Government of the Republic of Malawi

The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee(MVAC)

Bulletin No. 16/19Volume 1

MALAWI Vulnerability Assessment Committee

STATE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY DURING THE 2019/2020 CONSUMPTION YEAR

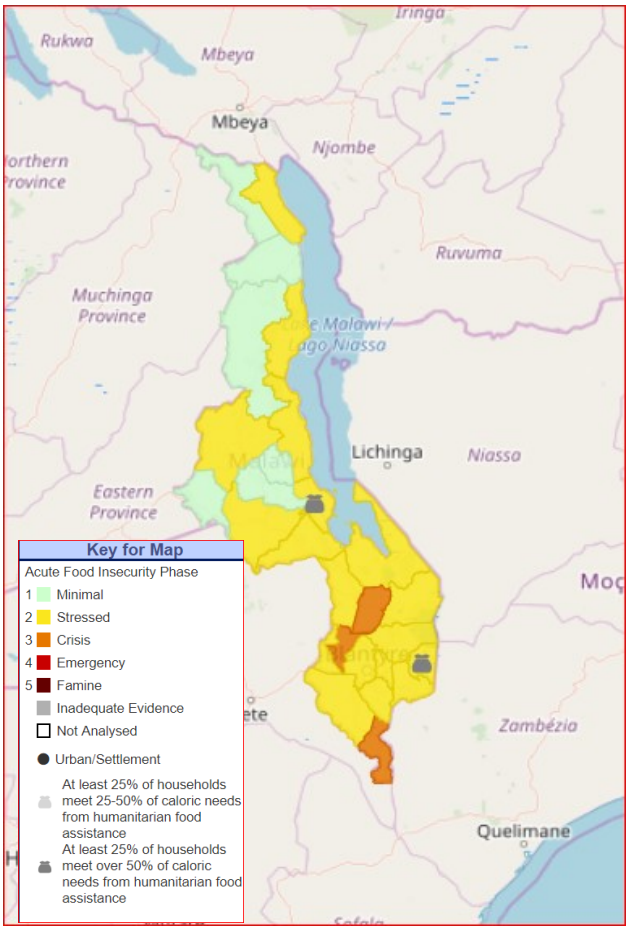
KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The country received early and more rains this year compared to last year. A few districts, especially in the centre and north reported dry spells..
- The current food insecurity was driven by several shocks largely climatic including cyclone IDAI which resulted into flooding in the districts that border Mozambique in the southern parts of Malawi and the dry spells in the central and northern regions.
- Through the IPC process, population projected to be in phase 1 (minimal) is: **10,795,827** (68 %), those in phase 2 (stressed) is: **3,823,511** (24%) and **1,062,674** (7 %) in phase 3 (crisis) or worse. The total number of people facing food gaps and require humanitarian assistance for 2 to 5 months is 1.062 million .
- Maize prices are generally higher than last year are projected to increase as households deplete their stocks during the lean season. Higher prices are likely to be in the southern part of the country typically experiencing production deficits (despite registering an increased production compared to last year) and in the areas affected by floods.
- Urgent action is needed for the population in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) to save and protect their livelihoods and reduce food gaps.
- Based on the MVAC market situation analysis, cash-based transfers (CBT) would be the most appropriate modality for addressing food gaps for population in phase 3 or worse because markets will remain functional throughout the consumption year, all things being normal.

National Overview

Malawi's economy relies on the country's agricultural sector. The sector contributes approximately 30 percent of Malawi's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Not only does the agriculture sector contribute to GDP, it also contributes to the foreign exchange earnings. This makes the country vulnerable to external price shocks and changing weather conditions caused by climate change. Malawi mainly exports tobacco, tea and sugar. The real Gross Domestic Product growth was estimated to be 3.7% as of 2018, a decrease from 5.1% in 2016/17. This was on account of unfavorable weather conditions i.e. the long dry spell in the first half of 2018 and fall armyworm infestation which affected the agriculture output by reducing maize output.

IPC District Food Insecurity Severity Classification



The Central Bank projects that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth for 2019 to be at 5.0 percent, an improvement from the growth rate of 4.0 percent in 2018. The rebound is expected to be supported by the agriculture sector, improved power supply, continued macroeconomic stability as well as the easing of monetary policy. However, the World Bank slashed Malawi's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate for 2019 to 4.5 percent from 4.7 percent largely due to severe strains from tropical cyclone Idai that took heavy human toll and caused severe damage to social and economic infrastructure in the country. In addition, Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) report notes that the disaster lead to production losses to a value of about US$ 9.96 million to the economy in 2019, equivalent of 0.13 percent of GDP a such the real GDP in 2019 is estimated at 4.9 percent (revised downwards by 0.1 percentage points) as a result of the floods.

