



# MALAWI

## 2024 IFRC network country plan

22 February 2024

Funding Requirement **CHF 26M**

### In support of the Malawi Red Cross Society



**33**

National Society branches



**168**

National Society staff



**85,817**

National Society volunteers

### People to be reached



**610,000**

Ongoing emergency operations



**948,000**

Climate and environment



**2.4M**

Disasters and crises



**2.4M**

Health and wellbeing



**300,000**

Migration and displacement



**2,000**

Values, power and inclusion

### IFRC network multi-year focus

#### Emergency response

- Integrated response to the impact of tropical storms
  - Food insecurity

#### Longer term needs

- Disaster risk reduction and response
- Food security and livelihoods
- Health, water, sanitation and hygiene
- Climate change adaptation

#### Capacity development

- Volunteer management
- Resource mobilization

### Key country data

Population **20.4M**

INFORM Severity rating **High**

INFORM Climate Change Risk Index **Medium**

Human Development Index rank **169**

Population below poverty level **50.7%**

IFRC Country Cluster Delegation for Zimbabwe, Zambia & Malawi, Harare

## Hazards



Tropical storms



Disease outbreak



Floods



Food insecurity



Drought

## Funding requirements

**Total 26M** CHF

Through the IFRC

**15.7M** CHF

Through Participating National Societies

**2.4M** CHF

Host National Society

**7.9M** CHF

### IFRC Breakdown

**7.3M** CHF

Ongoing emergency operations

### Longer term needs

**3.7M** CHF

Climate and environment

**1.4M** CHF

Disasters and crises

**1.3M** CHF

Health and wellbeing

**140,000** CHF

Migration and displacement

**465,000** CHF

Values, power and inclusion

**1.4M** CHF

Enabling local actors

## Participating National Societies

American Red Cross\*

Belgian Red Cross

British Red Cross\*

Canadian Red Cross Society\*

Danish Red Cross

Icelandic Red Cross

Japanese Red Cross Society\*

Kuwait Red Crescent Society

Red Cross of Monaco\*

The Netherlands Red Cross

Norwegian Red Cross\*

Qatar Red Crescent Society

Swiss Red Cross

*\*National Societies which have contributed only multilaterally through the IFRC in the first half of 2023.*

## IFRC Appeal codes

Ongoing emergency response:

**MDRMW018 | MGR6001**

Longer-term needs:

**MAAMW003**

# NATIONAL SOCIETY PROFILE

The **Malawi Red Cross Society** was established by an Act of Parliament in 1966 and admitted to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 1971. It has acted as an auxiliary to the public authorities since its inception, providing support in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response, and the strengthening of Malawi's legal and policy framework for disaster risk management.

The National Society is present across the country with its vast network of volunteers and 33 branches in 28 districts and many local units. At a national level, it has a pool of 120 trained national disaster response team members specialized in different fields, including: water, sanitation and hygiene; relief; shelter; nutrition; food security; livelihoods; protection, gender and inclusion; data management; and communications. The National Society's staff, volunteers, communities and community leaders have been trained on community engagement and accountability, and it has integrated this way of working into its programming. It has also institutionalized cash and voucher assistance by implementing cash transfers since 2009. Staff and volunteers are trained in community-based health, first

aid and disease surveillance, and focus on active case finding. The National Society has substantial experience in implementing health programmes, including health care in emergencies. The Malawi Red Cross provided vital support to the health authorities for the COVID-19 response, working in partnership with the Ministry of Health, and was also one of the leading humanitarian organizations to support the Government in the fight against the cholera outbreak in 2022.

