

# WFP Malawi

Relief Operation

Situation Report (February 2016)

08 March 2016



In February 2016, WFP continued to target 2.4 million out of the total affected population of 2.86 million people with life-saving food assistance.\* With over 32,000 additional people now facing food insecurity as well, the Humanitarian Response Committee has agreed to cover this additional population from March, and meanwhile to continue assistance to all 2.86 million people through April 2016 to account for the El Niño-induced extended lean season. As the harvest nears, WFP is progressively shifting its focus to recovery and investment in the productive period in preparedness for another challenging 2016/17 lean season ahead.

## Peak Response In Numbers

(January—April)

**2.86 million** people

**25** districts affected

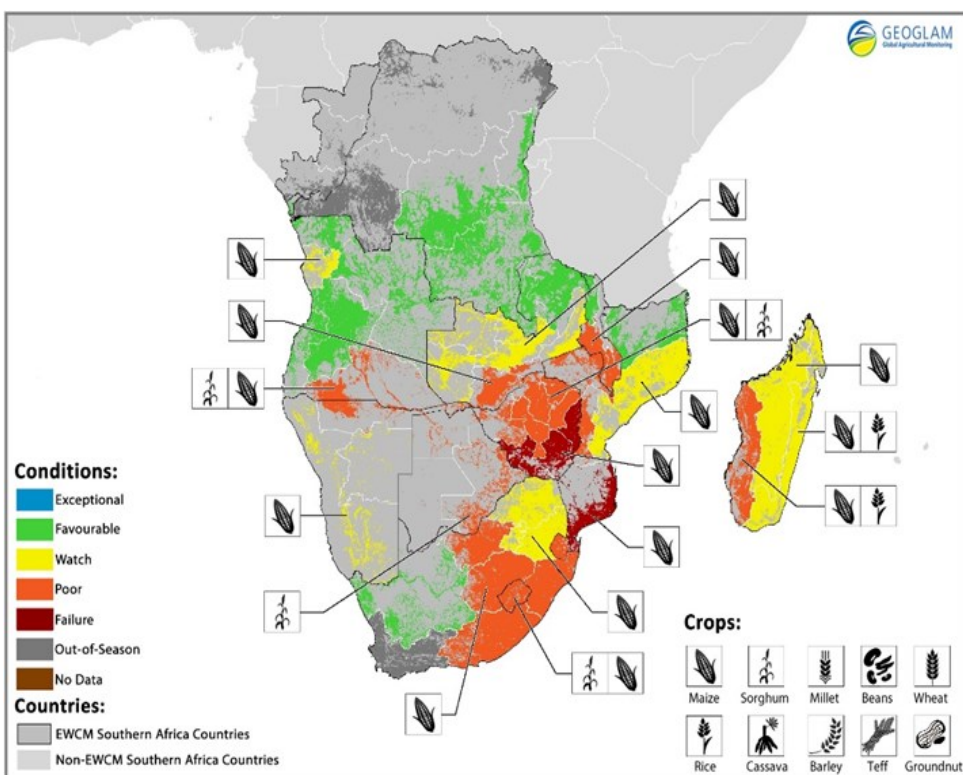
## FOOD SECURITY SITUATION UPDATE

El Niño continues to have a devastating impact on harvests and food security throughout Southern Africa, with three countries (Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Swaziland) declaring a states of disaster or emergency. The event is now on record as the second strongest signal since 1900.

In February, rainfall in Malawi improved in northern/central districts with moderate to heavy rainfall recorded —though in many areas this erratic rain comes too late for proper crop development. Southern Malawi generally continued to experience low rainfall, with eight southern districts now considered to be at risk for extreme drought. Given the expected low rainfall for the rest of the season, central and southern Malawi are projected to experience poor and failed crops (see map).



Failed maize crop being sold for animal feed in Chikwawa, 2 March 2016



Climate models suggest El Niño will fade by June 2016, but its impact on the population will continue to be felt for up to two years. At the same time, El Niño events have historically always been followed by a strong La Niña. In the Southern Africa region, this means flooding, which is as bad for production as drought, and could affect the region well into 2017.

