

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF

MALAWI

By George J. Coakley

The Republic of Malawi is a landlocked country surrounded by Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia. It has an area of 119,140 square kilometers, of which 20% is Lake Malawi. In 1997, Malawi had a population of about 9.8 million and a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, based on purchasing power parity, of \$900. The economy of Malawi is based mostly on agriculture, which contributes to 35% of the GDP and for more than 90% of total export earnings (U.S. Embassy, Lilongwe, August 1996, FY 1997 Country Commercial Guide, accessed August 12, 1997 on the World Wide Web at URL http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/com_guides/africa/malawi97.html).

The mineral sector contributed modestly to the economy and accounted for an estimated 3% of the GDP in 1996. Cement, coal, crushed stone for aggregates, dolomite, limestone, and some artisanal salt production were produced and consumed locally (*See table 1*). Malawi also produced small amounts of lime. Production of various gemstones, such as, in order of volume, rubies, sapphires, aquamarine, amethyst, garnet, and agate on a small scale and at organized levels are also known. Coal from the Mchenga mine and limestone produced in Malawi were essential components of the country's cement and lime industries. The production of stone for aggregate and cement was the largest component, by value, of Malawi's mineral production.

The country has known mineral deposits of apatite, aquamarine, bauxite, corundum, glass sand, granite, graphite, kaolin, kyanite, monzanite, phosphate, pyrite, salt, tourmaline, uranium, and vermiculite. Resources of oil or natural gas are not known and Malawi was planning to import 50 megawatts of electricity from the Cabora Bassa hydroelectric dam in Mozambique. Ashok Coal Mining Co. of Malawi was actively seeking investment partners to open a coal mine at Ngana, where proved and estimated coal reserves of 60 million metric tons have been identified. During 1997, investment interest was also being

shown in the closed Katengeza graphite mine, the Kaycrekera uranium deposit, and the Bwanje valley limestone deposits (Malunga, 1998).

Reference Cited

Malunga, Grain, 1998, Malawi: [London] Mining Journal, Africa Annual Review Supplement, v. 325, no. 8381, July 3, p. 39.

Major Sources of Information

Ministry of Energy and Mines

The Principal Secretary

Private Bag 309

Lilongwe, Malawi

Telephone: (265)-781-255 or 781-960

Fax: (265)-784-236

Department of Mines, Director

P.O. Box 251

Lilongwe, Malawi

Telephone: (265)-722-194 or 722-933

Fax: (265)-722-772

Geological Survey Department, Director

P.O. Box 27

Lilongwe, Malawi

Telephone: (265)-522-166

Fax: (265)-522-716

Mining Investment and Development Corp Ltd.

The General Manager

P.O. Box 565

Lilongwe, Malawi

Telephone: (265)-741-664

Fax: (265)-743-768

TABLE 1
MALAWI: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/ 2/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity 3/		1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Cement, hydraulic		127,000	121,954	138,675	140,000 e/	175,800
Coal		52,800	34,630	14,635	69,930	63,210
Dolomite		2,000 e/	1,321	876	700 e/	700 e/
Gemstones, ruby and sapphire	kilograms	20,000 e/	21,454	75,588	100,000 e/	351
Lime		2,560 e/	3,544	1,119	3,150 r/	1,940
Stone:						
Crushed for aggregate	cubic meters	70,000 r/	65,039	65,601	58,700 r/	162,538
Limestone, for cement		126,000	173,758	175,578	133,648	258,000

e/ Estimated. r/ Revised.

1/ Estimated data are rounded to three significant digits.

2/ Table includes data available through May 21, 1999.

3/ In addition to commodities listed, modest quantities of unlisted varieties of crude construction materials (clays, sand and gravel, and other stone) may also be produced, but information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output levels.