Drought Conditions and Management Strategies in Malawi

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By

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Background

- Drought in Malawi occur when seasonal rainfall is lower than 75% of the normal
- Virtually the whole country is vulnerable to droughts. However, **Karonga**, **Salima, Zomba** and **Shire Valley** are drought prone areas
- In the last two decades, Malawi has experienced two notable droughts of 2001/02, and 2004/05 rainy seasons

Background

- 2001/2002 affected 2,829435 people and maize production alone was approximately 30% short of the estimated domestic amount;
- 2004/05 affected 30% of the population and a total of 5,100,000 people mostly farmers, women and children were affected; 11 out of 21 Rural Development Project areas were affected; the cost of 2004/05 drought response in the country was over US$200 million
- Malawi imported between 200,000 and 300,000 tonnes of maize for distribution

Drought Monitoring and Early Warning Systems

- Traditional and scientifically based drought monitoring and early warning systems exist;
- Traditional systems use behaviour of plants or animals. Scientific systems are based on indicators derived from variables such as climate, soil moisture and stream-flow.
- Indicators commonly used to characterize severity of droughts are WRSI, SPI, NDVI & Weather / Seasonal Rainfall Forecasts.

Drought Monitoring and Early Warning Systems

- DCCMS & WRD are responsible for meteorological stations and hydrological stations respectively
- The role of DCCMS is geared at improving station-network and its operations, and conducting research to improve understanding and application of climate information whilst role of WRD is to establish and maintain hydrological monitoring systems for identifying, developing, and conserving water resources.
- These roles are useful in drought mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Vulnerability Assessment

- The most vulnerable sector is agriculture followed by water, gender, health and fisheries.
- The most vulnerable groups of the society in Malawi include women, children and subsistence farmers

Emergency Relief and Drought Response

- GoM developed a NCP that is updated annually to reflect the changing weather patterns.
- The plan acts as a link between local disaster risk reduction measures and international disaster risk reduction efforts through international organisations such as UN agencies (like WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA) and NGOs.

Emergency Relief and Drought Response

- 2005/2006 drought, the incomes of at least 4.2 million people, had been severely reduced
- Humanitarian support of around 370,000 metric tonnes of maize costing around US$110 million was distributed to maintain nutrition levels.

Practices to Alleviate Drought Impacts

- Index-based weather insurance scheme
- Green belt initiative
- Conservation Agriculture
- Disseminate early warnings to communities
- Promote social cash transfer to ultra-poor households

The need for Knowledge and Skills on Drought Management

- Malawi has no policy or strategy that wholly focuses on ‘integrated’ Drought Management.
- Awareness on crop weather insurance to money lending institutions such as banks and smallholder farmers
- Inadequate capacities for timely warning on drought conditions

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