



OXYGEN IN MALAWI

WHAT COMMUNITIES NEED TO KNOW

What is medical oxygen, and why is it important?

Everyone needs oxygen to survive. Medical oxygen helps people breathe when they are sick. It is used to treat:

- Babies with breathing problems.
- Mothers after difficult deliveries.
- Patients during and after surgery.
- Pneumonia, COVID-19, and other diseases.

Is medical oxygen available in Malawi?

Yes, but supply is often limited.

- Malawi uses concentrators, cylinders, plants, and liquid oxygen systems. But not every health facility has enough.
- Some facilities lack funds to buy oxygen, so they use other small budget lines to cover costs.
- Devices like pulse oximeters used to identify patients in need of medical oxygen are also scarce.
- Nine oxygen plants, supported by global partners, have helped improve access.
- Still, many hospitals face challenges with equipment maintenance, consistent supply, and staff training.

What is Malawi doing about it?

Malawi has a National Medical Oxygen Roadmap (2021–2026) to improve oxygen access for all.

- The government is training health workers to safely use oxygen and pulse oximeters (devices that measure a patient's oxygen level).
- Hospitals are scaling up oxygen production, oxygen distribution, and maintenance of oxygen systems.
- The roadmap includes rules and standards for safe oxygen use and new investments in critical care.
- Partners like PATH and UNICEF are helping with planning, equipment, and funding support.

WHO CAN HELP OR PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION?

To learn more, contact a member of Malawi's CSO Coalition for Medical Oxygen Access:

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Fiction vs. Fact: Common myths about medical oxygen

❌ FICTION (NOT TRUE)	★ FACT (TRUE)
"Oxygen means a patient is about to die."	Oxygen helps patients recover and survive. It is not a sign of death.
"If someone died while on oxygen, the oxygen killed them."	Patients often receive oxygen when very sick. It is illness—not oxygen—that causes death.
"Doctors use oxygen to harm patients."	Oxygen is prescribed to health—not to hurt.
"Oxygen machines are dangerous."	Oxygen machines deliver oxygen to patients and save lives when used properly.
"Oxygen machines are always broken."	With proper care and support, equipment can work well.
"Oxygen doesn't really help; it's just air."	Medical oxygen is concentrated and powerful for treating illness.
"Oxygen is only for COVID-19."	Oxygen helps with many illnesses, not just COVID-19.
"Oxygen is dangerous or addictive."	Oxygen is safe and helps people recover.
"Oxygen is too expensive."	The government is working to make oxygen affordable.
"Only big hospitals have oxygen."	Oxygen should be available in all health centers, big or small.
"Oxygen cylinders are better than oxygen concentrators."	There are many ways to supply oxygen, and the right choice varies based on factors like hospital setup and patient needs.