The Malawi Red Cross Strategic Plan 2020–2024 defines its four strategic priority areas as:

- Building safer and more resilient communities through comprehensive disaster management
- Increasing access to health services and encouraging healthy behaviour
- Strengthening branches, volunteer management, membership and youth engagement
- Increasing the resource base, effective service delivery and accountability

## IFRC NETWORK ACTION

### JOINT SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Malawi is split by the Great Rift Valley in the North and the mass of Lake Malawi, with its amazing biodiversity running from North to South. The area of the country is 118,480 square kilometres, however, the length of the country makes access and logistics more difficult. The capital city is Lilongwe and the other main cities include Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu. Malawi has a population of over 20 million people, ranking it 61st out of 196 countries for population density. The total population is increasing by approximately 3% per year due to a fertility rate of 4.25 births per woman. The population is expected to double by 2038.

Malawi is a peaceful country and has had stable governments since independence in 1964. One-party rule ended in

Malawi in 1993, and since then, multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections have been held every five years. The last presidential elections were held in June 2020.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world and is ranked 174 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI), making it one of the world's least developed countries. This slower level of development is due in part to its landlocked position, poor utilization of natural resources, over reliance on rain-fed agriculture, and low levels of social and technical innovation. Despite implementing significant economic and structural reforms to build economic growth (the country moved up by 45% in the HDI ranking in the past 30 years), the economy remains heavily dependent on rain-fed agriculture. Between 80% to 90% of the population, primarily residing in rural areas, live on overcrowded plots and grow subsistence crops. This makes them extremely vulnerable to disasters, particularly climatic shocks, and yield is low, with hunger and malnutrition widespread.

The economic situation has worsened, in part due to COVID-19, but also due to [inflation rates which continue to rise in 2022 from 12% in January to around 28% as of August 2023](#). This is due to rising global commodity prices, fuel costs, the impact of the conflict in Ukraine, the [depreciation of the kwacha](#) and evolving economic conditions. This also means that food inflation has risen to 39% as of July 2023 due to increases in maize prices and non-food inflation has risen to 16% due to global commodity price increases.

Malawi is prone to disease outbreaks and faced a significant cholera outbreak in 2022 and 2023, which infected 59,088 people nationwide. The country also faces major climate change and environmental challenges, and recent high temperatures and weather extremes are having a serious impact on environmental ecosystems. In March 2023, Tropical Storm Freddy southern Malawi bringing 300-400mm of rainfall in the first 48 hours alone. This brought sudden, violent

and destructive flash floods and landslides, causing severe devastation, the destruction of livelihoods and loss of life. Deforestation, limited water supply, old farming practices (that cause soil erosion and reduced yields) and declining fisheries create further challenges. There is also limited institutional capacity to manage Malawi's natural resources.

While the Government of Malawi is committed to making reforms that would advance the country's development, poverty remains a persistent challenger. The [2063 Vision, launched in 2021](#), has been developed through an inclusive and participatory multi-stakeholder consultative process at a time when the country has made progress in a number of areas, such as, reduced maternal and child mortality rate; increased primary school enrolment ratio; reduced prevalence of HIV/ AIDS; increased life expectancy; and improved uptake of technology use, especially mobile phone technology.

## ONGOING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

For real-time information on emergencies, see [IFRC GO page Malawi](#)

### Emergency 1

<b>Emergency Operation</b>	Revised Africa Hunger Crisis Emergency Appeal 2023-2024
<b>Appeal number</b>	MGR60001
<b>Duration</b>	December 2023 to December 2024
<b>People affected</b>	People affected/at risk: 157 million people across sub-Saharan Africa (143m in the 25 countries covered in this operation/watch list)
<b>Funding requirement</b>	Total funding requirement through the Appeal: CHF 232.5 million Total Federation-wide funding requirement: CHF 318 million Funding requirement for Malawi for 2024: CHF 4 million to assist 450,000 people (IFRC funding requirement); CHF 6.5 million (Federation-wide)
<b>Emergency Appeal</b>	<a href="#">Revised Africa Hunger Crisis Emergency Appeal</a>



24 February 2023, Malawi Red Cross Society volunteers distribute chlorinated water to members of a community in Blantyre (Source: IFRC)

The IFRC launched a Regional [Hunger Crisis Emergency Appeal](#) in October 2022, which included Malawi as part of the watchlist. Due to the prolonged and deepening food crisis across the region and deterioration of the situation in Malawi, the [Revised Africa Hunger Crisis Emergency Appeal](#) integrates Malawi as part of the priority countries. By end of 2023, Malawi had increased IPC3+ level of 67% as compared to 2022.

