

# **UNRC Situation Report I**

## **Karonga earthquake, Malawi**

**22 December 2009**

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### **Situation overview**

Karonga is the northernmost district of Malawi, bordered by Lake Malawi on the East, by the Songwe River (border with Tanzania) on the North and the Nyika Plateau and highlands on the West and South. The District headquarters (the Boma) are approximately six hours drive from Lilongwe (Malawi's capital city and location of the closest international airport). Mzuzu, a major commercial city, is three hours drive away and has an airport which receives light aircraft flights most days from Lilongwe. Mbeya in Tanzania is five hours to the north.

The population (approximately 270,000 in 2009, increasing at 3 % per annum: crude birth rate c. 40/1000, infant mortality c.15 %) is rural, dependent upon subsistence agriculture and fish from the lake. Household crop production (chiefly cassava, maize, sweet potatoes and rice) is the main source of food for all households. Cassava consumption is significant, accounting for 45%, 34% and 28% of consumption for the 'poor', 'middle' and 'better-off' respectively. 'Poor' and 'middle' households purchase staple (for example, maize) and non-staple (for example, sugar) foods to supplement domestic production. Despite larger livestock holdings, milk and meat consumption is insignificant for most households because animals are used as a source of income rather than for direct consumption.

After 3 months of low intensity seismological activity, the area was hit by a sequence of stronger earthquakes ranging between 5.4 to 6.0 on the scale of Richter, between 6 and 20 December 2009. Seismological activity continues and is taking the form of an earthquake swarm. There is no certainty about when this is expected to halt.

The humanitarian profile of this natural disaster is as much determined by each physical occurrence, as by the knock on effect of the sequence of earthquakes. On 11 December the first assessments indicated that 2752 families had been affected. This rose to 3860 on 18 December and at 20 December the figure was placed by Senior Officials In DoDMA (the national disaster management authority) at 4677. This last figure however does not take into account the impact of the last earthquake of 20 December which measured 6.0 on the scale of Richter. The Government of Malawi has formally declared a national emergency on 21 December.

Immediately after severe shocks were felt on 12 December, and cracks have appeared in the ground, some with water seepage, the Government decide to use a nearby military camp (Mulinda camp) as refuge given the uncertainty and worry this gave to the local population. Initial reports indicated that some 600 families or 3000 people has taken shelter there. A visit by UNICEF on 15 December indicated that 1800 people had remained in the camp. However, people seem to be moving in and out, seeking shelter and relief. DoDMA officially keeps the number of displaced at 3000.

In total some 1000 houses have been reported to have collapsed, while some 2900 houses have been reported to have sustained damage of some sort – construction standards vary widely from thatched roofed mud huts, to tin topped stone structures in the urban area. In total over 300 people have been wounded, and 4 have been killed. The human impact on the earthquake of 20 December has been most severe in Karonga town; people had started to sleep inside their often weakened houses again due to the arrival of seasonal rains and as the tremor hit in the middle of the night, many were wounded by falling debris. Following this latest quake, there is panic and much uncertainty in the area. The DoDMA have indicated that shelter needs are to be regarded as urgent. Government has formally approached the EU and WFP for assistance, but otherwise has only issued general statements seeking support and relief.

### **Immediate relief provided.**

Being the first on the ground through the local offices, the Red Cross within a few days of the first earthquake distributed 40 tarpaulins, five family tents and 20 shelter kits. At the same time IFRC also despatched 400 tarpaulins and 300 shelter kits. To date the Red cross reported they have delivered on site a total of 600 shelter kits; each shelter kit contains tarpaulins, plastic sheeting, nails and a hammer. Following a joint assessment between DoDMA, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP from 9 to 11 December, UNICEF provided a total of 800 survival kits and 30 large tents for affected schools. The survival kits contain tarpaulins, blankets, mosquito nets, soap and other items.

The press has reported that the H.E. the Vice Present monitored the relief distribution from Government on a site visit on 11 December. H.E. President visited the area on 14 December and announced a donation of Mk. 2,5 Mln to relief efforts. The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China is reported to also have raised funds through various means, to the tune of Mk. 5 mln. for national relief efforts. USAID has informed they have allocated US\$50,000 through OFDA.

