In pregnancy, infections are a key cause of anemia and can be prevented by sleeping under a bednet and taking intermittent preventive treatment (IPTp) for malaria and deworming pills.

In 2010, only 32% of pregnant women in Malawi consumed 90 or more IFA tablets.

54% of pregnant women receive IPTp to prevent malaria during pregnancy (2010).

71% of infants in Malawi are exclusively breastfed during the first six months after birth (2010).

In 2010, 45% of children 6-23 months of age consumed foods rich in iron*.

One out of four married adolescent girls expressed an unmet need for family planning (2010).

*Includes meat (including organ meat), fish, poultry, and eggs

A multisectoral approach to prevent anemia will save lives and improve the wellbeing of mothers, infants, and children.
Anemia has substantial negative effects on the health and economic wellbeing of nations and communities. Children with anemia experience irrevocable cognitive and developmental delays and exhibit decreased worker productivity as adults.\(^1\) Globally, maternal anemia increases the risk of pre-term delivery and low birth weight, and iron-deficiency anemia underlies 115,000 maternal deaths and 591,000 perinatal deaths each year.\(^2\)

**Prevalence of anemia among children 6-59 months and women 15-49 years, by region**

*Source: Malawi DHS, 2010*

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**Trends in the prevalence of anemia in Malawi**

### Children 6-59 months of age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Severe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>73.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DHS hemoglobin levels used to diagnose anemia in children 6-59 months in grams/dL are: Mild 10.0-10.9; Moderate 7.0-9.9; Severe <7.0; Any <11.0.

### Women 15-49 years of age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Severe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DHS hemoglobin levels used to diagnose anemia in non-pregnant women 15-49 years of age in grams/dL are: Mild 10.0-11.9; Moderate 7.0-9.9; Severe <7.0; Any <12.0.

**Status of Policies or Strategies to Support Reductions in Anemia**

- IFA for pregnant women
- IFA for women of reproductive age
- IFA for adolescent girls
- Iron and/or folic acid fortification legislation
- Delayed cord clamping
- Dietary diversity for complementary feeding
- Micronutrient powders for children
- Long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) for household use
- Indoor residual spraying
- National policy on sanitation
- IPTp for pregnant women
- Malaria diagnosis and treatment
- Deworming for children
- Deworming for pregnant women
- Breastfeeding

*Information from the Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA) (https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/en) or country documentation. The status of policies and strategies have been identified to the best of our knowledge. Revisions and updates are welcome.

Evidence-informed WHO guidance can be found here: [http://www.who.int/elena/en/](http://www.who.int/elena/en/)

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Anemia is a Preventable Condition—Simple Interventions Can Have a Huge Impact

Increase iron uptake and stores

IFA supplementation among pregnant women increased from 2004 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Received any IFA during pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took &lt;60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took 60-89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took 90+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contraception use steadily increased among married women from 2000 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breast milk, milk, or milk products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4+ food groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum meal frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 3 IYCF practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Few children 6-23 months old were fed according to 3 key Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices in 2010

Reduce iron losses and infection

Insecticide-treated mosquito net (ITN) use increased more than twofold from 2004 to 2010*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant women 15-49 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 6-59 months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of children, but not women, who received deworming medication was relatively high in 2010*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Exclusive breastfeeding of children <6 months steadily increased from 2000 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children under 5 years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exclusive breastfeeding of children <6 months steadily increased from 2000 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Very few households have an improved latrine/toilet*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

All data is from Malawi Demographic and Health Surveys unless otherwise noted.
Multiple Sectors Play a Role in Anemia Prevention and Treatment

Stunting and anemia share similar risk factors and are responsive to many of the same interventions

Agriculture
- Increase income and reduce poverty
- Production of biofortified and iron-rich crops
- Small livestock/poultry
- Dietary diversity

Health
- Iron supplementation
- Deworming
- Breastfeeding and complementary feeding
- Family planning
- Malaria prevention and treatment
- Delayed cord clamping

Water and Sanitation
- Improved latrines
- Handwashing
- Access to clean water
- Livestock management
- Infectious disease prevention

Education
- Female literacy
- Health education
- Hygiene education
- Family planning education
- Nutrition education

Data Sources:
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