

# COVID-19 Update

<b>Date</b>	<b>Updated on 10 April 2020</b>
<b>Situation Update</b>	<b>No. 4</b>

## 1. MALAWI HIGHLIGHTS

Total Cases	Current Cases	Recovered	Dead
9	8	0	1

- ❖ Malawi is in a declared State of Disaster
- ❖ Prevention and response measures are being implemented
- ❖ Government, UN and Partners coordination structures in place

2. GLOBAL UPDATE	3. REGIONAL UPDATE (Africa)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>1,439,516</b> COVID-19 cases confirmed</li> <li>❖ <b>85,711</b> confirmed deaths</li> <li>❖ <b>212</b> countries, areas and territories have cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>8,222</b> COVID-19 cases confirmed in <b>45</b> countries</li> <li>❖ <b>380</b> confirmed deaths</li> <li>❖ <b>1,115</b> recovered</li> </ul>

## 4. MALAWI GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

### 4.1 Malawi Preparedness and Response Plan, and Coordination

- On 8 April, Malawi Government launched the [National Covid-19 Preparedness and Response Plan](#), with a budget of US\$213 million (MWK157 billion). The UN RC represented the International Community in the Launch.
  - The main objective of the plan is to prevent, rapidly detect and effectively respond to any COVID-19 outbreak thereby reducing morbidity and mortality in Malawi;
  - It has four broad pillars: Emergency Preparedness and Capacity-Building; Spread Prevention and Control; Response; and Early Recovery;
  - The plan is built around nine clusters that comprise members from government ministries, departments and agents, UN Agencies, NGOs and other humanitarian actors;
  - The plan will be updated every three months or on a need basis.
- The Ministry of Health has set up a [COVID 19 National Information Dashboard](#).
- Discussions are reported to be taking place between the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Government of Malawi for support of \$150 million (about K110 billion) from the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust, Rapid Credit Facility and balance of payments support for the COVID 19 response. [Link](#)
- Efforts to establish a national Relief Fund to accept contributions from well-wishers, companies and individuals;
- The President has said salaries of the President, Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers have been reduced by 10 percent for three months, with savings directed to fund the fight against the coronavirus;
- Next HCT scheduled on 14 April is expected to discuss the UN&NGO operational plan to support the GOM's overall Plan as well as a policy to ensure access to communities at times of lockdown.
- The Humanitarian Window of the SDG-Acceleration Plan is one of the tools to support the implementation of the Plan when joint proposals are identified.

### 4.2 Laboratory Capacity

- Three laboratories are testing for COVID-19: National Health Reference Laboratory (NHRL) in Lilongwe, the College of Medicine (COM) Laboratory in Blantyre and the Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Trust (MLW) in Blantyre;
- Reports indicate that testing can take 2-3 days due to a backlog;
- Plans to set up a fourth laboratory at CHANCO in Zomba. Ministry of Health is also considering expanding capacity to other districts by unlocking Abbott machines or using Cepheid Xpert point of care devices;
- Ministry of Health has been directed by the State President to recruit 2,000 health workers to assist in the fight of the pandemic.

### 4.3 Socio Economic Outlook

- The Reserve Bank of Malawi has disbursed K12 billion to commercial banks to give loans to their customers to cushion the effects of COVID-19;
- MyBucks Banking Corporation, National Bank of Malawi, Standard Bank and NBS Bank announced restructuring of their base lending rates. The applicable base lending rates for banking loans and overdrafts in the commercial banks have been revised downwards from 13.30 percent to 13.20 percent. [Link](#)
- Reduced fees and charges on all electronic money transactions in order to promote use of electronic money transactions;
- The Malawi Revenue Authority has been instructed to open a voluntary tax compliance window for a period of six months to allow taxpayers with arrears to settle their tax obligations in instalments without penalty;
- Tax waivers on importation of essential goods for Coronavirus management including personal protective equipment, hand sanitizers, soaps, water treatment chemicals and many more;

- Malawi Enterprise Development Fund to increase loan allocation from K13 billion to K15 billion to help Micro, Small and Medium Scale businesses seriously affected by the pandemic;
- A 50% increased nutrition allowance payable to civil servants with foundational medical conditions.