Through a series of coordinated activities in the sectors of WASH, cash, health and nutrition, and livelihoods support, this Revised Regional Emergency Appeal will ensure that National Societies in the region, including Malawi, meet the urgent needs of people facing severe food insecurity. The number of people to be assisted under the Revised Regional Emergency Appeal in Malawi is 450,000, with an IFRC funding ask of CHF 4 million.

The Revised Regional Emergency Appeal is fully aligned with the [IFRC's Pan-Africa Zero Hunger Initiative](#), which informs the long-term food security and livelihood plans of National Societies in Africa.

The IFRC has mobilized a 'Zero Hunger Cell' tasked with overseeing the operational coordination of the Hunger Crisis response across the African continent, and the regional services provided by the IFRC and partners include:

- operations coordination and technical support
- surge deployments
- information management, foresight, and analysis
- regional and global level advocacy and humanitarian diplomacy
- communications and visibility
- Federation-wide planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER)

- tailored support to National Societies on implementation, development, and accountability
- resource mobilization, including national resource mobilization plans.

### Short description of the emergency operational strategy

The regional emergency operations are structured around three main response pillars, which include: (1) **food security and livelihoods**, encompassing interventions like multipurpose cash transfers, vouchers, or in-kind assistance, information dissemination, training, provision of inputs/tools, linking to essential services, among other measures; (2) **health and nutrition**, involving activities such as regular community-based screening, referral of malnourished children to therapeutic feeding programs, nutrition awareness and education, access to health services, promotion of health and hygiene practices, among others; and (3) **water, sanitation, and hygiene**, comprising interventions such as the supply of safe drinking water, rehabilitation of water infrastructure, provision of water treatment products, construction or rehabilitation of sanitation facilities, among other initiatives.

The operational strategy integrates **community engagement and accountability** (CEA) and **protection, gender and inclusion** (PGI) as pivotal elements, in an approach that recognizes and values all community members as equal partners, with their diverse needs shaping the response. Activities include the provision of dignity kits, and establishment of two-way feedback mechanisms. The strategy emphasizes local voice amplification, collaborative engagement, and transparent communication, extending into **long-term resilience building** through initiatives such as the IFRC Pan-Africa Zero Hunger Initiative.

# ONGOING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

## Emergency 2

<b>Emergency Operation</b>	Malawi Tropical Cyclone Freddy
<b>Appeal number</b>	MDRMW018
<b>Duration</b>	17 March 2023 to 31 March 2024 (extended)
<b>People affected</b>	2.2 million people
<b>People to be assisted</b>	160,000 people
<b>Funding requirements</b>	Total funding requirement through the IFRC Emergency Appeal: CHF 5 million - for 2024 CHF 3.3 million Total Federation-wide funding requirement: CHF 6 million
<b>Link to Emergency Appeal</b>	<a href="#">Tropical Cyclone Freddy Emergency Appeal</a>
<b>Link to Operational Strategy</b>	<a href="#">Tropical Cyclone Freddy (Operational Strategy)</a>
<b>Link to Operation Update</b>	<a href="#">Tropical Cyclone Freddy 6-month Operation Update</a>

Tropical Storm Freddy swept through Southern Malawi on 12 March 2023, with strong winds and heavy rains leaving the affected districts in a state of disaster and affecting the power supply throughout most of the country. Tropical Storm Freddy is set to be the longest tropical system since 1994, having weakened and re-intensified seven times over its course.

