mw/public/#:~:text=Malawi%20Council%20for%20Disability%20Affairs%20(MACODA)%20formally%20known%20as%20Malawi,simplified%20and%20cost%20effective%20mechanism (Accessed: 22 February 2026)

the physical environment) for persons with disabilities include: promotion of enforcement of accessibility standards; introduction of audit mechanisms for access to services and facilities; and ensuring that information and communication materials are provided in accessible formats[107].

In Malawi, following a presidential declaration in 2021, sign language has been used in television broadcasts and official events. The Malawi National Association of the Deaf is working to promote the use and development of sign language, including the creation of a Malawian Sign Language dictionary. The shortage of sign language interpreters is a major challenge, and training in Malawian Sign Language is provided by universities and support organizations, and training for teachers and the general public by the Malawi National Association of the Deaf[108].

The Concluding Observations expressed concern about: the absence of public plans or programs to improve accessibility in all areas covered by CRPD; measures taken by public and private agencies being limited to physical environmental accessibility such as the installation of ramps; and insufficient accessibility measures at detention centers and prisons, victim support units at police stations and shelters for victims of violence, polling stations, and election information and materials.

8) Disaster Risk Reduction

Malawi is a disaster-prone country where floods and droughts are frequent due to the effects of climate change, with approximately half of the country's districts designated as disaster risk zones. The Department of Disaster Management Affairs (hereinafter referred to as 'DoDMA'), under the Office of the Vice President, serves as the primary disaster prevention and response body, and the most recent relevant law is the Disaster Risk Management Act enacted in 2023. While this law does not contain specific provisions regarding vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities, it stipulates that representatives of persons with disabilities are included among the members of local government disaster risk management committees, aiming for participatory disaster risk management that assumes the participation of marginalized groups including persons with disabilities[109]. The Government of Malawi has recognized the insufficient support for persons with disabilities in disaster risk management, identified climate change and disaster risk management as priority areas for incorporating into national development discussions through NDMS&IP, and formulated

[107] MoGCDSW, Government of Malawi (2025)
[108] GDF (2025)
[109] Government of Malawi (2023) *Disaster Risk Management Act*

strategies and action plans for 2018-2023[110]. Mainstreaming disability in disaster risk reduction and management programs is also listed in the National Disability Policy, and DoDMA is designated as the lead or co-lead agency for these action plans. However, it has been pointed out that implementation is hindered by: the serious shortage of personnel and resources at DoDMA (funding shortages, technical capacity shortages, equipment shortages, ICT infrastructure deficiencies, etc.); excessive dependence on district-level officials[111] of the Ministry of Local Government; unstable and short-term implementation due to high dependence on donor funding; and insufficient community involvement and low ownership due to top-down disaster risk management[112].

In addition, the Concluding Observations presented the following concerns:

- Women and girls with disabilities are not accounted for in the disaster response policy framework, including the National Climate Change Management Policy of 2016, the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act of 1991, and the National Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Plan 2021/22, and women and girls with disabilities are often reported to be the last to access rescue services during crises;
- There is no systematic data collection on the impact of emergencies and disasters on persons with disabilities, including the situation of at least 52,211 persons with disabilities who were forced to be internally displaced due to Cyclone Freddy and the emergency responses provided to them;
- The ongoing impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities, such as the loss of personal assistance support, continues and countermeasures have not been taken;
- No measures have been taken to ensure that persons with disabilities receive early warning information in accessible formats.

In fact, a UN report points out that persons with disabilities are often unable to use basic early warning systems and evacuation systems during disasters, exposing them to greater danger. A MACODA report states that more than 50,000 persons with disabilities were affected by Tropical Cyclone Freddy, which struck Malawi in March 2023, and many people could not understand the warnings[113].

[110] GDF (2025)
[111] They often lack the necessary training in the field of disaster management. Source: GDF (2025)
[112] GDF (2025)
[113] *Ibid.*

3. International Treaties and International Cooperation

3-1. Response to the ratification of the CRPD

Malawi signed the CRPD on September 27, 2007, and subsequently ratified it on August 27, 2009. Malawi has neither signed nor ratified the Optional Protocol. The government submitted its state report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in February 2017, which was received, and in April 2020 the Committee presented its list of issues. In 2020, two parallel reports were submitted[114]. In April 2023, the Government of Malawi submitted its Replies to the LOI, and around July 2023, five parallel reports were submitted[115]. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities subsequently adopted its Concluding Observations in October 2023. The next state report is due in September 2035.

3-2. Status of Implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty

The Government of Malawi acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty on July 14, 2017. Regarding authorized entities under the Marrakesh Treaty, the Malawi Blind Union is listed on the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)'s Authorized Entity registry. Regarding the sharing of works with other countries, the University of Malawi Chancellor College is listed as a participating institution in the Global Book Service of the Accessible Books Consortium, which enables the exchange of books in accessible formats[116].

