2026

Tackling Agricultural Vulnerability and the Learning Crisis in Malawi

Source: Phiri (2024)

Executive Summary

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, challenged by a vulnerable agricultural sector with low productivity and a learning crisis, both negatively affecting living standards. Climate-smart agriculture (CSA) can help make farming more resilient and productive, but most farmers have not adopted these methods due to limited knowledge and financial resources. To encourage adoption, this brief suggests training peer farmers to share CSA knowledge through demonstrations and combining them with field days, as well as expanding Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) through NGO-government collaboration. Proposed interventions to address the learning crisis which is partly linked to language barriers, limited linguistically stimulating home environments and ineffective teaching materials, include piloting early-grade instruction in students' home languages, combining children's books with dialogic reading, and repiloting structured pedagogy with simpler teaching materials. Together, these measures offer a realistic path towards achieving Malawi's Vision 2063.

Economic and Social Context

Malawi is **among the poorest countries** in the world and remains well below the Sub-Saharan Africa average. Gross Domestic Product **(GDP) per capita was only US$672 in 2025** (Figure 1). Around 82% of people live in rural areas, where poverty rates are more than double those in cities and are highest in the central and southern regions (World Bank Group, 2025b; Cardona, 2025). In 2021, about **75% of Malawians lived on less than $3.00 per day** (Caruso and Sosa, 2022). More recently, GDP growth of 1.9% in 2025 remained below population growth of 2.6%, contributing to a **fourth consecutive year of declining GDP per capita**. Also, the high inflation of around 28% in 2025 is reducing household purchasing power (Engel *et al.*, 2026). The Gini coefficient has only slightly decreased last decade to about 0.39, mainly because wealthier Malawians consume less, rather than the poor becoming better off (Caruso and Sosa, 2022).

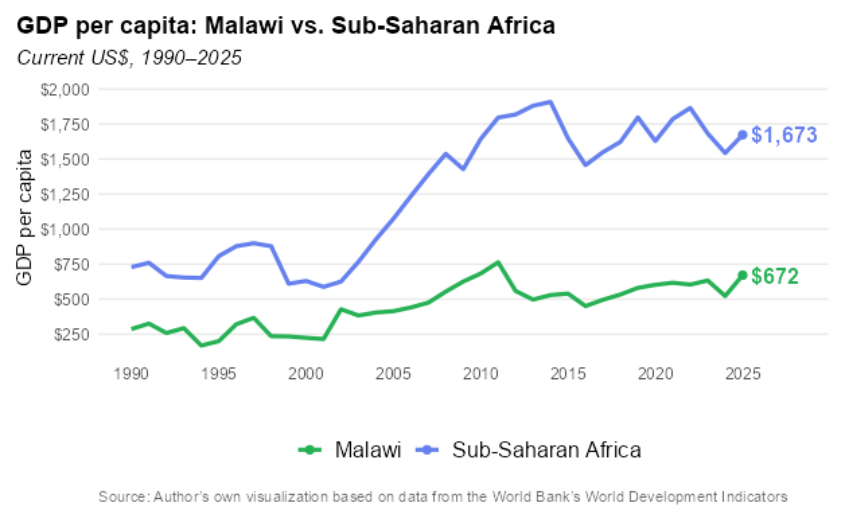

Figure 1

Two sectors are especially important for improving living standards and well-being: agriculture and education. **Agriculture employs 65% of workers and accounts for about 29% of GDP** (Ministry of Agriculture of Malawi, 2020), making agricultural productivity and resilience

crucial for rural incomes and food security. Yet **food insecurity remains widespread**, with 51% of Malawians estimated to consume fewer calories than the minimum recommended level (Cardona, 2025). At the same time, increasing exposure to **climate shocks and declining soil fertility threaten agricultural productivity**. Farmers' **reliance on imported synthetic fertilizers** also exposes agricultural production to currency depreciation and global price volatility, including spikes triggered by the Russia-Ukraine-War and the USA-Iran-War (Evans, 2026; Angel and Veyet, 2026). These challenges underline the **urgency to adopt climate-smart agricultural practices that improve soil fertility, increase resource-use efficiency and strengthen resilience to climate shocks.**

Education is also a crucial for improving living standards. Although the government spends 16% of its budget on education and offers free schooling (Mutambirwa and Frisvold, 2023), Malawi still faces a **serious learning crisis**. About **87% of 10-year-olds cannot read and understand a simple, age-appropriate text** (Pitchford and Levesque, 2024). Improving education quality is therefore essential to ensure that Malawi's growing working-age population acquires the skills needed for securing better jobs with higher earnings. Malawi's Vision 2063 also identifies climate-smart agriculture and quality education as important pillars for creating inclusive wealth (National Planning Commission, 2020).

