



WFP Malawi

Relief Operation

Final Situation Report (April 2016)

18 May 2016

Peak Response In Numbers

(January—April)

2.86 million people

25 districts affected

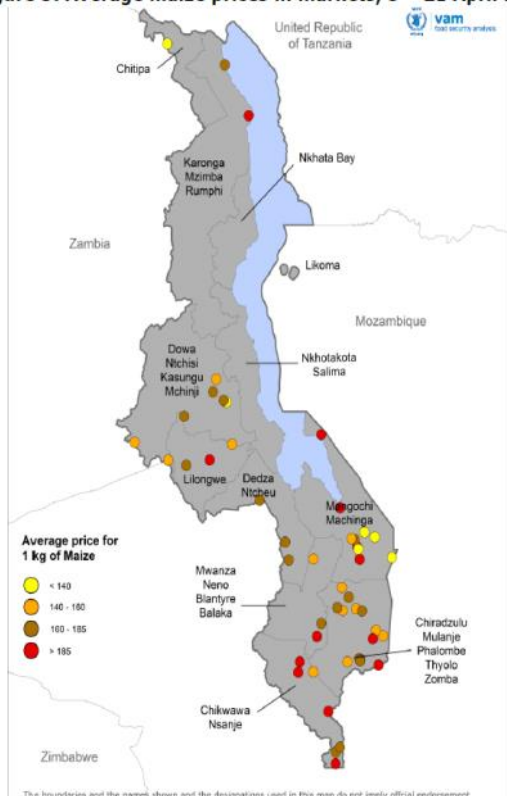
April marked the final round of WFP’s emergency response to 2015/16 lean season food insecurity, targeting 2.4 million vulnerable Malawians with in-kind food assistance and cash-based transfers, out of the 2.86 million affected people.* As the response ends, focus is shifting to taking stock of efforts to respond differently and capture best practices ahead of the upcoming El Niño response. Following the Declaration of Disaster on 12 April, WFP has been planning with communities to enable the roll-out of cash for work schemes for hard hit communities in targeted districts.

FOOD SECURITY SITUATION UPDATE

Across Southern Africa, harvests are well underway, temporarily alleviating some market pressure and allowing for food price improvements in pockets of the region as people consume for their own production. However, crop expectations remain poor following one of the driest seasons in 35 years with seasonal rainfall deficits experienced throughout the region, and particularly in central and southern Malawi. For this reason, food prices, which have remained unusually high as compared to the seasonal trend, are expected to increase again in the coming months.

To date, six countries in Southern Africa (Malawi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland & Mozambique and parts of South Africa) have made declarations of drought-induced disasters, emergencies or alerts. According to FEWSNET (April 2016), poor households across the southeastern part of the region that were hit hard by drought this season will atypically continue to experience food consumption gaps during the post-harvest period (April—September).

Figure 3: Average maize prices in markets, 5 – 21 April 2016



Source: WFP mVAM, April 2016

For Malawi, despite an average 40 percent decline in maize prices between the last week of March and mid-April 2016, April maize prices were still 35-85 percent higher than the previous year. With low crop yields, households will need to rely on purchasing food on the market sooner in the year than usual – meaning that the downward price trend will be short-lived.

WFP’s innovative mobile food security monitoring tool, mVAM, found that surveyed drought-affected households continue to resort to negative coping strategies despite the harvest, and more so in the central and southern regions than in the north. Negative coping strategies are methods households use to deal with food insecurity, such as selling assets in order to buy food, and which will make them more vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity again in the future.

Levels of food insecurity will be confirmed in late May by the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s annual vulnerability and food insecurity assessment, which will generate the evidence of where humanitarian assistance is required, for how many people and for how long.

Meanwhile, in April, cases of adult malnourishment increased with 38 percent more moderately malnourished admissions and 25 percent more severely malnourished admissions. The nutrition status of people living with HIV also remains a

significant concern, and although cases of child malnutrition decreased, the anticipated food insecurity is certain to take a toll on their nutritional status as well.

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

WFP Response

In April, 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 endorsement and based on the latest MVAC assessment conducted in December 2015.

WFP's final round of distributions have so far reached about 2.07 million people including over 1,640,700 beneficiaries with in-kind food assistance and nearly 432,100 with cash-based transfers.* Pipeline breaks for commodities that began in February caused a domino effect into March and April distributions, so April distributions will be concluded in May 2016.

Due to ongoing challenges in securing adequate funding, WFP was forced to significantly reduce rations in April with maize distributed at half ration and vegetable oil distributed at one fourth the planned amount per household. Resource constraints for cash-based transfers also caused a reduction in the transfer value. WFP was only able to provide around 77 percent of the planned transfer value to targeted households, which meant that families were likely unable to access the full amount of food required.

Over the entirety of its response, WFP received just over USD 90 million in contributions from generous donors, allowing it to avert a crisis over the past lean season. However, with some USD 30 million unmet, reduced rations remained constant for one commodity or another throughout the response, and this, together with the effects of El Niño, has meant a decline in food security, primarily for the worst-hit southern region.

