

# Suicide in Malawi- another example of dispensability of men?

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A 2021 article by Banda et al<sup>1</sup>, presented the growing epidemic of suicide in Malawi. She and her co-authors proposed interventions to curb the suicide outbreak in Malawi. In fact, if we follow the traditional definition of an “outbreak”, suicide in Malawi has passed the outbreak stage. It has now become endemic, and much more so among males. The 2024 suicide statistics from the Malawi Police Service are as below:

**Table 1: 2024 Suicide Malawi Suicide Statistics**

Month	Females	Males	Monthly Total
January	6	39	45
February	6	37	43
March	5	33	38
April	7	33	40
May	6	51	57
June	6	47	53
Total	36	240	276

**Source:** Malawi Police Services

A 2017 study by Pengpid and Peltzer<sup>2</sup> reported that approximately 0.8% of the population in Malawi has attempted suicide at least once, with 7.9% of the population experiencing suicidal behaviour (SB) in the past year. In terms of having thought about committing suicide (suicidal ideation) (7.2%) reported such ideation, 3.9% had planned, and 0.4% had attempted suicide in the past year. Fewer men (6.0%) than women (at 9.6%) had experienced suicidal behaviour (thus ideation, plans, attempts and completed suicide). For the first half of 2024 however, completed suicides were as shown in Table 1 above, with the number of male decedents far outweighing those for females.

## Call to Action

Banda et al comprehensively presented the overall problem and suggested what interventions could be implemented to stem the Malawi suicide endemic. However the interventions currently being implemented in the country are obviously inadequate. Our population of an estimated 20 million

people continue to suffer a mean of 40 deaths monthly from suicide. Every death is regrettable irrespective of the sex or gender of the deceased. But there are more males dying from suicide and this disparity should be cause for concern just as we serve and prevent such deaths among women. Males are the vulnerable group and vulnerable groups attract public attention and support. Time has come for public interest to save male lives.

## References

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2. Pengpid S, Peltzer K. Prevalence and correlates of suicidal behaviour among adults in Malawi: a nationally representative cross-sectional survey in 2017. *Int J Ment Health Syst.* 2021 Jun 6;15(1):57. doi: 10.1186/s13033-021-00483-x.PMID: 34092262