This brief, therefore, focuses on tackling low adoption of climate-smart agriculture and weak foundational learning. Agricultural vulnerability directly threatens rural livelihoods and food security, while weak foundational learning reduces children's future employment opportunities and limits education's potential to contribute to poverty reduction. For each problem, the brief identifies key constraints and evaluates evidence for feasible policy interventions.

Method

To provide appropriate, feasible, and specific policy recommendations for addressing the learning crisis and the low adoption of CSA practices, this policy brief is based on a review of existing academic and institutional literature, including reports and data from the World Bank, and the UN. Regarding the academic literature, both Malawi-specific studies and those conducted in Sub-Saharan African countries, when possible, with similar characteristics, are used to ensure that the recommended interventions are transferable to Malawi's context.

Issue – Agriculture Background

Malawi's agricultural sector is highly vulnerable to climate shocks, natural resource degradation, and overreliance on rain-fed farming (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, no date). The 2024 drought caused by El Niño left **5.7 million people acutely food insecure** (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2024). Heavy dependence on maize, which is sensitive to drought, made the crisis worse and showed the need for more climate-resilient and diverse crops, which are key CSA practices (Campbell *et al.*, 2024). Until Malawi's Affordable Inputs Program was redesigned in 2023, it mainly subsidized nitrogen fertilizer for maize production (World Bank Group, 2025a), contrary to CSA practices, and led to **overreliance on maize, stagnating yields and soil degradation**.

Source: Pensulo (2024)

Even after the Malawi government has made **climate-smart agriculture** a **national priority**, **most smallholder farmers** have **not adopted** these practices yet (Chevallier, 2025). The literature shows that smallholder farmers face major **barriers to using CSA methods**, mainly due to a **lack of knowledge and training** and **high input costs** (Phiri *et al.*, 2022). Malawi's agricultural extension system already provides farmers with information about new farming methods and technology through Agricultural Extension Development Officers (AEDOs). These officers carry out demonstrations, field days and cooperate with lead farmers (Agwu *et al.*, 2023). However, this **extension service is underfunded and understaffed**. Each extension worker serves about 2,500–3,000 farmers, far above the government's own recommended ratio of 1:500 (GoM, 2011; Ragasa, 2018; as cited in Agwu et al., 2023; Maertens, Michelson and Nourani, 2020). So, the government needs to increase the reach and effectiveness of existing extension services and easing financial constraints that prevent farmers from adopting CSA practices that require upfront investment.

Climate-smart agriculture (CSA)
A set of farming techniques and technologies that **simultaneously secure food production, build resilience to climate shocks, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.** It weighs trade-offs among these three goals and tailors practices to local conditions. Examples: climate-resilient crop varieties, conservation agriculture, agroforestry.

Source: FAO (n.d.)

Improve extension service reach

Extension services profoundly increase the likelihood that farmers adopt CSA practices according to a systematic review across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Mnukwa, Mdoda, and Mudhara, 2025). To make the most of the limited extension staff, the government should **build on the already existing network-based communication and peer influence** present in villages. An RCT in Malawi found that **social identity of the communicator matters**. "Peer Farmers" (PFs), who are similar to other villagers, are the most effective at spreading new technology compared with AEDOs or "Lead Farmers" (LFs), who tend to be more educated and have more resources (BenYishay and Mobarak, 2019).

Source: Phiri (2024)

So, the AEDOs should **train peer farmers in CSA practices**, who can then share this knowledge in their communities. These peer farmers should also get **small in-kind incentives**, like legume seeds, to encourage them to adopt and promote the new methods (BenYishay and Mobarak, 2019). This is a cost-effective policy compared to AEDOs regularly visiting the villages, especially when these are remote and the extension service is understaffed.