Onsite monitoring data in April revealed positive results in food and cash recipients' satisfaction and lack of safety issues. The monitoring found that 100 percent of respondents were satisfied with the distribution setup, meanwhile 100 percent also stated experiencing no security incidences while traveling to the distribution point. This positive result may have been supported by concerted efforts throughout the response to collaborate with the Protection Cluster and working with partners to improve accountability and feedback mechanisms.

With the final distributions concluding in the coming week, WFP is now undertaking a series of learning exercises to collate lessons learned from a number of initiatives to "respond differently" and break the cycle of hunger. These included: cash transfer innovations; piloting individual targeting and in-depth social behaviour change communication interventions; assessing feedback and accountability mechanisms to affected populations; linkages between humanitarian response and social cash transfer, and other resilience-building activities; and a review of partners WFP works with for humanitarian responses.

While the response to 2015/16 food insecurity has come to an end, WFP in April responded to a request from the government to support the floods response in the northern region. Contingency stocks of high energy biscuits and maize meal were distributed in the north, prioritizing the displaced population. WFP will continue coordinating with the government to provide assistance until June 2016, by when the displaced people are expected to be resettled.

WFP also continues to provide for the food needs of camp-based refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi. To date, over 11,500 Mozambicans are seeking refuge in Malawi with the majority of people still residing in Kapise village in Mwanza district. Around 400 people have been relocated to the Luwani refugee camp, while others continue to reside in border locations. Meanwhile the population at Dzaleka, the main refugee camp, continues to grow, bringing the total refugee population in Malawi to over 39,500 people. If arrivals continue at the current rate, food stocks will be depleted by October. Based on a market assessment, WFP is also seeking to introduce cash transfers in Dzaleka, which will necessitate further funding.

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



Breaking the Cycle of Hunger

Throughout April, WFP continued to work with partners to complement food and cash distributions with recovery activities intended to build resilience among communities. As these activities were ongoing throughout the response, a field mission took place to observe best practices of linkage activities in breaking the cycle of hunger.

WFP will use the documented information to inform linkage activities in the upcoming El Niño response.



A road rehabilitated by relief beneficiaries

The most effective linkage activities in terms of participation, technical know-how and completion throughout the response included planting of trees, creation of backyard gardens, construction of fuel efficient stoves, building of hand washing facilities and dish racks for improved hygiene, digging of wells and maintenance of road.

In addition, WFP's work towards positive behavior change continued throughout the month with a greater percentage of people benefiting from messages in all categories. According to April onsite monitoring, the most significant increase was seen among those receiving gender equality messages (up from 58% to 80%) and protection & SGBV prevention messages (up from 54% to 79%).



A relief beneficiary using a hygienic hand washing facility

Theatre for Development (TfD) work done in partnership with Art & Global Health Center Africa continued throughout April, with ongoing participatory community performances and action planning for food and nutrition-related behavior change in the two pilot districts of Chikwawa and Phalombe. Based on April onsite monitoring from this intervention in Phalombe, women in particular were found to be actively participating in discussions, especially ones on gender based violence and diet diversification. A special operational learning exercise of the TfD pilot will be conducted to consolidate lessons learned.

Way Forward: A Major Response Ahead

As the relief response to 2015/16 lean season food insecurity ends, WFP thanks the below donors for their partnership and support. Without the emergency food/cash assistance, development gains would have been lost and the most vulnerable would have fallen deeper into food and nutrition insecurity. In addition to the learning exercises now underway, an operational evaluation is being conducted to look at the past 18 months of relief, recovery and resilience activities and key conclusions will be used to inform programming under the upcoming lean season response.

UN partners are working together now, ahead of the 2016/17 lean season, to reduce the impact of El Niño by supporting livelihoods and boosting food and nutrition security during the winter cropping period (May – November 2016). WFP has kickstarted the scale up of productive works through people-centred planning processes that strengthen existing village action plans and align productive works with communities' priorities and resources (see picture on front). WFP will support identified activities through a roll out of cash-for-work schemes, whereby vulnerable families with labour will receive cash in exchange for productive asset creation and rehabilitation.

To address the already precarious nutrition situation, especially for those with HIV, the Government, WFP, UNICEF and UNAIDS are scaling up life-saving treatment to malnourished children, pregnant/breastfeeding women and adults on ART. Given that only 15 percent of children under five eat a minimal acceptable diet, in the event of severe food insecurity it is likely that micronutrient deficiencies will worsen without a fortified blended food supplement.

The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee is currently conducting the annual vulnerability and food insecurity assessment, which will inform the extent of humanitarian intervention required under the fast-approaching El Niño response expected to begin as early as August.

Funding is most significant obstacle that lies ahead. Substantial contributions will be required early to manage a complex supply chain from local, regional and international markets in a timely and cost-efficient manner. Some 30-40 percent of overall food requirements will need to be prepositioned in hard-to-reach areas by October, before the rainy season. Timely prepositioning supports cost-efficiency by minimizing transport costs and will take on life-saving significance to ensure uninterrupted food assistance.

