

# The Weekly

## Information Resource Bulletin

### Climate Change Focus

Climate change happens in different ways, ranging from increased climate variability and gradual changes in temperature and precipitation, to increased frequency and intensity of extreme events.

How does all this affect the ability of Malawians to feed their families?

Many environmental problems caused by climate change are aggravated by a rapidly growing population. For instance, climate variations can result in food shortages, and as the population rapidly expands, more people are put at risk of hunger.

Agriculture is an important sector of the Malawi economy. Agriculture and fisheries are highly dependent on specific climate conditions.

Increases in temperature and carbon dioxide can be beneficial for some crops in some places. But to realize these benefits, nutrient levels, soil moisture, water availability, and other conditions must also be met. Changes in the frequency and severity of droughts and floods can pose challenges for farmers in the country.

Overall, climate change can make it more difficult to grow crops, raise animals, and catch fish in the same ways and same places as have been done in the past.

The links between climate change and hunger, have, to date, largely been explored in relation to the impact on crop productivity and hence, food production.

### The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To describe potential impact of climate change on hunger
- To discuss how the impact of climate change has affected small-holder farmers in Malawi
- To look for solutions to slow the effects of climate change on agriculture and the nation's ability to feed itself
- To describe how farmers can adapt to climate change

### The Problem: Climate Change and Hunger

Changes in climatic conditions constitute major challenges for agriculture productivity. Climate change will affect:

- Availability of good quality water
- Timing and length of the growing season
- The availability of food

People depending on climate-sensitive livelihoods are the most affected by climate change.

For example, farmers are one of the groups most vulnerable to climate change. They depend on rain-fed agriculture which is highly climate sensitive.

By December 2013, many parts of Malawi had not yet received enough rain since the onset of the growing season. This was bad for the farmers in the country since they rely on rain for the production of both food and cash crops.

Some farmers also planted their crops with the first rains, but most of the new germination withered due to the prolonged dry spell. This could in turn lead to food shortages.

Agriculture is a climate-sensitive activity, strongly affected by climate change and variability.

According to Action Aid International, changing rainfall patterns and higher temperatures have forced farmers to shorten the growing season and switch to more expensive hybrid crops.

Still another issue is frequent flooding during what is supposed to be the dry season and droughts during what has been the rainy season. The result has been a drop in crop production. Changes in rainfall patterns have also affected the growing seasons and the type of crops being planted.

The Action Aid study also found that: long-season local maize varieties are no longer a preferred option, and maize normally grown in November is now being planted in December.

## Activities for Journalists

Climate change is already affecting Malawi. Extreme weather events such as floods and droughts are becoming more frequent and seasonal rainfall patterns are changing. In the future, unpredictable weather patterns are expected to intensify and average temperatures are projected to rise by as much as six degrees by the end of the century. (UNDP climate change country profile: Malawi)

It's important to know that Malawian smallholder farmers are particularly vulnerable to climate change since they depend almost solely on the rains to irrigate their crops such as maize.

You may recall during the 2011/2012 growing season, when erratic rainfall patterns coupled with prolonged dry spells significantly impacted crop yields and food prices. It left nearly two million households with food shortages – creating food gaps for three to eight months of the year.

In just the next couple of decades, the World Bank says, farmers across Africa could lose more than half their cropland to drought and heat.

Use your radio station to help your community understand the impact of climate change on hunger and agriculture. Also get your listeners to talk about things they might do to slow the climate change effects on hunger and agriculture.

Have a Vox pop with people from your area. Let them talk about their experiences on the impact of climate change on food.

Have an interview with two smallholder farmers on the effects of climate change on their own ability to produce enough food.

Ask them how rainfall patterns have changed.

Why they think the rainfall patterns have changed?

How has this affected crop production?

How this has affected their daily lives.

### Engagement with an extension worker

What are things farmers can do to slow the climate change effects on agriculture and producing enough food to feed one's family?

Also have an interview with an agriculture officer from your area. Ask him/her to explain the effects of climate change on the country's ability to produce enough food for its people.

The officer should clearly explain how climate change is linked to food shortages.

He/She should also suggest ways/solutions to slow or even reverse the climate change effects on farmer's ability to produce enough food for the country.

Also identify extension workers from civil society organisations promoting alternatives to industrial agriculture such as organic farming and Permaculture and ask them similar questions

### Community Engagement

Urge listeners to send SMS, call or stop by the radio station to talk about solutions to slow or even reverse the climate change effects on farming and the ability to produce enough food to feed one's families.

### Useful Contacts

- Herbert Mwalukomo -Civil Society Network on Climate Change ; Phone:+265( 0)881038910, + 265 (0) 212 700 104
- Welton Phalira- Lake Chilwa Basin Climate Change Adaptation Programme; Phone: +265(0)888 308074
- [www.oxfam.org/.../rp-winds-of-change-malawi-0906.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/.../rp-winds-of-change-malawi-0906.pdf)
- Walter Mugove Nyika; [www.seedingschools.org](http://www.seedingschools.org); Phone:+265( 0) 999788373
- [www.actionaid.org/malawi/stories/climate-change-malawi](http://www.actionaid.org/malawi/stories/climate-change-malawi)
- McSweeny et al, 2008, UNDP climate change country profile: Malawi. [http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/climate/projects/undp-cp/UNDP\\_reports/Malawi/Malawi.lowres.report.pdf](http://www.geog.ox.ac.uk/research/climate/projects/undp-cp/UNDP_reports/Malawi/Malawi.lowres.report.pdf)
- World Food Programme .October 2012. Global food security update. [www.reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/wfp251749.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/wfp251749.pdf)



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