

WFP Malawi

Relief Operation

Situation Report (March 2016)

13 April 2016



Peak Response In Numbers

(January—April)

2.86 million people

25 districts affected

On 12 April 2016, the President of Malawi declared a State of National Disaster caused by the prolonged dry spells during the 2015/16 season. This is following second round crop estimates that found a 12 percent decline in production as compared to the 2014/15 deficit maize production. This comes at a time when WFP continues to target 2.4 million vulnerable Malawians with in-kind food assistance and cash-based transfers, out of the 2.86 million affected people* through April. WFP and partners are closely coordinating plans to scale up productive investment during the post-harvest period in order to support immediate recovery and resilience-building.

FOOD SECURITY SITUATION UPDATE

While the strength of El Niño is lessening, the effects of the phenomenon are continuing to threaten economies, food security and livelihoods throughout the southern Africa region. At present, the global crisis is affecting 60 million people, nearly 50 percent of whom are in southern Africa, and it is expected that these figures will only continue to rise.

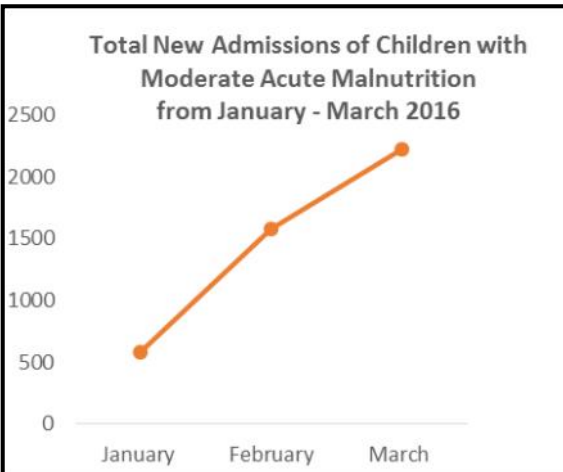
According to the Southern Africa Food and Nutrition Security Working Group, the region as a whole will be faced with extensive crop failure as many areas have received less than 65 percent of the normal rainfall this season. The group is projecting a regional cereal deficit of 7.9 million tonnes.

For Malawi, second round crop estimates show an expected 1.07 million mt national maize deficit, which is nearly five times the registered deficit last year and implies that the number of people in need of relief food assistance will significantly increase over the next 18 months.

While the humanitarian community is fully engaged in Malawi and in the region, more needs to be done—for which more funds are needed. According to the declaration of disaster, some 790,000 MT of maize alone will be required for the population affected by food insecurity for the next 2016/17 lean season. The annual MVAC vulnerability and food security assessment will be conducted early, from late April, to inform further mitigation actions and food insecurity responses, including identifying the number of people who will require assistance later this year.



El Niño has caused poor rain fall in Balaka district during the 2015/16 planting season, which has resulted in wide-spread crop failure (taken mid-March)



The El Niño-induced drought is aggravating the chronic nutrition vulnerability in the region. Hard-hit communities and vulnerable groups such as young children, orphans, pregnant and breastfeeding women and the elderly are particularly at risk for malnutrition at this time. People living with HIV and TB patients are also vulnerable especially as significant gaps in treatment access still exist across the region.

WFP's on-going real time monitoring, known as mVAM (mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping) which monitors maize prices, food security and malnutrition admissions, continues to find climbing admissions of children with moderate acute malnutrition in the 70 sentinel health centres (see graph on left).

Regardless of falling international food prices, key staple food prices in southern Africa are expected to continue to stay at above five-year average levels. Retail maize prices remain unusually high in Malawi, where prices in all markets monitored by mVAM were recorded at more than 75 percent above the five-year average. Within the past few weeks, maize prices have started to steadily experience a slight decline as the harvest in many areas has provided some price alleviation. At the same time, the rate of inflation continues to be the highest in the region at a rate of 23.4 percent and disproportionately affects the most vulnerable.

* Other humanitarian actors continue to assist the remaining portion of the affected population

WFP Response

In March, of the 2.86 million people in need of food assistance, WFP as co-lead of the national Food Security Cluster planned to reach over 2.4 million with food and cash based assistance. As per the Humanitarian Response Committee decision, WFP began assisting from March the additional 32,390 people across Blantyre, Dedza, Mangochi and Mzimba districts identified as in need of assistance by the MVAC in the December food security monitoring exercise.