Malawi still faces the highest inflation rate in the region at 23.5 percent, which continues to have a disproportionate impact on the poor who are struggling to access moneymaking opportunities in the face of low labour demand. The economic context is being further aggravated by the local currency that is on average 170 percent higher than its exchange rate at this same time last year, and by maize prices that have now stabilized at unusually high levels.

Significant multiyear investment in preparedness and coordinated response and resilience-building measures are needed to mitigate what's now projected to evolve into a record-setting regional food and nutrition security crisis. The MVAC is currently carrying out food security monitoring to assess the impact of the ongoing El Nino and make recommendations by mid-March for possible post-harvest/April responses.



# WFP Response

In February, of the 2.86 million people in need of food assistance, WFP as co-lead of the national Food Security Cluster, was to reach 2.4 million with food and cash based assistance. As per the Humanitarian Response Committee decision, WFP will begin assisting from March the additional 32,390 people identified as in need of assistance by the MVAC.

For February, WFP has so far reached more than 1.7 million people including 1.3 million with in-kind food assistance and 413,000 with cash-based transfers.\* Due to funding constraints, pulses remained at a reduced ration (6 vs. 10 kg) for the fifth month in a row, while Super Cereal also had to be reduced from 6 kgs to 4.5 kgs, putting in jeopardy nutrition status of women and children. Meanwhile, some 1,600 people in Chikwawa district continued to benefit from e-payments, a delivery platform using a card-based system with Standard Bank.



Cash-based transfers occurring in Mangochi district



Illustrations of important nutrition messages are displayed on posters at distribution sites visible at registration

Slight delays that pushed some distributions of assistance into early March were due to food supply challenges, poor road conditions in some districts that created access problems, and the need to create additional cash distribution sites in the northern region to reduce waiting times and travel distances.

With the MVAC confirming that food insecurity will last until the end of April 2016, WFP still urgently requires a total of US\$ 15.5 million. Without additional funds, cash distributions will have to be suspended in April, while food distributions will be drastically reduced by mid-April.

Planning for increased needs post-April is underway, aiming to decrease future vulnerability, support livelihoods and build resilience. Spearheaded by WFP and FAO, food security and agriculture partners are conducting a

'Who is Where, When, doing What' (4Ws) coordination activity to finalize productive investment planning through to the end of the next lean season (likely April 2017). Meanwhile, WFP is planning to scale-up its [Seasonal Livelihood Programming](#) and [Community Based Participatory Planning](#) tools in up to six additional disaster prone districts to inform a mixture of conditional and unconditional cash and food transfers post-April, depending on market functionality and needs of different affected groups, and to support close coordination with other social support including the irrigation planning of the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO and other NGO partners. Recognizing that resilience is a multi-year process and multi-sector investment, the immediate period (April-November 2016) would focus on high impact and low tech quick-wins, such as productive asset creation, to boost food and nutrition security.

## Breaking the Cycle

To ensure the maintenance and return of sustainable livelihoods and support a systematic transition from humanitarian relief to recovery and development activities, WFP continues to work with partners to implement a range of complementary activities to build community resilience. These activities have been designed to be non-labour intensive and not to distract people from core agricultural activities. Successes of these efforts to date



AGHCA works with communities to use theatre to drive their own positive behavior change

include a growing number of households receiving agricultural inputs (now at more than 19,000 households); revamping and creating over 85 village, savings & loans groups; training of more than 1,000 families in irrigation; distributing 20,000 tree seedlings; maintaining over 370 km of feeder road; and cooking demonstrations to promote diet diversity, amongst others.

Communication of keys messages to contribute towards positive behavior change through enhanced awareness of important food and nutrition-related themes continued in February. According to the latest monitoring on knowledge and practices, just over 50 percent of beneficiaries on average could correctly explain proper infant and young child feeding, hand washing and safe sex practices.

