

Alert

Malawi

Food insecurity in Malawi

Geneva, 28 August 2015

1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

The country experienced a number of weather related hazards during the 2014/15 agricultural production season. The rain season delayed by 30 to 40 days due to late onset of rains; this delayed planting of all major crops across the country so much so that by the time of the cessation of the rains, such that most crops had not yet reached maturity. Heavy rains followed in the month of January 2015 resulting in widespread floods and wash-aways. Apart from damage or loss of lives and other infrastructure, the floods severely destroyed field crops, caused wash-away of soil nutrients and affected farming activities such as planting, weeding, and ridging as well as fertilizer application. The country also experienced dry spells in most districts for a period of 4 to 6 weeks, between February and March 2015, which resulted in early tail-off of the rains. The result was low production of most crops and subsequent increase in food insecurity. The National Vulnerability Assessment shows that 2,833,212 people (representing 17% of national total population), in 25 of the 28 districts of Malawi will face food shortage and hunger ranging from 3 to 8 months, requiring about 124,183 MT of maize equivalent. Among the districts affected includes: Balaka, Chikwawa, Kasungu, Nkhota-kota, Dedza, Dowa, Karonga, Mchinji, Mulanje, Nsanje, Phalombe, Thyolo and Zomba, where Malawi ACT forum members are also implementing long term development projects.

2. Why is an ACT response needed?

An ACT response is needed to assist those affected by the food insecurity, including the vulnerable groups like women and under- five children, by providing them with essential needs including food and resilience support. The affected populations will not be able to meet all their food needs even with the use of other coping strategies. An ACT response is also needed to safeguard on-going development projects by ACT Forum members and to prevent the plunging of the affected populations deep into poverty. Above all, the ACT response will directly respond to the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) recommendation, calling upon Government and its collaborating partners to move swiftly to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected population and facilitate resilience building through early recovery activities.

3. National and international response

The Malawi Government, through the Department of Disaster Management Affairs, in conjunction with the UN (under the lead of WFP) and other humanitarian stakeholders, are planning and other are already mobilizing resources to respond with food aid and cash transfers to the affected households. A market assessment was done to help make a decision on the approach to be used for the response.

Government is currently importing 100,000 MT of maize from its neighbouring countries, such as Zambia and Tanzania, in attempts to bridge the existing food deficit gap. The maize will be distributed to Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) depots for sale to the public during the lean period. This maize, nevertheless, will still not be enough to bridge the whole deficit gap, estimated at 223,723 MT.

4. ACT Alliance response

Based on the assessment results in the reports by the government and Ministry of Agriculture, the ACT Malawi Forum is planning to respond to the crisis by issuing an ACT appeal. Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD), Evangelical Lutheran Development Service (ELDS), and Blantyre Synod Health and Development Commission (BSHDC) will be the ACT requesting members.

5. Planned activities

After a detailed assessment of the food situation, the forum is planning to respond with the provision of food items inputs and activities on early recovery program activities.

6. Constraints

The ACT forum's main challenge is funding for implementation of the humanitarian response programme. Currently, the Malawi Forum has technical officers and field project staff who are conversant with implementation of humanitarian responses and are currently doing nothing on this due to lack of funding.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel (Line.Hempel@actalliance.org).

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