


www.ifrc.org
Saving lives,
changing minds.

Emergency appeal operations update Malawi: Floods

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Emergency appeal n° MDRMW011	GLIDE n° FL-2015-000006-MWI
Operations update n° 1 Date Issued: 9 February 2015	Timeframe covered by this update: 22 January-5 February 2015
Emergency Appeal operation start date: 22 January, 2015	Timeframe: 9 months (End date: 21 October, 2015)
Appeal budget: CHF 2,639,620	Appeal coverage: 26%
Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) allocated: CHF 274,000	
N° of people being assisted: 42,130 people (7,660 households)	
Host National Society(ies) presence (n° of volunteers, staff, branches): 17 Staff and 250 volunteers	
Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners actively involved in the operation: Swiss Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, Netherlands Red Cross, Belgian Red Cross, Finnish Red Cross and Icelandic Red Cross.	
Other partner organizations actively involved in the operation: UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, UNFPA, UNOCHA, IOM, World Vision, Goal Malawi, MSF, Shelterbox, IMC, AMRA, CARE, SC, Oxfam and Water Missions.	

Appeal History:

- This [Emergency Appeal](#) was launched on 22 January for CHF 2,639,620 for 9 months to support Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) provide assistance to some 42,130 persons (7,660 households) affected by floods.
- Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF): CHF 274,000 was initially allocated from the Federation's DREF to support the national society to respond.
- This update provides information regarding the first 15 days of the operation since the launch.
- The IFRC, on behalf of the Malawi Red Cross Society would like to thank all those that have contributed to this Emergency Appeal, including Swiss Red Cross and Netherlands Red Cross (from the Netherlands government).

Summary: Malawi has not only experienced the worst floods in two generations, but the disaster happened two months early according to the usual seasonal calendar, when nobody was expecting it.

Ever since early January, the country has been experiencing continual heavy rains accompanied by storms and high winds, all of which resulted in massive flooding (flash floods, inundation and storm damage), mainly across the southern part of the country. On 13 January 2015, the Government declared a state of emergency and appealed for international aid. The 15 affected districts (out of a total of 28 districts) are Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre, Phalombe, Mulanje, Zomba, Machinga, Chiladzulu, Thyolo, Mangochi, Salima, Karonga, Balaka, Rumphi and Lilongwe.

After a comprehensive situation assessment by the UNDAC team in all 15 affected districts, the numbers at present are as follows: 1.15m people affected altogether, with currently 104 dead, 172 still missing, 645 injured, and a rough total of 336,000 people displaced. Of these, Nsanje district is worse off with 74,000 displaced, Chikwawa has 35,000 displaced, and Phalombe a total of 50,000 displaced, although not all of these are in camps, but probably 30% are with host families at least some of the time. Of the other districts, Zomba and Blantyre are next worst hit by a large margin. It is believed that numbers are still somewhat inflated, but anything up to 230,000 people are still taking refuge – whether permanently or just at certain times – in sites, with an estimated 106,000 more in host families.

Anecdotally, the floods are being described as the worst that anyone can remember, with water levels rising well over 4m across most of the lower Shire and Rou valleys (even elderly people report they have never experienced anything like it). Another factor is that people are terrified that more is to come. As this disaster has occurred so early in the rainy season, it is feared that further flooding can be expected, as rain is still heavy in the south of the country and some of the mountainous areas (Blantyre, Mulanje).

The Government of Malawi (Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA), line ministries and District Commissioners' offices) in collaboration with the Malawi Red Cross and UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP) conducted the first rapid assessment on 11 January 2015, while the flood waters were still rising. The assessment aimed at identifying the immediate needs of the people affected by the floods as well as immediate extent of the damage. The assessment indicated that houses had collapsed some completely and some partially; livestock had drowned, crops had been washed away; crop fields submerged; some parts of road networks had been washed away in some affected districts, resulting in inaccessibility to health facilities, schools and other public services. This was followed by the more in-depth assessment by the UNDAC teams of all affected districts between 17 Jan – 2 Feb, of which the results were painting a worrying picture: the situation is probably worse than at first feared, and although there may be a lower number of people displaced (accurate figures are difficult to obtain), those that have lost everything are in a really precarious position.