The Malawi government declared a state of disaster in 14 southern districts that were hardest hit by the storm. A large number of people were reported to have been affected, of which about 125,000 households (approximately 560,000 people) have been displaced with over 500 camps set to accommodate the displaced. The initially reported death toll of 499 as of March 20, 2023, was anticipated to increase due to the 427 individuals who remained unaccounted for, with certain regions inaccessible due to continuous rainfall and strong winds. Ultimately, the total death toll was determined to be 676.

On 17 March 2023 the IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal to support the Malawi Red Cross' response to the country's acute needs.

### Short description of the emergency operational strategy

The chief vision of this strategy is to enable 160,000 people most affected by the cyclone (32,000 households) to meet their essential needs in a safe and dignified manner, recover from the crisis and strengthen their resilience to future shocks. The Malawi Red Cross has prioritized five most affected districts (Blantyre, Chikwawa, Nsanje, Mulanje and Phalombe) and further extended to other districts (Mangochi, Thyolo, Zomba, Chiradzulu and Machinga) based on the need and request

by Malawi Government. The overall strategy is to ensure that immediate and early recovery needs are met in a dignified manner and affected communities have adopted the 'building back better' approach resulting in communities that are more resilient in the face of recurrent shocks. The response expands to support displaced families to return to their areas of origin and rebuild their homes, livelihoods, community and social infrastructure with a longer-term, community-based disaster risk reduction approach.

The highlights of this assistance are:

### Shelter, housing and settlements

Provision of essentials household items such as blankets, buckets, kitchen sets, tarpaulins, shelter kits, solar lamps, mosquito nets, sleeping mats and assorted clothes to internally displaced persons (IDPs). Provision of rental assistance for urban IDPs whose capacity to pay rent has been compromised. Offering farm inputs for winter cropping and cash transfers for business to help with revival of livelihoods.

### Multi-purpose cash

Provision of both unconditional multi-purpose cash grants during all phases of response and conditional restricted cash grants during the early recovery and rebuilding phase to address the basic needs of affected individuals.

### Healthcare and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

- Provision of First Aid training, mental health and psychosocial support, hygiene kits, health services like support health clinics to the affected communities

- Facilitation of improved access to safe water through rehabilitation of boreholes, distribution of water purification agents, jerricans, buckets and household and community water filters
- Rehabilitation of latrines, and hand washing facilities with appropriate wastewater treatment.

### Risk reduction, climate adaptation and recovery

Provision of search and rescue services through prepositioning of boats, distribution of lifejackets, deployment of search and rescue teams (staff and volunteers).

### Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI)

- Provision of dignified and equitable access to services, considering different needs based on gender and other diversity factors, through PGI-informed multi-sector needs assessment to identify and address gender and diversity-specific needs and protection risks. Immediate protection needs shall include provision of clothes, lighting and dignity kits

- Provision of access to safe spaces and that they receive adequate support to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and SGBV to displaced populations in camps
- Provision of mental health and psychosocial support, psychological First Aid, life skills, counselling, case detection and safe referrals

### Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA)

- Provision of CEA tools tailored to the Malawi context to generate ownership in the community; includes consulting with community members about their needs and keeping them informed about available services, including referral pathways
- Keeping vulnerable communities informed about risks, preventive measures, and responses through Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) activities

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



### Climate and environment

The position of Malawi as a land-locked country in southern Africa, has made it particularly vulnerable to changing climate patterns and weather shocks. A scarcity of land resources, rampant poverty and a growing population are continuing to intensify the pressure on natural resources, while heavier but less predictable rains, hotter weather and extended dry periods are making planting and harvesting more difficult. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in deforestation, coupled with a growing scarcity of water resources for communities, affecting their ability to sustain both agricultural activities and daily life.

With the majority of livelihoods dependent on agriculture, Malawians are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate-related shocks and stresses. Subsistence farming practices also contribute to soil erosion and diminish productivity of available farmland, resulting in decreased crop yields for subsistence farmers and increasing food insecurity. This has been exacerbated by recent recurring droughts followed by intense periods of flooding, both of which have affected communities' homes and crops.