Assessment Objectives

The main objective of the MVAC assessment is to answer key questions on the status of food and nutrition security in a given consumption year. Key questions about who is affected; why are they affected; where are the affected; how much food and non food needs and for how long. Findings of the assessment help government and stakeholders to formulate policies and programmes to ameliorate food and nutrition insecurity.

Methodology

The MVAC conducts Annual Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis (VAA) from May to June every year. For the assessments under report, MVAC collected both primary and secondary data for its food security analysis. Prior to commencement of field assessments, MVAC Technical Working Group (TWG) held a workshop to refine it's data collection tools to ensure an integrated assessment and analysis process. Three surveys were integrated to happen at the same time and synchronized through harmonized tools and coordination. The main surveys undertaken included; the Household Food Security Survey (**HHFSS**), the Household Food Economy Approach **(HEA)** and a Market Survey. A number secondary data sets was used in the final analysis and these included: Agricultural Production Estimates Survey **(APES**)third round agricultural estimates from Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, FEWSNET and WFP (mVAM) price data, NSO inflation and population census figures, District Agriculture Office (DAO) reports among others.

Production: Agricultural Production Estimates (APES): 2018/2019

	Third Round 2017/18	Third Round 2018/19	% Change against Third Round 2017/2018
Crops	Prod. (MT)	Prod. (MT)	
Maize	2,697,959	3,391,924	25.7
Rice	112,313	132,728	18.2
Wheat	729	716	(1.8)
Millet	31,315	44,912	43.5
Sorghum	82,852	137,097	65.5
Groundnuts	344,583	417,990	21.3
Cotton	24,010	25,331	5.5

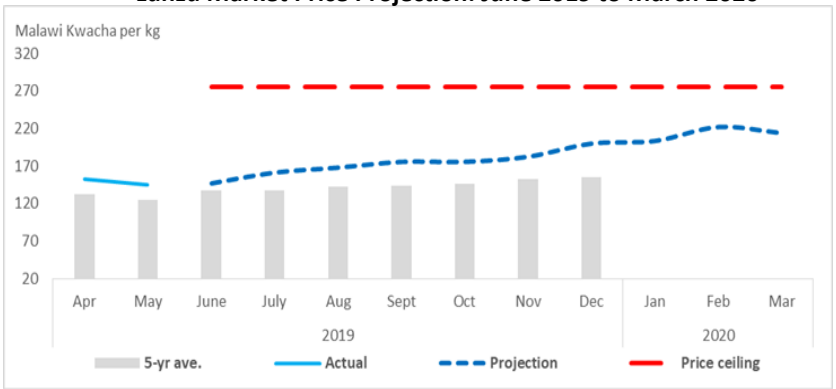
Source: MAIWD 2019

Overall, data analysis was done through a rigorous technical consensus building using an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Analytical Framework. Overall classification into the five food insecurity phases was based on several indicators thus: key drivers of food insecurity (indirect indicators: thus risks , hazards and vulnerability; food availability, food access, food utilization and food stability) and IPC outcome elements (direct indicators; thus: food consumption; livelihood change; mortality and nutritional status). Populations were classified into the five IPC Phases namely: **Minimal**, **Stressed**, **Crisis**, **Emergency** and **Catastrophe /Famine**. Each phase has recommended response objectives to be addressed.

Limitations of the Assessments and Analysis

- No Nutrition Survey had been conducted at the time of conducting the MVAC assessment and analysis and as such, MVAC used GAM by MUAC as a proxy for determining.
- Likoma island was not part of the assessment because there are currently no baseline information for Likoma
- Big and medium grain traders were hard to find in markets where market day didn't coincide with data collection date.
- The data collection was done at the time pigeon peas and cowpeas were not yet mature as such very traders had the commodity during the data collection period.
- There were some instances where some traders refused to grant the enumerators interviews arguing that they see no benefit in such endeavors

Lunzu Market Price Projection: June 2019 to March 2020



Assessment Key Findings

i) Weather/hazards

The country received early and more rains this year compared to last year. A few districts reported dry spells during the growing season. Floods were experienced mostly in the southern part of the country and few isolated areas in the central and northern regions.

