



UN MALAWI HUMANITARIAN SITUATION REPORT 15 FEBRUARY 2006

Prepared by the UN Disaster Management Technical Working Group

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE

The food security situation in the country remains serious. The availability of affordable maize in ADMARC depots continues to be scarce and erratic across the country. In general maize prices in local markets have remained high with further price increases reported in some areas. For the week of 2 to 8 February, World Food Programme (WFP) reported prices of maize ranging from MK 40 kg to MK 65 kg in local markets across ten¹ districts. Informal cross border trade reports from Famine Early Warning Network (FEWS-NET) and WFP indicate that maize supplies are dwindling along the border and prices are rising in neighbouring Mozambique and Tanzania. This trend will likely further increase the maize prices in Malawi.

Various coping mechanisms are being applied across the country. These include charcoal and wood selling and where available casual labour. In Mangochi district people living along Lake Malawi and Shire River have begun eating seeds from grass as an alternative food. In the tobacco growing areas of Zomba district the selling of tobacco leaves at prices ranging from MK 10 kg to MK 30 kg is just beginning as another coping mechanism.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will soon release the preliminary crop production estimates figures which will provide a clear indication of the volumes of production expected for this harvest season. An initial rapid assessment of crop development production carried out by FEWS Net in January anticipated a good yield provided the favourable weather conditions continued. However, since end of January the general crop situation in the country has been threatened by dry spells that have been persistent in some parts of the country. The below normal rainfall is worrying as this is a critical time for most crops in particular maize, as this is the tasseling/cobbing stage. If the situation continues in these areas, there is high probability that crops will wilt and yield will be affected. According to the Department of Meteorological Services, the worst affected areas are in central and northern Malawi, while most parts of the south and a few areas in the centre have received favourable rainfall for a good crop production. The weather forecast for 11-20 February 2006 predicts the rainfall situation is likely to improve over most parts of Malawi.

The National Nutrition Survey conducted in December 2005 in 28² districts in Malawi reported Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) levels ranging from 2.6 % in Kasungu in the Northern Region to 13.1% in Phalombe in the Southern Region. At national level, the prevalence of GAM is 6.4%. Four districts were identified as having GAM rates above 10%, which is indicative of a serious situation. The four districts were Phalombe (13.1%), Machinga (12.2%), Lilongwe (10.5%) and Salima (10.5%). 13 districts recorded GAM levels between 5 % and 9.9% while the remaining 9 districts had malnutrition level below 5 %. The Survey also noted that acute malnutrition is not the only malnutrition problem of children under 5 in Malawi. The prevalence of stunting and underweight is also very high. A very high severity of stunting at above 40% was recorded in 16 districts. 9 districts had stunting levels between 30 and 40%, while only in Kasungu district were the stunting levels below 30%. Taking into

¹ Machinga, Zomba, Mangochi, Balaka, Salima, Kasungu, Ntchisi, Lilongwe, Mchinji, and Dowa.

² All 28 districts in Malawi were surveyed, but Mwanza/Neno and Nikata Bay/Likoma districts were combined as they share health administration structures

consideration that the survey was carried out prior to the peak of the hungry season, the results indicate a clear need for more attention on the nutrition situation of children in Malawi. The Survey was carried out by the Ministry of Health (MoH) with technical and financial support from UNICEF. The National Statistical Office (NSO), University of Malawi, Action Against Hunger (AAH) and other stakeholders provided technical assistance at district level.

Initial figures from Action Against Hunger/UNICEF for the month of January show 2,137 admissions of severely malnourished children to 48 Nutrition Rehabilitation Units (NRUs). This represents a 30% increase nationwide compared to same time last year, the highest increase recorded in the Southern Region where 1,026 admissions took place in 15 NRU's. Comparing December 2005 to January 2006, the number of admissions increased from 1,424 to 2,137 nationwide.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE TO FOOD SECURITY CRISIS

FOOD SECTOR

The targeted food aid distribution for the month of January has now been completed in all districts following delays in distribution due to shortages of stock affecting both the WFP and the DFID supported Government Voucher Scheme (GVS). Full rations of cereals (50 kg) and pulses (10 kg) and a third ration of oil (1 ltr.) were distributed in 26 districts to approximately 4,350,734 beneficiaries totalling 49,130 MT of food commodities.

