Cyclone Freddy response
VillageReach in Malawi
Highlights

- Tropical Cyclone Freddy developed in the Western Indian Ocean and moved eastwards—causing torrential rains and resulting in multiple flood events over the southern part of Malawi on 12th March, 2023.
- A total of 14 districts were highly impacted in Malawi, including Blantyre, Zomba, Thyolo, Mulanje, Phalombe, Chiradzulu, Machinga, Balaka, Mangochi, Chikwawa, Mwanza, Neno, Nsanje, and Ntcheu.
- The devastating effects of the cyclone led to the declaration of a state of disaster in parts of southern Malawi by the state president, His Excellency Dr Lazarus Chakwera, on 13th March 2023.
- Following the declaration, an inter-agency rapid assessment led by the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office (UNRCO) was conducted from 18th to 24th March, 2023 in Blantyre City, as well as Chikwawa, Nsanje, Phalombe, Mulanje, Chiradzulu and Zomba districts.
- The assessment involved government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), United Nations (UN) Agencies, local and international Non-Governmental Organizations, and the district councils. Representatives of all 11 clusters were involved during the inter-agency assessment.
- The number of people displaced by Cyclone Freddy at the onset of the disaster was reported to be 659,278, concentrated in 747 camps across the 14 affected districts. These included 336,252 women and 323,026 men, according to preliminary figures from the inter-agency assessment report overseen by DoDMA.
- Humanitarian partners developed a Flash Appeal, which called for US$70.6 million in support of the Government-led emergency and recovery response plan.

According to the Ministry of Health (MoH), at least 83 health facilities have been damaged or destroyed; compromising health service delivery in some communities. Issues concerning mental health and sexual and reproductive health may need close attention to support those traumatized by their loss and living in unsafe situations. In addition, there are risks of disease outbreaks which could lead to increased morbidity and mortality in the recovery phase.

Food security at household level is also compromised, which could accelerate malnutrition.

Visiting some of the affected people living in some camps in Blantyre, Minister of Health, Hon. Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda expressed shock at the devastation the disaster has especially on children.

“For the children, because their needs are different, we are talking to our partners to meet their nutritional and other needs, it is really sad that some of the most affected are children, babies actually, so as the government, we will work hard to ensure children are protected and we are grateful for all the people who have come in to support us,” Kandodo Chiponda said.

In the wake of these developments, VillageReach mobilized resources to provide emergency response to targeted districts. VillageReach conducted a rapid visit to Phalombe and Mulanje districts to assess the impact of the cyclone at the onset of the disaster and made efforts to align with Malawi Government response plans to provide relief in the cyclone hit districts VillageReach’s response targeted the five most affected districts of Phalombe, Mulanje, Chikwawa, Nsanje and Mangochi.
Infrastructure destruction

The drive into Phalombe was met by silence, signaling the lack of electricity at the district’s trading centre. There was evidence of fallen electric poles and wires on some roads as the team drove through the area. At interface with the district officials, the team learnt that the district had been cut from power supply for more than one week since the cyclone hit. The District Hospital was being powered by a 20 litre per hour diesel capacity generator to provide life-saving health care such as theatre services and the laboratory.

In both Mulanje and Phalombe, there were reports of health facilities being completely damaged and closed, also rendering many communities unable to access health services. In Phalombe, two MoH facilities had been closed completely due to damages from the cyclone and the old Phalombe District Hospital was submerged in mud deposits and rendered dysfunctional.

The same was true in Mulanje for Mloza, Nyamlenga, Mlomba and Dzenje Health Facilities. Although all health facilities in Mulanje were functioning, they still faced some challenges. Fourteen health facilities needed solar energy; eight incinerators were no longer functional; and there was no safe drinking water in some facilities.

An increased need for drugs and health supplies

Due to flooding in some health facilities, drugs and other medical supplies were damaged. Consequently, there was an increased need for additional essential drugs supply such as analgesics and antibiotics by district health facilities. The surge in cyclone-related trauma cases also contributed to the increased demand of these essential drugs.

*Figure 1: A clinic review room at Phalombe Health Center soiled by mud.*
Demand for increased human resources for service provision

Many health facilities have been destroyed or flooded in Malawi in the wake of Cyclone Freddy. That has left hundreds of communities without adequate access to health services. Health personnel housing are destroyed, and their families were also affected following the devastating impact of the cyclone, and as such, some health workers were unable to get back to work at the peak of the response. The need for health personnel stretches across professions such as clinical officers, nurses, and Health Surveillance Assistants just to mention a few.

*Figure 1: The remnants of what used to be a housing infrastructure, completely destroyed by the floods.*
VillageReach’s response

Following the rapid assessment visit, VillageReach mobilized some resources to support the emergency response. As such, the organization is currently implementing cyclone response activities based on findings from the rapid assessment and in alignment with MoH emergency and post emergency response plan.

Between March and April 2023, VillageReach provided the first phase of our support as part of the emergency response. From May to September 2023, VillageReach will continue to provide ongoing post-emergency support to mitigate the impact of the cyclone, particularly focusing on provision of health services.

The first phase of support offered emergency relief items to address water and sanitation issues and increase public awareness of the Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) hotline; and through radio jingles and posters.

*Figure 3: Official handover of WASH and relief supplies at Mulanje and Phalombe to District Heath Offices.*

In addition, rescue missions also directed their emergency calls for ambulatic or rescue support to CCPF hotline workers, who in turn assisted to connect emergency services where they were needed.

These focus areas were also identified as needing support by MOH in the wake of the cyclone.

The table below outlines the support provided in phase one of VillageReach’s response. This support was provided across the five districts and reached a total of 17,787 affected people in 15 camps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buckets</td>
<td>50litres</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chlorine</td>
<td>25Kgs</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publicity for CCPF hotline</td>
<td>Posters</td>
<td>1,320</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radio Jingles</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotline response capacity</td>
<td>Additional Hotline workers recruited</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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From April to September 2023, VillageReach will provide the following support for cyclone recovery efforts in the five districts in alignment with district/MOH needs:

**Water and Sanitation**
- Procure and deliver HTH Chlorine and, Water Guard to the five priority districts.
- Procure and deliver WASH supplies including handwashing soaps and plastic buckets
- Procure and deliver dignity kits to women and adolescent girls in targeted camps or communities.

**Food Security and nutrition**
- Procure and deliver Corn and Soya blend flour to targeted camps and communities in the 5 districts.

**Health sector transport, logistics and coordination.**
- In collaboration with the Directorate of Health and Social Services, provide support for outreach services in targeted affected health catchment areas and camps.
- Conduct ongoing situation assessments of health facility and camp needs, as required, to prioritize and quantify additional support desired as the recovery efforts progress

**Risk Communication and community engagement**
- Promotion of Chipatala Cha Pa Foni (CCPF) as a source for reliable health information for ongoing psychosocial and other health needs.

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**Acknowledgements**

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Visit the VillageReach website to learn more about the 2023 Cyclone Freddy response activity in Malawi. For more information, contact Ndasowa Chitule

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