Government has been distributing relief good and have provide food aid;

- 800(20Kg) bags of maize meal
- Bags of maize (number not reported)
- 5664 blankets
- 332 rolls (100x1.5M) of plastic sheets
- 2732 plastic pails
- 2400 plastic plates
- 3000 plastic cups
- 23 tents (form MDF)

Between the above reported donations of tents, shelter kits, plastic sheeting and tarpaulin, we now estimate that the shelter needs of approximately 2000 families have been met, including the 600 families Government reported as residing in Mulinda Camp.

### **Planned response.**

We are awaiting confirmation from Government as to the overall response, including revalidation of the basic information. Meanwhile, DoDMA has informally requested that we use the data and figures provide on 18 December of planning purposes (attached).

The Red Cross will deliver a further 450 shelter kits and will be replenishing its stock in country with another 1500. UNICEF has informed they will be able to provide a further 1400 survival kits and have

taken responsibility of providing with the Ministry of Water 2 additional boreholes in Mulinda camp, as well as 20 additional pit latrines in collaboration with the District Health officer. UNICEF has requested to further dialogue with development partners in order to be able to replenish their stocks in view of the imminent flood and cholera season.

Government has formally approached the EU for assistance and they are on 22 December fielding an ECHO assessment team from Harare. It is expected the EU will arrive in location on the 23rd.

WFP has been requested by the Government to provide food relief for 5000 families for 3 months. WFP would in consultation with DoDMA be fielding an assessment mission as soon as possible in order to establish the levels of food insecurity amongst the 5000 families. Meanwhile, subject to Development Partners being able to underwrite this activity, WFP proposes to provide relief rations for 14 day for the 3000 displaced Government has reported.

In conjunction with this assessment , FAO in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture will be proposing to field a rapid crop assessment mission. The fact that the planting season started one week ago, has given rise to concerns with the long term food security if farmers do not plant at this very moment. In this connection it should be noted that larger parts of the population have reported to be traumatized by the events of the last weeks, as well as the fact that due to economic hardship some may not have enough seeds or fertilizer.

Catholic Relief Services, with support for USAID, will complement the US\$50,000 provide by the latter with another US\$ 60,000. Funds will be allocated to provide food requirements for 500 families for one month, upscale existing child feeding programmes and provide additional support in shelter, water and sanitation. The planning activities for this are underway.

The resources of the health system are stretched but holding up very well to the pressure. The collaboration between Karonga and Mzuzu hospitals has produced very good results. Supplies are currently adequate, but WHO estimates that if the systems remains under this pressure for another 3-4 week some assistance in the form of supplies may be required. UNFPA reported they will be bringing in reproductive health kits in the next 14 days and will be travelling to Karonga on 28<sup>th</sup> January in order to pave the way.

Government has indicated a great need for tents. At this stage no organization or development partner have made any commitment in this respect. There is a general understanding that the survival and shelter kits are the most feasible and immediately available options. Tents would take most likely another one of two weeks to be delivered and the needs, given that the rains have arrived, are considered to be acute. Tents, particularly in the urban setting and with the growing concern over personal safety are important.

The Office of the UN Resident Coordinator has been in touch with World Vision, Care International, OFAM, SCF-UK and others but have to date not received any indications of actions they may have taken or are planning to take. Civil Society partners are strongly encouraged to share their information.

### **Concerns.**

Discussion amongst development partners and representatives of civil society have brought forward the following concerns;

