



Context

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world¹ with a high prevalence of chronic food and nutrition insecurity². The country is extremely vulnerable to a wide range of climate shocks which includes droughts, dry spells, flooding and pest infestations. Floods and droughts pose the most significant and recurring risk to Malawi, with the highest impacts occurring in the central & southern regions (World Bank, 2019a). A large proportion of the population is exposed to climatic shocks which are becoming increasingly frequent and intense. The compounding effect drives a “*vicious cycle of poverty and recurrent vulnerability*” (WFP, 2019: p.2).

Malawi is extremely vulnerable and exposed to a range of climatic shocks in southern Africa, especially to severe drought induced by the occurrence of a possible El Niño event. In 2015-2016, Malawi’s agriculture season experienced a late onset of rains, prolonged dry spells, and incidence of floods across regions of the country. The severe drought was exacerbated by El Niño and Malawi experienced its worst food security crisis in over a decade leading the Government of Malawi (GoM) to declare a state of disaster in April 2016. The Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC)³, which delivers humanitarian assistance in shock prone areas, indicated a total 6.7 million (an estimated 40 percent of the total population) were severely affected and faced chronic or acute food security (NRS, 2020).

One of the worst disasters in Malawi occurred in January 2015 when rainfall, the highest on record and constituting a 1 in 500-year event, caused significant flooding – predominantly in the Southern Region. It is estimated that the floods affected 1,101,364 people, displaced 230,000 and killed 106 people. A state of

¹ Nsanje is the poorest district in Malawi. As of 2005, 76 percent were classified as poor. The top 5 regions also include Machinga, Zomba, Mulanje, and Chitipa.

² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/malawi/overview>

³ This delivers humanitarian assistance in shock prone areas

disaster was declared for 15 districts⁴ of the 28 districts, several of which are the poorest in the country⁵ (Red Cross, 2017). Most recently, in March 2019, the country was struck by Tropical Cyclone Idai which led to heavy rains, deadly floods and strong winds severely affecting 15 districts, two of the four major cities, and an estimated 975,000 Malawians (World Bank, 2019b). According to the Post Disaster Needs Assessment, it was estimated that the total effects of heavy rains and floods amounted to US\$ 220.2 million, requiring US\$ 368.3 million to recover (GoM, 2019).

In addition, issues such as deforestation, low productivity and an over-reliance on rain-fed subsistence farming makes the economy especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and leaves the poorest particularly exposed to climate change, shocks and variability. In terms of administration, Malawi is divided into three regions (Northern, Central, Southern) which comprise a combined total of 28 districts.

⁴ Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe, Zomba, Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Thyolo, Mulanje, Balaka, Machinga, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Salima, Rumphi and Karonga.

⁵ Based on the recent Integrated Malawi Household Survey, the most highly affected districts – Nsanje, Chikwawa, Phalombe and Zomba – have poverty incidences above the national average of 50.7 percent, ranging from 55 to 80 percent

National Legislation and Policies

Currently the Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act of 1991 (DPR Act), which is focussed on relief, provides the legislative framework for DRM in Malawi. The DPR Act created the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) and the National Disaster Preparedness and Relief Committee (NDPRC). DoDMA is currently under the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) and is responsible for coordinating the response to natural disasters. DoDMA coordinates with other ministries and international partners through the NDPRC.

A more proactive Disaster Risk Management Bill has been drafted⁶ to reflect the increasing occurrence of disasters in the country and to reflect changes in Disaster Risk Management approaches guided by the Sendai Framework. Although it was finalised in November 2018, it currently awaits approval from Parliament.⁷ The new bill aims to integrate Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into sustainable development, prevent the creation of new risk and develop institutional arrangements for working in a systematic way, to enable the country to be better prepared for responding to future disaster events. It provides for DRM funding mechanisms and the establishment of integrated Early Warning Systems (World Bank, 2019a; CISONTECC, 2020). It also proposes the outright decentralisation of DoDMA for management functions and finances and frames the decision on either keeping it under a department or changing to a Commission and support the devolution of DRR functions to the district level (CISONTECC KII). The presidential elections of 2020, along with the end of tenure of office for members of various parliamentary committees, could be responsible for the delays in the passing of the Bill (CISONTECC, 2020). Although there is no explicit reference to anticipatory actions (AA) in the new bill, when it passes it will become the entry point for AA (KIIs).

