

MALAWI

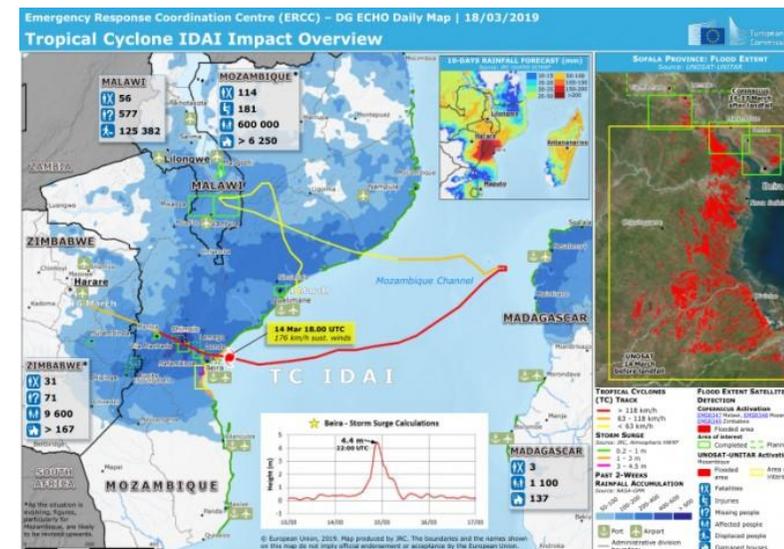
Floods: Update I

Since the publication of the ACAPS Malawi Floods Briefing Note on 12 March, severe flooding has continued in southern and central regions of Malawi. In total, an estimated 922,900 people have been affected across 14 districts, with 56 deaths and 577 injuries reported and more than 125,000 displaced. The number of people reported as being affected by flooding has increased by more than 450,000 since the last ACAPS report. This trend can likely be attributed in part to the impact of Cyclone Idai, which has exacerbated rainfall across Malawi, and potentially to new information becoming available. Response gaps include shelter, food, health, and WASH. There is an elevated risk that rain linked to Tropical Cyclone Idai will persist in southern and central regions of Malawi, which will likely continue to drive humanitarian needs in flood-affected areas.

IMPACT



NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE



Source: OCHA 18/03/2019 (larger version of map at end of document)

Forecast

Rainfall is expected to continue in parts of southern and central Malawi until at least 20 March, which means that there is a significant possibility that flooding will persist in the near future. It is likely that districts in southern Malawi such as Chikwawa, Mangochi, and Machinga will continue to be among the most severely affected. As a consequence of the flooding, the affected districts face an elevated risk of disease outbreak, waterborne diseases such as cholera. It is also likely that food insecurity will increase as a result of the destruction of crops and food supplies.

Key priorities



+125,000
people displaced



Significant shelter needs
among the displaced population



Urgent need
for intervention to prevent disease outbreaks

Humanitarian constraints



Physical access to affected areas continues to be severely constrained. Many roads and bridges have been destroyed, which limits the ability of humanitarian actors to reach people in need. Boats and helicopters are being used to reach many affected communities.

Limitations

Most available information about humanitarian impact is several days old and may no longer reflect the rapidly changing context. Information about the number of people in need and severity of needs is lacking. Most data from needs assessments has not yet been released, therefore there is still a lack of information concerning affected and displaced populations.

Crisis impact

Since the beginning of March, Malawi has experienced heavy rainfall linked to Tropical Cyclone Idai, which has led to intense flooding in 14 districts across southern and central regions of the country. The most severely impacted districts are Mangochi, Machinga, Zomba, Phalombe, Thyolo, and Chikwawa, which each have more than 50,000 affected people (OCHA 14/03/2019). Since the last ACAPS publication on 12 March, there has been a significant rise in the reported number of affected people, which increased from 468,600 to 922,900 (UNICEF 17/03/2019; ECHO 14/03/2019). The number of reported fatalities and injuries also increased from 30 to 56, and from 370 to 577, respectively, while the estimated number of displaced people went from 31,700 to 125,382 (Africa News 14/03/2019; ECHO 18/03/2019). It remains somewhat unclear whether this increase is primarily due to an intensification of flooding, or a change in the availability of information about the size and scope of the crisis. With forecasts indicating an elevated risk of further rainfall, there is a significant possibility that flooding will persist, even though most areas of Malawi remain removed from the direct path of Cyclone Idai (NOAA 13/03/2019; FEWS Net 15/03/2019; BBC 18/03/2019).