Due to poor sanitation in the affected areas, there is faecal contamination of drinking water as boreholes have also been flooded. The Mkula hydro electrical power station, in Blantyre district had also been affected which resulted in interrupted power supply in all districts (throughout Malawi, there is up to 30% less electricity available, and this will persist until after the rainy season). The education system has also been interrupted due to damaged school blocks and some schools being used to temporarily house affected families. Some health facilities have also been affected with damage to roofs and infrastructure.

Chikwawa and Nsanje were by far the hardest hit districts, with many dozens of people requiring rescue by military helicopters and marine boats (Malawi Red Cross volunteers were also involved in the rescue). In both areas, being on the whole very low lying, the flooding was widespread, reached its peak slowly (over a week) and is now receding again equally slowly. There are still a few areas of Nsanje district which are not accessible at all by road as a major bridge has been completely destroyed at the junction of the Rou and Shire rivers (near Bangula) and due to the river Rou changing its course.

Many of the displaced families are still staying in the public buildings they fled to, i.e. schools and churches, although gradually more and more are being moved to alternative camp sites established by the Government, and managed by respective Civil Protection Committees (these are a permanent feature in Malawi and exist at GMV/TA and district levels). The Government is keen to reopen all the schools and the pressure to move people out of them is growing steadily. In most instances, this will also be temporary as most of those displaced express their intention to return home – probably in April-May.

Table1: Affected population per district as of 2 February

Affected Districts	Total Population	Number of displaced households HH = 5.5 people	Number of camps
Nsanje	238,089	26,630	43
Chikwawa	438,895	7,064	26
Phalombe	313,277	3,340	36
Zomba	670,533	1,812	10
Thyolo	587,455	300	7
Mulanje	525,429	150	9
Chiladzulu	290,946	200	0
Machinga	488,996	583	9
Blantyre	999,491	NYK	0
Mangochi	803,602	1,526	23
Balaka	316,748	577	12
Ntcheu	474,464	803	6
Salima	340,327	5	6
Karonga	272,789	515	6
Rumphi	169,112	83	0
Total	6,930,153	43,597	193

Source: Emergency Operations centre – Shelter Cluster

However, there are some who will not be able to return as their villages have been completely washed away – in these cases, the Government is meant to identify relocation sites in suitable places. This is happening very slowly and no infrastructure or facilities have been planned for in new sites yet; in previous years, when those living on flood plains had to move and were encouraged not to go back by the Government, no alternative arrangements were made in time and the people eventually returned to their original places – only to be flooded out again each year. This is a perennial problem in southern Malawi, especially in the Rou and Shire valleys. It remains to be seen whether a more permanent solution will be found this time. If so, the MRCS will have a role in helping to establish services.

Detailed needs assessments have now been done in many places, although these are hampered by access constraints and by the fact that many people are still

moving around. Local host populations – suffering the lean season between planting and harvest – are very keen to be included in the upcoming distributions, so have been infiltrating the sites. Some of the displaced are trying to be registered in more than one site. In addition, some displaced people move out during the day to find food or work while others actually stay in the camp sites during daytime to be available for distributions, but sleep elsewhere (at home, or with relatives and friends in local villages). In any case, an absolutely verified figure for site populations is very challenging to achieve.

Accurate satellite data is now available on the extent of the flooding, and it would appear that damage is not quite as extensive as first reported – in the worst affected areas, it is 20-30% of houses destroyed and more damaged and in some areas only 10% destroyed. Damage to property, assets and infrastructure is, however, very serious, and most people had to leave in a hurry and so have lost their household goods. So far, the figure for households in need of shelter materials is 31,636, but this may go down as much as 20% in the coming weeks. (Figures as per DoDMA [Directorate of Disaster Management Affairs])

Emergency shelter is the biggest need, with non-food household items (bedding, hygiene provisions and kitchen items) the next in line. Many people are still complaining of a lack of food availability: WFP, with their implementing partners, are gradually getting round to all the sites with some provisions, but there were challenges. Maize was distributed rather than flour and milling was a problem due to lack of electricity supply or fuel. Some soya, wheat or maize flour is now being distributed, as well as pulses and oil (cereal, pulses and oil). Nutritional status data is too sketchy so far to be of any use in terms of seeing a downward trend, but this will need to be monitored carefully since there were many school feeding programmes in the region beforehand and that it is lean season, both indicate that the under-5 population will be vulnerable.