Source: Phiri (2024)

However, the evidence also suggests that **simply providing information is insufficient**. An RCT in 100 Malawian villages found that **farmers who took part in hands-on demonstration plots planned to use 14% more integrated soil fertility management**, a CSA method, than those in control villages (Maertens, Michelson and Nourani, 2020). In contrast, field days did not have a significant effect. Importantly, the results reflect farmers' adoption plans rather than realized adoption, as the survey was conducted before the following planting season. Survey answers can also be influenced by what people think is expected of them, which may lead to higher numbers (Maertens, Michelson and Nourani, 2020). Nevertheless, interviews showed that farmers found **locally situated demonstrations easier to translate into practice likely because they share participants' soil and**

climate conditions. On the other hand, field-day participants could often not recall the operational details of the new technology they learned about. However, since demonstration plots cost much more than field days, the government should **combine broad field days**, which can reach many farmers at relatively low cost, **with smaller peer-led demonstration sessions** where farmers can practice new techniques under local soil and climatic conditions. This approach would use scarce AEDO capacity more efficiently while retaining hands-on learning.

Improve access to credit

Research shows that **combining extension services with access to credit** helps farmers adopt CSA practices more than either approach alone (Makate et al., 2019). Nevertheless, small farmers struggle to get credit because they lack collateral, rural banks are rare, and **only 23% of adults in Malawi have a formal bank account** (Dunga, 2025). This makes it hard for them to invest in CSA methods that require high upfront spending (Chevallier, 2025).

An alternative to formal banks and microfinance institutions are **Village Savings and Loan Associations** (VSLAs), which offer a **solution to the "last mile problem";** the unprofitable operation of these institutions in rural areas of developing countries (Ksoll et al., 2016). An RCT across 46 villages in northern Malawi found that households in villages assigned to receive the VSLA intervention were **significantly more likely to take out a loan** (Ksoll et al., 2016)**. The share of treatment households with any loan more than quadrupled, from about 6% to 26%, and borrowing specifically for agricultural investment increased significantly.** This translated into higher fertilizer use on maize. The true effect may be larger for two reasons: the reported estimate is intention-to-treat, averaging across all treatment-village households even though only 45% joined a VSLA, and spillovers into control villages further narrow the measured gap. Nonetheless, these results may still be context-specific and require more evidence on generalizability (Ksoll et al., 2016).

Village Savings & Loan Association (VSLA)
Informal, community-based savings groups of 15–25 members who **pool weekly savings and make small loans to each other**, **without** relying on **external capital**.

Source: DAPP (n.d.)

To ensure credit is directed toward CSA-specific inputs rather than general agricultural ones**, VSLA expansion should be paired with peer-based CSA extension services**. Also, since VSLAs have a comparatively complex governance structure and often require external facilitation to form spread (Ksoll *et al.*, 2016), the **government should cooperate with NGOs** that already have the relevant know-how.

Issue – Education Background

In Malawi, **primary school enrolment is high** because education has been free since 1994. Since 2026, secondary school has also been free. Despite this, Malawi, like many other Sub-Saharan African countries, is experiencing a **learning crisis**. Only **19% of children aged 7 to 14 possess basic reading skills, while only 13% have basic numeracy skills** (Pitchford and Levesque, 2024). Although students are expected to spend **9.6 years in school**, the **learning-adjusted years of schooling is only 5.5 years** (Human Capital Project, 2020). This means that about four years of schooling result in little or no measurable learning.

