

Malawi

Multi-year Strategy 2023 – 2026



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1.1 Executive Summary

The operation's strategic vision is that, by the end of 2026, UNHCR Malawi will have created a more conducive environment for refugees, asylum seekers, stateless and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to access protection assistance and solutions in close collaboration with Government and partners. This will be achieved through the reform of key national legislative and policy frameworks, progressive transformation of camps into settlements, and achieving greater self-reliance initiatives and opportunities for refugees and their host communities. Additionally, increased access to comprehensive solutions such as local integration, voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and complementary pathways.

As of 31 October 2024, UNHCR is hosting 56,212 individuals consisting of 15,585 households comprised with 35,620 refugees, 20,588 asylum seekers, and 4 individuals classified as "other of concern." Most of the new arrivals came from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), specifically from Sud Kivu province. The DRC population is the largest at 36,469 individuals, followed by Burundi at 12,291 and Rwanda at 7,019. The minority population are Somalia at 173 followed by Ethiopia at 183 individuals. As conflicts continue to ravage the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the operation anticipates a steady flow of new arrivals in 2025 and beyond.

Looking at the latest population trends in the flow of new arrivals and newborn babies, it is projected that by the end of 2025, UNHCR Malawi will record a total number of 59,564 in 2025 while in 2026, we are expected to have 63,028 individuals. The operation is also planning to support the government in assisting Internal Displaced Persons survivors of climate-induced disasters. Similarly, statelessness activities will continue to be implemented to meet the objectives of the #IBelong Campaign.

UNHCR is working with the government of Malawi to decongest Dzaleka refugee camp through the expansion of the camp with the additional extension sites of the Woodlot Area, Dzaleka Hills and Katubza Area, as well as the establishment of a new open settlement in Kayilizi in Chitipa district in the northern part of Malawi. The current areas of expansion around Dzaleka will only accommodate 8,000 individuals, therefore the new site in Kahilizi is expected to accommodate all new arrivals and excess population numbers in the Dzaleka camp.

The operation envisages strong advocacy to ensure the adoption of the Draft Migration Policy as well as the Draft Refugee Act nevertheless also to continue advocacy on

refugee inclusion in national system and to ensure sustainable responses for forcibly Displaced and stateless people and host communities.

Given the growing population and needs, the implementation of this strategy will require an operational budget of USD 21,302,871 in 2025.

1.2 Situation Analysis

Political instability and social unrest in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region have resulted in a continuous flow of refugees into Malawi for three decades. As of October 31, 2024, UNHCR Malawi hosts 56,212 individuals consisting of 15,585 households. The number of individuals from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) remains the highest at 36,469. This is followed by Burundi with 12,291 individuals and Rwanda with 7,019 individuals. This population includes 35,620 refugees, 20,588 asylum seekers, and 4 individuals classified as "other of concern."

The average number of monthly new arrivals is 200 individuals and an average number of 150 new-born babies. [BBS1] The refugees and asylum seekers mainly come from the Sud Kivu province in the DRC as well as Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

The camp was originally designed to accommodate 10,000 – 12,000 people on a 224-hectare piece of land, but the persistent influx of refugees from countries in the Great Lakes region has led to overcrowding at the camp. The congestion has resulted in the development of a high-density, congested settlement with water facilities prone to contamination and widespread public health risks that include the increased risk of the spread of infectious diseases such as COVID-19, Cholera, Measles and respiratory Tract infections and Tuberculosis (TB).

To decongest the Dzaleka refugee camp, the government has identified a new open settlement in Kayilizi (439 ha including 166.5 ha for agriculture and irrigation), in Chitipa district in northern Malawi near the border with Tanzania. Kayilizi is situated approximately 689 kilometres northwest of Lilongwe, 310 kilometres northwest of Mzuzu, and 117 kilometres west of Karonga. The proposed open settlement will be approximately 15 kilometres from the Zambian border and approximately 38 kilometres from the Tanzanian border. During 2024, two Joint assessments mission were conducted for technical evaluation and sharing findings for Support. The site planning, land acquisition and the environmental, social impact assessment are completed. \$ 85,234,843.84 are needed to develop the site into 5 phases. Phase A to accommodate the new arrivals approximatively 200 Households. Currently, the Government already set aside USD 171,330.67 for compensation.