Malawi adopted a decentralisation policy in 1998, but many Ministries haven't devolved their functions in line with the policy (CISONTECC KII). From 2016/2017 the GoM and UNDP have been working on making sure districts have DRM Officers (now called Relief and Rehabilitation Officers, which doesn't fully reflect their work). From 2019 resources have been allocated in an informal way because the old DPR act does not allow this (CISONTECC KII).

The main framework that guides the implementation and coordination of DRR in Malawi is the Disaster Risk Management Policy (2015-2020). This was adopted in 2015, largely as a result of the devastating floods earlier in the year. The policy assigns the role of other actors in disaster management such as the National Disaster Risk Management Technical Committee (**NDRM TC**), a multi stakeholder committee⁸ which serves as the National Platform for Disaster Risk Management⁹, chaired by the Secretary and Commissioner of DoDMA. The responsibility of implementing the Policy at the local level is assigned to the Disaster Risk Management Committees (DRMC). DoDMA serves as the Secretariat for the NDPRC and the NDRM TC (IFRC, 2020). The funding mechanism for the DRM Policy is vague. It states that: *“Financial resources for the implementation of the DRM policy will be an integral part of the budgets of ministries, departments, as well as those of the city, municipal and district assemblies, as they are implementing their activities as per*

⁶ In 2018, the Office of the Vice President through the Department of Disaster Management Affairs subsequently requested the Malawi Red Cross to support in the revision of the Disaster Risk Management Bill. A task force comprising of the Malawi Red Cross, officials from DoDMA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Transport and Public works, Malawi Revenue Authority among others (Malawi Red Cross, 2020). Stakeholders were able to provide inputs to the draft in 2017.

⁷ The bill is approved at the Cabinet level was gazetted pending tabling in Parliament (10th May 2019). However, the tabling of the bill failed during the Sept 2019 seating of parliament due to a busy schedule.

⁸ Composed of designated senior representatives who are formally appointed to serve on the NDRM TC as the DRM focal points for their government line ministries and departments, civil society organisations, scientific and academic institutions, the private sector, UN agencies, donor community, and the mass media.

⁹ This acts as an advocate for DRM; provides advice and technical support; and acts as the coordinating mechanism for mainstreaming DRM into sustainable development policies, planning, and programmes

disaster risk management devolved functions. In addition, civil society organisations and development partners will be encouraged to accommodate the aspirations of this policy in their normal programmes” (GoM, 2015:p.12).

The climate change mandate falls under the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services (DCMS) which is embedded in the Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining (MoNREM). DCMS is responsible for producing seasonal forecasts using global and regional models. Despite having different structures¹⁰ and policies, approaches used to address disasters and those for CCA are largely the same and involve the same actors. The GoM recognised the need for coherence and set up a joint coordination mechanism between DRR and CCA actors and in 2019 merged the two structures to create the Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management Technical Committee. The draft terms of reference of the committee notes that *‘It is important to promote the integration of risk reduction associated with existing climate variability and future climate change into strategies and programmes for the reduction of disaster risk and adaptation to climate change’* (UNDRR, 2020). The technical committee, chaired by the DCMS and co-chaired by DoDMA, is meant to meet three times a year to review projects, but competing priorities and COVID-19 have impacted the frequency of the meetings. It currently functions as a good platform for knowledge exchange, but less so for aligning policies. It could offer a relevant space to present the CERF AA pilots after being finalised and approved (FAO KII).

There appears to be a national consensus and commitment towards resilience, as indicated by numerous policies and strategies: the National DRM policy (mentioned earlier), the Malawi Vision 2063 (MW2063), the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS III) (2017-2022)¹¹, the Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP II), the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP), the Climate Change Management Policy (2016), the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA), etc. Malawi is also a signatory to the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) DRR Strategy. However, although these policies contain AA ‘concepts’, they are framed from a DRM perspective (FAO KII).