Relief items being distributed in Nsanje district. Photo: MRCS

Clean water supply in many areas has been compromised, although not completely. There are many boreholes in the areas affected and many will need cleaning. Some new ones will be required in new sites which are meant to be more than very temporary (a few months) – in these, bladders or filtration is being used. People also urgently need water storage – jerry cans or buckets with lids.

Sanitation and hygiene is a major issue, and it is lucky that so far there has been no major outbreak of disease. Cases of acute respiratory infection (ARI), skin diseases and diarrhoea are of course on the increase, but it is malaria which is the biggest worry. Use of bed nets is starting to become an accepted practice in Malawi, but they are by no means enough, so this needs to be a standard part of any NFI package. For those sheltering in public buildings, or who cannot use nets, the idea of internal insecticide spraying has been raised and might be a solution. Otherwise, many people do not have even basic hygiene supplies – soap, sanitary pads, toothbrushes, etc.

Many farmers have lost their livelihoods: 35,000 hectares of arable land were inundated and an estimated 48,000 metric tonnes of crops lost (Figures as per agricultural cluster). Livestock, especially small animals, were lost in large numbers. While this represents only 2% of the total production in Malawi, for the families concerned it is still devastating. Those living in precarious conditions in the slums of urban Blantyre also lost a great deal, their homes, goods and livelihoods (if they had any).

An under-reported issue, as is often the case, is the protection situation for vulnerable individuals - in this case, women, children, the elderly, PLWD and PLWHA. There are many small NGOs which cater to these needs, but certainly the physical and human security situation in the camps is precarious: police and Malawi Defence Force (MDF) are present everywhere, GBV cases are reported regularly and some reports of child abuse are also starting to emerge.

The key message at this stage is that rapid intervention will still save lives. The next 2 months will see bad weather, and many people remaining in very poor conditions, so shelter, relief items, food rations and preventive health and hygiene measures are absolutely vital.

The Malawi Red Cross Society is requesting a revised appeal for international assistance to the tune of approximately CHF 3 million, mainly to provide emergency shelter solutions, non-food relief items, health and hygiene promotion activities and community support, which will be provided by the many MRCS volunteers who have found themselves among the displaced population. MRCS is a significant player in the disaster response set up in Malawi – they are co-chair of the Shelter and Camp Management Cluster (the cluster system in Malawi differs slightly from the UN system, with line ministries taking the lead in each case and DoDMA taking the overall coordination role).

The MRCS intervention will focus on 6 key outcomes: improving preventive health measures; filling gaps in the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene solutions; helping to bridge the food gaps left by the lost crops and upcoming lean season; helping people to establish safe temporary shelters for their families; support to protection measures including family links and psychosocial support; and improving MRCS own capacity in disaster preparedness and response.

MRCS has been involved in the response from the earliest days, assisting with search and rescue operations, providing tents and tarpaulins for emergency shelter, helping the Government agencies to manage the camps, and conducting assessment, verification and registration exercises in some of the many public building camp sites.