Malawi is facing overlapping crises, heavy rains, floods and tropical cyclones every year. In 2023, 658,278 Malawians were impacted by the devastating effects of tropical cyclone Freddy in Nsanje, Chikwawa, Mulanje, and Phalombe districts as well as other districts in the Southern region of the country. Besides, 10,000 Mozambican households crossed the Malawi border to the Nsanje district because of the said storm. The forcibly displaced individuals were living in camps and needed assistance as well as interventions to mitigate protection risks. In addition, in 2024, the rainfall season, impacted by El Nino conditions were characterized by late onset and prolonged dry spells, particularly in the southern and Central region. To prevent other potential natural disasters, Malawi's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) has been implementing disaster forecasting and risk modelling measures that are reducing risks and creating safer environments for communities. UNHCR is currently working towards mainstreaming Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13: Climate Action in its programming. The operation contributed to the national disaster risk management policy and ensured the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the policy. The operation is also advocating for the inclusion of forcibly displaced persons in the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). This enables the operation to work with DoDMA, the Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the climate field. Furthermore, the operation is working on a replica program for parametric insurance against drought to cover the Dzaleka refugee camp and the host community in the Dowa district. This is being done in collaboration with African Risk Capacity and the Malawi government.

The long-term dwindling donor interest, as well as the current impact of the ongoing emergencies around the world, has impacted the UNHCR funding situation including Malawi. The forcibly displaced and stateless persons are struggling to survive compounded by the fact that they have limited access to arable land and lack physical means of earning a living within the camp. Legal restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement and right to employment have also worsened conditions for refugees. As such, they are highly dependent on food and other assistance provided by UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the government of Malawi. However, WFP is also facing a shortfall in funding and, to continue supporting food assistance for refugees, they have implemented several changes that include changing from the provision of in-kind food to cash-based intervention and reduction of the ration to 50%. These changes have dangerously compromised the food and nutrition security of the population, and the situation is projected to worsen.

Following the government directive for all urban refugees to return to the camp, a total of 762 families of 2,293 refugees and asylum seekers have returned to Dzaleka refugee camp, and UNHCR and its partners are still in the process of settling them. UNHCR continues to advocate for reviewing refugee laws and policies by conducting and financially supporting the government in finalizing and adopting the National Migration Policy and subsequent review of the 1989 Refugees Act. UNHCR is leveraging the

growing presence of development actors such as the European delegation and multilateral development banks in policy advocacy with the government. The operation also continues to advocate for the inclusion of forcibly displaced persons in the programming and development plans of development actors in Malawi. In the spirit of burden-sharing, the operation has commenced discussions with the World Bank and the government of Malawi on Malawi's eligibility to access the International Development Assistance (20) Window for host communities and Refugees (WHR) funding.

As regards statelessness, the government of Malawi has initiated consultations with the other stakeholders on the convention related to statelessness in Malawi and starting in 2024, the implementation of Birth registration of children aged 16 and below at Dzaleka Camp and the Validation workshop of the SOPs for birth registration of vulnerable children. However, the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness has not been implemented as it is still pending the adoption of the National Action Plan on Statelessness and the implementation of the #IBelong campaign. UNHCR is, therefore, following up with the government to fast-track the implementation of the pending activities.

UNHCR continues to implement the Multi-Year Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy (MYMPPS) objectives, which are replicated in the 5 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledges made by the government of Malawi that are pending adoption by the Inter-Ministerial Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Steering Committee and Cabinet for the full implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees in Malawi. Some significant strides have been made towards the implementation of the pledges. More specifically, the migration policy has been drafted, and the subsequent review of the Refugee Act is underway; accelerated RSD processing has been introduced pending the adoption of a prima facie approach. The review of the Refugee Act is ongoing and is planned to be completed in December 2025. Currently, UNHCR is the only agency that is financially contributing to the process, and it is hoping that the government will lift the nine reservations and improve the rights of the forcibly displaced persons. This process requires nearly USD 200,000, and UNHCR has already contributed USD 110,000.