#### 4.4 Communication

- Intensified civic education and information sharing by government authorities with communities;
- Risk communication tools developed by the Health Education Unit, including posters, jingles and leaflets;
- MoH has developed an app to track patients and suspects to ensure compliance with national guidelines;
- Repetitive radio jingles are being broadcast;
- Toll-free number 54747 available to access more about COVID-19
- Mobile phone companies are supporting the Chipatala Cha Pa Foni, a mobile-based health hotline in Malawi that connects a health centre and remote communities;
- Chipatala Cha Pa Foni has been overwhelmed by phone calls and the ministry is working on increasing the capacity and personnel to improve the situation
- Media updates, press releases and dissemination of information through social media ([MoH Facebook page](#)).

#### 4.5 Preventative measures instituted by Malawian Government (all measures as at 1 April)

##### 4.5.1 Public Institutions and Banks

- In his statement on 4 April, the State President called for adjusted working arrangements in public and private institutions:
  - To decongest workplaces, all offices should work in shifts except those delivering essential services;
  - For the public sector, the Chief Secretary to the Government will issue a circular to provide guidelines;
  - For the private and other sectors, the heads of institutions should liaise with the Secretary responsible for Labor;
  - All places, buildings and structures with public access shall ensure that there is adequate ventilation;
  - All employers shall allow vulnerable employees, including those with underlying medical conditions, to work from or stay at home.
- Preventative measures introduced for the Courts on 27 March are active ([Link](#));
- Measures previously introduced to limit crowds in banks are active.

##### 4.5.2 Screening and Quarantining

- The requirement for self or institutional quarantine for 14 days for all residents and nationals returning from affected countries remains in place. Those with symptoms have samples be taken in their homes;
- Contact tracing on all individuals that came into contact with confirmed cases;
- Intensified screening of people at all entry points and surveillance of travelers from countries with confirmed cases;
- All district hospitals have reserved rooms/spaces for treatment of confirmed cases;
- Work has started on treatment spaces at border districts and central hospitals;
- Training for health care workers and community health workers is currently underway;
- Govt has repaired ventilators in the central hospitals and provided 20 new ventilators for treatment sites
- Over 20,000 test kits donated by Jack Ma are currently being used by the three laboratories. All our test kits have met the WHO and CDC standards. CDC has been confirming initial results with NICD in South Africa;
- Ministry of Health is finalising guidelines on GenExpert machines to be used in district hospitals;
- Provision of Personal Protective Equipment for all personnel at risk of contracting the disease, especially health care workers, was announced by the State President on 4 April;
- Increased risk allowances are urgently required for health workers.

##### 4.5.3 Travel and Transport Sector

- The wide-ranging restrictions on public transport introduced by the Ministry of Transport and Public are in place although full enforcement, particularly in relation to minibuses, remains challenging;
- All cross-border passenger travel suspended from 1st April 2020 including suspension of all international flights except those carrying health personnel, equipment, emergency relief items; returning residents and general cargo;
- To reduce the impact of restrictions imposed on the transport industry, the Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority Board reduced prices from 4 April 2020 by Diesel 13.75%, Petrol 16.13% and Paraffin 9.71%.

##### 4.5.4 Gatherings, Meetings and Schools

- In his public address on 4 April, the State Present suspended all public meetings, gatherings and conferences;
- On 9 April, Government announced more restrictions on entertainment, public events, markets and religious gatherings;
- Schools, colleges and universities remain closed since 23 March;
- From 8 April, the Lilongwe City Council placed a temporary ban on the opening of bottle stores, pubs and night clubs, sports clubs and gyms, street processions, wedding receptions, bridal showers, birthday parties and any other social gatherings or public events. The notice declaring the ban states that the Council will work with Police to ensure the ban is respected.