Coordination and partnerships

- The Malawi Red Cross Society is the lead agency and has the lead role for this operation, with the IFRC and several partner National Societies in support. The ICRC delegation in Zimbabwe is also providing support.
- The Federation will provide key technical support and PMER expertise throughout this major operation, aiming to help MRCS significantly build their capacity to deal with large-scale disasters in the future (floods happen very regularly in Malawi, as well as other hazard events). It is expected that, in support of the EA, RDRT experts and logistics support from the SARO or Africa Zone offices will be involved.
- The PNS in-country, notably the Danish RC, Netherlands RC, Finnish RC, Swiss RC and others, will provide technical and financial assistance to the operation, either multi-laterally through the Appeal, or bilaterally as an extension of their ongoing activities. It will also be important to get support from other NS in the region with relevant expertise, such as the Zimbabwe RC, the Kenya RC and others. The ICRC will support with logistics, and in the Restoring Family Links objective.
- MRCS, as co-chair of the Shelter and camp management cluster, already has strong links with the UN HCT and most international organizations in country. As the MRCS operation is large-scale in some aspects (e.g. Shelter), but in others takes a gap-filling approach (e.g. WASH), it will be vital to coordinate very closely with all other actors throughout the response. A Federation Operations Manager will be appointed for the duration of the operation.
- There will not be required any additional Movement platform beyond the usual coordination mechanisms in Malawi – all PNS have their offices in the MRCS HQ premises and regular meetings are held to ensure good partnership practice.
- The Emergency Plan of Action will describe all the activities going on in Malawi in favour of those affected by the floods. The MRCS is not only working with the Federation on the EA operation, but also with the Danish RC bilaterally on a response intervention (Zomba district), with UNICEF on health and hygiene promotion in the camps (separate MOU signed for 3 months in January 2015), and with the Government of Malawi, the Malawi Defence Force and as implementing partner for several other organizations. There have also been a large number of donations from well-wishers (individuals or corporations) to MRCS.
- Information management will be a challenge in this operation, and the PMER functions of the MRCS will be strengthened with the recruitment of additional staff. Additional programme staff, as well as support function staff, will also help MRCS to deliver these programmes to a high standard.
- MRCS profile in the national and regional media has been increased when they report on disaster events of this type and it will be important to use the opportunities available for raising the NS's profile. For example, the arrival of the free Airbus freight cargo in Lilongwe on 5 February 2015 will be well attended by local media.
- Lastly, while security is not a major concern in Malawi, all staff members, volunteers or delegates operating with the scope of the floods response operation will abide by the MRCS security regulations, as well as the Code of Conduct. The high profile of MRCS requires an absolutely rigid application of integrity standards, with zero tolerance towards reputational risk issues.

Operational implementation

Overview

MRCS have already distributed considerable quantities of relief items from their pre-positioned stock and new supplies are coming in from Las Palmas, Dubai and Harare. A summary of the goods distributed is below:

Table 2: Relief items distributed by MRCS as at 1 February

ITEMS	Chikwawa	Mzimba	Balaka	Nsanje	Machinga	Phalombe	Zomba	DoDMA	Lilongwe	Blantyre	Total
Tarpaulins	20	29	220	0	100	0	0	0	257	20	646
Family tents	75	0	0	60	0	60	21	55	0	15	286
Collapsible jerry cans	200	29	0	200	0	200	150	200	257		1236
Bed nets	200	29	0	200	0	200	0	205	257	10	1101
Shelter kits	26	29	0	10	0	40	40	205	257		607
Kitchen utensils	0	29	0	0	0	0	0		257	50	336
Blankets	0	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	257	0	286
Hospital tents	2			2							4

Source: MRCS and Shelter Cluster

The FACT team, which has been working from the beginning with MRCS counterparts in all sectors has visited more than a dozen of the key displacement sites (some consist of several small camps), to verify the most urgent needs or do primary assessments. The pipeline of relief supplies will allow the distributions to start the week beginning 9 February, although large quantities will still need to be procured to reach the target of nearly 8,500 households (more than 20% of the vulnerable households who have lost their homes and belongings).

Technical work has progressed well in shelter, WASH and logistics as well. A design for a suitable and safe family shelter, made from only 2 tarpaulins and some wooden poles, has been completed, and training of trainers is now being rolled out among MRCS volunteers on how to erect it properly with the materials and tools which will be provided. This shelter will afford good protection, even from driving wind and rain. By 10 February, more than 100 volunteers will have been trained. The distribution and implementation plan for this is almost complete.



Erected shelter in Nsanje district. Photo: MRCS

Some of the most worrying trends over the coming months are likely to be with disease outbreaks and other health problems. Malaria is already on the increase – some estimates say that 30% of all the displaced have malaria – and other maladies will not be far behind. Scabies is common among the children, many of whom are already weakened by poor nutritional status or HIV. The WASH team is setting up a system for spraying buildings where bed nets are not available and are also negotiating a contract with a company to start de-sludging and cleaning some of the many latrines in public buildings which have been vastly over-used in the last few months.

While some areas are still cut off by flood water, the relief distribution plan will use the WFP/UNHAS MI8 helicopter which can carry 4MT per load. Owing to the short distances (a round trip can be as little as 5 minutes by air), and quick unloading (many willing hands), the work can proceed quickly once it is underway. The team hopes to have a full plan (for the items available so far) in the coming week and will aim to begin distribution the week beginning 16 February. The first sites will be Mchacha James and Makhanga in Nsanje district. The distributions will, where appropriate, include fuel-efficient stoves, which are essential in an area where over-use of



Offloading of NFIs for distribution in camps. Photo: MRCS

firewood supply is a factor in exacerbating the disaster risks of flooding and landslides, as well as reducing crop productivity.