1. **Continued Seismological Activity;** as long as the community in Karonga district continues to feel tremors and experience periodically more severe shocks, life will not return to normal. People have been advised to sleep outside, while the population in camp fluctuates. This situation may give rise to concerns with social protection issues, and informal reports from people living in the area, suggest a general worry over personal safety and security. This can be a very traumatic period. And it is not impossible that further shock may occur and that this will exacerbate damage to vulnerable or weakened structures and infrastructure.
2. **Unnecessary relief dependency;** while by no means rich, Karonga district is in normal times food secure. The fact that the community cannot easily return to normal life may have repercussions for food production, food security and livelihoods. People should be stimulated to remain in their family unit next to their lands, homes and possessions. District Government is promoting, through the Agricultural extension services and other channels, that people return to their fields to plant. We have expressed concern with the establishment of Mulinda camp as it takes people out of their normal setting, but do understand that as a temporary measure this may be necessary to manage immediate fear.
3. **Government leadership;** Despite the joint assessment mission (9-11 December), no joint assessment report has been produced. The international community has had one formal meeting with DoDMA on 18 December to discuss this earthquake. We have been advised by DoDMA that a national emergency has been declared. We have to date received no formal communication and no new assessment data in this respect. WFP and the EU have been individually approached to provide support. Contacts between development partners, civil society and Government at all levels have been constructive and friendly, and all partners are looking forward to build on this in weeks to come.

### Conclusion

On 22 December the UNRC hosted a meeting for Civil Society and Development Partners. DFID, USAID, CIDA, WHO, WFP, OXFAM, FAO, Red Cross, CRS, Irish Aid, JICA, Embassy of Japan, EU and the UNDP attended. The meeting underscored that the earthquake was limited in human impact. The response to date seems to be meeting immediate shelter requirements and a further 1850 people will be covered in the next few days. Food and food security issues would require further assessment. The health response is well coordinated and managed by Government and this includes actions in the area of water and sanitation.

Participants to the meeting committed to information sharing, but did not see the immediate need to meet again in this forum. Dependent on how the situation evolves, a meeting after X-mass should be contemplated.

**KARONGA EARTHQUAKE RELIEF REQUIREMENTS**  
**18 DECEMBER 2009**

**1.0 Summary of damage**

The summary of damage caused by the earthquake as on 15<sup>h</sup> December 2009 is as follows:

- Number of deaths - 1
- Number of people injured - 15
- Total number of households affected - 3,860
- Average household size - 6
- Number of houses that have collapsed - 979
- Number of houses with cracks - 2,881
- Under five children affected - 2,786
- Institutional infrastructure damaged:
  - Police Mobile Force houses - 15
  - School blocks - 17
  - Agriculture houses - 27
  - Teachers houses - 48
  - Telecentre - 1
  - Health post - 1
  - Water points - 5
  - Churches - 7
  - Business places - 17
  - Mosques - 2

**2.0 Assistance already provided**

- Big Tents - 53
- Family tents - 23
  
- Shelter kits - 300
- Tarpaulins - 680
- Blankets - 5,664
- Plastic sheets - 332 rolls (100x1.5m)
- Plastic pails - 2,732
- Plastic plates - 2,400
  
- Plastic cups - 3,000
  
- Kitchen sets - 100
  
- Collapsible jericans - 200 (20 ltr)

- Survival kits - 800
- Maluwa soap - 1,596
- Water guard wa ufa - 5,600 pkts
- Water guard - 2,000 (150ml);
- Chlorine water - 20 drums
- Mosquito nets - 300

### 3.0 Relief Requirements

The relief requirements have been calculated based on a figure of 5,000 affected households. This is to take into account additional figures since assessment is still going on. The requirements are as follows:

- Maize flour - 750 mt
- Beans - 75 mt
- Iodised kitchen salt - 15 mt
- Corn Soya Blend - 135 mt
- Cooking Oil - 30,000 litres
- Big Tents - 20 (1 for Maternal & Child Health Services)
- Family tents - 4,677
- Tarpaulins - 3,400
- Blankets - 2,740
- Plastic sheets - 334 rolls
- Plastic buckets with lid & tap - 50
- Plastic pails - 3,600
- Plastic plates - 14,400
- Plastic cups - 18,000
- Spoons - 20,500
- Soap - 15,204 bars
- Mosquito nets - 8,100
- Jerry cans - 4,000
- Building materials, such as iron sheets, nails, timber
- Provision of reproductive health services.
- Dissemination of information on earthquake and mitigation measures.

The food requirement is for a period of three months.

#### **4.0 Recovery**

- Rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged houses and infrastructure;
- Procurement of earthquake monitoring equipment for the Department of Geological Survey;
- Agricultural production.