

Information bulletin



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Malawi: Earthquake

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This bulletin is being issued for information only, and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS), with the support of the International Federation, is working to map the full scope of their response, including the specific needs for international support.

Early in the morning of Sunday 20 December 2009, the northern Malawian district of Karonga was hit by a magnitude 6.2 earthquake. Two people died with 171 people injured, 81 of whom were seriously injured and admitted to the district hospital. The Government estimates that up to 6,000 households may have been affected.

This is the second quake to hit the region in the past two weeks. On 6 December, a series of earth tremors – peaking at a magnitude of 5.8 – killed one person and affected 3,000 households.

The Malawi Red Cross Society, with support from the Federation, has been active in the region since the 6 December tremors. They have been able to provide immediate assistance to many of those affected by the most recent earthquake, including through the distribution of shelter materials (tents, tarpaulins, shelter kits, etc) as well as other non-food items. The National Society is urgently requesting for a shelter specialist to be sent as soon as possible.

Following the 6 December tremors, the Federation released CHF 306,365 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) to the MRCS. It is clear however that the needs of those affected will require more from the Red Cross and the wider humanitarian community, and further support (including extended DREF), is being considered.

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The Situation

On Sunday 20 December, the northern Malawian district of Karonga experienced its second significant earthquake in two weeks. The Government of Malawi has officially declared a national disaster.

The magnitude 6.2 earthquake killed two people and injured 171. Eighty-one of these were sent to hospital with serious injuries. Initial assessments indicate that 4,800 households have been affected, although the government is using a figure of 6,000 households in its assessments and planning. This means that the number of people directly affected could be as high as 36,000 people.

The Government has advised people in the affected area to stay outside of their homes in case further earthquakes happen. This means that many more than this figure of 36,000 are living outside, a particularly worrisome issue given that it is now the rainy season in Malawi.

Almost 1,000 houses collapsed in the quake, with a further 2,881 damaged. One hundred and thirty nine official or community buildings (police stations, school buildings, business, etc) have also been damaged.

On 6 December, a series of tremors –peaking at magnitude 5.8 – hit Karonga, killing one child and affecting 3,000 households. Fifteen people were injured and an estimated 15,000 left homeless. Seven hundred and seventy five houses collapsed and 1,154 houses were assessed as having hazardous cracks and thus uninhabitable.

The government and authorities, including the Malawi Red Cross Society have identified shelter as a primary need. In addition, expertise in terms of camp management will be needed given the large numbers of people suddenly displaced from their homes.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Malawi Red Cross Society has been active in Karonga since the 6 December tremors, and was thus able to respond to the 20 December earthquake immediately. Already (including during the period between the two disasters), MRCS volunteers and staff have distributed nine family tents, 510 shelter kits, 1,020 tarpaulins, 200 blankets, and 200 collapsible jerry cans, along with various other non-food items.

These activities have been supported through the Federation's 14 December allocation of CHF 306,365 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF). This funding was intended to support Malawi Red Cross efforts to provide temporary shelter and basic non-food items to 1,929 households affected by the 6 December earthquake. An extension to this DREF funding is under consideration, based on assessments and needs.

The Malawi Red Cross Society and the Federation are currently revising their plans to take into account the additional needs created by the most recent earthquake. This includes the potential deployment of a shelter specialist to the affected region. Additional shelter supplies (tarpaulins, tents, shelter kits, etc.) are on hand in the Federation's regional warehouse in Harare and can be deployed rapidly.

Additional information regarding expanded Malawi Red Cross Society activities, supported by the Federation, will be communicated shortly.

How we work

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

The International Federation's activities are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.
- Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.
- Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.
- Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

Contact information

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