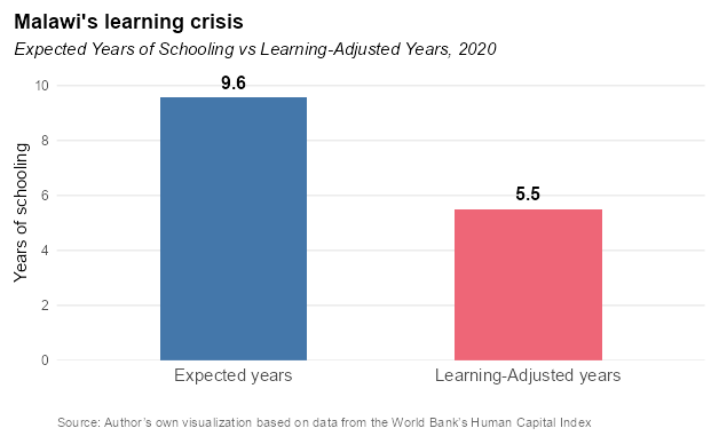

Figure 2

Improving the quality of education and basic learning skills should remain a top priority for Malawi's government**. Education is the primary mean**s by which individuals acquire the skills necessary **for better job opportunities and increased earnings**. According to the World Bank, **an additional year of education raises individual incomes by 12.4% in Sub-Saharan Africa** (Dabalen and Styvanley, 2024), but these returns depend on whether schooling translates into actual skill acquisition. **High-quality education helps reduce poverty, improve living standards, and mitigate inequality** (Alvarez-Marinelli et al., 2025). It can also **boost productivity and economic growth** by equipping workers with adaptable general skills. Malawi's expanding working-age population offers the potential for economic growth, provided that free access to schooling is matched by better education quality.

Reasons for the learning crisis in Malawi include **poor school infrastructure, crowded classrooms, and teacher shortages** that limit instructional quality (Asim and Gera, 2024). The Malawi Education Reform Programme aims to tackle this by constructing more classrooms, hiring auxiliary teachers, aiming for a pupil-teacher ratio of 60 (Ministry of Education of Malawi, 2024). Another challenge is the mismatch between the language used in school and the languages spoken at home. **Chichewa is the main language of instruction in lower primary, but nearly a third of students do not speak it at home** (Alvarez-Marinelli et al., 2025). This brief suggests three connected recommendations to address the learning crisis: teaching in children's home languages, improving the home learning environment, and strengthening how lessons are delivered.

Teach in the home language in early grades

As previously noted, 31% of students do not speak Chichewa at home, even though it is the main language of instruction in lower primary schools (Alvarez-Marinelli et al., 2025). Schools where more children speak Chichewa at home tend to perform better, while schools with **many minority-language speakers show lower learning results**. This shows that the system is not meeting the needs of students who speak minority languages (Asim and Gera, 2024). This is consistent with research showing that **children learn to read most effectively when they are first taught in a language they already know** (Alvarez-Marinelli et al., 2025). Mohohlwane et al. (2024), drawing on two RCTs in South Africa, similarly concluded that children learn decoding skills best when they already understand the language of instruction. They also find positive spillovers to English literacy, while English-only instruction weakens home-language literacy. Although the two RCTs were conducted in socioeconomically similar provinces, differences in home languages across provinces may limit the generalizability of the conclusions. The government should **test early-grade teaching in home languages, such as Yao in Mangochi or Machinga districts**, where children aged 7-14 from Yao-headed households have some of the lowest literacy rates (Molendijk et al., 2022). The pilot should compare learning results between schools teaching in Yao and those still using Chichewa in the same area.

Improve vocabulary knowledge through caregiver engagement

In addition to oral language skills, **vocabulary knowledge** is closely **linked to reading comprehension** across several African countries (Alvarez-Marinelli et al., 2025). Children in poverty often **lack linguistically stimulating home environments**, partly because they have little access to storybooks, which support language development and school readiness (Can and Ginsburg-Block, 2016). In Malawi, only 1% of children can access three or more children's books (UNICEF, no date). In a poor rural area in Kenya, an RCT found that **providing** culturally and linguistically appropriate **children's books together with dialogic-reading training improved** storybook-specific **vocabulary**, as well as reading frequency and caregiver-child interactions (Knauer et al., 2020).

Dialogic Reading
A way of **reading storybooks** with children where, instead of just listening, the **child actively talks about the story**. The adult asks open questions, encourages the child to describe what's happening and share their own thoughts.

Source: Global Giving (n.d.)

The benefits were at least as large for children with illiterate caregivers as for children with literate ones. Since this is a low-cost approach, Malawi should try parent-child book-sharing and dialogic reading in local languages, especially in areas where caregiver literacy is

low and children have few books. The pilot should evaluate if this improves early reading skills before expanding the program nationally.