Malawi's Copyright Act (2016) was revised and consolidated in 2016 from the previous law (the 1989 Act). Under this Act, the Copyright Society of Malawi is responsible for protecting the rights of copyright holders and related rights holders (performers, broadcasters, etc.), collecting and distributing royalties, maintaining the copyright register, carrying out educational and awareness activities related to copyright, and promoting and advising on the enforcement of copyright law[117]. At the time of ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty, the Copyright Act was amended to incorporate exception provisions that reflect the spirit of the Treaty into domestic law. Specifically, a provision was introduced allowing the creation of accessible-format copies of works for persons with visual impairments or print disabilities[118].

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[114] Submitting organizations: 1) Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA), 2) Human Rights & Advocacy

[115] Submitting organizations: 1) Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA), 2) DIWA, 3) Self-Advocate with Intellectual Disability Mark Mapemba, 4) Centre for Human Rights Education, Advice and Assistance (CHREAA), Irish Rule of Law International (IRLI), Reprieve, Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC), 5) Africa Albinism Network (AAN) and Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi (APAM)

[116] https://www.accessiblebooksconsortium.org/globalbooks/en/ (Accessed: 22 February 2026)

[117] Government of Malawi, *Copyright Act*, http://malawilii.org/akn/mw/act/2016/26/eng@2017-12-31 (Accessed: 22 February 2026)

[118] J. Band & K. Cox (2020) *National Implementations of the Marrakesh Treaty By Countries That Have Ratified or Acceded to the Treaty*, Association of Research Library, https://www.arl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020.06.26-MarrakeshTreaty.pdf (Accessed: 22 February 2026)

Additionally, an amendment to the Act was passed in 2025, under which some of the responsibilities for administering and enforcing copyright law that had previously been handled by the Copyright Society of Malawi were transferred to a new government-affiliated body (the Companies, Registrations and Intellectual Property Centre). While the amendment and practical implementation of the Act are being aligned with the spirit of the Marrakesh Treaty, the current law requires a Commercial Availability Test when producing accessible-format copies—meaning that libraries and others must verify whether a book is commercially available before creating an accessible-format copy. This requirement has been criticized as potentially impeding early access for many persons with disabilities in practice. In 2017, an international library organization[119] issued a statement requesting the removal of this verification obligation when creating accessible-format copies in Malawi[120].

3-3. Initiatives on Disability Issues within SDG-related Policies

Malawi Vision 2063, the country's long-term national development plan, has internalized the SDGs as core principles. In the area of disability, persons with disabilities are explicitly identified as a priority target group under the pillars of Human Capital Development and Social Protection, with 'equal access for persons with disabilities' enshrined as a policy principle in education, health, employment, and social protection[121]. The First 10 Years Implementation Plan (MIP-1) is a medium-term plan that simultaneously implements Malawi Vision 2063 and the SDGs. Specific measures concerning disability include mandating disability mainstreaming across all sectors (education, health, agriculture, employment, disaster risk reduction, etc.), requiring impact analysis on persons with disabilities, consultation with persons with disabilities, and accessibility considerations at the policy and project design stage, as well as requiring disaggregated data by type of disability in monitoring indicators[122].

In Malawi's Voluntary National Review (hereinafter referred to as 'VNR') conducted in 2022, although multiple indicators require results to be reported by groups such as disability and gender, the data are not disaggregated by disability, so the situation of persons with disabilities remains unclear[123]. The report states that persons with disabilities and persons with albinism are fully participating in the VNR drafting process[124].

[119] Three organizations: Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA)
[120] https://www.eifl.net/eifl-in-action/copyright-reform-malawi (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[121] Government of Malawi (2020) *Malawi Vision 2063*
[122] Government of Malawi (2021) *The Malawi Vision 2063 First 10 Years Implementation Plan (MIP-1) 2021-2030*
[123] Government of Malawi (2022) *Malawi 2022 Voluntary National Review Report For Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3997777/files/1363137.pdf (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[124] Government of Malawi (2022)

3-4. Ratification of and Initiatives regarding Other International Treaties related to Disabilities and Development

Malawi neither signed nor ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), but acceded to the treaty as a state party in 1987[125]. In the most recent Concluding Observations submitted in 2023, recommendations regarding women and girls with disabilities include: improving access to justice services; ensuring adequate allocation of human, technical, and financial resources for education; enforcing employment policies targeting women with disabilities; improving access to sexual and reproductive health and rights; ensuring the participation of women with disabilities in economic policies; and strengthening measures to protect women with albinism from gender-based violence and discrimination[126].