The National Resilience Strategy (NRS) (2018-2030)¹², overseen by DoDMA, was developed to break the cycle of hunger. It includes measures to achieve national goals outlined in the NDRM and Malawi National Social Support Program (MNSPP), which among others promotes shock-sensitive social protection, but has been hampered by funding constraints. The National Meteorology Policy (2019) was adopted to coordinate action in the delivery of timely and accurate meteorological services as well as to encourage a shift towards meteorological products and services that are user oriented (World Bank, 2019a).

¹⁰ Both departments have set up technical committees, respectively the National Technical Committee on Climate Change and the National Disaster Preparedness and Relief Committee.

¹¹ DRM is one of the cross-cutting areas to be mainstreamed by all planning sectors.

¹² NRS emerged from dialogue initiated at the Development Cooperation Group and High-Level Forum in 2016. The NRS is the first Government-led multi-sectoral strategy to be managed under a common framework for implementation, coordination, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning. (https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Malawi_National_Resilience_Strategy.pdf)

Disaster Risk Financing

In recent past years, Malawi has experienced severe disasters which have resulted in fiscal pressure and macroeconomic instability. It is in this context that the **Disaster risk financing and implementation plan (2019 - 2024)**¹³ was adopted. The strategy aims to act as a reference document for all relevant stakeholders in understanding the fiscal risks of disasters as well as financial instruments that the country will employ in the next five years to anticipate, prepare and better respond to natural disasters. The strategy follows a risk-layering approach, ensuring that appropriate tools are in place to provide funding for immediate recovery and longer-term reconstruction in response to risks of various scales and frequencies (GrIF, 2020).

The World Bank's US\$30 million Malawi Disaster Risk Management Development Policy Financing with Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option (DRM DPF with Cat DDO)¹⁴ was designed to support policy reforms to address vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, and to secure timely financial support to alleviate the economic and humanitarian costs associated with the impact of Tropical Cyclone Idai. The Cat DDO was triggered just before Covid-19 (OCHA KII). This mechanism helped with the adoption of a disaster risk-financing strategy in Malawi and catalysed the government's efforts for a new social protection plan that contains measures to modernise the system, including by developing shock-responsive social protection¹⁵. It also advances on design features for a disaster risk finance fund, which can be established once the DRM Bill is approved. In addition to this, the **Global Risk Financing Facility (GRIF)**¹⁷ co-financed an International Development Association (IDA) grant amounting to US\$21 million grant, part of a US\$125 million World Bank operation. This project enables the country's Social Cash Transfer Program to scale up during emergencies and funds the design of a parametric insurance instrument that will provide protection against more severe events (GrIF, 2020).

Immediately upon the establishment of the **Africa Risk Capacity (ARC Ltd)**¹⁸ in 2014, Malawi purchased a US\$5m drought insurance policy covering its 2015/16 agricultural season (which starts in October and ends in April).¹⁹ However, when Malawi experienced severe drought across 24 districts, induced by a record El Niño, ARC Ltd did not automatically trigger a pay-out on a policy, citing "the model indicated a low number of people affected by drought".²⁰ Hence timely assistance was not delivered to more than 6.5 million affected people. After international outcry from the aid community, US\$8.1 million was paid out of a maximum US\$30 million for a US\$ 4.7 million premium. ARC Ltd's cover is based on a pre-agreed plan for how the government will use the pay-out. In Malawi the funds are/would be channelled through Treasury Departments, which could lead to a lag time before they could be utilised. Therefore, country-level bureaucracies are an important determinant in how rapidly ARC funds can be deployed. It is important to note that due to mismanagement of resources within the government and ambiguity about how pay-out funds would be used, Malawi did not receive a Certificate of Good Standing until 2015, at which time they

¹³ Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (2020) Disaster risk financing and implementation plan (2019 - 2024) <<https://www.preventionweb.net/english/policies/v.php?id=71969&cid=104>>

