



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



WFP MALAWI

COUNTRY BRIEF

October 2026



409,294 people assisted in September 2026
(54% female)



136 mt food distributed in September 2026



USD 2,427,675 cash transferred



USD 142.3 million required in the next six months (October 2026 – March 2027)

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- WFP plans to begin assisting vulnerable households in November; however, funding constraints have reduced the planned response from 600,000 to 400,000 people and narrowed coverage from four districts to three: Chikwawa, Nsanje and Phalombe.
- Funding constraints have forced WFP to prioritise assistance for the most vulnerable refugees in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, reducing the number of people receiving support from 65,000 to 35,000 from November.
- WFP mobilised USD 1.85 million to support more than 9,000 households in drought-prone districts through cash transfers, agricultural inputs, climate advisories and early warning information before conditions worsen.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

- Malawi is a small, landlocked country in Sub-Saharan Africa with a population growing rapidly by 3 percent per year. With most livelihoods dependent on rainfed agriculture, communities are highly vulnerable to the effects of drought and cyclone-induced floods.
- Malawi also faces weak economic growth (GDP growth around 1.8 percent in 2024; [International Monetary Fund, 2025](#)), high risk of overall debt distress, low primary school completion (44 percent; Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2025), a high prevalence of stunting (37.6 percent; [UNICEF, 2024](#)) and high HIV prevalence (6.2 percent; [World Bank, 2025](#)). Together, these factors constrain household income-earning opportunities, weaken resilience to shocks and increase vulnerability to food insecurity, malnutrition and other humanitarian needs, driving continued demand for social protection and humanitarian assistance.
- Recurrent climate shocks, including Tropical Storms Ana and Gombe in 2022, Tropical Cyclone Freddy in 2023, the 2024/25 El Niño-induced drought, and Tropical Cyclone Jude and Tropical Storm Chido in 2025 have impacted harvest and livelihoods.
- According to [Famine Early Warning System Network \(FEWSNET\)](#), Malawi remains highly vulnerable to climate shocks affecting food security across southern Africa and is projected to be among the countries most severely affected by the forecasted El Niño event.

Reporting Period: September 2026

Photo Caption & Credit: A family sharing a meal in Dzaleka Refugee Camp. WFP/Francis Thawani

- In response to these growing risks, WFP is supporting the Government to strengthen preparedness, protect food security and nutrition, and build resilience to future shocks.

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

Emergency Lean Season Response

- An estimated 2.6 million people are expected to face acute hunger through March 2027, with forecast El Niño conditions potentially increasing humanitarian needs. WFP is supporting the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) to implement the 2026/27 Lean Season Response Plan. However, limited funding has forced WFP to scale back its planned response, reducing the target caseload from 600,000 to 400,000 people and narrowing geographical coverage from four districts to three districts: Chikwawa, Nsanje and Phalombe. As a result, many vulnerable households will remain without assistance at a time when food insecurity remains high, increasing the likelihood of families reducing the number of meals they eat each day and other negative coping strategies. Sustained donor support remains critical to prevent further deterioration in food security, and ensure vulnerable households receive timely support.

Refugees

- WFP continues to provide monthly cash-based food assistance to over 64,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Dzaleka Refugee camp. Donor contributions remain the backbone of our efforts to improve food and nutrition security and strengthen livelihoods. Unfortunately, funding constraints have prompted WFP to transition to targeted assistance. From November, food assistance will be prioritised for the most vulnerable refugees, reducing the caseload to only 35,000, leaving thousands without assistance. To support a protection-sensitive transition, WFP, the Government of Malawi, UNHCR and protection partners conducted a rapid protection risk assessment and strengthened referral pathways for affected populations.

Nutrition

- Malnutrition remains a major challenge in Malawi and is expected to worsen as food insecurity

increases. In August 2026, WFP supported 27,086 people, achieving a recovery rate of 87 percent. However, nutrition supplies are expected to run out by December 2026 without additional funding, putting essential services for vulnerable families at risk.

School-Based Assistance

- The 2026/27 school year began on 14 September, with the first term running through 18 December. WFP continued providing Home-Grown School Feeding in 173 public primary schools, reaching 161,233 learners (81,821 girls and 79,412 boys). WFP also supported a national policy review workshop led by the Department of School Health and Nutrition, bringing together stakeholders from all 34 education zones to strengthen the School Health and Nutrition Policy and promote integrated service delivery. Despite this progress, funding shortfalls threaten school meal assistance for more than 612,000 learners, jeopardizing gains in education, school attendance and nutrition.