Regarding the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Malawi ratified it in 1990. In the Concluding Observations issued by the CRC Committee in March 2017 [127], the Government of Malawi was recommended to take the following actions concerning children with disabilities:

- Adopt a human rights-based approach to disability.
- Implement the Old Disability Act (2012) and related national plans, establish the Disability Trust Fund, and develop strategies to address the challenges faced by children with disabilities.
- Review disability-related legislation including the former Persons with Disabilities Act (1971).
- Establish a national mechanism for monitoring and reporting in the area of disability, with a particular focus on children with disabilities.
- Ensure access for children with disabilities to inclusive early care and education, early development programs, healthcare, and other services, and secure adequate resources for these services.
- Adopt measures to ensure sufficiently inclusive education.
- Collect and analyze data on the situation of all children with disabilities (in particular, data disaggregated by age, sex, type of disability, ethnicity, country of origin, and place of residence).

[125] Accession refers to the act by which a State that has not signed a treaty expresses its consent to be bound by it. It carries the same treaty obligations as ratification.
[126] UN CEDAW (2023) *Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of Malawi*
[127] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2022) *Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Malawi (CRC/C/MWI/CO/3-5)*

- Develop comprehensive awareness-raising campaigns for parents, family members, teachers, and society to respect the rights of children with disabilities.

In addition, the Government of Malawi ratified the 'Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa (African Disability Protocol)' in 2018. Through ratification of this Protocol, Malawi has joined the framework for strengthening the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities at the African regional level, and is working to align domestic legal frameworks and institutional strengthening with regional standards[128].

The Government of Malawi also ratified ILO Convention No. 159 (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention) in 1986. The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) has acknowledged that the National Disability Mainstreaming Strategy (NDMS) prohibits all forms of disability-related discrimination in the labor market, that measures promoting the employment of women with disabilities are being considered, and that the strategy was developed with the active participation of disability-related organizations. At the same time, the CEACR has requested the provision of up-to-date, sex-disaggregated detailed data on the status and impact of measures for the employment and vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities[129].

3-5. International Cooperation on Disability[130]

• The Government of Japan

<Grant Aid>

- Domasi College of Education Expansion Project[131] (2017)

• Other Donors

International Labour Organization (ILO)

- Sparking Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation (SPARK) (2021–2024) (Improving employment and income for persons with disabilities in rural areas)[132]

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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[128] International Commission of Justice (2025) *An Opportune Moment: Realizing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa*

[129] https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID%2CP13100_COUNTRY_ID:4120676%2C103101 (Accessed: 27 March 2026)

[130] Project names are listed exactly as they appear in the original text. However, this does not apply in cases where there is no English name or the English name is unknown.

[131] JICA (2025) 'Activities on Disability and Development: Toward a World Where All People Benefit' https://www.jica.go.jp/information/publication/brochures/issues/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2025/03/25/activities_on_disability_and_development.pdf (Accessed: 22 February 2026)

[132] https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40africa/%40ro-abidjan/%40ilo-lusaka/documents/publication/wcms_866515.pdf (Accessed: 22 February 2026)

- Inclusive Early Childhood Education Project (2020–2023)[133]

World Health Organization (WHO)

- Support for the implementation of the Global Disability Action Plan[134]
- Rehabilitation Capacity Strengthening and Technical Guidance[135]

United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)

- Breaking the Silence (BtS) approach (promotion of disability and sexual and reproductive health and rights)[136]
- We Decide Programme (Disability Inclusion Strategy)[137]

Global Disability Fund (GDF)

- Advancing disability rights together in Malawi (2018-2021)[138]

European Union (EU)

- Titukulane Project to Empower Persons with Albinism (2025-2025)[139]
- Africa Disability Protocol Project (2025-2030)[140]

World Bank

- Promoting the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities into Basic Education for All (2012-2015)[141]
- Inclusive Education for Disabled Children (2012-2016)[142]

United Kingdom (UK)

1) Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth and Development Office
   - Education Support in Malawi (including Inclusive Education)[143]
2) UK Aid Match[144]
   - Improving access to quality, inclusive, and comprehensive eye health services for

[133] https://www.ukfiet.org/2023/inclusive-early-childhood-education-in-malawi-project-development-through-community-participation/ (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[134] https://macoda.mw/public/assets/uploads/publications/250812084349_NATIONAL%20DISABILITY%20POLICY.pdf (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[135] https://did4all.com.au/resources/who-2023-package-of-interventions-for-rehabilitation (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[136] https://malawi.unfpa.org/en/topics/adolescents-and-youth (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[137] https://www.unfpa.org/disabilities-inclusion (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[138] https://globaldisabilityfund.org/programme/malawi/ (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[139] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/malawi/titukulane-project-empower-persons-albinism_en (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[140] https://malawifreedomnetwork.com/2025/04/24/malawi-prioritizes-disability-rights-in-push-for-inclusive-society/ (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[141] https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099121523173533601/pdf/P17611706d01d50350b94c06a4e5aeef394.pdf (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[142] https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/102881468300296181 (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[143] https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/programme/GB-1-204643/summary (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[144] This system involves the British government (Department for Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth and Development) matching the amount of funds that British citizens donate to charities.

marginalized rural communities in Central-Eastern Malawi[145]

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

- Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (2019-2024)[146]

Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

- Australia-Africa Community Engagement Scheme (2011-2016)[147]
- Australia Awards Africa (A scholarship program that includes fields of social inclusion such as disability and gender)[148].