Lake Malawi is a mainstay for the country and its economy. However, changing climate, over-fishing and pollution have led to declining fish stocks, which are projected to impact the biodiversity of the area and the livelihoods of the communities who are dependent on it. Relying on small parcels of densely cultivated land for their livelihoods, rural Malawians are highly affected by climate change. Episodes of drought as well as severe flooding are increasing in frequency, intensity and unpredictability, giving the most vulnerable households inadequate time to recover.

Specifically, in the past few years, Malawi has been prone to a number of severe weather shocks from tropical storms and cyclones, associated with large scale flooding. Beyond their humanitarian impact (see under disasters and crisis section), the storms have had a major impact on the country's infrastructure, agricultural productivity and economy. In 2023, Cyclone Freddy caused significant economic losses estimated at about USD 500 million. Additionally, the cyclone exacerbated the cholera crisis in Malawi. The cumulative effect of these heavy storm seasons, projected to increase as a result of climate change, heightens the likelihood of poverty and food insecurity while decreasing the resilience of the population.

This ongoing climactic pressure cannot be managed by short-term humanitarian funding but requires longer-term environmental and infrastructure development and management. With around [18 per cent of Malawians now living in cities](#), there is growing pressure on the limited urban infrastructure and systems, with overpopulation and pollution putting pressure on urban areas. Rising temperatures and scarcity of water are expected to lead to [deteriorating living conditions](#) and sanitation within these impoverished urban environments.

Climate change and environmental sustainability are anchored in several frameworks in Malawi, such as the National Resilience Strategy, National Climate Change Environmental policy, Disaster Risk Management Policy and National Adaptation Plan. Transitioning to a green economy in Malawi presents [significant challenges](#), threatening the environmental sustainability of the country and its ability to manage or adapt to climate challenges, thereby jeopardizing the sustainability of its land resources. The Government aims to restore 4.5 million hectares of degraded land by 2030, and 1.3 million hectares have been restored so far. The planting of 60 million trees in Malawi will be a giant step towards achieving this goal. The authorities are also developing the Malawi Watershed Services Improvement Project, which aims to promote sustainable landscape management practices in priority watersheds and improve rural livelihoods.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Malawi Red Cross is part of the [IFRC Global Climate Resilience Programme](#), which aims to foster an unprecedented scale-up in locally led climate-smart disaster risk reduction and adaptation efforts to prevent and reduce climate-related disaster impacts, and build community-level climate resilience. The programme aims to support 500 million people in 100 of the most climate-vulnerable countries, focusing on the least supported and marginalized communities. This holistic, multi-year programmatic approach consists of four operational pillars: (1) scaling up climate-smart disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action and preparedness; (2) reducing the public health impacts of climate change; (3) addressing climate displacement; and (4) enabling climate-resilient livelihoods and ecosystem services.

The Malawi Red Cross will seek to integrate climate risk management across all programmes, operations and advocacy. It works along the following high-level objectives:

- Engage an increased number of communities in sustainable environmental management and livelihood interventions

- Involve an increased number of households in climate smart agriculture practices and tree planting initiatives
- Improve biodiversity conservation through forest management and restoration
- Support the development and dissemination of national policies addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Support the government to implement climate resilient development addressing water, air and soil pollution and facilitating climate smart agriculture

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### Planned activities in 2024

- Undertake risk mapping and risk profiling, vulnerability, impact and capacity assessments ([IFRC-VCA](#)) integrating climate change risks
- Support the establishment of volunteer and community climate groups for championing climate action at the local level, and strengthen their institutional and technical capacities
- Facilitate locally acceptable climate adaptation interventions and [nature-based solutions](#) e.g. training volunteers and communities in establishment of community woodlots; planting vetiver grass
- Participate in the [IFRC Pan African Tree planting and Care initiative](#)
- Facilitate local action through provision of resources, information, knowledge sharing and technical guidance

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC, in collaboration with participating National Societies, will provide the following support

- Assist the Malawi Red Cross in promotion of community-led solutions to address climate-related challenges, improve behaviours and promote climate action
- Help the National Society get strategic partnerships that support sustainable environmental actions
- Support the National Society's programming to enable it to participate in the IFRC Pan-African Tree Planting and Care initiative

Participating National Societies will support the National Society with capacity building, funding and supervision.