Delays in vessel arrivals, overloaded transport corridors and poor performance of some of the main food suppliers continue to create pipeline problems and will affect the targeted food aid distributions in February. As a consequence of current shortages in cereals, WFP has revised its distribution plan for February prioritising districts identified as particularly vulnerable in the National Nutrition Survey. Districts identified with GAM levels above 10% in WFP distribution districts i.e. Phalombe and Machinga, will now be receiving 50 kg of cereals, 5 kg of pulses, 4 litres of oil, and 5 kg of corn soy blend. In Zomba, Chikwawa, Mulanje and Mzimba districts, where the GAM rates are below 7 %, 16.6 kg of cereals, 5 kg of pulses, and 4 litres of oil will be distributed. The remaining two districts Chiradzulu (GAM 7%) and Nsanje (GAM 7.8%) will receive 16.6 to 25 kg of cereals, 5kg of pulses, 4 litres of oil and 5 kg of corn soy blend. The rations will most likely be topped up in the worst of districts later in February as USAID Food for Peace has supported WFP with a loan from C-SAFE pipeline to ensure timely distributions.

The Government Voucher Scheme expect to move ahead with the planned February distributions of 50 kg maize and 1 litre oil targeting 456,461 households, but will reduce the ration of pulses to 5 kg. However, the districts of Lilongwe and Salima, where GAM levels were reported to be above 10%, will receive a full 10 kg ration of pulses.

HEALTH

Cholera

Since early February, there has been a significant escalation in number of cholera cases. In the week 30 January to February 5, a total of **423** cases of suspected cholera and **5** deaths were reported in the following districts:

Districts	Cholera Cases	Deaths
Blantyre	128	3
Mangochi	66	1
Ntcheu	57	0
Machinga	45	0
Chiradzulu	45	0
Salima	35	1
Balaka	16	0
Mwanza	10	0
Dowa	9	0
Thyolo	6	0
Phalombe	1	0
Dedza	2	0
Chikwawa	3	0

This brings the total number of reported cholera cases since 17 October 2005 to **1,649**, an increase by 1084 cases as compared to same time last year. 20 people have died of cholera representing a case fatality rate of 1.2%. Of the 20 deaths, five patients died as a result of refusing medication on religious grounds.

To date more than 600 cases of cholera have been reported in Blantyre. In urban Blantyre, the two townships of Ndirande and Bangwe are particularly badly affected with poor sanitation and unsafe water supply identified as the main contributing factors to the spread of the disease. In response to the cholera outbreak the City Council of Blantyre with support from UNICEF has started organizing the removal of rubbish around public places and schools, as well as intensifying the social mobilisation campaigns to prevent further outbreaks of cholera. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health and the City health workers continue to treat patients, chlorinate drinking water, and carry out active surveillance and health education. Similar, control measures are underway in all other affected districts.

The Ministry of Health with technical assistance from WHO has also started conducting refresher workshops on cholera prevention and control for health workers, initially focussing on districts of Blantyre and Mangochi in the Southern Region; and Ntcheu and Salima in Central Region.

Rapid Health Assessment

A limited health assessment of the emergency carried out by the WHO with participation of the Ministry of Health, UNFPA, UNAIDS and UNICEF in 11 vulnerable southern region districts has revealed a moderate increase in morbidity and mortality. Preliminary results indicate a crude mortality rate of 0.41/ 10,000/day and a mortality rate among children under 5 years old of 0.56/10,000/day. The crude mortality figure falls relatively below the sub-Saharan average of 0.45/10,000/day and is within what is considered the normal rate for a settled population. Diarrhoea and malaria are reported to be the most prevalent cause of child deaths.

Avian Influenza

The Government of Malawi with technical support from WHO and FAO have prepared an Avian Influenza Emergency Preparedness Plan for Malawi. The plan which deals with animal health, wild life, and human health, includes activities such as risk assessment, disease surveillance and investigation, public awareness campaigns, procurement of pharmaceuticals

and equipment, and strengthening of local technical capacity. The Department of Animal Health is presently working on a concept note on the animal health response side, which will include proposal for a compensation plan.

NUTRITION

Supplementary feeding

Last week WFP completed the planned food distribution in 14 districts in conjunction with the scale up of the Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP). A total of 38,406 beneficiaries (25,133 moderately malnourished children and 13,273 pregnant and lactating women) will be targeted in the emergency supplementary feeding in February in 154 centres in the 14 districts. WFP already provides supplementary food to 42,845 moderately malnourished children (29,302) and women (13,543) under the regular country programme. The initial scale up of the SFP will therefore benefit **81,251** moderately malnourished children and women in total (30 percent of all moderately malnourished).

EDUCATION

Emergency School Feeding Programme

WFP School Feeding Programme has been expanded from targeting 249 schools to now benefiting 489 schools in seven of the districts most affected by the food crisis in the South. The Emergency School Feeding Programme will benefit a total of 200,000 pupils and 8,933 pre-school children in 125 Community-Based Child Care Centres during the lean period of January to March 2006, in addition to the 210,000 pupils which are already being targeted under WFP's Country Programme.