Norwegian government

- Strengthening Human Rights for Vulnerable Populations in Malawi (2023-2026) (A joint project between the Government of Iceland and UNDP to strengthen human rights protection functions and improve access to them.)[149]
- Inclusive Education Programme[150]

German government

- Improving Basic Education in Malawi[151] (2018-2023) (Creating an environment where children with disabilities can access basic education)
- Social Protection Programme (2015-2018) (Improving access to life security for persons with disabilities)[152]

• International NGO

World Vision Malawi

- Able to Thrive Project (Inclusive Support Project for Children and Persons with Disabilities)[153]

Butterfly Space

- Disability Support Centers[154] (Educational support, social participation support, and

[145] https://www.ukaidmatch.org/news/projects-in-progress-a-uk-aid-match-team-visit-to-malawi/ (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[146] https://www.inclusivedevpartners.com/mcsie-malawi/ (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[147] https://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/aid/aaces-annual-report-2012-13/Pages/promoting-disability-inclusiveness-in-malawi (Accessed: 22 February 2026) This report covers multiple African countries. In Malawi, it includes the provision of prosthetics, orthotics, and wheelchairs.
[148] https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australia-awards-africa-information-for-intake.pdf (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[149] https://www.undp.org/malawi/press-releases/malawi-secures-funding-us-2-million-governments-iceland-and-norway-bolster-human-rights-vulnerable-populations-country (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[150] https://www.nyasatimes.com/norway-pledges-maximum-support-towards-inclusive-education-in-malawi/ (Accessed: 22 February 2026) Support for providing facilities in schools that are accessible to persons with disabilities (resource centers, accessible toilets, etc.), as well as visual and auditory support equipment and special teaching materials.
[151] https://www.giz.de/en/projects/enhancement-basic-education-programme (Accessed: 22 February 2026)
[152] https://www.giz.de/en/downloads_els/Factsheet_Malawi_Social_Protection.pdf (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[153] https://malawifreedomnetwork.com/2025/03/08/world-vision-project-instils-hope-for-children-with-disabilities-in-dowa/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[154] https://butterflyspacemalawi.com/disability-centres/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

skills acquisition support provided by centers for persons with disabilities)

Humanity & Inclusion (HI) UK

- Making It Work – Gender and Disability[155] (Supporting the elimination of violence and discrimination against women and girls with disabilities and advocating for their rights)

International Paralympic Committee

- I'm POSSIBLE Toolkit Malawi / Para Sport Against Stigma (PSAS) (Introduction of inclusive physical education and rights education materials in schools)[156]

SightSavers

- Eye Care (Ophthalmic examinations for the visually impaired, physician training)[157]
- Inclusive Education Project (2020-2023) (Inclusive education for preschool children with disabilities)
- Employment Programme (Technical Education for Persons with Disabilities)

CBM (Christian Blind Mission)

- See the Way Malawi (2021-2024) (Focuses on ophthalmic treatment, human resource development related to visual impairment, ophthalmic care, and awareness campaigns. Funded by UK Aid Match.)
- Project to Promote the Rights and Community Participation of Children and Young Persons with Disabilities[158](2022-2024)

[155] https://www.humanity-inclusion.org.uk/en/country/malawi (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[156] https://at2030.org/impossible-toolkit-malawi/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[157] https://www.sightsavers.org/where-we-work/malawi/#what-we%E2%80%99re-doing-in-malawi (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[158] https://sjog.mw/2025/04/01/christian-blind-mission-cbm-ceo-visits-saint-john-of-god-hospitaller-services/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

4. Disability-related Organizations and Activities

The main disability-related organizations in Malawi are as follows:

4-1. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

Organization Name	Overview
Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi (FEDOMA)	Established in 1999 as the national umbrella organization for disability rights advocacy organizations in Malawi. FEDOMA plays a central role in the Malawian disability rights movement, advocating, lobbying, and providing services for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, and coordinating capacity development and policy advocacy. It works in collaboration with the government and international partners[159].
Malawi Union of the Blind (MUB)	Established in 1994 as a local NGO of blind and partially sighted persons. Its main objectives are to unite blind and partially sighted persons, to speak with a common voice, to raise awareness of the issues faced by persons with visual impairments, and to implement action plans addressing identified needs[160].
Malawi National Association of the Deaf (MANAD)	An organization of deaf persons established in 1992 and registered with the government in 1996. It aims to promote the use of sign language in interpretation, promote educational and employment opportunities for deaf persons, and promote the welfare of deaf persons in various social and economic aspects[161].
Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities in Malawi (APDM)	Established in 1999 to enable persons with physical disabilities to be independent and fully participate in social life at the national level. Members from the districts of Nkhotakota, Mulanje, Balaka, Neno, Lilongwe, and Mangochi participate in its activities[162].
Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi (PODCAM)	Established in 1998, the organization represents and supports the interests of children with disabilities at all levels of social, economic, political, and cultural activities. With over 20,000 members, including parents and guardians of children with disabilities, volunteering their time, the organization operates in 23 of 28 districts in Malawi[163].

