



Government of Malawi

Department of Disaster Management Affairs

Statement by the Secretary and Commissioner for Disaster Management Affairs, Mr. Wilson Moleni on Cyclone Idai Response and Recovery Needs during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment.

24th to 26th June, Geneva

1. Background

Malawi is exposed to various hazards, both natural and human-induced. Recently, the country has witnessed an increase in the frequency and magnitude of these hazards, which often culminate into disasters leading to damage to infrastructure, loss of lives, property and livelihoods, among others. Disasters have also impacted on the socio-economic development of the country, while eroding efforts and gains in infrastructural development and other spheres of life.

2. Impact of Cyclone Idai

From 5th March, 2019, the country experienced heavy rains accompanied by strong winds as a result of the Tropical Cyclone Idai.

The heavy and persistent rains led to severe flooding in fifteen (15) districts and two (2) cities in southern Malawi. Over 975,000 people were affected, with over 86,976 people displaced, with 60 deaths and 672 injuries recorded. The displaced people sought refuge in 173 displacement sites/ camps across the affected districts.

The heavy rains and floods damaged infrastructure, including houses, roads, bridges, and water and irrigation systems. In the social sector, the housing subsector experienced the greatest damage, with 288,371 houses partly or completely destroyed. Most of the displaced sought refuge in schools, churches, community buildings and other temporary shelters. Some were hosted by relatives or neighbours. Around 80% of the displaced people sought refuge in schools, preventing delivery of education services as students were not able to attend lessons as their schools were damaged or being used by the displaced households as temporary shelter.

All the affected districts had populations targeted receiving food assistance under the 2018/ 2019 national food insecurity response programme, hence the cyclone exacerbated their existing dire situation and vulnerabilities.

3. Flood Disaster Response

Following the disaster, the President of the Republic of Malawi, His Excellency Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika declared a state of disaster and appealed for humanitarian assistance towards flood-affected people on 8th March, 2019.

Government activated the National Contingency Plan and all the clusters to undertake assessments, search and rescue, implement and coordinate response interventions.

The Department of Disaster Management Affairs in collaboration with the UN Country Team, partners and clusters facilitated the development of a 2019 Response Plan aimed at providing immediate assistance to the affected people. The plan targeted a total of 162,640 households for three months up to June, 2019. The total requirements for the immediate response was **US\$45.2 million**. As at 15th June, 2019, over 87% of the response requirements had been funded.

Provision of relief food and non-food items started immediately from the government contingency stocks and other humanitarian actors. Apart from provision of relief items, humanitarian partners also provided life-supporting services including water, sanitation and hygiene, protection and psychosocial support.

The Government of Malawi acknowledges and commends the foreign governments, UN Country Team, organizations, development partners, the private sector and individuals of goodwill for the

support rendered to address the immediate basic and survival needs of the flood affected people.

With over 87% of the response requirements met, a significant proportion of our targets under the response plan were realized. Nevertheless, as we approach the close-out of the response phase, there remains some residual humanitarian needs which we do not wish to leave unmet. These include needs in the agriculture sector where small scale farmers continue to lack access to farmlands and irrigable land.

4. Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction Needs

The Government of Malawi, with support from UNDP, the World Bank and the European Union, commissioned a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) to assess the impact of the floods on different sectors and determine the recovery and reconstruction needs across the affected districts. The PDNA focused on three major sectors of the economy and crosscutting sectors:

- i. **Productive Sector** - Agriculture (include crops, irrigation and fisheries) and Industry and Trade;
- ii. **Social Sector**- Education, Health, Nutrition and Housing;
- iii. **Infrastructure** - Transport, Energy, Water and Sanitation and Water Resources; and
- iv. **Cross cutting issues:** Disaster Risk Reduction, Employment and Livelihoods, Gender, Disability, Governance and Environment.

The **total damage and losses** are estimated at **US\$ 220.2 million)** while the **total Economic Impact** is estimated at **US\$ 9.96 million** representing 0.13% of GDP (production approach). The **Total cost of recovery & reconstruction** is estimated at **US\$370.5 million.**

Government is mobilizing resources to facilitate implementation of the recovery priorities and strategies identified by the sectors. So far, the World Bank has committed US\$120 million (out of which US\$40 million is earmarked for response related activities) to support recovery interventions. There are other commitments from the African Development Bank (AfDB).

This means that we still have a huge gap to meet the recovery requirements. I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to appeal for support from development partners to assist the Government of Malawi in its recovery efforts.

