Ongoing Nutrition Activities in Malawi

Contents

1. National Dietetic Association

National dietetic association / credentialing verification: In 2015, a Postgraduate Diploma Program in Clinical Dietetics launched at Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, with support from Malawi College of Medicine. The 18-month program enrolls nutritionists holding a Bachelor of Science. It is endorsed by the Ministry of Health and accredited by the Medical Council of Malawi, meaning graduates take on the credential of Registered Dietitian. The program upholds regional and international standards with rigorous didactic and practical training. It has a particular emphasis in clinical dietetics in order to address the human resource gap identified by local experts and government leaders. Support for the Diploma Program has been provided by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Nutrition, based at Tufts University. Contact Elizabeth Marino-Costello at elizabeth.marino_costello@tufts.edu for more information.

Below are some useful contact addresses for government ministries and other organizations related to nutrition. But first a few notes on communication. Our country code is (265) and is included with the phone numbers below—don’t get too frustrated, there tends to be a few problems with the phone lines! Mail from the US takes 3 weeks to 3 months, within Malawi mail takes 3 days to 3 weeks - communication is unreliable!
Nutrition Society of Malawi
Owen Nkhoma, Chair
0998-125-005
ONkhoma@cc.ac.mw,
ONkhoma@gmail.com

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Chair</td>
<td>Owen Nkhoma</td>
<td>Chanco</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Secretary</td>
<td>Stacia Nordin</td>
<td>NeverEndingFood</td>
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<td>3. Treasurer</td>
<td>Janet Guta</td>
<td>Ministry of Health</td>
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<td>4. Member</td>
<td>Ruth Mwandira</td>
<td>DFID</td>
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<td>5. Member</td>
<td>Alexander A. Kalimbira</td>
<td>LUANA</td>
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<td>6. Member</td>
<td>Ken Maleta</td>
<td>COM</td>
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<td>7. Member</td>
<td>Lucy Maseko</td>
<td>NAO Support Unit</td>
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<td>8. Member</td>
<td>Theresa Banda</td>
<td>World Vision</td>
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<td>9. Member</td>
<td>Beatrice Mtinumi</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
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<td>10. Member</td>
<td>Mary Shawa</td>
<td>Ministry of Gender</td>
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Principle Secretary of Nutrition and HIV
Dr. Mary Shawa
Office President & Cabinet, Arcade Bldg, City Centre
1-770-714, 1-773-827 or 846 (direct)
Cell: 9-957-992
maryshawa@yahoo.co.uk

Ministry of Health (clinical focused)
Nutrition Department – Tapiwa Ngulube
PO Box 30377, Lilongwe 3, Malawi
1-789-400, 1-788-201 (direct)
Cell: 9-276-052
ngulubetapiwa@yahoo.co.uk

Ministry of Agriculture (food security focused)
Nutrition Department – Dr. Grace Malindi
PO Box 30134, Lilongwe 3, Malawi
1-755-522, cell: 8-506-440
gmalindi@gmail.com

Ministry of Education (school health & nutrition)
School Health, Nutrition, HIV – Charles Mazinga
Private Bag 328, Lilongwe, Malawi
1-789-422, cell: 8-347-760
Charlesmazinga@yahoo.com

Ministry of Women & Child Dev. (community nutr.)
Nutrition Department – Esmie Kainja
PO Box 30377, Lilongwe 3, Malawi
1-770-411, cell: 9 258 711
2. National Nutrition Programmes & Projects
   - Food and Nutrition Bill (2017) An Act providing for the right to adequate food and nutrition; labeling and fortification of food; provision of nutrition in schools; the establishment of the National Food and Nutrition Council and the Food and Nutrition Fund
   - Malawi Micronutrient Survey
   - Finalization of Agriculture Sector Food and Nutrition Strategy (2017)
3. Organizations working on Health & Nutrition

International Organizations:

- AfriCare
- Action Aid
- Adventist Development & Relief Agency
- Catholic Development Commission
- Gesellschaft Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Development - GTZ)
- Concern Universal
- Medecins Sans Frontieres
- OXFAM
- Plan International
- Project HOPE
- Save the Children
- UN: WFP, UNICEF, FAO, UNDP, WHO
- Government aid: US, Britain, Japan, German, and many more.
- World Vision International (WVI)

... and many, many more!
• Simplified planning and reporting structure for nutrition:

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<td>HQ</td>
<td>• Principle Secretary for Nutrition &amp; HIV</td>
<td>• Deputy Director Nutrition &amp; HIV</td>
<td>• Deputy Director Nutrition &amp; HIV</td>
<td>• Deputy Director Nutrition &amp; HIV</td>
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<td>• Director of Nutrition</td>
<td>• Chief Nutritionist</td>
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<td>Division</td>
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<td>• Food &amp; Nutrition Officer</td>
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<td>District</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• Food &amp; Nutrition Officer</td>
<td>• District Social Welfare / Child Development (non-nutritionist)</td>
<td>• District School Health &amp; Nutrition Coordinator (non-nutritionist)</td>
<td>• District Nutrition Officer</td>
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<td>Zone &amp; Comm.</td>
<td>Below district level (in zonal or area and community levels), there are no nutrition professionals. Each ministry relies on their extension workers to transfer any nutrition knowledge &amp; Skills.</td>
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OPC chairs a quarterly National Nutrition Committee which has 6 subcommittees that are also supposed to meet quarterly, mostly chaired by the implementing ministries (Agriculture, Women, Education and Health). Reporting all goes to OPC for Nutrition. Development partners ideally work to support this system.