## Disasters and crises

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For real-time information on emergencies, see [IFRC GO page Malawi](#).

Malawi continues to face the risk of both natural hazards and man-made disasters, particularly the growing impact of [storms, flooding and droughts](#). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted economic activities and led to loss of many lives. The compounded effects have heavily impacted the lives and means of those already afflicted, weakening their ability to bounce back. Moreover, the hot and arid conditions, particularly during the lean season, have [heightened pressure](#) on regions already struggling with food insecurity.

Malawi is experiencing a growing humanitarian impact, particularly in areas affected by tropical cyclones and tropical storms. An estimated 975,000 people were affected by [Tropical Cyclone Idai in 2019](#). The major disaster event that followed was Tropical Storm Ana in January 2022 which passed through many districts of Southern Malawi, leaving devastation in its wake. According to the government's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA), [over 945,000 people were affected and needed urgent, life-saving assistance, support for livelihoods restoration and to recover from heavy losses](#). Heavy rains and flooding caused damage to homes, farmland, and infrastructure, [affecting 115,388 hectares \(including cropland\), with more than 34,000 livestock injured or killed](#). The impact of tropical storm Ana also displaced around 6,500 people. This was followed by Tropical storm Gombe, which hit the same regions in March, causing compounding to the damage and hardship of those already affected and recovering from Ana. In 2023, Tropical Storm Freddy made landfall, exacerbating the challenges faced by the already strained districts (see also under ongoing emergency response section). This series of adverse weather events weakened the resilience of vulnerable communities even further.

Other hazards include landslides, fires and epidemics, while political protests also pose a risk to the safety of the people who participate and nearby communities. The impact of such events is exacerbated in an environment where approximately half the population are living below the poverty line.

The Malawi Government established a National Disaster Risk Management Policy in 2015. This led to the establishment of the Department of Disaster Management Affairs and strengthened the country's readiness for disasters and disaster risk management. To further reduce exposure to risk, the Government also maintains a National Contingency Plan, which includes plans to address the impacts of floods, dry spells, disease outbreaks, pest infestation, strong winds and stormy rains. The Government has emphasized the importance of transitioning from relief to resilience, while addressing the root causes of food insecurity, with the aim of scaling up interventions focused on integrated resilience.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

In its position as an auxiliary to the public authorities, the Malawi Red Cross is a key responder to humanitarian emergencies. It has worked with the Government to strengthen the legal and policy framework for [disaster risk management](#), which is critical to reducing disasters and climate risks, and building sustainable resilience.

The Malawi Red Cross will continue to focus on preparedness and readiness to respond to shocks, enhancing community risk reduction and resilience. This includes [early warning, early action](#) and anticipation to mitigate risks from multi-hazards affecting the lives, the livelihoods, homes and living conditions of vulnerable, disadvantaged and hard to reach communities.

It will prioritize the implementation of the following high-level objectives:

- Respond to and support recovery from crises and disasters
- Facilitate preparedness and capacity building processes (such as preparedness for effective response ([IFRC-PER](#)), [anticipatory actions](#) and the development of [early action protocols](#), multi-hazard contingency plans and, cash preparedness and logistics)
- Facilitate adoption of new legal instruments related to [disaster law](#)
- Provide shelter and urban strategies which include city-level coordination, partnerships with development actors and actionable municipal contingency and response plans

The Malawi Red Cross also aims to develop a more holistic approach to food security, in alignment with the IFRC Pan-African Zero Hunger Initiative. This aims to deliver rapid support for food and nutrition security and livelihoods, alongside a long-term strategy that works towards zero hunger and more sustainable development.