¹⁴ <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/922541627418585517/disclosable-version-of-the-isr-malawi-disaster-risk-management-development-policy-financing-with-cat-ddo-p165056-sequence-no-03>

¹⁵ This includes the use of UBR data for enabling shock-response through the social protection system for both COVID-19 emergency and 2020/21 lean season food insecurity responses

¹⁶ <https://www.financialprotectionforum.org/blog/three-ways-that-contingent-policy-financing-contributes-to-resilience-building-before-during>

¹⁷ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/12/12/world-bank-approves-142-million-to-support-resilient-livelihoods-in-malawi>

¹⁸ <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/53400>

¹⁹ The index-based insurance offers maximum coverage of \$30 million per country per season for drought events that occur with a frequency of one in five years or less

²⁰ As the model used by ARC calculated that only 20,594 people had been affected by the drought

became eligible to take out a policy (ActionAid, 2017; OPM 2017)²¹. Since then, the GoM has not taken a cover, but it still pays membership dues to receive technical advice, slowly re-building the relationship with the new administration. There are reports that a new policy, with the premium paid by the AfDB and KfW, might be taken out soon (OCHA, FAO KIIs).

Strategic Grain Reserves (SGR) are an important instrument to cope with shock-induced food crises, accurate and timely information and early warning systems to enable more adequate policy responses and better management of coping instruments. In the 2021/2022 fiscal budget, K12.0 billion (US\$15m), comprising World Bank and GoM funding, has been allocated for maize purchases by the National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA) and ADMARC. The revised guidelines of 2017 require enhancing the country's early warning system for better preparedness, early release of funds to procure grain during the harvesting period; establish a 14-member committee to oversee drawing down of maize; and specifies circumstances to trigger drawing down both in emergency and non-emergency circumstances. Parliament approved K10 billion (approx. US\$12 million) Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC, US\$20 million)²² as part of the World Bank's support to the agriculture sector.

The **IMF Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT)** helps eligible low-income member countries to meet balance of payment needs created by disasters. The CCRT's post-Catastrophe Relief window provides exceptional assistance in the wake of a catastrophic natural disaster. A three-year ECF arrangement was approved in April 2018. Following Tropical Cyclone Idai, access was augmented (IMF, 2016)²³.

The IFRC are also investigating a flood-based insurance model in two districts, building on lessons learnt from premiums in countries with volcanic eruptions (OCHA KII). The World Bank is reported to be developing triggers for food insecurity funded by the UK government in different two districts.

Social Protection

The GoM's vision of shock sensitive social protection (SSSP or 3SP) is articulated in the Malawi National Social Support Programme II (MNSSP II) and the National Resilience Strategy (NRS). SSSP aims to "*advance a social protection system which can meet seasonal needs, prepares for and responds to shocks together with the humanitarian sector, and supports recovery and the return to regular programming*" (WFP, 2020). Therefore, the GoM intends to promote resilience to shocks in anticipation of a crisis, for e.g., by scaling up existing social protection both vertically and horizontally (Red Cross, 2017).

The Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) or *Mtukula Pakhomo*, launched in 2006, is the GoM's flagship unconditional cash transfer program targeted to ultra-poor, labour-constrained households, run by the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability, and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW). The transfer amount depends on household size and the number of children of primary and secondary-school age living in the household. But on average a household receives 7,000 MWK per month (approx. US\$9.5) (IDS, 2019). Although there is evidence that the payments have been of great value during disaster incidents, there have been calls to strengthen the system to ensure timely and sufficient transfers (Red Cross, 2016). There is an interest in integrating food security response with social protection. DoDMA coordinates the distribution of food directly and this makes it difficult to integrate efforts since social protection is handled by MoGCDSW. More integration and a pooling of funds is required to maximise the benefits of the programmes (FAO KII).

²¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malawi-insurance-idUSKBN18K2RZ>

²² For the procurement of 21,000 tons of maize for restocking the Strategic Grain Reserves (humanitarian assistance)

²³ <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/Sheets/2016/08/01/16/49/Catastrophe-Containment-and-Relief-Trust>

Malawi's integrated social registry, known as the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR)²⁴, is a response to concerns about the fragmentation of the social protection system. It is meant to provide *harmonized information on the socio-economic status of households to determine their potential eligibility for social programs. In doing so, it serves as a social registry by supporting the processes of registering households and determining their potential eligibility for multiple user programs in a coordinated way* (World Bank 2018: p.8). By 2020, the UBR was rolled out in 18 districts (rural areas only) and data for more than 1.4 million households is available²⁵. Although country-wide coverage of the UBR is expected by the end of 2021, KI's indicated that this will not be achieved because of some data challenges leading to a retargeting exercise in some areas and lack of adequate funding. The NRS also articulates the vision of integrating all the various registries - the SCTP, UBR, humanitarian register, WFP's SCOPE - with the National ID card to facilitate the delivery of shock-sensitive responses through vertical and horizontal expansion of livelihood support (NRS, 2018).

The GoM social policies and programmes are mainly funded by donors. A corruption scandal in 2014²⁶ led donors to reduce funds and reallocate the resources to collective pools and to initiatives they do not run themselves. Therefore, the financial and managerial responsibilities over country-wide initiatives ended up divided among many development partners, each responsible for certain districts, as is the case with the SCTP (Arruda, P.,2018)²⁷. Four donors each fund separate SCTP districts – Irish Aid, the World Bank, the EU (through KFW), and KFW (the German development bank) but they are moving towards a more harmonised approach. The World Bank is looking to do something similar (OCHA, KII). The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and Public Sector Reforms²⁸ is responsible for coordinating the MNSSP II, which recognises the need for better coordination and collaboration in the social protection sector. The practical implementation of social protection programmes in Malawi is challenging, with limited human and technical resources to fulfil this coordinating role. The ongoing project "Support to the implementation of social protection for the ultra-poor people in Malawi" commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) aims to support the Ministry and strengthen the implementation of MNSSP II.

Anticipatory Action Pilots

CERF AA framework²⁹

CERF has provided over US\$43 million in allocations to Malawi since 2006, the majority of which were for drought (OCHA, n.d). A phased approach was agreed with the Resident Coordinator to develop an AA framework for floods and dry spells with OCHA support. These are still in development and a few months from finalisation. There is a US\$30 million funding envelope for a two-year period which could be revised after the finalisation of the frameworks (FAO KII). Triggers have been developed by looking at historical data on Malawi's experience of shocks. In terms of community engagement, a household survey was implemented in a number of districts to inform both AA pilots, documenting key lessons (OCHA, n.d).

²⁴ The UBR is owned and coordinated by the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MoFEPD) and managed by the UBR Taskforce, which is composed of representatives of key central stakeholders including the Local Development Fund and the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability, and Social Welfare and others

²⁵ <https://www.resilience.mw/project/social-protection-ultra-poor-people-malawi>

²⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25912652>

²⁷ This limited the development of common tools such as single registries Up until 2012, donors also found it difficult to fund the SCTP, since it lacked a normative background. This problem was only solved when the proposal for the National Social Support Policy (NSSP) was approved in 2012.

²⁸ <https://www.epd.gov.mw/>

²⁹ https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/Anticipatory%20Action%20Update_0.pdf

Floods are one-in-four-year events in the two flood-prone districts - Chikwawa and Nsanje. These are districts where the Red Cross AA pilots are in, in addition to a larger CERF allocation. The pilot will have one trigger and aims to reach 300,000 people in 5 days, with coordination with the Red Cross (on the design of the trigger) and the 510 initiative (on the technical side). There has also been limited bilateral engagement with DoDMA (the Forecast based Financing taskforce was one such mechanism led by DoDMA, but unsuccessfully so far).

For the dry spells pilot, the districts of Chikwawa, Nsanje and Balaka have been selected. Dry spells are tricky to forecast, so based on these early actions are still being looked at and triggers are being fine-tuned (FAO KII). Interestingly, results from a community survey show that the preferred option would require three months to deploy, which would not be operationally viable since the prediction accuracy would be lost (OCHA KII). Coordination has taken place primarily with the convening Ministry, DoDMA, and to a lesser extent with the DCMS. There has been an agreement to use the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) for the dry spells pilot (OCHA KII).