[159] https://www.fedomamw.com/about-us-1 (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[160] https://csoplatform.africa/search/cso/malawi-union-of-the-blind (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[161] https://www.adry.up.ac.za/country-reports-2014/malawi (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[162] https://rodra.co.za/malawi (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[163] https://ablechildafrica.org/our-organisation/network-members/podcam/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

Women and Girls with Disabilities Rights Organization	Established in 2015 with the aim of improving the rights of women and girls with disabilities. It was founded to fill a gap, as no organization specifically for women with disabilities existed. It implements programs for the prevention of gender-based violence, empowerment, and rights advocacy campaigns[164].
Visual Hearing Impairment Membership Association (VIHEMA)	Established in 2008 with the aim of advocating for the rights and needs of persons with hearing and visual impairments[165], the organization works to improve their welfare and promote their socioeconomic and political interests[166].
Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi (APAM)	Established to raise awareness about albinism, reduce prejudice, and improve the status of persons with albinism within the country[167].
Spinal Injuries Association of Malawi (SIAM)	Founded in 2011 by a group of spinal cord injury survivors aiming to become peer group trainers, this organization advocates for the rights of spinal cord injury survivors in Malawi and improves healthcare services. Its goal is to establish and promote excellent standards in all aspects of spinal cord injury care in Malawi[168].
National Epilepsy Association (NEA)	An organization that provides support, advocates for rights, and conducts awareness campaigns related to epilepsy. It collaborates with the International Bureau for Epilepsy and the International League Against Epilepsy to carry out awareness activities and campaigns[169].
Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA)	This organization, founded in Tanzania in 2002 and in Malawi in 2012, works for women and girls with disabilities. Its goal is for women and girls with disabilities in Africa to enjoy their rights and be free from all forms of gender and disability-based discrimination. It engages in information sharing, capacity building, learning, research, and advocacy activities on the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities[170].

[164] https://www.wagdisability.org/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[165] https://rodra.co.za/malawi (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[166] https://www.facebook.com/p/Visual-Hearing-Impairment-Membership-Association-Vihema-100071772677975/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[167] https://www.fedomamw.com/about-us-1 (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[168] https://www.fedomamw.com/about-us-1 (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[169] https://mwnation.com/ngo-decries-stigma-against-epileptics/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[170] https://womenenabled.org/partner-situation/diwa-disabled-women-in-africa/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

Disabled Women in Development	Established in 1996, the organization aims to advocate for the rights of women with disabilities to participate in all aspects of development and to achieve independence. It provides support such as business skills training and assistance with creating fundraising proposals. It also conducts awareness campaigns to boost the self-confidence of women with disabilities[171].
Disabled Widows Orphans Organizations of Malawi	Established with the aim of promoting the rights of widows with disabilities and orphans and providing them with the skills necessary for economic independence. Headquartered in Rumphi, northern Malawi, the organization conducts skills training activities for its members at a vocational training center[172].
Malawi Disability Sports Association	Established in 1998 to promote sports activities for persons with disabilities in Malawi, the organization receives funding to provide training for persons with disabilities in order to participate in the Paralympic Games. It has 562 registered members from the districts of Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Blantyre, and Lilongwe[173].

4-2. Disability Support Organizations

Organization Name	Overview
Malawi Against Physical Disabilities (MAP)	A non-profit organization that provides medical rehabilitation to persons with physical disabilities. Established in 1982, it supports rehabilitation clinics, physical therapy, and the distribution of assistive devices throughout Malawi[174].
Sightsavers	An international NGO that supports visually impaired people. In Malawi, in addition to providing eye examinations for the visually impaired and training for doctors, it supports inclusive education for preschool children with disabilities and technical education for persons with disabilities[175].

