

CONTEXT

- Climatic shocks—including droughts, floods, and storms—continue to adversely affect agricultural livelihoods and reduce food availability in Malawi, creating widespread food insecurity and intensifying persistent humanitarian needs. Strong El Niño conditions, which result in severe droughts or above-average rainfall in Southern Africa, will likely contribute to additional shocks and exacerbate needs in the country during the October-to-April rainy season, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network.
- In March 2023, Tropical Cyclone Freddy made landfall in southern Malawi, bringing heavy rainfall and subsequent floods that resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,000 people, displaced nearly 660,000 individuals, and negatively affected an estimated 506,000 acres of agricultural land, according to the UN. The cyclone also exacerbated conditions faced by communities recovering from two previous cyclones in 2022 and affected health and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure amid an ongoing countrywide cholera outbreak which began in March 2022 and resulted in 1,771 deaths and more than 59,100 recorded cases as of January 2024, according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO).
- An estimated 4.4 million people across Malawi are expected to face Crisis—IPC 3—or worse levels of acute food insecurity during the November 2023-to-March 2024 lean season, largely due to the effects of multiple shocks, including disease, poor macroeconomic conditions, according to the IPC Technical Working Group.¹ Relatedly, stocks of maize—a staple household food in Malawi—are dwindling, contributing to a nearly 90 percent increase in the price of maize between December 2022 and December 2023.
- Nearly 53,000 refugees—primarily from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda—were residing in Malawi, some for more than two decades, as of November 30, 2023, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports. The vast majority—approximately 50,000 people—reside in central Malawi’s Dzaleka refugee camp, which was originally designed to accommodate only 12,000 residents. The Government of Malawi enforces a policy introduced in 2021 of requiring refugees and asylum-seekers to reside in the camp, which lacks adequate resources to assist new arrivals. More than 2,000 refugees and asylum-seekers have returned to the camp since the introduction of the policy.



¹ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardized scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine—IPC 5—for acute food insecurity. IPC Phase 5 is referred to as “Catastrophe” when classifying a household and “Famine” when classifying an area. Famine conditions occur when at least 20 percent of the population in a given area face an extreme lack of food; the Global Acute Malnutrition prevalence, measured by weight-for-height z-score, exceeds 30 percent; and the mortality rate exceeds two people per 10,000 individuals per day.

ASSISTANCE

- USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA) is working with partners to address acute food insecurity and its drivers throughout Malawi. USAID/BHA supports the UN World Food Program (WFP) to provide emergency food assistance, including 800 metric tons of food of food commodities, as well as non-food items (NFIs) to cyclone-affected and food-insecure populations, support livelihoods in vulnerable communities, and increase resilience to future food security shocks. In the southern Malawi’s Nsanje and Phalombe districts, WFP is providing critical cash and in-kind food assistance for more than 173,000 people during the 2023/2024 lean season. WFP also provides critical cash transfers for food in Dzaleka refugee camp, reaching 51,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in November and December 2023, to help them meet monthly food assistance needs. USAID/BHA also supports Catholic Relief Services to distribute dignity kits, NFIs, and WASH supplies to more than 1,000 cyclone-affected households.



USAID/BHA partner CARE conducting vocational training for locals through the Titukulane program. District. Photo Credit: USAID/Justin Horoiwa

- With USAID/BHA support, CARE continues to implement Titukulane, a five-year, multi-sector food security and resilience program in southern Malawi’s Mangochi and Zomba districts, assisting nearly 162,000 households—or 547,000 people—between September 2019 and December 2023. CARE has assisted at least 14,400 farmers in obtaining seeds through microfinance, conducted business management training for an estimated 5,200 youth, and trained nearly 200 community animal health workers in collaboration with local educational institutions during the same period. Additionally, CARE has supported more than 13,200 households with nutrition assistance, creating kitchen gardens with nutrition-dense foods, including cabbage, pumpkin leaves, and sweet potatoes. Through Titukulane, more than 3,100 youth and more than 280 youth business groups were targeted for off-farm trades, including Entrepreneurship and Business Management Training.
- USAID/BHA partner the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) delivers safe drinking water and emergency WASH supplies to cyclone-affected communities. With USAID/BHA and other donor support, UNICEF and its partners provided critical WASH supplies—including soap and water containers—to approximately 3.8 million people across Malawi while bolstering access to safe drinking water for approximately 2.8 million people during 2023 by providing climate-resilient water supply services through water facility rehabilitation in vulnerable areas. The UN organization also continues to increase access to health care facilities, distribute hygiene kits for cholera prevention, and promote hygiene awareness through various media.

USAID/BHA Funding in Malawi ²			
	Emergency	ER4	TOTAL
FY 2023	\$6,470,543	\$40,077,871	\$46,548,414
FY 2024	\$9,250,000	\$3,600,000	\$12,850,000

² Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of March 1, 2024.