FAO pilot

In 2019, FAO implemented early action interventions to mitigate the impact of El Niño induced drought and the impact of floods in six regions. Activities included the distribution of early maturing/ drought-tolerant seeds, ring vaccination to prevent outbreaks, promotion of micro-irrigation and on-farm water conservation (3W Mapping). Through a grant from the German Government, the country office has been training government officials in DoDMA, MoA and DCMS on AA, developed disaster risk profiles with the GoM for some districts to help prioritise interventions and is now trying to engage the Red Cross through the CERF pilot (with FAO support on the analysis). The project under the grant will also align AA terminology with early response (FAO KIIs).

Red Cross pilot

The Forecast-Based Action (FbA) pilot project is one of the components of the ECHO Enhancing Resilience in Malawi (ERIM) project for a period of 18 months starting from 1 June 2017. It is a consortium with Malawian, Belgian, Netherlands and Danish Red Cross Societies. The target beneficiary group consists of 2,800 households in the Chikwawa (TA Makhuwira) and Nsanje (TA Ndamera) districts positioned in the Lower Shire flood plain (Red Cross, 2017). FbA programming has been continued through the DRC Consortium project, COMREP, which is developing an Early Action Protocol (EAP) for FbA flooding in Chikwawa and Nsanje. This has been further complemented through the mainstreaming of FbA in the recently initiated ECHO Increased Disaster Resilience through Early Action in Malawi (IDREAM), a two-year project targeting four districts in the south of Malawi. Through IDREAM the development of Early and AAs for flood will be developed, supported by an expanded lead time and enhanced linkages to the UBR (Red Cross Communication).

World Food Programme:

The triggers for drought are set based on historical records and seasonal forecasts embedded in the map room which hosts hindcasts, thresholds, forecasts and anticipatory actions. The International Research Institute for Climate and Society (IRI) is supporting the idea of putting a functional map room for AA in place. Beneficiaries include food-insecure households, vulnerability to climatic shocks, households with labour. Although no AA has been triggered yet, vulnerable communities implemented actions that helped them to lessen impact of prolonged dry spells through the Food for Asset creation program – a resilience programme implemented in AA districts (3W mapping). Additional AA related work includes the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) initiative, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). This initiative focuses on “*reducing vulnerability to climate change by enhancing*

the production and use of climate services in support of decision making for a range of sectors, including agriculture, food security, health and disaster risk reduction” (WFP, 2021).

Collaboration

The Forecast-based Finance (FbF) Taskforce, a multi-disciplinary structure led by DoDMA, is involved in FbF-related programming, validations and the coordination of FbA projects and actors in the country (Red Cross Communication). However, convening the taskforce has been a challenge.

Development/resilience projects of relevance:

M-Climes is a six-year, US\$16,264,545 project funded by the Green Climate Fund, the GoM and the UNDP. It aims at supporting the GoM to take steps in saving lives and enhancing livelihoods at risk of climate-related disasters. UNDP is implementing only DRM/mitigation projects to reduce the impact of future disasters and there is nothing anticipatory (FAO KII).

The **Malawi Resilience and Disaster Risk Management Project (MRDRMP)** is funded by the World Bank to support the GoM in the recovery of livelihoods and critical infrastructure, while strengthening climate resilience in areas affected by the 2016 drought and the 2019 Tropical Cyclone Idai which severely affected food production and food security.

Analysis

Malawi is a great example of a country with numerous policies, all with a resilience/DRR/DRM angle and with large ambitions. However, they lack coordination and implementation. For example, the NRS, a well written document, was the brainchild of Vice President Dr Saulos Klaus Chilima. It was mentioned that the VP is now the Minister of Economic Planning, Development and Public Sector Reforms and has dedicated his efforts to other priorities such as urbanisation. The NRS hasn't received the traction people thought it would and is now just generally considered a 'nice' document by some (KIIs). In general, the uptake of the DRM agenda has been much slower than expected. DoDMA now has new managers therefore they need to be brought up to speed, which has slowed down the process (FAO KII).