Shelter: As of 18 March, over 125,382 people had been displaced since the onset of flooding in Malawi (ECHO 18/03/2019). This figure represents a significant increase since 10 March, when 31,700 people were recorded as displaced as a result of the flooding (OCHA 10/03/2019). Many displaced people have had their homes and personal property damaged by the flooding and face elevated shelter needs as a result. In Blantyre district, approximately 1,400 houses have collapsed, and in Nkhotakota district 600 people have reportedly been forced to leave their homes after their houses were inundated by the flooding (Malawi News Agency 11/03/2019; The Nation 13/03/2019). Most of the displaced population are hosted in 187 camps that have been established in the affected districts while others are in makeshift sites in schools and churches where access to adequate shelter is often lacking (Reuters 13/03/2019). The precise distribution of the displaced population between camps and other forms of shelter remains unknown.

Food: Food needs are reported in flood-affected areas, particularly among the displaced population, though precise figures remain unavailable. Before the onset of widespread flooding in March, 3.3 million Malawians were assessed to be in need of food assistance in the period leading up to the main April harvest season, with southern districts having the highest concentration of food insecurity (FAO 18/03/2019). As a result of the destruction of farmland and livestock, food needs in flood-affected districts of southern Malawi can be expected to increase (The Herald 15/03/2019).

Livelihoods: Flooding will likely have a direct negative impact on agricultural livelihoods in flood-affected districts of central and southern Malawi. Though assessments are still ongoing in order to determine the full scale of the destruction, it is known that large areas of farmland have been submerged as a result of flooding, washing away crops and killing livestock (Africa News 18/03/2019). This year's maize harvest could be up to 25% lower than previously anticipated as a result of flooding, according to government sources (The Nation 13/03/2019). Across Malawi, agriculture is responsible for one third of the country's gross domestic product, and is the main income-generating activity for approximately 65% of Malawians (The Nation 13/03/2019).

WASH: Water supplies have been impacted by rain and flooding (OCHA 9/3/2019). Displaced people are reported to have no or only very limited access to clean and safe drinking water. Some camps reportedly lack functioning latrines and other essential WASH facilities (Al Jazeera 14/03/2019). Preliminary assessments conducted in Phalombe and Nsanje suggest that additional WASH facilities are required to meet the needs of the flood-affected population (OCHA 16/03/2019).

Health: So far, there have not been any major disease outbreaks associated with the recent flooding in Malawi, though the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea, as well as mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria, remains a concern (Al Jazeera 14/03/2019; VOA 15/03/2019). Malaria is already a pressing concern in Malawi, with an estimated prevalence of 300 cases per 1000 people in many areas (WHO 2018). Relatively little new information about the health impact of floods in Malawi has come to light since the last ACAPS publication, though it is likely that local hospitals will continue to be strained by large numbers of patients and limited resources (GoM 11/03/2019; Manilla Bulletin 11/03/2019). The physical impact of flooding on health infrastructure is unknown.

Impact on critical infrastructure

Following the initial onset of flooding, it was reported that many roads and bridges had been damaged or destroyed, limiting mobility for both residents of affected areas and emergency responders. In Mangochi district, local media sources reported that four bridges were damaged as a result of rivers in the area overflowing (Malawi News Agency 15/03/2019). On 13 March, government authorities in Blantyre District reported that damage to roads and bridges was negatively impacting residents and businesses (Nyasa Times 13/03/2019). At present, the total extent of the damage inflicted on transportation infrastructure in the flood-affected areas of southern and central Malawi remains unknown.

Two hydroelectric powerplants located next the Shire River were damaged as a result of floods, causing a reduction of Malawi's electricity supply (The Nation 09/03/2019). As of 9 March, approximately 270 out of Malawi's 320 megawatts of hydropower capacity

were reportedly offline, causing widespread disruptions to electricity access (OCHA 09/03/2019; NY Times 08/03/2019). It remains unclear whether electricity generation has returned to normal levels in subsequent days.