For March, WFP has so far reached more than 1.84 million people including 1.45 million with in-kind food assistance and nearly 400,000 with cash-based transfers.* Thanks to recent additional contributions, WFP was able to restore full rations for pulses for the first time in five months and for Super Cereal for the first time in two months. At the same time however, ongoing resource constraints have resulted in the reduction of the ration of fortified vegetable oil by half.

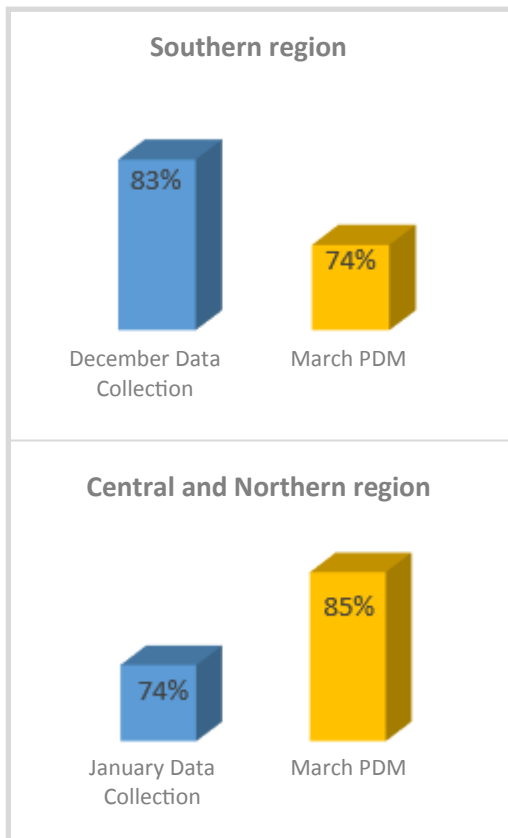
With resource constraints for cash based assistance in March, WFP was only able to provide 80 percent of the planned transfer value to targeted households. In the face of unusually high prices, this meant that people were likely unable to access the full amount of food required.

Overall, delayed funding has been an obstacle in scaling up and maintaining food and cash assistance at the required level throughout the duration of the relief response. This obstacle, paired with the deepening impact of El Niño on the most vulnerable, has contributed to a decline in food security indicators.

When comparing data collected from the second round of Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) in March to data collected in December and January, beneficiaries with 'acceptable' or 'borderline' food consumption dropped in the southern region, where the effects of El Niño have been most acutely felt, while those in northern region continue to experience better food security now than they did at the start of assistance. While beneficiaries of WFP relief assistance continue to fare better than non-beneficiaries countrywide, it was found that 44 percent of beneficiaries in the south are sharing food, indicating that beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike are experiencing high levels of food insecurity.

Acceptable to Borderline food consumption means that a household is consuming staples and vegetables every day, frequently accompanied by oil and pulses, and (for the Acceptable category) also occasionally accompanied by meat, fish and dairy.

Acceptable to Borderline Food Consumption of Beneficiaries



Breaking the Cycle

Recognizing that the resulting effects of El Niño will be long-lasting and will most immediately contribute to greater numbers of people in need during the 2016/17 lean season, WFP is finalizing a breaking the cycle of food insecurity plan that focuses on scaling up productive and nutrition-sensitive asset creation activities, as well as climate services during the post-harvest period, aiming to lessen the El Niño impact over the next 18 months. This productive investment will be paired with unconditional and conditional cash and food assistance, depending on levels of vulnerability, and will build on WFP's existing programmes in school meals, nutrition and agricultural market support.

To kickstart this planning, district officials and WFP have initiated several community based participatory planning (CBPP) sessions in order to strengthen existing village action plans and to align productive works with communities' priorities and resources.

WFP continues to work with partners on a range of recovery activities that complement the food and cash transfers and intend to contribute towards community resilience. As the current relief response winds down, a field mission is underway to take stock of the linkages that best contribute to breaking the cycle of annual response and hunger, and to document best practices. So far, partners have reported the following achievements:



In addition, WFP's work towards positive behavior change continues. According to March onsite monitoring, an increasing number of assisted households are receiving key messages on food and nutrition-related information, with the highest proportion of households receiving nutrition messages (80 percent), followed by WASH (up from 46% in Dec to 70% in March), HIV/AIDS (up from 55% in Dec to 64% in March), gender equality (up from 49% in Dec to 58% in March), and protection & SGBV prevention (up from 37% in Dec to 54% in March). Theatre for Development (TfD) work done in partnership with Art & Global Health Center Africa continued throughout March, with ongoing participatory community performances and action planning for food and nutrition-related behavior change in the two pilot districts of Chikwawa and Phalombe.