Resilience and Livelihood Support

- WFP, together with district councils and government institutions, continues to strengthen household resilience and protect development gains through the Integrated Resilience Programme and Zero Hunger Villages initiative. However, limited funding for agricultural inputs threatens the continuity and scale of resilience interventions ahead of the next planting season. WFP is engaging government and development partners to mobilise support and identify complementary assistance. Continued investment in agricultural inputs and livelihoods support is critical to sustain agricultural productivity and protect vulnerable households from future shocks.

Food Systems

- The IGNITE Innovation Challenge selected 23 agribusiness ventures from 43 applicants and provided business development training. Under the Zero Hunger Villages, Value Chain Development and Home-Grown School Feeding programmes, WFP launched a pilot contract farming initiative to connect 100 smallholder farmers with prospective off-takers, strengthening

market access and supporting local food systems development.

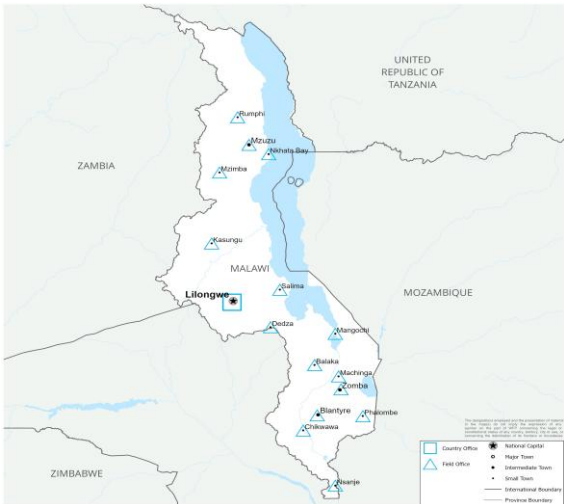
Emergency Preparedness and Response

- As part of national El Niño preparedness efforts, WFP is supporting the Ministry of Transport and Public Works (MoTPW) and the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) to assess the condition and accessibility of key roads and storage facilities in October 2026. The assessments will identify logistical bottlenecks to inform supply chain planning and strengthen logistical preparedness for the 2026/27 Lean Season Response, enabling timely and efficient emergency operations. Key stakeholders involved in the exercise include DoDMA, MoTPW, the Roads Authority, and District Councils. The assessments will focus on districts forecast to be most affected by El Niño.

Gender, Protection and Inclusion

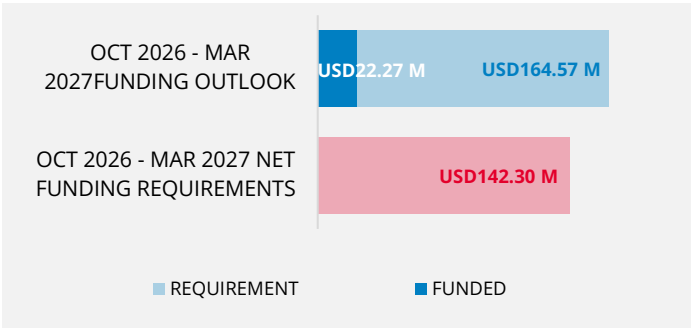
- WFP conducted a protection risk assessment to support the transition to targeted assistance in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, strengthening community engagement, feedback mechanisms and referral pathways. However, limited livelihood opportunities, pressure on essential services and funding constraints continue to heighten protection risks. Continued investment in livelihoods, protection services and basic service delivery remains critical for vulnerable refugees and host communities.

WFP presence in Malawi



FUNDING OVERVIEW

Country Strategic Plan (2024-2028)



(13.5 percent of the 2026 country portfolio funded)

Funding Shortfalls

- WFP Malawi faces a net funding shortfall of USD 142.3 million through March 2027, threatening the continuity of critical life-saving assistance. This includes a USD 17 million gap for the 2026/27 lean season response (October 2026 – March 2027), USD 4.8 million to sustain nutrition support, USD 19.7 million to maintain school meals throughout the academic year, and USD 2.4 million to continue reduced refugee rations through March 2027 (USD 9.8 million is required to restore full rations). Without additional funding, assistance across these programmes will be disrupted, putting lives, nutrition outcomes and education gains at risk.

Donors

- European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Union International Partnerships, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Malawi, Multilateral Funds, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), United States of America and WFP’s Emerging Donors Matching Fund (in alphabetical order).

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