

**5** What aspirations do people have?  
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**6** Explain why Healthcare can be a barrier to development?  
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**7** How do wages compare in the Tobacco industry?  
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**1** Describe Tiyamike's quality of life?  
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**2** What crop does Malawi export?  
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**3** Why does Tiyamike not go to school?  
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**4** What are the impacts of child labour?  
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## WHY DOES MALAWI STRUGGLE TO DEVELOP?

Tiyamike Phiri is 14, with the long skinny legs of a girl entering adolescence. In another world, she would be with friends in the school playground. Instead, she is bent double at the hips, gouging out weeds from the earth under a savage sun between banked rows of tobacco plants using a heavy hoe, made of a tree branch and a metal plate.

She looks up in some wonderment, unused to questioning such a life for a child. She is not unusual. There are 18 tenant families on this tobacco farm in the Kasungu district of Malawi, each living in a straw hut.

"I left school last year because I had no school materials," said Tiyamike, her eyes on the ground and her voice quiet. "I liked school. I liked Chichewe [her language] best. I got very good grades. But my main problem was I had no exercise books and nothing to write with."

Without a pen and an exercise book, she could not do schoolwork, her teachers pointed out. But she lives with her older brother and his wife and baby and they have nothing. "I help them in the fields," she said. She would go back if she could. "I would like to do nursing," she said. Instead, she weeds, builds earth banks for the tobacco plants and sews the harvested leaves together to suspend them from branches so they dry in the air. Weeding is the worst. "It is a hard job,"

A report in 2011 estimated there were 1.3 million worldwide under the age of 14. The figures are hard to come by, but the International Labour Organization last year reported that child labour was on the increase, in spite of [the tobacco companies'](#) protestations that they are

working to end it. "Child labour is rampant," the report said.

Research conducted in Malawi revealed that 57% of all children in two tobacco producing districts were involved in child labour; among tobacco growing families, 63% of children were engaged in child labour.

Children's health is also affected; families "admitted to pulling their kids out of school to work in handling tobacco directly without protection". The children were exposed to wet leaves – with the danger of contracting green tobacco sickness – as well as fertilisers and pesticide.

These children live in the poorest of families. Tiyamike's brother doesn't want her or the rest of his family to work in the tobacco fields.

"I want my children to own shops and sell things." It's a dream the tenant farmers all nurture. That when the money comes in, they can go back to their home villages and buy land to farm for themselves or open businesses. But when the crop is sold, the money is never enough.

Yeriko Phiri, 26, and his wife, Esther Banda, 20, thought their son, three-year-old Chifundo, had malaria. They took him to hospital, with a promise from their landlord that he would pay the bill.

Eight days later, Yeriko was still working alone in the fields. He and his neighbours were very worried – without Esther's help, he would not be able to get all the work done. In the end, Esther offered to leave her pots and plates, which she had been using to prepare food for herself and her son, with the hospital as

surety. Then she set off on the 9km walk home, with Chifundo on her back.

When she arrived home, the family were together again, but not smiling. "We haven't had lunch today. We don't have money to go to the mill to grind maize."

The families are given a weekly ration of maize, which they grind to a flour, mix with water and eat twice a day as a porridge. They are given salt and the tools they need, but have no cash unless they do extra piecework in the maize fields.

Because he was alone, Yeriko could not do the piecework after working on the tobacco plot to afford the 300 kwacha (40 cents or 30p) to mill a pail of maize.

In Malawi, the tobacco is transported by lorry to the auction halls in the capital, Lilongwe – a cost paid by the farmers. Most farmers are under contract to a leaf buyer. If they don't take the price they are offered, they could put their bales up for auction but they risk not selling at all. Studies of the livelihoods of farmers have found that farmers at the end of a season just repay debts. "Unequivocally for the vast preponderance of these leaseholders, the livelihood is very bad."



**8** Why do buyers have more power than farmers?  
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**Reflection:** Why does Malawi struggle to develop?

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