

Alert

Malawi – No.21/2010

Geneva, 13 July 2010

FOOD SITUATION ALERT.

Brief description of the emergency

During the 2009/2010 rainy season, Malawi received normal to above normal rainfall distribution. However, the southern part of Malawi experienced prolonged dry spells that heavily affected the crop stand. An army worm outbreak that followed further affected the crops. According to the latest (June, 2010) Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) report, around 2 million people in the southern region have no food at present.

Impact

The food security situation has affected all eight districts in the southern region, and ACT members are working in four of these districts namely: Nsanje, Chikhwawa, Thyolo and Balaka. Over 200,000 households in these districts do not have access to food and do not have alternative food sources. According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET; Malawi Food Security Outlook update, June 2010) “delayed commencement of humanitarian assistance in the affected districts will result in affected households beginning to adopt coping mechanisms with damaging consequences”. Already some of the households now rely on wild roots for food and there have been confirmed cases of hospitalisation due to the nature of the wild roots taken. Two cases were reported in Nsanje and five in Balaka, though no deaths have been confirmed.

Many cases of malnutrition amongst children and elderly people have also been reported in these districts. According to the report from the National Nutrition Symposium of the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS of 23 - 24th June 2010, 46% of the children in the affected areas have serious nutritional deficiencies. This is a result of low food and nutrient intake due to low food production. Diseases caused by poor hygiene and sanitation have also contributed to the situation.

National and international response

The Malawi government through the department of Disaster and Preparedness is trying to bring food to some of the affected population but have limited capacity in the area of finances and competent staff to handle the humanitarian intervention. The UN through the World Food Programme is also responding but is not able to cover all the affected areas. The government has so far requested the ACT Alliance members to assist in responding to the emergency.

ACT Alliance response

At present the Malawi ACT forum has not responded physically to the affected population through drought relief, but the intention is to respond as a Forum through the members working in the affected districts. This work is being coordinated by the ACT Coordinator through the Coordinating agency, ELDS. In the Forum meeting of 1 July, 2010 the forum agreed to respond to the situation through ELDS in Chikwawa district, CARD in Nsanje and Thyolo, Blantyre Synod in Balaka and CHAM will respond in all the districts through its nutrition rehabilitation clinics and feeding centres, which already exist in its health facilities. The Malawi forum has been monitoring the situation in the affected districts and kept updating the ACT Secretariat up to this time when there has been a great need to respond and more so the government has now called on ACT Forum to support the affected districts.

Planned activities

ACT Malawi Forum through its members working in the affected districts is planning to respond in the following:

- General food distribution to the affected households for 3 months.
- Winter cropping and small-scale irrigation farming. All the ACT members involved in the response are involved in food security projects (winter-cropping and irrigation).
- Livestock production for food and income as well as restocking for those households that have sold their livestock for food.

The Malawi ACT Forum is working on an Appeal to respond to the situation.

Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to Jessie Kgoroadira, ACT Chief Finance Officer (jkg@actalliance.org).

Thank you for your attention.

For further information please contact:

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