5. Lessons Learned

5.1. Prepositioning Contingency Stocks

Stockpiling and prepositioning of contingency stocks is critical in facilitating timely response and alleviating the suffering of the affected people. The prepositioned contingency stocks assisted

government to quickly reach out to the affected with an initial package of food items within the shortest time.

5.2. Timely Needs Assessments and requirements for disaggregated data

Timely undertaking of needs assessment is critical in facilitating the development of the response plan, mobilization of resources for response and timely provision of relief assistance.

While the need for comprehensive disaggregated data and needs analysis are key, there is also need to ensure that they don't impede provision of humanitarian assistance, and efforts are made to quickly reach out to the needs of the affected population to save lives and alleviate suffering.

5.3. Coordination saves lives

The cluster system facilitated joint planning, implementation and coordination of disaster preparedness and response. This coordination enabled the effective delivery of life-saving support to the affected populations. While the cluster system has been institutionalized at the national level, its operation at the district level has been limited. Government and its humanitarian partners are working to facilitate its institutionalization at district level.

5.4. Ensuring Coherence

Our partnership with multiple actors across the humanitarian and development strata has ensured that we stayed focused on ensuring

coherence between the robust humanitarian response phase and the imminent journey to recovery and resilience-building. We worked purposively to integrate approaches that ensure a smooth transition from humanitarian relief to longer term recovery with the support of our development partners particularly the UN, World Bank and others. This is translating into a well-articulated recovery planning in collaboration with our partners to ensure increased coherence and synergies between planned interventions by the clusters and sectors.

5.5. Early financing- Early action

The disaster required undertaking of early action to save lives, ensure survival needs and alleviate the suffering of the affected population. The timely declaration of a 'state of disaster' by the State President facilitated early action. The disaster also portrayed the need for development and humanitarian partners to review early financing tools such as reprogramming of funds for existing programmes and crisis modifiers, which are critical in facilitating early action in disaster response.

5.6. Cross-border Risk Monitoring and Response Mechanisms

There is need to monitor cross border risks and put in place measures for bilateral and regional response mechanisms. Cyclone Idai displaced some Mozambican population who eventually sought refuge and humanitarian assistance in Malawi therefore underlying the importance of bilateral and regional mechanisms on cross-border risks.

5.7. Participatory and Coordinated Resettlement

While government and partners are facilitating the return of IDPs and resettlement of some of the flood affected populations, it is becoming apparent that implementation of the durable solution strategy requires the elaboration of cross sectorial plans, bringing together affected communities involvement, humanitarian and development actors under the leadership of the relevant authorities. Underlying cultural factors and fears to relocation and resettlement have to be negotiated with the concerned communities.

5.8. Harmonization of Indigenous Knowledge and Conventional Early Warnings

Over recent years the government with support from the global environment facility and Green Climate Fund is enhancing early warning systems. NGOs are also implementing community based early warning systems. However, there is need to harmonize with the culturally deep-rooted indigenous knowledge systems on the hazards to ensure and maximize early action by the targeted communities.

6. Recovery Planning and Appeal

Government in collaboration with the UN Country Team and humanitarian partners is facilitating the development of a recovery plan to operationalize the implementation of the recovery interventions identified in the PDNA. The finer details of the consultative recovery planning exercise are expected by the end of July. However, a preview of the recovery needs and related costs as outlined in the first draft of a consolidated plan indicate a recovery

cost of about **\$370.5 million** representing needs in the main sectors affected by the disaster.

In the transition to recovery, government is also facilitating the return and resettlement of internally displaced households to safer areas through identification and provision of land and basic start-up packages of shelter, food and non-food items. The Government, in collaboration with humanitarian partners, is also supporting the affected people in rebuilding their livelihoods through a range of recovery interventions. However, there is need for support in the provision of basic social amenities, such as portable water, education and health facilities and other infrastructure in the resettlement areas.

Malawi developed a National Resilience Strategy (NRS) which focuses on breaking the cycle of food and nutrition insecurity and other disasters that the country faces. The transition from the 2019 humanitarian response to the recovery will be aligned to the NRS and follow principles of Building Back Better and Smarter in order to build the resilience of Malawian communities that are usually affected by disasters.

Government reaffirms its commitment to building resilience, to building back better, and to further integrating early recovery approaches that focus on minimizing the negative impacts of recurrent disasters on the lives of people, especially the most vulnerable.

I would, therefore, once again, like to appeal for financial support from our development partners for the implementation of the recovery and resilience interventions.