Redesign structured pedagogy materials

Even when children are taught in their home language and exposed to linguistically stimulating home environments, their progress still depends on how teachers deliver lessons in class. **Structured pedagogy is a cost-effective and evidence-based way to improve learning outcomes** in low income-countries (Dynarski *et al.*, 2023) (2023). In Sub-Saharan Africa, this intervention has produced the largest gains in student learning among education interventions (Conn, 2017). Structured pedagogy provides teachers with **clear lesson plans, learning materials, skills-based training, and ongoing mentoring**. For example, Kenya's Primary Math and Reading pilot **significantly increased reading fluency and comprehension**, and the national successor, the Tusome program, achieved similar success (Piper et al., 2018). In contrast, Malawi's Early Grade Reading Activity pilot, a comparable initiative, did not yield significant gains, partly because the teacher guides were too dense and more difficult to follow. As a result, teachers either did not use them or modified them in a way that lowered lesson quality (Pushparatnam, Ding, and Molina, 2023). The government should therefore **re-pilot structured pedagogy with redesigned, simplified lesson plans** that directly reference student books, giving teachers complete and easy-to-use materials. While this will not fix teacher shortages or school infrastructure, it can help improve teaching quality within existing constraints and reduce the time teachers need for preparing lessons.

Source: DAPP (n.d.)

Limitations

This brief has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Where possible, evidence comes from Malawi, but in some cases, it is based on studies from other Sub-Saharan African countries. These **findings may not directly transfer** to Malawi and should therefore be piloted, reviewed, and adapted locally before scaling up. **Some evidence is correlational** rather than causal, which weakens the strength of these conclusions. During the research, **data access was also constrained** because the Malawi Institute of Education's website was inaccessible, so some relevant documents may have been overlooked. Additionally, the suspension of USAID-

funded education programs in Malawi during the second Trump administration has disrupted initiatives and restricted access to data. Finally, even the proposed cost-effective **interventions depend on institutional and financial capacity**, and since Malawi is one of the world's poorest countries, its ability to implement these measures will likely continue to rely on international donor support, which has proven unstable.

Policy Recommendations summarized

Policy Recommendation	Target
Agriculture	
Train locally trusted peer farmers in CSA-practices through AEDOs and **give them small in-kind incentives**	Increase CSA adoption among small holder farmers
Combine broad field days with smaller peer-led demonstration plots adapted to local soils and climate	Improve farmers' practical ability to apply CSA techniques
Expand VSLA in partnership with NGOs and link it to peer-based CSA training	Ease financial constraints so farmers can invest in costly CSA inputs/ practices
Education	
Pilot **early-grade instruction in children's home languages** (e.g., Yao) and compare with Chichewa	Improve reading and comprehension among minority-language learners in primary school
Distribute local-language children's books and train caregivers in dialogic reading	Strengthen vocabulary and early reading skills, particularly in low-literacy households
Redesign and re-pilot **structured pedagogy with simpler lesson plans, training and coaching**	Improve teaching quality and foundational literacy and numeracy

AI Disclosure

For this policy brief AI was used for background research and identification of relevant sources, however all sources were verified independently before being used. Furthermore, AI was used to assist in retrieving data from the World Bank and to refine the aesthetics of plots generated in R.

References

Agwu, E.A. *et al.* (2023) *Agricultural extension and advisory services in Nigeria, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, and Kenya*. Alliance for African Partnership, Michigan State University. Available at: https://www.canr.msu.edu/csus/uploads/2. Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services in Sub-Saharan Africa.pdf.

Alvarez-Marinelli, H. *et al.* (2025) *Effective Reading Instruction in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: What the Evidence Shows*. Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel. Available at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099448110272527300/pdf/IDU-740c63ca-259a-4fae-8d95-7935242a25db.pdf.

Angel, M. and Veyet, T. (2026) "How does the Iran war affect fertiliser supplies, prices and food security?" *Reuters*, 17 March. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/how-does-iran-war-affect-fertiliser-supplies-prices-food-security-2026-03-17/ (Accessed: August 26, 2026).

Asim, S. and Gera, C. (2024) *What Matters for Learning in Malawi? - Evidence from the Malawi Longitudinal School Survey*. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/ World Bank Group. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1596/40948.

BenYishay, A. and Mobarak, A.M. (2019) "Social Learning and Incentives for Experimentation and Communication," *The Review of Economic Studies*, 86(3), pp. 976–1009. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdy039.

Campbell, J. *et al.* (2024) "From Harvest Decline to Food Crisis: The Looming Threat of the El Niño-Induced Drought on Food Security in Malawi." Available at: https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/from_harvest_decline_to_food_crisis_the_looming_threat_of_the_el_nino-induced_drought_on_food_security_in_malawi.pdf#:~:text=From%20Harvest%20Decline%20to%20Food%20Crisis%3A%20The%20Looming,decline%20in%20food%20production%20and%20jeopardizing%20food%20security.