The current food insecurity was largely driven

by several shocks including climatic factors as driven by the cyclone IDAI which resulted in flooding in the districts that border Mozambique in the southern parts of Malawi and the dry spells in the central and northern regions. The Government of Malawi declared a State of Disaster in the 13 districts and two cities on 8 March, following the impact of the heavy rains, floods and strong winds associated with Tropical Cyclone Idai. It is estimated that approximately 975,600 people were affected by these floods with 60 deaths and 672 injuries reported. The 15 affected districts are Balaka, Blantyre, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Mangochi, Mulanje, Mwanza, Neno, Nsanje, Phalombe, Thyolo, Zomba districts in the Southern Region and Dedza and Ntcheu in the Central Region. The two cities were Zomba City and Blantyre City.

ii) Agricultural Production Outlook

Third round of the Agricultural Production Estimates Survey (APES) released by Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development projects an increase in all major crops except tobacco. National maize production is expected to increase from **2,697,959** metric tonnes in the 2017/18 growing season to **3,391,924** metric tonnes in the 2018/19 growing season, representing a **26 percent** increase. The increase in production is mainly attributed to favourable weather conditions, improved crop practices and improved use of inputs such as fertiliser, which positively affected crop development and maturity. All districts in the north reported increase in maize production except for Karonga, Nkhata Bay and Rumphi districts. Increase in production was attributed to good rainfall distribution despite the heavy rainfall in the south that occurred when the crop had matured.

Farm gate prices for most crops improved slightly but remain generally low for farmers to have good gross margins. Staple maize prices is projected to be above the 5 year average during the lean season but its estimated to remain below 270 MWK per kg nation-wide for the reset of the consumption year.

All districts reported incidents of FAW but with minimal impact on crop performance. Irrigated crop is projected to increase due to increased residual moisture resulting from the high rainfall experienced in the year. Prices of commodities are likely to be affected by the weakening Malawi Kwacha with an expected higher prices of staple food commodities.

iii) Food and Nutritional Outlook: April-March 2020

The food security situation in Malawi, can be summarised as generally being an average year as compared to the two previous years 2017/18 and 2018/19 with production largely being good.

The overall IPC analysis shows that food consumption score **(FCS)** reflects 54 percent of the households having an acceptable FCS, while 36 percent having borderline and 10 percent having poor FCS.

In so far as coping is concerned, those that were not adopting any coping strategies were 61%, while those adopting stress coping were 21% and crisis coping were 14% and only 2% having emergency coping strategies. In terms of nutrition, acute malnutrition by GAM (using MUAC and oedema) was within normal ranges (below 5%) with an average **GAM** of 3.1 percent.

MVAC 2019 IPC Acute Food Security District Population Phases

District	Total # (pp)	Phase 1#	Phase 1%	Phase 2#	Phase 2%	Phase 3#	Phase 3%	Phase 4#	Phase 4%	Phase 5#	Phase 5%	Level 3 or higher#	Level 3 or higher%
Balaka	389,024	182,841	47	128,378	33	77,805	20	0	0	0	0	77,805	20
Blantyre	451,220	266,220	59	157,927	35	27,073	6	0	0	0	0	27,073	6
Chikhwawa	551,538	281,284	51	215,100	39	55,154	10	0	0	0	0	55,154	10
Chiradzulu	353,914	191,114	54	138,026	39	24,774	7	0	0	0	0	24,774	7
Chitipa	217,184	182,435	84	21,718	10	13,031	6	0	0	0	0	13,031	6
Dedza	799,584	615,680	77	103,946	13	79,958	10	0	0	0	0	79,958	10
Dowa	740,891	629,757	85	88,907	12	22,227	3	0	0	0	0	22,227	3
Karonga	303,419	185,086	61	60,684	20	57,650	19	0	0	0	0	57,650	19
Kasungu	726,235	566,463	78	137,985	19	21,787	3	0	0	0	0	21,787	3
Lilongwe	1,637,583	1,260,939	77	311,141	19	65,503	4	0	0	0	0	65,503	4
Machinga	710,231	404,832	57	255,683	36	49,716	7	0	0	0	0	49,716	7
Mangochi	1,080,158	615,690	57	410,460	38	54,008	5	0	0	0	0	54,008	5
Mchinji	574,294	476,664	83	68,915	12	28,715	5	0	0	0	0	28,715	5
Mulanje	669,325	455,141	68	174,025	26	40,160	6	0	0	0	0	40,160	6
Mwanza	112,910	67,746	60	30,486	27	14,678	13	0	0	0	0	14,678	13
Mzimba	914,088	740,411	81	137,113	15	36,564	4	0	0	0	0	36,564	4
Neno	136,008	57,123	42	51,683	38	27,202	20	0	0	0	0	27,202	20
Nkhata bay	270,407	210,917	78	40,561	15	18,928	7	0	0	0	0	18,928	7
Nkhotakota	364,727	291,782	80	54,709	15	18,236	5	0	0	0	0	18,236	5
Nsanje	272,324	111,653	41	98,037	36	62,635	23	0	0	0	0	62,635	23
Ntcheu	638,367	510,694	80	76,604	12	51,069	8	0	0	0	0	51,069	8
Ntchisi	307,712	249,247	81	30,771	10	27,694	9	0	0	0	0	27,694	9
Phalombe	423,208	203,140	48	165,051	39	55,017	13	0	0	0	0	55,017	13
Rumphi	206,803	167,510	81	22,748	11	16,544	8	0	0	0	0	16,544	8
Salima	435,162	330,723	76	82,681	19	21,758	5	0	0	0	0	21,758	5
Thyolo	701,013	420,608	60	245,355	35	35,051	5	0	0	0	0	35,051	5
Zomba	746,724	410,698	55	276,288	37	59,738	8	0	0	0	0	59,738	8
Grand Total	**14,734,053**	**10,795,827**	**68**	**3,823,511**	**24**	**1,062,674**	**7**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1,062,674**	**7**