##### 4.5.5 Human Rights

- On 3 April the Malawi Human Rights Commission issued a comprehensive [press statement](#) outlining human rights concerns for Malawi to be integrated into the COVID 19 response;
- The statement emphasizes the need to respect human rights in the fight against the pandemic and lists population groups with special needs that must be integrated; also, it outlines the need for central and local governments to ensure mechanisms to address domestic violence; for the business community to respect fair labour practices and consumer rights; to mainstream and social media to avoid misinformation; and to the security forces to human right and deliver their responsibilities in an apolitical manner.

#### 4.5.6 Prisons

- No update has been received from the Ministry of Homeland Security on screening of prisoners for pardon;
- Restrictions on visits to prisons remain in place.

## 5. UNITED NATIONS RESPONSE

### 5 Malawi

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Malawi comprises 21 United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes with a presence in the 28 districts of Malawi. In the initial stages of preparedness and response, WHO and UNICEF played a central role in the preparation and implementation of the COVID-19 plan in Malawi. Following global guidance, the UNCT is actively contributing to the response and continued preparedness for more cases. WHO is the technical lead, providing guidance and technical support. Under the framework of the National Plan, the Resident Coordinator's Office is in close coordination with DODMA, the NGOs, and supporting the UN Task Force on COVID-19 on coordination and coherence is facilitating the preparation of a UN&NGO joint operational plan

#### 5.1 Preparedness and Resource Mobilisation (WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, UNCT)

- The UN is providing support to all activated clusters including mobilization of resources for proposed activities by linking with existing development partner and NGO coordination structures;
- Based on the directives from the government regarding safety measures, the UN and its implementing partners instituted hygiene and safety measures including social distancing in all distribution points for all its direct assistance activities
- The UN has activated a COVID-19 Contingency Plan and Business Continuity Plan;
- The Center for Multiparty Democracy organized a session to sensitize political parties on COVID-19. On 8 April, sixteen delegates from political parties represented in Parliament as Secretary Generals as well as Directors of Youth, Women and Elections participated in the meeting. UNRC and WHO made presentations on COVID-19 and the UN support and response to COVID-19. A Cross-Party statement on COVID-19 signed by all parties was the outcome of the meeting;
- On 8 April, Members of Parliament engaged with Ministry of Health, Ministry of Disaster Management and UN on COVID-19 preparedness and response. Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees and other legislators considered how to ensure preparedness and response on COVID-19 leaves no one behind, among others;

#### 5.2 Supply Chain and Logistics (WFP and UNICEF)

- The UN continues to facilitate the transportation and delivery of essential supplies sent to African countries for the COVID-19 response with shipments from Alibaba Foundation and Doctors without Borders expected shortly;
- Three Mobile Logistics Bases at Kamuzu Central and Adventist Hospitals in Lilongwe for COVID-19 preparedness and response, they may also serve as isolation spaces for patients with WFP's support;
- The UNICEF Supply Division is procuring supplies valued at US\$ 600,000 from international and local suppliers. Local supplies worth US\$75,000 have been received. International orders will be delivered between mid-April and mid-August 2020. The supplies include medicines and equipment for treatment of 84,000 cases of COVID-19 as well as critical WASH supplies (buckets, soap, chlorine);
- Personal protective equipment is being procured for all health care workers. Priority is given to local suppliers who meet the required standards

#### 5.3 Special Groups and Protection Issues (UN Women, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA, ILO)

- A needs assessment on mental health and psychosocial services for children (MHPSS) including the capacity to deal with the increased caseload, has been undertaken in Mzimba, Nkhata Bay, Ntchisi, Dowa, Nsanje, and Machinga districts. Efforts are also underway to integrate elements of MHPSS into training for health workers. A booklet on referral pathways for MHPSS has been developed for their and social welfare officers' use. Basic MHPSS content has already been shared which includes the impact on children's mental health and psychosocial wellbeing;
- Continuity of essential services for child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response has been ensured through the continued work with government counterparts including Social Welfare, Malawi Police and the Judiciary, at national and district levels on COVID-19 preparedness and response.
- WFP has moved some support systems to bi-monthly distributions, such as food assistance for refugees, as a way of limiting exposure to both beneficiaries and UN staff
- To ensure an effective response to a possible COVID-19 outbreak in Dzaleka camp, UNHCR, the Government of Malawi and NGO partners have set up a new reception centre to facilitate the 14 day self isolation or quarantine of new arrivals. The new reception centre is equipped with 40-60 tents, water, latrines, showers, kitchen, waiting shade and registration office to ensure the new arrivals are registered. It became progressively operational from 6 April