It was clear from the KIIs that AA is not a priority for the government and the country is not in a position to scale up, despite having the necessary evidence on the impact of AA (FAO, OCHA KIIs). The terminology is considered to be new and there is not much awareness, therefore continued advocacy is needed promoting the idea that “we need to respond before things get bad” (FAO KII). For example, in a speech to the UN, the Secretary and Commissioner refers to Early financing - Early action in the context of the experience of Tropical Cyclone Idai in a different way. *“The disaster required undertaking of early action to save lives, ensure survival needs and alleviate the suffering of the affected population. The timely declaration of a ‘state of disaster’ by the State President facilitated early action. The disaster also portrayed the need for development and humanitarian partners to review early financing tools such as reprogramming of funds for existing programmes and crisis modifiers, which are critical in facilitating early action in disaster response”* (GoM, 2019)³⁰.

It was suggested by KIIs that strengthening the foundations for DRM should be the priority before introducing AA concepts, since the GoM is not yet in a position to take over the pilots. AA is seen as filling in a policy

³⁰ Government of Malawi Department of Disaster Management Affairs Statement by the Secretary and Commissioner for Disaster Management Affairs, Mr. Wilson Moleni on Cyclone Idai Response and Recovery Needs during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment. 24th to 26th June, Geneva <https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/statement-secretary-and-commissioner-disaster-management-affairs-mr-wilson-moleni>

gap within the DRM framework. In terms of financing, each Ministry engaged has a different lead/decision maker, rather than a single Ministry.

In terms of disaster risk financing, there is currently no DRM fund since this was not mandated by the 1991 DPR Act. This is however one of the stipulations of the World Bank DPL, and a source of potential AA funding, if not constrained by legislation. Although there are significant sources of donor funding and a Disaster Risk Financing (DRF) strategy assisted by the World Bank, funding is not well coordinated. DoDMA and the MoA need to coordinate better, but this is not a tangible deliverable of the DRF strategy (KI).

In terms of social protection, although there is political will around shock responsive social protection, a harmonised approach is challenging. Donors are working towards a coordinated approach, as mentioned earlier, but the MoGCDSW cash transfer work funded by the World Bank would benefit from greater coordination with humanitarian partners (OCHA KII).

In terms of sustainability and the scale up of the pilots, the CERF AA framework indicates that it will be easier to adopt the triggers of the flood pilot rather than the dry spells pilot because of the short lead time that the dry spell pilot has used on (OCHA KII). Drought response is also more complex as it is cross-sectoral, across both the government and implementing partners, addressing both food security and livelihoods.

At district level, the annually revised district contingency plans could be strengthened and improved to anticipate disasters better (OCHA, FAO KIs). One KI mentioned that government funds could be better spent for AA with greater analysis on the disbursement mechanisms.

Implementing partners also need to engage better collectively across DRR, Climate Change and Social Protection, and approach the government with one voice. DoDMA is unable to convene partners together regularly, therefore at the district level partners only convene when there is a disaster (FAO KIIs).

Although there are ongoing efforts on climate information availability and dissemination based on demand from both the people and the government, the country has limited forecasting infrastructure and therefore DCMS can't provide granular information. These limitations are also noted in the 2015 DRM Policy (GoM, 2015; FAO KII).

To conclude, Malawi's high exposure to weather and climate risks combined with high levels of poverty, food insecurity and reliance on rain-fed agriculture, dry spells and floods lead to emergencies on a regular basis. And despite the frequency of the crises, they are managed individually. AA is therefore only a small yet vital part of the solution. Breaking this recurrent cycle of crises will require a transformative shift in policy and development support, from frequent and costly humanitarian responses to a greater emphasis on DRR and preparedness. AA pilots need to be connected to longer-term resilience investments that address the root causes of chronic poverty and build sustainable strategies for adapting to climate change.

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