As part of the German Government's response to the crisis, GTZ supports school feeding in 138 primary schools, reaching 89,000 school children. UNICEF with financial support from Netherlands and the UK National Committees for UNICEF contributes to both WFP and GTZ supported school feeding programmes through the provision of kitchen and feeding utensils, construction of kitchen and storage rooms and the provision of safe water and sanitation

AGRICULTURE

The Government of Malawi is providing subsidized (70% subsidy) fertilizer and seed, to 2 million smallholder farmers in the country reducing the fertilizer price from about MK 3,100-3,600 per 50 kg bag to MK 950 per bag. Of the 147,000 MT of fertilizer being procured by Government, the Smallholders Farmers Fertilizer Revolving Fund of Malawi (SFFRFM) had received 135,274 MT of fertilizers in their three main depots from suppliers by 10 February 2006.

With the support of UNDP and funding by the Swedish and Irish government, the subsidies have also been extended to include 6,000 MT of maize seed. 4,700 MT of the 6,000 MT of seeds have been purchased and distributed to ADMARC and SFFRFM.

The Ministry of Agriculture is presently preparing to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the 2005/2006 Emergency Response. Draft Terms of Reference have been drawn up by the Ministry of Agriculture with support from UNDP and World Bank and are being circulated to relevant stakeholders for comments. The European Commission has indicated its willingness

to fund the evaluation exercise. World Bank and UNDP also have some funds available to contribute to the evaluation.

UPDATE ON UN FLASH APPEAL

On Tuesday 30 August 2005, the UN system in Malawi issued a Flash Appeal. The overall purpose of the Appeal was to alert the wider international community of the seriousness of the food insecurity in Malawi and raise funds for a Government led comprehensive approach to address the situation. Thus far, the UN system and Government of Malawi have received approximately **US\$56 million** against the originally required US\$88 million. The UN system in Malawi has since revised the requirements in some sectors of the Appeal to address the deteriorating situation especially in the health, nutrition and food security sectors. UNDP withdrew the agricultural inputs project, as the planting season has begun and the window of opportunity passed. Collectively, the UN revised requests now total approximately **US\$ 74 million**.

The below table indicates the current response to the UN Flash Appeal. In addition, Spain has pledged approximately US\$ 300,000 toward crop diversification activities. It should also be noted that a number of donors, notably the European Union and the United Kingdom have responded significantly to government's request for emergency assistance outside or prior to the appeal. Further information regarding the contributions given outside the appeal is available from Government, while information regarding pre-appeal contributions can be found at the UN Financial Tracking Service on www.reliefweb.int/fts.

RESPONSE TO UN FLASH APPEAL (updated 14 February 2006)

Sector	Requirements (US\$)	Revised Requirements (US\$)	Commitments & Contributions (US\$)	Source of Funding
AGRICULTURE	36,455,000	6,971,878 2,000,000	914,634 301,125 242,455 1,290,244 4,767,000	Ireland Ireland Luxembourg Sweden United Kingdom
Sector Subtotal		8,971,878	7,515,458	
EDUCATION	450,000	500,000	400,000 158,730	Netherlands UK NC for Unicef
Sector Subtotal		500,000	558,730	
FOOD	48,805,869	48,805,869 150,000	361,882 996,016 608,973 1,785,714 168,823 339,213 13,013,892 1,184,133 292,401 100,000 4,000,000 14,239,521	Belgium France Ireland Japan Luxembourg Luxembourg Malawi Netherlands Spain Turkey United Kingdom United States
Sector Subtotal		48,955,869	37,090,568	
HEALTH & NUTRITION	1,750,000	10,500,000 2,900,000	427,350 525,766 764,343 121,065 3,200,000 381,840 750,000 644,330 101,503 169,856 258,175 361,010 400,000 200,000 485,000 51,219	Canada Denmark ECHO Luxembourg Netherlands Norway Norway Sweden Sweden NC for Unicef Switzerland UK (Scotland) UK NC for Unicef United States United States US NC for Unicef US NC for Unicef
Sector Subtotal		13,400,000	8,841,457	
PROTECTION, HUMAN RIGHTS, RULE OF LAW	300,000	300,000	400,000	Netherlands
Sector Subtotal		300,000	400,000	
WATER & SANITATION	-	1,700,000	427,350 411,569 800,000 51,816	Canada ECHO Netherlands UK NC for Unicef
Sector Subtotal		1,700,000	1,690,735	
AGENCY & SECTOR NOT YET SPECIFIED				
Sector Subtotal			-	
Grand Total	87,760,869	73,827,747	56,096,948	

The US\$ 4,767,000 provided by United Kingdom was given to Government of Malawi as direct budget support against the appeal and earmarked by Government for agricultural inputs.