- There is currently no disruption to health care services for refugees both at Dzaleka health centre and referrals to Dowa district hospital; however, there is a disruption at the tertiary health facility. Due to a reduced number of doctors at Kamuzu Central Hospital, only emergency referrals from Dzaleka health centre are accepted. Most non-urgent medical conditions are being scheduled for July and August 2020.
- UNHCR advocated with MyBucks Bank in Dzaleka refugee camp to reduce cash demands on low-income households by delaying and/or reducing loan repayments and services fees on financial transactions. This is in response to the orders made by President of Malawi in response to COVID-19 where he urged the Central Bank of Malawi to use moratoriums on loans.
- ILO is supporting responses by the Government of Malawi and non-government stakeholders including employers and trade unions [Link](#);
- Spotlight project has identified a number of activities to be fast tracked and scaled up to address increased levels of violence against women and girls at times of COVID19.

#### **5.4 Communications and Communication for Development (UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, UNDP, UNESCO, UN Women)**

- Coordination with the Government, media, NGOs and other partners to ensure evidence-based communications on COVID-19 in Malawi is continuing;
- 100 opinion leaders have been oriented to disseminate COVID-19 prevention/response messages to communities;
- 70,000 posters 200,000 and flyers on COVID19 prevention have been distributed, targeting communities;
- Over 8 million people have received COVID-19 prevention messages through mass media channels, including radio;
- Community Engagement sessions, including community radio dialogues, entertainment by partners, is ongoing and will be further developed;
- Social media messages have already reached more than four million online audiences in the past two weeks. Multimedia content in Chichewa and English to promote COVID-19 messaging and stories are to be disseminated through various online and offline channels, including national media and the Internet of Good Things (34,000 pageviews the past week).
- Sangie, a famous Malawian reggae artist is producing a song targeting children, youth, and their parents with UNICEF support. The song will promote awareness and prevention messages.
- The U-Report platform extensively to reach people with messaging on COVID19 through SMS, polling, open-end questions, quiz, information bots, social media, etc. So far, UNICEF has conducted two U-Report polls on COVID-19. The first poll was sent out to 195, 358 U-Reporters with a response rate of 24% (46,724) <https://ureport.mw/opinion/3989/>. The second poll on coping with school closures was sent out to 209,157 U-Reporters with a response rate of 21% (43,000) <https://ureport.mw/opinion/4090>. UNICEF also has a chatbot on COVID-19 that has now had 400,002 interactions.
- 250 Change Agents (Volunteers) on COVID-19 in Mchinji, Mwanza and Neno to communicate in communities through door to door educational talks on preventive measures for COVID-19 thanks to IOM support. Change agents were equipped with hand washing soap, sanitizer and face masks, as well as MoH posters and leaflets to distribute when sensitizing the community.
- Prerecorded messages by all Secretary Generals of political parties addressing Malawians on COVID-19 prevention, solidarity in the response and support for persons with the virus are being disseminated through media, mostly radios. Also MPs Chairs of the Parliamentary Committees recorded messages in seven different languages to be disseminated. These two activities were supported by UNDP.

