

Situation Report #1, 25 December 2009

World Vision responds to earthquakes in Karonga District, northern Malawi

World Vision Malawi has dispatched an assessment team to the country's northern district of Karonga following an earthquake on 20 December, measuring 6.2 on the Richter Scale, killing three people and leaving around 200 others injured. The Malawi Government has since declared Karonga as a National Disaster Area, and experts say the threat of more earthquakes remains high.

The disaster follows similar tremors earlier in the month, which caused significant damage to infrastructure and took the life of one child. Approximately 5,000 households remain in urgent need of humanitarian aid.



A young man points to where his brother's son died after a kitchen fell on him during the 20 December earthquake

Karonga District has experienced a record number of 31 earthquakes during December, measuring between 4.3 to 6.2 on the Richter scale. Recent earthquakes are thought to be a result of the District possibly being in an active and rejuvenated system, or new faults forming.

Latest developments

World Vision is working in collaboration with the Government and other UN and NGO partners in its response to the disaster. It has provided fuel and logistics for the initial rapid assessments and is also involved in the provision and distribution of relief items including food, shelter, water and mosquito bed nets. The Malawi Government has provided materials for makeshift shelter and other essentials, whilst also urging an evacuation of the affected area.

The disaster has not directly affected any of World Vision's ADPs, however the organisation has been requested by the Government of Malawi to lead coordination of one of five designated humanitarian emergency zones established on 22 December in Karonga District. Assessments within each zone are currently underway and are expected to be complete by 28 December.

Needs and gaps

The assistance received to date is far below the needs in the area. World Vision's priority is saving lives of children by ensuring that minimum requirements for their survival in these difficult times are provided.

The Government has released a special appeal for NGOs, the international community and the private sector to support the affected community by providing items such as tents, food, disinfectants for water treatment, blankets, and utensils.

The disruption to infrastructure has placed 270,000 people at risk of cholera, as communities have been forced to draw water from unprotected wells. The community – both displaced persons in camps and the larger population – is also at risk of Malaria, due to spending nights outside their houses for fear of structures collapsing over them.

In Brief

- 4 people lost their lives and 186 others were injured in the December earthquakes
- An estimated 31,220 people (5,126 households) in Karonga District are affected by the disaster
- 2,786 children under 5 are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance
- 17 school blocks and 48 teachers houses were heavily damaged during the earthquakes
- World Vision has provided 500 mosquito bed nets and 186 water guard units, amongst other urgent relief items, in the first few days following the 20 December earthquake
- In addition to HEA and operations staff being dispatched to the affected area, 14 World Vision field staff already based in Karonga District have been mobilised in response activities
- The organisation is working in collaboration with the Government and other key UN and NGO partners in responding to the disaster
- World Vision is coordinating one of five Government humanitarian emergency 'zones'

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