Can, D.D. and Ginsburg-Block, M. (2016) "Parenting stress and home-based literacy interactions in low-income preschool families," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 46, pp. 51–62. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2016.07.002.

Cardona, L.M. (2025) "Poverty & Equity Brief - Malawi." World Bank. Available at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099733404212517163/pdf/IDU-9f3c95bc-67f3-4066-af90-8b6f5d910d81.pdf.

Caruso, G. and Sosa, L.C. (2022) *Poverty Persistence in Malawi: climate shocks, low agricultural productivity and slow structural transformation*. World Bank Group. Available at: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099920006302215250/pdf/P174948072f3880690afb70c20973fe214d.pdf.

Chevallier, R. (2025) *Resilience Building Through Climate-smart agriculturein Malawi*. 165. South African Institute of International Affairs. Available at: https://saiia.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/SAIIA_PI-165_ClimateSmartAgric.pdf.

Conn, K.M. (2017) "Identifying Effective Education Interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Meta-Analysis of Impact Evaluations," *Review of Educational Research*, 87(5), pp. 863–898.

Dabalen, A. and Styvanley, D. (2024) *To reduce poverty in Africa the focus must be on education and skills*, *World Bank Blogs*. Available at: https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/africacan/to-reduce-poverty-in-africa-the-focus-must-be-on-education-and-skills-afe-1124 (Accessed: June 30, 2026).

Dunga, H. (2025) "Unlocking Financial Inclusion in Malawi: A Comprehensive Socio-Economic Analysis," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, 6(14), pp. 3944–3958. Available at: https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202561441.

Dynarski, S. *et al.* (2023) *2023 Cost-Effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning - What does recent evidence tell us are "Smart Buys" for improving learning in low- and middle-income countries?* Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel. Available at: https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/231d98251cf326922518be0cbe306fdc-0200022023/related/GEEAP-Report-Smart-Buys-2023-final.pdf.

Engel, J. *et al.* (2026) *Malawi Economic Monitor: Getting Reforms Right - Special Topic - Reversing Malawi's Export Decline (English)*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. Available at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099022026063019097 (Accessed: August 26, 2026).

Evans (2026) "Hormuz Tensions Threaten Malawi's Fertiliser Lifeline - Updates," *Agri Malawi*, 6 July. Available at: https://agri-malawi.com/2026/07/hormuz-tensions-threaten-malawis-fertiliser-lifeline-updates/ (Accessed: August 26, 2026).

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (no date) *Malawi at a glance*. Available at: https://www.fao.org/malawi/our-office/malawi-at-a-glance/en (Accessed: June 30, 2026).

Human Capital Project (2020) *Human Capital Index 2020 - Malawi*. Available at: https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/hci/HCI_2pager_MWI.pdf.

Knauer, H.A. *et al.* (2020) "Enhancing young children's language acquisition through parent–child book-sharing: A randomized trial in rural Kenya," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 50, pp. 179–190. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2019.01.002.

Ksoll, C. *et al.* (2016) "Impact of Village Savings and Loan Associations: Evidence from a cluster randomized trial," *Journal of Development Economics*, (120), pp. 70–85. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2015.12.003.

Maertens, A., Michelson, H. and Nourani, V. (2020) "How Do Farmers Learn from Extension Services? Evidence from Malawi," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 103(2), pp. 569–595. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.12135.

Makate, C. *et al.* (2019) "Synergistic impacts of agricultural credit and extension on adoption of climate-smart agricultural technologies in southern Africa," *Environmental Development*, 32, p. 100458. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2019.100458.

Ministry of Agriculture of Malawi (2020) "National Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services Strategy." Available at: https://docs.dcafs-tipdep-donors-mw.org/dt_docs/DOC20230511013600.pdf.

Ministry of Education of Malawi (2024) *Malawi Education Statistics Report 2023/24*. Available at: https://cms.nsomalawi.mw/api/download/400/ASC-Report-2024.pdf.

Mnukwa, M.L., Mdoda, L. and Mudhara, M. (2025) "Assessing the adoption and impact of climate-smart agricultural practices on smallholder maize farmers' livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review," *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 9. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2025.1543805.