Vulnerable groups affected

- Out of the 922,000 people affected by floods in Malawi, an estimated 460,000 are children (UNICEF 17/03/2019). Nearly 40% of children under 5 in Malawi suffer from stunting caused by malnutrition, which could become more prevalent as a result of the floods likely limiting access to more diverse food supplies (USAID 18/05/2019; Telegraph 12/03/2019).
- The estimated 125,382 people displaced by the flooding represent a particularly vulnerable group with elevated humanitarian needs (ECHO 18/03/2019). Most of the displaced population are living in camps, where access to adequate shelter and WASH facilities is often limited (Al Jazeera 14/03/2019). In some areas such as Mlolo (Nsanje District), a significant number of displaced households reportedly have no access to shelter, and are forced to sleep in the open (OCHA 16/03/2019). These households likely face an even higher level of vulnerability than the rest of the displaced population stemming from their reduced access to suitable shelter, as well as their potentially increased exposure to disease, among other factors.
- Women and girls in flood affected areas face a heightened risk of gender-based violence, particularly those who have been displaced and are living in inadequate shelter facilities. Temporary shelter arrangements for newly displaced women, with a lack of privacy and inadequate toilets and washing facilities, further increases their vulnerability (UNFPA 08/2016; UNDP 2013)

Humanitarian and operational constraints

Access continues to be limited in flood-affected areas. Since early March, many districts in central and southern Malawi have sustained damage to roads and bridges, which has made the delivery of humanitarian assistance more challenging. On March 10, local media reported that the road between Blantyre and Chikwawa had been inundated and would need seven days to be repaired, though it is not clear whether the road has been made operational again (Nyasa Times 10/03/2019). Following a period of extremely heavy rain, Chikwawa and Nsanje districts continue to be largely inaccessible by road (MSF 18/03/2019). Helicopters and boats are being used to deliver assistance in districts that are particularly affected by flooding (MSF 18/03/2019).

With forecasts indicating an elevated risk of further rainfall, there is a likelihood that humanitarian access will continue to be restricted in some areas in the near future (NOAA 13/03/2019; FEWS Net 15/03/2019; BBC 18/03/2019). Even after flooding

subsides, it will likely be some time before damaged infrastructure can be repaired and access is fully restored.

Response capacity

Local and national response capacity

On 8 March 2019, the President of Malawi, Arthur Mutharika, declared a state of emergency in flood-affected areas (OCHA 09/03/2019; Nyasa Times 09/03/2019). The primary responsibility for organizing relief efforts was delegated to the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA) (African Daily Voice 09/03/2019). The Malawian Defence Force and Malawian Red Cross were also mobilized to take part in rescue operations. In conjunction with local partners, the Malawian government has so far been providing relief to populations in need, including tents, plastic sheets, maize, rice, beans, blankets, and kitchen utensils (UN News 11/03/2019). Needs remain significant relative to the resources available and local actors' capacity to respond.

International response capacity

A number of international humanitarian actors are assisting the Malawian government with emergency response efforts. WFP reportedly plans to scale up its operations in Malawi to target approximately 600,000 people for food assistance (UN News 17/02/2019). WHO is similarly augmenting its operational presence in Malawi to address health needs and work against the possibility of an infectious disease outbreak (VOA 15/03/2019). Since 10 March, the European Commission's Copernicus Emergency Management service has been activated, and has been producing maps and other information products to gain a better understanding of the flooding situation (European Commission 14/02/2019). As of 14 March, needs assessments were ongoing to determine the level of humanitarian needs in affected communities, though it is not clear whether the results have been finalized (OCHA 14/03/2019).

Information gaps and needs

Even though some new information has been made available since emergency response efforts began, significant information gaps remain. Particularly important information gaps include:

- The total number of people in need of assistance and the severity of needs
- Detailed information about sectoral needs
- Geographic distribution of people in need of assistance
- Updated information about the impact of floods on critical infrastructure, in particular transportation, health, and education
- The current status of humanitarian access and which areas/districts remain inaccessible
- More detailed information about the risk of an outbreak of disease in flood-affected areas
- Short, medium, and long-term projections of the impact of flooding on food security, livelihoods, and other sectors.