In the spirit of sustainable Responses, the operation is represented in the United Nations Sustainable Development Corporation Framework and participates in the Joint Annual Work Plans. It is also an integral part of the UN Country Team (UNCT), the UN Programme Management Team, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisory Group, which serves as an advisory group to the UNCT and the UN Communication Group. The operation will continue to seek inclusion in the programmes of sister agencies and actively seek opportunities for joint programming with other agencies to provide protection solutions for forcibly displaced persons. The involvement in the Cooperation Framework is important because it helps the operation, including the forcibly displaced in the Malawi National Development Plans. This is built on the commitment of the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs to leave no one behind and to promote the inclusion of refugees,

the internally displaced, and statelessness people in the National Development Frameworks and systems, including health, livelihoods, education, and protection pending durable solutions to their displacement.

1.3 Vision and Strategic Orientation

By the end of 2026, UNHCR in close collaboration with Government and its partners will achieve a more conducive environment for refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced persons to access protection, assistance, and solutions in Malawi. This will be achieved through the reform of key national legislative and policy frameworks, progressive transformation of camps into open settlements, and achieving greater self-reliance and opportunities for refugees and their host communities, including greater access to comprehensive solutions.

UNHCR will achieve this strategic vision through the following objectives:

Create a more conducive protection environment including a review of the legal frameworks and strengthen refugee status determination by advocating for a progressive and integrated approach to refugee management to enable the harmonization of humanitarian and development activities. This will be achieved through a review of the refugee laws in Malawi, support for the formulation of a new refugee policy that provides the inclusion of refugees in national development plans, public information programs to improve attitudes towards refugees and improve the quality and efficiency of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) processes. The prevention and reduction of statelessness will be also addressed through this objective by promoting accession to the 1961 Statelessness Convention and advocating for improved birth registration and documentation services for citizens as well as refugees and asylum seekers. This will also include gradually integrating refugees into the national planning systems that will ensure that their humanitarian needs are effectively met.

Develop an integrated settlement approach under the national development programme and enhance the emergency response capacity. This will be achieved by working with development partners and the authorities to develop designated sites for emergency reception and settlement while decongesting and transforming refugee-hosting areas into settlements with an integrated socio-economic development hub to provide access to social services and economic opportunities for refugees and host communities. In the new open settlement, UNHCR will also aim to protect the environment by using eco-friendly cooking alternatives produced in the camp, locally sourced shelters as well as planting trees. UNHCR will build on the current energy-saving initiatives such as briquettes which also act as income generation activities for vulnerable communities and distribution of energy-saving stoves. Regarding solid waste management in the camps, the operation plans to utilize part of the organic waste for insect farming as feed.

The same organic waste will be used for compost manure and briquette-making. The environmental protection initiatives will consider the host communities.

Support self-reliance, economic inclusion, and enhanced livelihood opportunities by working with the government to create an enabling environment following the UNHCR and partner multi-year livelihoods strategy. The operation will expand its partnerships with the private sector and non-traditional actors. UNHCR will also continue advocating for refugees and asylum seekers to be integrated into the National Identification and Registration System and issued with government-recognized identification cards allowing them access to the same level of services thereby ensuring their basic rights are upheld. Refugee-led organizations play an important role, acting as first-level responders at the community level and key partners for protection risk analysis and decision-making. Currently, UNHCR and partners provide some support to those organizations for resilience and self-reliance.

Improve access to and opportunities for comprehensive solutions for the refugees and asylum seekers including local integration, voluntary repatriation, and resettlement. Voluntary repatriation is not considered an option for most of the refugees in Malawi, as the situation in their countries of origin, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continues to face conflict and displacement.

Resettlement remains an important primary protection tool for refugees with identified needs, therefore Malawi will ensure that 10% of refugees identified in need of resettlement in 2022 Projected Global Resettlement Needs Report (PGRN) is submitted. Malawi is also focusing on Complementary Pathways in line with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) by advocating for family reunification and third-country education opportunities, including supporting the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) program. Malawi has also been assisting and facilitating family reunification for eligible refugees by verifying data, facilitating contact, and securing necessary documentation.

