

Central Africa Medical Mission

A Day in the Life - Malawi

7:30am

The day begins with our Nurse in Charge, the housekeeper, and the gardener loading up the ambulance at the house in Lilongwe for the day's visit to one of the remote clinic sites. The storage trunks contain all the clinic's medical equipment, medications, test kits, record books, etc., which are restocked daily. The Nurse in Charge collects the vaccines in a cooler.

The ambulance has a large roof rack that holds most of the containers, along with maize and soya for the nutrition program. Everything is covered with a tarp and tied down for departure. Bags of pill bottles and smaller supply boxes are placed under the seats in the back of the ambulance.



8:20am

The ambulance departs, and our driver begins picking up staff along the way to the clinics. Fully loaded, the ambulance will have up to 10 staff members onboard, plus the Nurse in Charge, as they make their way to the clinics on rough, dirt roads.



9:00am

They typically plan to arrive at the clinic sometime between 9:00 am and 9:30 am, depending on traffic and the condition of the road itself in the rainy season.



At the clinic sites, people have started gathering before 9:00am, ready for the start of clinic. Our village staff will measure patients' weights and determine their place in line with a number. On a typical day, it is not unusual to have over 200 people attending the clinic. The patients are a mix of antenatal patients, under-fives, family planning, outpatients, and nutrition.

The first activity is a devotion, conducted in Chichewa, the local language, either by a Pastor or, more typically, an elder of the congregation. This elder also does our building maintenance. The devotion includes a hymn, a Biblical message, prayer, and a blessing.



After the devotion, one of the medical staff conducts a health teaching session for the people attending the clinic. The teachings cover various topics such as malaria, respiratory illnesses, scabies, diarrhea, nutrition, and most recently, coronavirus.

The teaching session is when our nurses complete a visual triage of the waiting patients, identifying particularly sick or critical cases that need the immediate attention of one of our clinicians.

Once teaching is over, the crowd forms lines to see one of the seven workstations which are under-fives, antenatal, family planning, two clinicians for outpatients, the pharmacy, and a station for vaccinations.

While teaching is going on, the staff organizes each workstation to be ready to see patients. Patients move along benches as they wait their turns. The Malawi government provides Health Surveillance Assistants to help give vaccinations. Malaria is our main diagnosis during the rainy season, and our staff tests patients for this in a separate room. They are often doing over 150 tests a day, so there is a long line stretching outside.



1:00pm



Gradually, we see all the patients, with the outpatients and the pharmacy being the last to clear. The medical staff complete their paperwork and pack up medical equipment and medicines, which are reloaded back onto the ambulance for the ride back to Lilongwe. The nurses on pharmacy duty will review the medicines issued that day and provide an order for medications to be replaced.

3:00pm

The clinic staff are dropped at various locations to connect to their minibus ride home. The ambulance returns to the house in Lilongwe, where everything is again offloaded and placed back into the pharmacy. Unused vaccines are returned to the vaccine fridge.

Sometime that afternoon or evening, the Nurse in Charge will take the order form and restock the medications and equipment list to ensure everything is ready for the next day's clinic.