[171] https://gdi-hub.com/organisations/ef9dce14-502c-470d-9a75-c62fb206b4ee (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[172] https://rodra.co.za/malawi (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[173] *Ibid.*
[174] The State Party's Report, https://mwnation.com/map-reflects-on-its-battle-against-disabilities/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026), https://www.facebook.com/mapmw/posts/at-malawi-against-physical-disabilities-map-we-are-dedicated-to-improving-the-qu/783480467344281/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[175] https://www.sightsavers.org/where-we-work/malawi/#what-we%E2%80%99re-doing-in-malawi (Accessed: 28 February 2026)

CBM (Christian Blind Mission)	An international NGO whose mission is to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities. It provides support for medical care, education, and social participation, particularly for those with visual impairments, around the world. In Malawi, it implements ophthalmic care and activities to promote the rights and social participation of children with disabilities. In response to the damage caused by Cyclone Freddy in 2023, it provided emergency relief as well as special support for persons with disabilities (assistive devices, rehabilitation, etc.)[176].
500 Miles	A British charity that supports the development and provision of prosthetic and orthotic services in Malawi and Zambia. It established two prosthetic and orthotic centers in Lilongwe and Mzuzu, providing prosthetic and orthotic services and rehabilitation services. While the operation of both centers has been transferred to the Ministry of Health and hospitals, the charity continues to provide support related to prosthetics and orthotics[177].
Under the Same Sun	An international organization that conducts advocacy and educational activities to support the elimination of discrimination and violence against persons with albinism and to promote their inclusion and participation in society[178]. With a focus on Africa, it submitted a parallel report in 2020 on the current situation of persons with albinism in Malawi[179].

[176] https://www.cbm.org/our-work/what-we-do/humanitarian-action/humanitarian-response-in-Malawi.html (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[177] https://www.500miles.co.uk/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026)
[178] https://www.underthesamesun.com/ (Accessed: 28 February 2026))
[179] Africa Albinism Network (AAN) and the Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi (APAM) (2023) *A joint submission by the Africa Albinism Network and the Association of Persons with Albinism in Malawi (APAM) to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the situation of persons with albinism in Malawi*

5. Barriers and Needs Faced by Persons with Disabilities

5-1. Barriers to and Needs regarding Healthcare Services

Access to Healthcare Services

The main barriers that persons with disabilities face when accessing healthcare services include difficulties with transportation and physical access, shortage of services and facilities, and financial burden[180]. Many persons with disabilities find it difficult to seek medical care due to the distance to medical facilities and the cost of transportation. Healthcare services are unevenly distributed across regions, and particularly in rural areas, adequate equipment, medicines, and specialist expertise are lacking[181]. While the law guarantees equal access, in practice the costs of transportation and medicines constitute barriers to seeking medical care for persons with disabilities[182]. In many rural and remote areas, access to basic healthcare services required by persons with disabilities is not secured. In rural areas, inadequate physical accessibility of healthcare facilities is compounded by a marked shortage of assistive devices and trained healthcare personnel capable of addressing the needs of persons with disabilities[183]. It has also been noted that access to healthcare services is severely lacking, particularly for women and girls with disabilities[184] and persons with intellectual disabilities[185]. As of 2023, there were only two psychiatrists covering the entire country including persons with disabilities, indicating a critical shortage of clinical specialists in psychiatry[186]. In the case of children, the shortage of services and rehabilitation centers means that early identification and recognition of disabilities is not carried out appropriately, which leads to the occurrence of multiple disabilities, prevents children from realising their full potential, and results in serious neglect. The government relies on donor funding to compensate for such service shortfalls, but there have been cases where NGO support has not been able to continue due to funding shortages[187].

Lack of Information Accessibility at Medical Facilities (Sign Language Interpretation and Information Access)

[180] J. A. K. Harrison, R. Thomson, H. T. Banda, G. B. Mbera, S. Gregorius, B. Stenberg & T. Marshall (2020) "Access to health care for persons with disabilities in rural Malawi: what are the barriers?", *BMC Public Health* 20, 833. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12889-020-08691-9 (accessed 22 Feb, 2026)
[181] J. A. K. Harrison, R. Thomson, H. T. Banda, G. B. Mbera, S. Gregorius, B. Stenberg & T. Marshall (2020)
[182] GDF (2025)
[183] J. A. K. Harrison, R. Thomson, H. T. Banda, G. B. Mbera, S. Gregorius, B. Stenberg & T. Marshall (2020)
[184] Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) (2023) *Alternative Report Submitted to the Committee towards the Malawi's CRPD Review*
[185] Mark Mapemba (2023) *Review of the state report of Malawi: Self-advocate with intellectual disability*
[186] UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023b)
[187] FEDOMA (2023) *Civil Society in Malawi Alternative Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*

It has been pointed out that access to sign language interpretation and other means of communication and information needed at medical facilities is insufficient. Although the digitisation of information on health services is progressing, it has not been made accessible to women and girls with disabilities[188].

Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services and Maternal Care

Communication barriers, lack of reasonable accommodation, and negative attitudes are major challenges in maternal care and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Access to sexual and reproductive health information, materials, and services is not adequately developed, and discrimination, prejudice, legal and policy challenges mean that women with disabilities in particular are excluded. Many women with disabilities also experience discrimination in situations such as pregnancy, childbirth, and access to contraception[189].