Mohohlwane, N. *et al.* (2024) "Reading Skills Transfer Best from Home Language to a Second Language: Policy Lessons from Two Field Experiments in South Africa.," *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 17(4), pp. 687–710. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2023.2279123.

Molendijk, S.J. *et al.* (2022) *Malawi Education Fact Sheets 2022 - Analyses for learning and equity using MICS data*. UNICEF. Available at: https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022Malawi_Factsheet_InDesign-FINAL-2.pdf.

Mutambirwa, T.K. and Frisvold, K.R. (2023) *Education Budget Brief 2023/24 - Towards a Sustainably Financed Education Sector to support Malawi's Human Capital Development*. UNICEF. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/malawi/media/10106/file/Education%20Budget%20Brief%202023-24.pdf (Accessed: July 7, 2026).

National Planning Commission (2020) "Malawi Vision 2063: An Inclusively Wealthy and Self-Reliant Nation." Available at: https://www.malawi.gov.mw/index.php/resources/documents/mw2063-malawi-vision-2063-document?download=202:mw2063-malawi-vision-2063-document.

Phiri, A.T. *et al.* (2022) *Socio-economic, Institutional and Environmental Enablers and Barriers to Climate Smart Agriculture Adoption and Scaling in Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria*. African Economic Conference. Available at: https://aec.afdb.org/en/papers/socio-economic-institutional-and-environmental-enablers-and-barriers-climate-smart-agriculture-adoption-and-scaling-kenya-malawi-and-nigeria-634 (Accessed: June 27, 2026).

Piper, B. *et al.* (2018) "Scaling up successfully: Lessons from Kenya's Tusome national literacy program," *Journal of Educational Change* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-018-9325-4.

Pitchford, N. and Levesque, K. (2024) *Malawi's school kids are using tablets to improve their reading and maths skills*, *The Conversation*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.64628/AAJ.ht36p36ys.

Pushparatnam, A., Ding, E. and Molina, E. (2023) *A tale of two early-grade reading programs*, *World Bank Blogs*. Available at: https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/education/tale-two-early-grade-reading-programs (Accessed: June 30, 2026).

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2024) *Malawi: Drought Flash Appeal July 2024 - April 2025 (July 2024)*. Available at: https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/malawi/malawi-drought-flash-appeal-july-2024-april-2025-july-2024 (Accessed: June 30, 2026).

UNICEF (no date) *Early Childhood - For every child, survive and thrive*. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/malawi/early-childhood (Accessed: July 8, 2026).

World Bank Group (2025*a*) *How Malawi's Reform is Just the Beginning for Smallholder Farmers*. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2025/10/21/how-malawi-s-reform-is-just-the-beginning-for-smallholder-farmers (Accessed: August 28, 2026).

World Bank Group (2025*b*) *Rural population (% of total population) - Malawi*, *World Bank Open Data*. Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=MW (Accessed: July 6, 2026).

List of Images:

Pictures 1, 4, 5: Phiri, M.R. (2024). LinkedIn. Available at: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mark-rimion-phiri_future4all-malawi-with-financial-support-activity-7189155260257484801-7w36/ (Accessed: August 27, 2026).

Picture 2:

Pensulo, C. (2024) *Malawi farmers urged to diversify from national staple as yields drop*. African Arguments. Available at: https://africanarguments.org/2024/03/malawi-farmers-urged-to-diversify-from-national-staple-maize-as-yields-drop/ (Accessed: August 27, 2026).

Picture 3:

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (n.d.) *CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE- Managing Ecosystems for Sustainable Livelihoods*. Rome: FAO. Available at: https://www.fao.org/climatechange/29790-0178d452d0ca9af024aad1092d4b78b1d.pdf (Accessed: August 27, 2026).

Picture 6:

DAPP Malawi (n.d.) *Agriculture*. Available at: https://www.dapp-malawi.org/what-we-do/agriculture (Accessed: August 27, 2026).

Picture 7:

Global Giving (n.d.) *Photos from Accelerate Literacy for 6,000 Malawian Children*. Available at: https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/accelerate-literacy-for-6000-malawian-children/photos/ (Accessed: August 27, 2026).

Picture 8:

DAPP Malawi (n.d.) *Education*. Available at: https://www.dapp-malawi.org/what-we-do/education (Accessed: August 27, 2026).