4. Assessment of Training Quality of National Dietitians, their Professional Role and Prestige

There are about 100 “nutritionists” in Malawi who are a part of the Nutrition Society of Malawi (not registered with the government and not very active at the moment). I write “nutritionists” because as of 2015, there was no training program for dietitians or nutritionists. There are two schools that produce something close to Community Nutrition Educators, but nutrition education is only a small part of their jobs. If a person has had a class at the university level in nutrition, or if they deal mainly with nutrition issues in their job, they use the title nutritionist or nutrition officer. The terminology changes from organization to organization. Most nutritionists are thought of as home economists that teach women to cook nutritious foods for children. In 2000 we started a Nutrition Society and met for several years, but many years later discontinued meetings. In late 2016, efforts were reinstated to create a Nutrition Society in Malawi, which is currently still being created. The motto will be “Good Nutrition, Better Life,” with the mission to, “promote the understanding, integration and sharing of accurate nutrition information in all aspects of life.”
5. **Brief Description of National Healthcare System and Private Practice**

Health care services are free. The most common place to receive healthcare is from the local small health centers, but they can only provide limited services and treatments. Community outreach and prevention is the main service they can provide. Some of the bigger health centers also have maternity wards. Private hospitals and clinics are also available and they are generally more well-equipped, but the prices usually are out of reach for the average Malawian. Traditional medicine is widely practiced.

6. **Employment Opportunities Profile**

Because there are many nutritional needs throughout the Malawian population, there is a high need for trained nutritionists but funding is limited for salaries in the governmental sector.

- **Development / Aid** – There are jobs with the International UN, government aid and non-governmental organizations from time to time, both for local and international staff.
- **Write a proposal** – If you don’t have a job, can’t find an opening with one of the organizations, and are not in a position to be able to volunteer your services, your best bet may be to learn a lot about Malawi’s nutritional needs and then create your own position to support government efforts through writing a proposal to one of the donors.
- **Private practice** – Another option is to start a private practice (I’m not sure that any exist at the moment, although there are some health prorammes such as weight watchers, exercise programmes, yoga, etc.) If you are interested in Starting a Business in Malawi, see an article with the same title at: [www.doingbusiness.org](http://www.doingbusiness.org)

7. **Obtaining Work Permits**

When you arrive in Malawi the immigration officer will give you a 30-day visitor’s visa unless your job has already arranged something else for you. You job generally takes care of getting the visa once your visitors visa expires, if not, you will need to contact immigration services either in Lilongwe, Blantyre or Mzuzu - the Headquarters is in Blantyre at (265) 1-823-777. If you are not employed, I don’t know how long you can stay. Other options are a Permanent Resident Permit after 5-7 years in the country or a Business Resident Permit if you will be generating income through business.

8. **Local Food Customs and Culture**

The diet is maize based, with a little beans, local greens, and seasonal fruits. Animal protein is very limited, but may include: fish (especially on the lakeshore), goat, cow, chicken, insects, and mice or bats (depending on which region). Maize is pounded and most of the bran and germ are discarded. This flour is then cooked with water to form a stiff porridge that can be picked up with fingers. It is eaten mainly with beans or greens that may have a little tomato, onion, or oil added. The soil in Malawi is deficient in iodine, so iodized salt intake is encouraged. There is a law mandating that all salt sold in Malawi be iodized. The current diet can easily be deficient in protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals. In the months just before rainy season Malawians generally have so little maize in storage that the diet can even be deficient in carbohydrate. Because Malawians feel that the only true food is maize, this leaves the diet deficient in calories, too. This
is an especially bad time of the year to be calorie-deficient because Malawians use a lot of energy preparing their maize fields for the next rainy season. Malawians didn’t always rely so much on maize as a staple food. Sorghums, millets, roots crops, and local fruits & vegetables balanced out both the diet and the varied climate. The Portuguese introduced maize, and then in the late 1800's colonialism began promoting maize as the crop of choice. Then during about the last 35 years, hybrid seed and fertilizer were strongly promoted. Now Malawians are losing both the knowledge and the plants that made up their old diet. We are working on preserving this knowledge about indigenous foods and protecting nature to improve health.

9. AODA Volunteer Opportunities

Opportunities to assist AODA with your time are probably endless. Learn as much as you can about the AODA and where your skills and interest would be of most benefit both to you and to the AODA. You could:

- Assist the AODA fund-raising team by scouting out items in your country related to food, and organizing the purchase and shipping. These items are a big hit at ADA annual meetings and even in other countries in expatriate circles.
- Become a Country Representative for a country that you know a lot about and that is not represented in order to help to educate others about what your country is really like related to nutrition and health.
- Become a Chapter Team Leader or Reviewer for AODA’s Guide to International Food Practices, Customs and Cultures (contact me or the Country Representative Chair for information)
- Be a member on the AODA board; Assist in organizing conferences; Submit articles to the AODA newsletter; and I’m sure that there are more opportunities!

For further information please contact:
Tessa Acker, CR-Malawi@EatrightOverseas.org