#### **5.5 Education (UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UNESCO)**

- With technical support from UN, the Ministry of Education has set up 'continuity of learning task force' to explore innovative ways of learning during the school closure period;
- The Ministry of Education has uploaded education materials on their website, on a trial basis, targeting lower secondary students. UN is working with the Ministry to prepare educational materials for other levels including upper secondary, primary and early learning as well as the Emergency Radio Education Programmes;
- As the cluster co-lead, UN continues to support the Ministry of Education with coordination of the education cluster and has updated its COVID
- Some 600,000 learners supported through school meals in seven districts in the Central and Southern regions have stopped receiving their daily meal due to school closures. WFP is exploring on how to maintain the programme and is considering, in consultation with the Government, to provide a three-month take home ration to learners who will not be able to get a meal at school;

#### **5.6 WASH and Health (WHO, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UN Women)**

- With the UK Aid funding, UNICEF supported the Government to calibrate the existing reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) machine, one of the most accurate laboratory methods for detecting, tracking, and studying the coronavirus, at the National Reference Laboratory. The Laboratory is currently processing most of the samples from suspected cases;
- Through partnership with United Purpose, a total of more than 15,000 people have been reached with messages on handwashing with soap and related hygiene messages for the prevention of COVID-19 in four districts (Blantyre, Mwanza, Mzimba, Mchinji) where treatment units are located;
- The four districts have also received 1,600 hygiene promotion posters printed by UN. Furthermore, Health Surveillance Assistants in two of the four districts (Mwanza and Blantyre) have, with UN support, conducted a total of 16 sessions and demonstration on proper handwashing;
- Hygiene promotion and message delivery using mobile vans have also been initiated. This is being done at night and in the morning, to avoid attracting large crowds;

- District-level coordination and consultative meetings are ongoing in the same four districts. On a national-level, weekly WASH cluster meetings continue every Tuesday. UNICEF is a co-lead of the WASH cluster led by the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Development;
- UN is exploring support to the government on institutional feeding for inpatient COVID 19 patients and health workers.

### 5.7 Socio Economic Impact and Social Protection (WFP, UNICEF, UNDP)

- The UN Socio-Economic coordination working group, with participation across the UN and World Bank, is monitoring the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 at the country and household-level, particularly on urban and rural households, to mitigate these secondary impacts of the crisis through the national preparedness, response and recovery interventions;
- UN agencies are in discussion with the Malawi Government to explore ways of leveraging the Social Cash Transfer Programme as part of Shock Responsive Social Protection, targeting most vulnerable populations across Malawi;
- UN is considering a crisis urban cash response that is aligned to the existing social protection programmes to the extent possible. The urban cash transfers will be targeting the vulnerable populations in the main urban and peri-urban cities of Malawi (Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu) in order to mitigate the advance effects of COVID-19;
- UN is also working with DODMA and MVAC to strengthen remote monitoring of food insecurity. Already, potential service providers to manage in-house calls have been contacted and an understanding will be finalized by next week. This will support in undertaking virtual IPC analysis to inform changes and vulnerability to food security.
- 2019/2020 Lean season distributions have also been finalized with last Distribution Site reached in Balaka on 7 April.

### 5.8 Nutrition (UNICEF, WFP)

- Key messages for Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in emergencies including maternal and child feeding were developed. Mothers will be advised to continue breastfeeding should the infant or young child become sick with suspected, probable, or confirmed COVID-19 or any other illness. The messages will be disseminated through community care groups and Community Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) platforms;
- A Ministry of Health management team continues to visit nutrition rehabilitation units in 25 districts to support and guide the districts nutrition teams on better nutrition as part of the COVID-19 preparedness and response;
- WFP is supporting the Ministry of Health to develop a programme of supplementary nutrition to populations vulnerable to increased malnutrition to bolster their resistance/immune response to COVID-19.

### 5.9 UN Protocols and Working Arrangements (UNCT)

- External missions and non-essential travel are not allowed;
- The UN in Malawi continues to work, but there is an increased use of virtual meetings, teleworking as well as reducing implementation to essential/ critical programmes while scaling up COVID-19 responses.

### Additional information and updates

- Myth busters: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>
- Technical Guidance: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>
- WHO Africa: <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19>
- WHO Africa Situation Reports: <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19#sitrep>
- WHO Global: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- UN Global: <https://www.un.org/coronavirus>
- Ministry of Health and Population: <https://www.facebook.com/malawimoh>

**NB: The global and Africa COVID-19 figures are from WHO as of 10 April 2020, 02:00 GMT+2**

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