Discrimination and Abuse by Healthcare Workers

According to a survey by Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA), 18% of women reported experiencing negative attitudes from healthcare workers on the grounds of being women with disabilities. A separate survey conducted in 2014 reported that 39% of girls with disabilities and 24% of women with disabilities had experienced violence or abuse from healthcare workers[190]. In particular, there are reports of women with disabilities receiving improper treatment during prenatal check-ups, childbirth, and postnatal care, based on negative stereotypes regarding their capacity and right to become parents.

5-2. Barriers to and Needs regarding Education

Underdevelopment of School Infrastructure

It has been pointed out that the number of special schools is small, and many inclusive education schools have significant deficiencies in the school infrastructure needed for persons with disabilities to access them. Many classrooms remain inaccessible, and many schools lack accessible toilets and water and sanitation facilities. This creates unhealthy and exclusionary environments, particularly for girls and children with disabilities[191].

Challenges in Promoting Inclusive Education

To address the needs of children with special needs in mainstream schools, specialist

[188] DIWA (2023)
[189] *Ibid*.
[190] AAN and APAM (2023)
[191] DIWA (2023)

teachers travel around the region, but there is a shortage of transportation to visit children with special educational needs across the various schools and communities they are responsible for. A shortage of specialist teachers themselves and a lack of knowledge among mainstream school teachers also impede the promotion of inclusive education[192].

Underdevelopment of Teaching and Learning Materials

There is a shortage of teaching and learning materials adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities, and it has been pointed out that online and radio lessons are underdeveloped, and that consideration for different types of disability is lacking in digital education policy[193].

Shortage of Teachers Trained in Special Needs Education and Discrimination and Abuse by Teachers

Specialist teachers are scarce in many inclusive education schools, and there is also a shortage of mainstream teachers with training in special needs education. Female students with disabilities are vulnerable to threats, sexual abuse, verbal violence, and bullying from teachers and other students, which results in high dropout rates[194].

Long-Distance Commuting to School

In many cases, persons with disabilities are forced to travel long distances to reach a school they can attend, resulting in high commuting costs and high dropout rates[195].

5-3. Barriers to and Needs regarding Employment

Limited Employment Opportunities

Persons with disabilities face a shortage of employment opportunities and are particularly vulnerable to exploitation due to barriers to entry into the formal labour market[196]. The reasons behind low employment rates include unequal access to education and skills development resources, negative attitudes and stereotypes among employers, discrimination, and the absence of reasonable accommodation provisions and employment quota systems.

A weak proactive recruitment policy in the public sector and a tendency for civil servants who acquire disabilities to be forced into early retirement have also been noted[197]. For

[192] UNICEF (2020)
[193] DIWA (2023)
[194] *Ibid.*
[195] GDF (2025)
[196] *Ibid.*
[197] FEDOMA (2023)

example, even when persons with disabilities themselves or their supporters determine that they have the motivation and ability to work, the absence of appropriate support and reasonable accommodation constitutes a barrier. Moreover, even in cases where systems and support for the employment of persons with disabilities exist, social prejudice and structural constraints (such as insufficient access to information and lack of reasonable accommodation in the workplace) become practical barriers[198].

Access to Vocational Training

It has been pointed out that because the provision of education and training is not sufficiently developed, support for persons with disabilities to transition from primary and secondary education to vocational skills training is inadequate. When sufficient skills are not acquired during training and educational stages, the situation continues in which persons with disabilities cannot access formal employment opportunities. It has been noted that a lack of employable skills leads to prolonged unemployment or over-reliance on short-term, low-wage, and precarious day labour. Major barriers include a shortage of appropriate teacher training and technical education institution management, a lack of adequate institutional support for social welfare issues in technical education institutions, a shortage of educational and learning tools and materials, and deficiencies in infrastructure and maintenance systems[199].

5-4. Barriers to and Needs regarding Transportation

Underdevelopment of Accessibility in Public Transportation and Public Facilities

Public transportation lacks accessibility features such as boarding ramps and audio announcements, and services are unreliable, making it difficult for persons with disabilities to use. Many public spaces lack basic facilities such as ramps and accessible toilets[200]. Guidance systems for visually impaired persons are lacking, and there are no devices or features to assist them in navigating public areas safely and independently. Bus stops and route information are also inadequate, leaving persons with disabilities dependent on others for travel information. Public transportation, even when accessible, is irregular and infrequent, making it difficult for persons with disabilities to plan travel.

Transportation staff have not received training on their obligations regarding consideration

[198] L. Wånggren, J. Remnant, S. Huque, L. Kachali, K. J. C. Sang & J. Ngwira (2022) "Disability policy and practice in Malawian employment and education", *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 45(6), 1354–1375. https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/83357/1/W_nggren_etal_SHI_2022_Disability_policy_and_practice_in_Malawian_employment_and_education.pdf (Accessed 22 Feb, 2026)

[199] UNESCO (2018)

[200] GDF (2025)

for persons with disabilities, which leads to a lack of services for persons with disabilities and insensitive and discriminatory treatment by staff[201].