Iv) Markets

The current market prices are within or slightly above the 5-year average and above the previous year's prices by approximately 20%. The higher prices could be attributed to panic buying by traders and speculation of high prices at the peak of the lean period. Meanwhile, tobacco production is expected to decrease by 6 percent this year. This is attributed to poor market prices in the previous season, hence farmers were sceptical of improvements in the current season. Maize peak price for the lean season will

depend on availability and stable supply of the commodity on the local market. For maize to be readily available, there is need for ADMARC and private traders to play their market role of moving the commodity from surplus to deficit areas.

The food insecure population dropped from 6.7 million in 2016/17, to 1.043 million in 2017/18, 3.3 million in 2018/19 and currently at 1.062 million in the 2019/20. The population projected to be in phase 1 are, 10,795,827(68 %) , in phase 2 3,823511 (24%) and 1,062,674 (7%) in phase 3. This brings the total population requiring humanitarian assistance to 1.062 million people from October 2019 to March 2020. During this period, the start of the next season will commence, and some districts usually experience floods during this period, the intensity is not expected to be severe as the very initial forecast from climate outlook indicate a near normal to above normal rainfall.

In the period; October 2019 to March 2019, it is estimated that 7 percent of Malawi rural population (**1,062,674**) will require humanitarian assistance to manage their food needs and to some extent recover lost assets because of the cyclone effects. The post disaster needs assessment (PDNA 2019, Malawi) has outlined the needs per sector and for the food security immediate food needs are key. The affected population will require: **33,810 MT** of maize (costing about **MK 5.7 Billion)** ; **6,762 MT** of pulses (costing about **MK4.0 Billion**) and **1,244 MT** of vegetable oil (costing about (**MK 1.9 Billion**).

The forecast is based on the following assumptions:

- The foreign exchange rates to remain stable and fuel prices to remain relatively stable over the reference period otherwise this would significantly increase transmission costs for prices mostly in the southern region markets
- Informal cross-border trade to remain within the average levels despite production deficits in some neighbouring countries.
- ADMARC markets to remain open and with enough stocks over the reference period and the selling price remaining at MK 200 per kilogram.
- Early rainfall forecasts for the coming 2019/20 growing season have projected a normal season resulting in availability of labour opportunity for the poor and very poor households.
- Based on available nutrition data, level of acute malnutrition will most likely remain stable in most areas through January 2020. The overall level of acute malnutrition is expected to remain within acceptable (<5 GAM) thresholds through the period with slightly high levels in the areas that experienced floods. These areas are likely to deteriorate to Alert levels.
- Income from the sale of cash crops (Tobacco, Cotton, Soya beans etc.) will be average in most northern and central districts but remain below normal in some southern districts due to low farm-gate prices that have prevailed for three consecutive seasons.
- Agricultural labour opportunities and rates will likely be normal to above normal in most northern and central Malawi districts but below normal in some southern districts which experienced heavy rains and flooding resulting in below average crop production.

Key Issues to Monitor

- The price changes for key commodities and market provisioning.
- Informal cross border commodity movements and impact on prices.
- Levels of acute malnutrition in the worst hit areas and other hot spots in the north.
- Infestation of Fall Army Worm on the winter and irrigated crop.
- Inflation and impact on the Malawi Kwacha.
- Possibility of flooding during the 2019/2020 rain season.

The MVAC will carry out the annual update in the month of November to ascertain the food and nutrition security situation and the assumptions that have been factored in the analysis. There will also be an opportunity to review the impact of the floods and dry spells on nutrition indicators which usually reflect late. Recovery programmes that are ongoing from the Department of Disaster Management and inauguration of the 2019/20 lean season response action plan will be informed by the update.