Art & Global Health Center Africa, WFP's partner using Theatre for Development (TfD) as a tool for social behaviour change communication (SBCC), began to pilot the TfD approach in Chikwawa and Phalombe districts in February. The first step was conducting a Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal, which supports communities to identify their own challenges and opportunities, and formed the evidence base for interactive community-led dramas to inspire the rest of the community into action. The dramas applied critical lenses through which community members could comprehensively explore SBCC issues related to food and nutrition security, and led to the development Community Action Plans on dietary diversification, infant and young child feeding practices and gender and protection.

\*These beneficiary figures are expected to increase following final reconciliation with partner reports.

## Bridging the Gap: Linking people to markets and social services

Msuwazi River is a treacherous waterway for the people of Thyolo and Mulanje districts, cutting off access to critical social services and markets each time the water level rises. When heavy rains inundated southern Malawi in early 2015, Msuwazi River again burst its banks.

"The only big market where we buy our basic necessities including maize is across the river, so when the river is full, we can't buy food and end up going hungry," says the village chief, Mr. Gubudu.

For decades, this community of about 15,000 residents has tried to find alternatives to having to wade across the river which is home to crocodiles and other animals. The most recent bridge made from concrete was destroyed by the 2015 floods. After this, the people were unable to regularly access food, medical treatment or send their children to school.

"We've had many fatal accidents when the river is full," says Kesteni Magaleta, a mother of four who lives nearby the river. "And children miss classes for several days at a time."

Magaleta's eldest child is in his last year of primary school, which is just about 500 metres across the river and would normally be a few minute walk. When the bridge broke, Magaleta was forced to instead send him to a school 5 kilometres away from their village, which was more than an hour's walk.

The poor infrastructure also restricts humanitarian access to the surrounding community – even some of WFP's most rugged vehicles are unable to endure the force of the water.

With funding from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and in partnership with the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency and Malawi's Ministry of Transport and Public Works, WFP is constructing three bailey bridges – the first of which has just opened on Msuwazi River.

A bailey bridge is a portable type of bridge made up of three main parts - floor, stringers and side panels - that can be erected without use of specialised tools or heavy machinery. Once completed, these bridges will reopen critical routes for communities to access markets and services, as well as guarantee quick access for WFP and others needing to reach vulnerable areas.



Newly constructed Bailey Bridge over Msuwazi River in Thyolo District

## Challenges and Opportunities

- Heavy rains in late January led to access constraints in certain districts, specifically Thyolo, which meant that January distributions carried over in February and caused a domino effect, delaying February dispatches and negatively affecting timely conclusion of February distributions by month's end. Efforts through WFP's logistics work and partnerships (such as the one highlighted above) should help improve access in the long run.
- WFP thanks the below development partners whose contributions have helped make the response possible thus far. However, inadequate and delayed funding to date has been a major barrier to scaling up assistance to the required levels and to act early (now ahead of the peak El Niño impact) to prevent people from falling deeper into crisis. Some US\$ 15.5 million is still needed just to meet the relief needs until end of April 2016. Humanitarian needs are likely to increase further in 2016 due to El Niño, posing substantial challenges to national response capacity and to meeting funding requirements against a backdrop of high global needs.
- Since mid-2015, there has been a steady and now exponential inflow of Mozambicans seeking asylum in Malawi. At least 7,000 people are now residing in a settlement in Mwanza district and have been reliant on external assistance, while also competing for limited resources in the surrounding host community. WFP is providing assistance to meet the growing population's basic food needs. Malawi's main refugee camp in the central region – Dzaleka – also continues to receive new arrivals primarily from the DRC and Burundi, bringing the total number of refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi to more than 32,000 people. With new arrivals continuing, and in some cases on a daily basis from Mozambique, food and funding needs are projected to quickly rise in the face of already scarce resources.
- Development partners have an opportunity to reduce humanitarian need and vulnerability through the use of 'crisis modifiers' in existing funding mechanisms and through the support to quick wins which would yield resilience benefits in the short-term, such as strengthening community education, reinforcing surveillance, extension services and expanding food and cash-based safety nets, among others.



Government of Malawi



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