Financial Burden of Transportation

Transportation costs are often very high, placing a significant burden particularly on persons with disabilities on low incomes. Since it is often necessary to travel with a caregiver, costs are doubled in many cases[202].

5-5. Barriers to and Needs regarding Information Access

Underdevelopment of Information Accessibility

Persons with disabilities have limited access to necessary information due to insufficient translation into Braille, local languages, and plain language, and a shortage of sign language interpreters. In particular, they often cannot directly access information on new systems and support opportunities and must rely on second-hand communication[203].

Inadequacy of the Legal Framework for the Right to Information Access

The National Access to Information Policy[204] stipulates that all persons have the right to access information held by public bodies, but does not explicitly mention persons with disabilities. As a result, there is no framework for monitoring the extent to which the information needs of persons with disabilities are being met, and there is no framework for reasonable accommodation in methods of providing information[205].

5-6. Barriers and Needs regarding Gender

Disparities in Education

Although enrolment and completion rates for girls are higher than for boys at primary and lower secondary education levels, at the upper secondary level, completion rates fall below those of boys due to early marriage and high rates of adolescent pregnancy. In Malawi, an estimated 38% of women marry before the age of 18, and 30% of newborns are born to teenage mothers. This has a dramatic impact on school completion rates, and only 10% of young mothers return to school after giving birth[206]. In this context, disability constitutes a risk factor in continuing upper secondary education. Girls with disabilities are more likely to

[201] GDF (2025)
[202] *Ibid.*
[203] *Ibid.*
[204] Government of Malawi (2014) *National Access to Information Policy*
[205] GDF (2025)
[206] UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (2024) *The UN Joint Programme on Girls Education in Malawi.*

be overage (older than the age expected for their grade level) compared to girls without disabilities. While 42% of girls without disabilities are overage, 57% of girls with disabilities are overage[207].

Exploitation and Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities

Many cases of exploitation, violence, and abuse of women and girls with disabilities go unreported [208]. No nationwide research on gender-based violence and women with disabilities has been conducted, and there is no data to ensure that the specific needs of women with disabilities are adequately addressed[209]. There are reports that women with disabilities experience discrimination, prejudice, and inappropriate treatment when accessing health services, and the Malawi Human Rights Commission has reported that particularly serious discrimination is seen in sexual and reproductive health services and other areas[210]. It has also been pointed out that marginalised women and girls, including women with disabilities and women with albinism, are particularly vulnerable to violence[211].

Disparities in Information and Services

While Malawi has reported reductions in maternal and infant mortality rates and improvements in reproductive health standards, it has been noted that women and girls with disabilities have not benefited from these improvements[212]. Communication barriers in healthcare services, lack of reasonable accommodation, distance, and negative attitudes are some of the main challenges faced by women with disabilities who need prenatal and postnatal care, and similar challenges are faced in access to other reproductive health services and rights[213].

Economic Status and Employment

It has been pointed out that the employment rate of women with disabilities is very low,

[207] Program for Evidence to Inform Disability Action (n.d.) *Evidence Brief: Education and Disability in Malawi.*

[208] A survey conducted by the Malawian NGO Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) (2014) found that 64.7% of women with disabilities and 56% of girls with disabilities had experienced exploitation, violence, or abuse, but only 17.6% of women and 22% of girls had actually reported it. Source: Disabled Women in Africa (2014) *Exploitation, Violence and Abuse among women and girls with Disabilities*

[209] Disabled Women in Africa (DIWA) and Humanity & Inclusion (HI) (2020) *Joint Submission to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: 13th Pre-Sessional Working Group for the establishment of the List of Issues – Malawi (UNCRPD) First Cycle*

[210] https://times.mw/mhrc-report-exposes-heavy-discrimination/ (Accessed 22 Feb, 2026)

[211] Ministry of Gender, Children, Disabilities and Social Welfare, Government of Malawi (2019) *Republic of Malawi National Review on the Beijing + 25: Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)*

[212] DIWA and HI (2020)

[213] DIWA (2023)

and they tend to be engaged in informal, low-wage, or unpaid work[214].

Shortage of Social Workers, Shelters, and Other Services

Malawi's social care system needs improvement, including a shortage of qualified social workers and healthcare workers, and a shortage of shelters and facilities to provide care for persons with disabilities who have experienced violence or abuse in particular[215].

[214] Commonwealth of Learning, Gender Equality (2024) *Climate Change and Persons with Disabilities Analysis,* https://oasis.col.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/3c8a1e5d-9ea1-4ef5-9abc-67758c891b52/content (Accessed 20 Feb, 2026)

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