Lessons learned

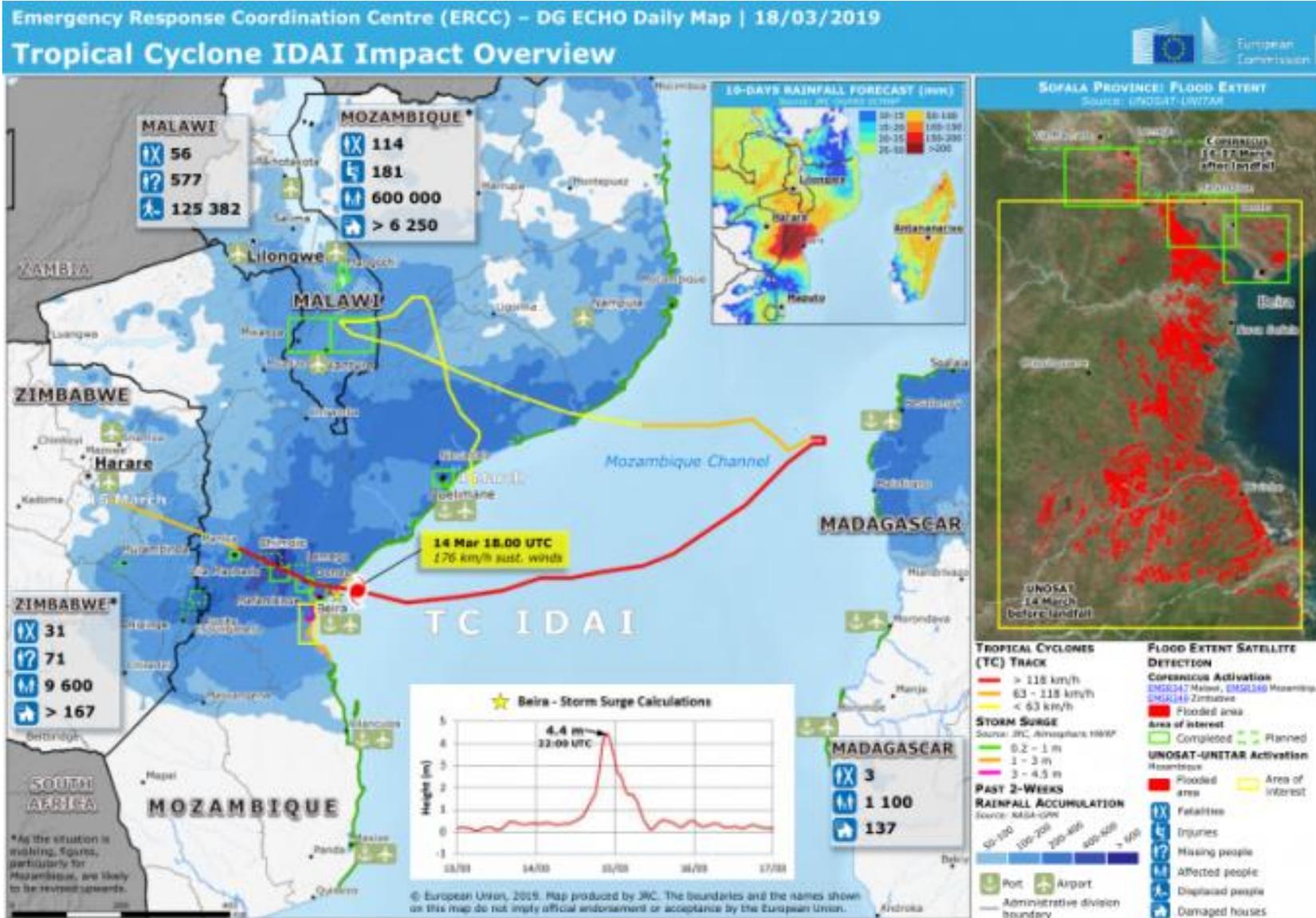
The development of the National Disaster Recovery Framework and its implementation helps to identify and to address gaps in national disaster risk management and response. Its implementation must be practised among several actors involved (such as different governmental ministries, national NGOs and international stakeholders). Lack of coordination among government stakeholders causes a delay in implementation (GFDRR 2015).

It is important to specifically target information and awareness-raising campaigns to communities at risk, as high illiteracy levels may hinder target communities from effectively utilising the information (GFDRR 2015).

Gender-specific vulnerabilities, as well as those of people with disabilities, must be taken into consideration when disseminating information. Temporary shelter arrangements for displaced women must be safe and secure, and include adequate toilets and washing facilities, in order to not further increase women's vulnerability and ensure protection (UNFPA 08/2016; UNDP 2013).

Post-disaster needs assessments to inform the recovery process, as well as monitoring and evaluation, are crucial to inform and improve preparedness measures. Political commitment is however needed for sustainable interventions (GFDRR 2015). Improved road access to rural areas as well as planning and compliance with safer housing construction standards increase the resilience of many people at risk to floods. (GFDRR 2015).

Map



Source: OCHA 18/03/2019.