UNHCR will support the government and other UN agencies' efforts in response to internal displacements caused by natural disasters. UNHCR will target 20,000 IDPs with protection interventions (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), persons with specific needs, mental health, and psychosocial support to survivors of GBV, and child protection), core relief items, and shelter kits.

1.4 Fair Access and Representation

UNHCR will continue to invest in strengthening participation, accountability to affected persons and effective two-way communication with all groups in the community. The thematic areas that will be reviewed and discussed include but are not limited to

registration and RSD, education and child protection, security from violence and exploitation (GBV/SEA), water, sanitation and hygiene, livelihoods and self-reliance, health and nutrition. Feedback will be incorporated to improve planning, and service delivery and help inform amendments to the annual operations plan. The findings of the assessments and issues raised by the community leaders and from within relevant community structures will be prioritized and inserted into the programming cycle. Feedback and information for the refugee community, partners and other stakeholders will be compiled and shared to facilitate accountability to affected persons.

UNHCR is committed to ensuring that children's rights are mainstreamed into all protection, assistance and solution interventions, and improving knowledge about human rights for individuals with specific needs to ensure that no one is left behind. Livelihood interventions will target diverse groups in the productive ages of 18-65 years, comprising 60% refugees and asylum seekers, and 40% host community members. Additionally, there is a deliberate policy to ensure that 60% of the target population are women and 40 % are men, 10% of whom are persons with disabilities with the capacity to engage in income-generating activities. Indicators will be used to measure and track these demographic requirements.

Refugee-led organizations will continue to be key actors in targeting groups with high protection risks including women and girls, youth, and persons with disabilities.

2. Impact Statements

Impact statement

By 2026, forcibly displaced people in Malawi enjoy a conducive protection environment through improved access to durable solutions and alternative pathways.

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Forcibly displaced and stateless people enjoy a peaceful and safe environment.

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

Forcibly displaced and Stateless people have access to registration and civil status documentation processes that conform to international standards.

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Forcibly displaced and stateless people enjoy medical services including nutrition and have optimal access to reproductive health and HIV services.

Outcome area: Healthy lives

Effective coordination and partnerships and external relations exist

Outcome area: External engagement and resource mobilization

Forcibly displaced people have access to quality status determination procedures.

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

Forcibly displaced and stateless people experience reduced cases of GBV and improved child protection.

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

Protection monitoring for IDPs, Documentation procedures and systems function effectively

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

National legislative framework for the protection of PoCs follows international standards

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

The forcibly displaced persons have adequate information to return in a manner that upholds their security and dignity.

Outcome area: Voluntary repatriation and sustainable reintegration

Impact statement

By 2026, forcibly displaced people enjoy legal and social protection to realize their rights.

Impact area: Empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Outcome statements

Effective operations management, coordination and support are in place

Outcome area: Operational support and supply chain

Persons with specific needs have access to services

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Forcibly displaced people have increased resettlement opportunities.

Outcome area: Resettlement and complementary pathways

Forcibly displaced people have access to livelihood opportunities and are self-reliant.

Outcome area: Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods

Forcibly displaced people can participate in decision making.

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

Forcibly displaced and stateless people have access to education

Outcome area: Education

Forcibly displaced people have access to sufficient basic and domestic items.

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

Forcibly displaced and stateless people live in a decongested camp and have access to shelter that meets UNHCR's minimum standards.

Outcome area: Sustainable housing and settlements

Forcibly displaced people have access to sufficient water supply and minimum sanitation and hygiene standards are met.

Outcome area: Clean water, sanitation and hygiene

Forcibly displaced and stateless people enjoy food security.