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

Strengthening Protection & Feedback

In order to deliver assistance in a safe and dignified manner and to fulfil WFP's commitment to remain accountable to affected populations, WFP continues to closely collaborate with the national Protection Cluster, led by UNICEF, to strengthen partners' capacity to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and to strengthen Community Based Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CBCFM) in its relief response.

In March, WFP organized a two-day training on CBCFM and PSEA for 50 NGO partner staff members in order to strengthen and standardize the implementation of protection measures for the response through sharing of best practices on CBCFM and PSEA. Partners were also guided to develop an action plan to ensure protection of the assisted population, which has resulted in improved ways of managing complaints and feedback mechanisms, including using standardized timelines for providing feedback to complaints in order to expedite the process. Based on feedback and observations during this response, WFP will request partners to employ a dedicated officer to fully manage gender and protection issues in the future. Other issues raised at the training will further inform programming for the upcoming El Niño response.

Innovations in Procurement

While much of the country and its smallholder farmers have been unable to harvest, in a few areas farmers have been able to endure and reap enough for their families, and even a portion to sell. WFP seeks to support these farmers through smallholder-friendly procurement strategies that increase price information and transparency, as well as help build structured and reliable market demand. In partnership with the Agricultural Commodity Exchange for Africa (ACE), WFP has purchased more than 5,800 mt of maize locally through the online marketing platform. Of this, nearly 1,500 mt was purchased directly from smallholder farmers—supporting their livelihoods and putting the equivalent of almost US\$ 400,000 into their pockets.

Some of WFP's food for the relief response is also drawn from what's known as the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF), which is a regional based platform that allows WFP to make advance purchases of food commodities at favourable prices from local and regional markets, and keep them readily available for immediate draw down as soon as funding is made available. For the first time, smallholder farmers supported by WFP in Malawi were also able to sell to the GCMF. Some 1,500 mt of maize was supplied to the GCMF from Malawian smallholders.



One farmer in particular, Mr Robium Chalinda of Kafulu Farmer Organization in Dowa district managed to sell just over 50 mt of maize to the GCMF. "I was so proud of my profit and was able to buy a cow and two goats from the sale," he says.

Mr. Chalinda points to his livestock purchased with the profits of the WFP sale

Challenges and Opportunities

- WFP thanks the below development partners whose contributions have helped make the response possible thus far. To meet the humanitarian imperative for the remaining month of the response (April), WFP still urgently requires a total of US\$ 13.4 million. Without additional funds, cash distributions will have to be suspended for April, while food distributions will be drastically reduced. Against a backdrop of high global needs, securing these funds stands as a substantial challenge.
- Access constraints in certain districts, specifically Thyolo, due to heavy rains have resulted in a domino effect of distributions carrying over into the following month, which continued to negatively affect timely conclusion of distributions by month's end. WFP's logistics team is helping to mitigate access issues in future responses by taking measures to ensure deliveries can be made under any conditions. This includes the ongoing Bailey Bridge construction as well as the recent arrival of a Swamp Cruiser boat (pictured on front) that will allow WFP to reach areas and affected populations that may be cut off in late 2016/17 due to floods caused by La Niña.
- Since mid-2015, there has been a steady and growing inflow of Mozambicans seeking asylum in Malawi. Around 10,000 people are now residing in a settlement in Mwanza district and in border areas of Chikwawa and Nsanje districts, and have been reliant on external assistance including basic food assistance from WFP, while also competing for limited resources in the surrounding host community. The government has recently agreed to move the population to a former refugee camp—Luwani—in Neno district amidst projections that the asylum seekers will reach 30,000 by December 2016. This is in addition to the progressively growing population in Malawi's main refugee camp, Dzaleka, bringing the current total number of refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi to more than 35,000 people. Food and funding needs continue to rise in the face of already scarce resources.
- Significant opportunity exists for development partners to invest in scaling up productive works during the post-harvest period to help alleviate the projected high food and nutrition needs for the next 2016/17 lean season. The gravity of the food insecurity situation for the 2016/17 lean season has now been underlined by the President's Declaration of National Disaster.