Recommendations

- Based on the analysis presented above, it is recommended that cash-based transfers would be ideal modality for the stressed households over the consumption period between October and March 2020. Key factors supporting the cash-based transfers are significant surplus production of maize, pulses and other key staple foods such as sweet potatoes, potatoes, rice, sorghum and cassava.

- Promote nutrition sensitive interventions that will intensify good health eating behaviours to improve diversity. This can be achieved through; Provision of key messages on health eating, food budgeting, processing and preservation, promotion of Integrated Homestead Farming (IFH) and key WASH interventions.
- Resource mobilization and linkages to development, social protection and DRR programmes;
- Current recovery responses and approaches by various stakeholders need to be continued to sustain and improve food security and household welfare;
- Due to vulnerability of the various population groups in the affected areas and the continued impacts of climate change, development, social protection; DRR and resilience programmes highlighted in the National Resilience Strategy should be scaled up to prevent worsening poverty and food security situation
- Scale up shock responsive targeted interventions to address chronic poverty and chronic food and nutrition insecurity.
- Agriculture: Intensify control of FAW through; strengthening extension messages; enhancing development and dissemination of the messages; promote plant wise concept (plant clinics); intensify farmer training on management of FAW; provision of pesticide and protective gear.
- Promote irrigation farming through; provision of farm inputs, rehabilitation of irrigation schemes and promotion of sustainable climate SMART agriculture technologies e.g. use of solar powered panels.
- Markets: based on the analysis presented in the report, it is recommended that cash-based transfers would be the appropriate modality for assisting food insecure households over the consumption period from October,2019 to March,2020.

MVAC RESPONSE HUMANITARIAN REQUIREMENTS

District	District Rural Populations	Affected population	No. of HHs	Perecnt Population Affected	Deficit Months	Cereal Maize Requirement (MT)	Cereal maize cash Equivalent (MK000')	Cereals (MT)	Pulses (MT)	Oil (MT)
Balaka	389,024	77804	17,290	20	5	4,322	734,816	4,322	864	159.07
Blantyre	451,220	27073	6,016	6	2	602	102,276	602	120	22.14
Chikhwawa	551,538	55154	12,256	10	3	1,838	312,539	1,838	368	67.66
Chiradzulu	353,914	24774	5,505	7	2	551	93,591	551	110	20.26
Chitipa	217,184	13031	2,896	6	2	290	49,228	290	58	10.66
Dedza	799,584	79958	17,768	10	2	1,777	302,064	1,777	355	65.39
Dowa	740,891	22227	4,939	3	2	494	83,969	494	99	18.18
Karonga	303,419	57650	12,811	19	2	1,281	217,789	1,281	256	47.14
Kasungu	726,235	21787	4,842	7	2	484	82,306	484	97	17.82
Lilongwe	1,637,583	65503	14,556	4	2	1,456	247,456	1,456	291	53.57
Machinga	710,231	49716	11,048	7	4	2,210	375,632	2,210	442	81.31
Mangochi	1,080,158	54008	12,002	5	4	2,400	408,060	2,400	480	88.33
Mchinji	574,294	28715	6,381	5	2	638	108,479	638	128	23.48
Mulanje	669,325	40160	8,924	6	2	892	151,716	892	178	32.84
Mwanza	112,910	14678	3,262	13	2	326	55,450	326	65	12.00
Mzimba	914,088	36564	8,125	4	2	813	138,131	813	163	29.90
Neno	136,008	27202	6,045	20	4	1,209	205,526	1,209	242	44.49
Nkhata bay	270,407	18928	4,206	5	2	421	71,506	421	84	15.48
Nkhotakota	364,727	18236	4,052	5	2	405	68,892	405	81	14.91
Nsanje	272,324	62635	13,919	23	5	3,480	591,553	3,480	696	128.05
Ntcheu	638,367	51069	11,349	8	2	1,135	192,927	1,135	227	41.76
Ntchisi	307,712	27694	6,154	9	2	615	104,622	615	123	22.65
Phalombe	423,208	55017	12,226	13	2	1,223	207,842	1,223	245	44.99
Rumphi	206,803	16544	3,676	8	2	368	62,500	368	74	13.53
Salima	435,162	21758	4,835	5	2	484	82,197	484	97	17.79
Thyolo	701,013	35051	7,789	5	2	779	132,415	779	156	28.66
Zomba	746,724	59738	13,275	8	5	3,319	564,192	3,319	664	122.13
Total	**14,734,053**	**1,062,674**	**236,150**	**7**		**33,810**	**5,747,672**	**33,810**	**6,762**	**1,244.20**