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

3. Malawi 2025 Indicators and Targets

Country	Results Level	Result Area	Indicator	Population Type	Baseline	Target 2025
Malawi	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.1 Proportion of people seeking international protection who are able to access asylum procedures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA1: Protect	1.2 Proportion of people who are able to move freely within the country of habitual residence	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	30%	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.2 Proportion of people residing in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1%	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA2: Respond	2.3 Proportion of people with access to health services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	68%	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2a Proportion of children and young people enrolled in	Refugees and	86%	Not applicable

			primary education	Asylum-seekers		
Malawi	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.2b Proportion of children and young people enrolled in secondary education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	43%	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA3: Empower	3.3 Proportion of people feeling safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	85%	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2a Number of people who departed on resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	787	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.2b Number of people who departed through complementary pathways	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	50	Not applicable
Malawi	Impact	IA4: Solve	4.3b Number of refugees for whom residency status is granted or confirmed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0	Not applicable
Malawi	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.1 Proportion of refugees and asylum seekers registered on an individual basis	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Malawi	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.2 Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	9%	45%
Malawi	Outcome	OA1: Access/Doc	1.3 Proportion of people with legally recognized identity documents or credentials	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	39%	100%
Malawi	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.1 Average processing time (in days) from registration to first instance asylum decision	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	730	300
Malawi	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.2 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to legal representation	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%

Malawi	Outcome	OA2: Status	2.3 Proportion of people undergoing asylum procedures who have access to an effective appeal mechanism after first instance rejection of their claim	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	100%	100%
Malawi	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.1 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	Progressing towards alignment: 70-89 points
Malawi	Outcome	OA3: Policy/Law	3.2 Extent national legal framework is in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	None	Not yet aligned: ≤69 points	Progressing towards alignment: 70-89 points
Malawi	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.1 Proportion of people who know where to access available GBV services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	60%	95%
Malawi	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.2 Proportion of people who do not accept violence against women	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	79%	90%
Malawi	Outcome	OA4: GBV	4.3 Proportion of survivors who are satisfied with GBV case management services	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	74%	80%
Malawi	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.1 Proportion of children at heightened risk who are supported by a Best Interests Procedure	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2%	3%
Malawi	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.2 Proportion of children who participate in community-based child protection programmes	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	16%	50%
Malawi	Outcome	OA5: Children	5.3 Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	36%	80%
Malawi	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.1 Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported.	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	Extensive: ≥70 points	Extensive: ≥70 points
Malawi	Outcome	OA7:	7.2 Proportion of people who	Refugees	94%	100%

		Community	have access to safe feedback and response mechanisms	and Asylum-seekers		
Malawi	Outcome	OA7: Community	7.3 Proportion of women participating in leadership/management structures	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	44%	50%
Malawi	Outcome	OA8: Well-being	8.1 Proportion of people that receive cash transfers and/or non-food items	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	93%	100%
Malawi	Outcome	OA8: Well-being	8.2 Proportion of people with primary reliance on clean (cooking) fuels and technology	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	9%	15%
Malawi	Outcome	OA9: Housing	9.1 Proportion of people living in habitable and affordable housing	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	1%	30%
Malawi	Outcome	OA9: Housing	9.2 Proportion of people that have energy to ensure lighting	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	62%	60%
Malawi	Outcome	OA10: Health	10.1 Proportion of children aged 9 months to five years who have received measles vaccination	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	76%	93%
Malawi	Outcome	OA10: Health	10.2. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	91%	100%
Malawi	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.1 Proportion of young people enrolled in tertiary and higher education	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8%	10%
Malawi	Outcome	OA11: Education	11.2 Proportion of children and young people enrolled in the national education system	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	22%	37%
Malawi	Outcome	OA12: WASH	12.1 Proportion of people using at least basic drinking water services	Refugees and Asylum-	7%	93%

				seekers		
Malawi	Outcome	OA12: WASH	12.2 Proportion of people with access to a safe household toilet	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	65%	94%
Malawi	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.1. Proportion of people with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	90%	90%
Malawi	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.2. Proportion of people who self-report positive changes in their income compared to previous year	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	39%	55%
Malawi	Outcome	OA13: Livelihood	13.3 Proportion of people (working age) who are unemployed	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	8%	30%
Malawi	Outcome	OA15: Resettle	15.1 Number of refugees submitted by UNHCR for resettlement	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	2,769	To be confirmed
Malawi	Outcome	OA16: Integrate	16.2 Proportion of people covered by national social protection systems	Refugees and Asylum-seekers	0%	100%