MRCS logistics is working to upgrade their supply chain procedures with the help of the regional logistician from SARO and the zone logistics unit (ZLU).

The Shelter cluster has made great progress in bringing together all the partners involved and is trying now to establish systems, processes, standards and protocols suitable for the context. They now estimate that they have 90% of the required data to give an accurate picture, in numbers, critical needs, and the 4Ws. A working group on safer construction has decided to

promote community based shelter solutions and will roll out a Participants Approach for Safe Shelter Awareness [PASSA] training as soon as possible. The urgent needs for shelter and NFIs are a constant challenge to everyone, but so are the issues related to camp management. IOM has recently established their office here, and will bring in site planners and camp management specialists soon.

Planned interventions	Implementation (%)
Quality Programming/Areas common to all sectors	
Outcome 1: Continuous and detailed assessment and analysis is used to inform the design and implementation of the operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FACT has almost completed assessment and planning phase – EpoA to be discussed with NS on 5 February
Health and care	
Outcome 2: The immediate risks to the health of affected populations are reduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health promotion by volunteers is going on, lots of concern about malaria and more displacement feared
Water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion	
Outcome 3: Immediate reduction in risk of waterborne and water related diseases in targeted communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash officer in Nsanje to do assessment and set up the MRCS UNICEF project Contracts for spraying and de-sludging being drafted
Shelter and settlements	
Outcome 4: The immediate shelter and settlement needs of the target population are met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ToT for erection of shelters for volunteers underway with 100 volunteers to be reached by next week, then can roll out distribution Others, e.g. IOM, looking to MRCS/ Federation to lead in this area 3,200 HH on islands don't need sticks as they are available locally.
Restoring Family Links and Protection	
Outcome 5: Missing individuals are re-united with their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICRC RFL Officer coming this week to train and establish systems. Sessions on GBV and rights of vulnerable groups to be set up with Village Civil Protection Committee's (VCPCs) as soon as possible.
Food security, nutrition, and livelihoods	
Outcome 6: Basic food and nutrition are met within the most vulnerable households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not started yet – planting season goes to March for these crops, which are hardier than maize and more versatile
National Society capacity building and Disaster Preparedness	
Outcome 7: The emergency response planning is a collaborative effort by the domestic NS leadership and the Federation team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions ongoing about best way to ensure balance between MRCS ownership of the programme and capacity building from external specialists.

Contact information

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- **Malawi Red Cross Society:** Hastings Kandaya, Director of Programmes, Malawi Red Cross Society. Phone: +265 991015441; email: hkandaya@redcross.mw
- **IFRC Regional Representation:** Michael Charles, Programs Coordinator for Southern Africa Region for Southern Africa; mobile: +278 34132988; email: michael.charles@ifrc.org
- **IFRC Zone:** Daniel Bolaños, Disaster Management Coordinator for Africa; Nairobi; phone: +254 (0)731 067 489; email: danie.bolanos@ifrc.org
- **In Geneva:** Christine South, Operations Quality Assurance Senior Officer; phone: +41.22.730.45 29; email: christine.south@ifrc.org
- **IFRC Zone Logistics Unit (ZLU):** Rishi Ramrakha, Head of zone logistics unit; Tel: +254 733 888 022/ Fax +254 20 271 2777; email: rishi.ramrakha@ifrc.org

For Resource Mobilization and Pledges:

- **In IFRC Zone: IFRC Africa Zone:** Martine Zoethoutmaar, Resource Mobilization Coordinator; phone: +251 11 518 6073; email: martine.zoethoutmaar@ifrc.org

For Performance and Accountability (planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting)

- **In IFRC Zone:** Robert Ondrusek, PMER/QA Delegate for Africa; Nairobi; phone: +254 731 067277; email: robert.ondrusek@ifrc.org

How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (Sphere) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The IFRC's vision is to inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

www.ifrc.org
Saving lives, changing minds.



The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of non-violence and peace.