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### Planned activities in 2024

- Develop and review of multi-hazard contingency plans
- Develop early action protocols (EAP)
- Support the access, understanding, dissemination and use of seasonal forecast at national, district and community level
- Facilitate dissemination of community weather forecast and early warning and anticipatory action activities

- Expand collaboration with community-based organizations for risk identification, mapping, [vulnerability, impact and capacity assessments](#) and mitigation
- Support affected people with non-food items, and cash delivery through financial services providers
- Orient stakeholders, staff, volunteers and communities on disaster response, assessments, and distribution processes

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

IFRC mechanisms such as the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (IFRC-DREF) and Emergency Appeals will be drawn on as needed for the National Society to respond to disasters and crises.

The IFRC, in collaboration with participating National Societies, will provide the following support:

- Help the National Society design and support early warning and early action initiatives
- Help the National Society in implementing the IFRC Pan Africa Zero Hunger Initiative and build its capacity in [cash and voucher assistance \(CVA\)](#)
- Provide guidance, training and tools to strengthen community early warning, preparedness and response plans

The Icelandic Red Cross will support the Malawi Red Cross on community resilience projects.



## Health and wellbeing

Over the last two decades, Malawi has made significant strides in improving its health indicators by focusing on the improved delivery of essential health services, achieving [Millennium Development Goal 4](#) on child survival and [reducing maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS infections](#) by 73 per cent and 41 per cent respectively since 2003. However, challenges persist, with HIV/AIDS affecting almost [9.6 per cent of the population](#), high maternal mortality ratios (MMR) and [under five mortality rates](#). The country experienced a [Wild Polio outbreak in 2022](#) and undertook strong measures to re-immunize its child population. Malawi also experiences [high levels of malnutrition](#), particularly chronic malnutrition and stunting affecting 37% of children under five.

Among key challenges facing Malawi however, is the capacity and quality of its health infrastructure and systems marked by challenges like inadequate qualified health workers and local health facilities. Addressing the health needs of marginalized groups, especially women and young people are a recognized priority, with a focus on family planning services, to mitigate [high fertility rates](#).

With over one million people living with [HIV](#), Malawi faces approximately 34,000 new infections a year, disproportionately affecting women and leaving approximately 770,000 children orphaned. Initiatives like the emergency plan for AIDS relief (PEPFAR) aim to mitigate the social and economic impacts of the disease, particularly among vulnerable youth.

In February 2022, Malawi's Ministry of Health reported a confirmed case of [Type 1 wild poliovirus \(WPV1\)](#) in Lilongwe district, followed by a declaration of an emergency by the President. This was the first case of polio in Malawi since

1992 and the first detected case of WPV1 in Africa since 2016. In response to the polio outbreak, the Ministry of Health implemented strategies aligned with WHO guidelines, bolstering surveillance and immunization efforts. Despite previous success in eradicating polio, challenges persist due to population movement, climate change, and economic factors, necessitating ongoing vaccination campaigns and surveillance interventions.

The burden of [non-communicable diseases](#) is significant in Malawi, with cardiovascular diseases being the leading cause of death among adults. According to a 2018 WHO report, 32% of all deaths are attributed to cardiovascular diseases. In Malawi, rates of heart disease and diabetes are 9% and 6% respectively and the prevalence of hypertension, obesity, and smoking are estimated at 16.7%, 18.5%, and 21.7% respectively. In 2021, the Ministry of Health established non-communicable diseases unit and clinics across the 29 health districts of Malawi to address this challenge through prevention and management.

According to a [UNICEF](#) report, 23% of all child deaths in Malawi are related to child under-nutrition. 4% of Malawian children under five suffer from acute malnutrition. Despite this majority of children have normal weight at birth. Exclusive breastfeeding among children aged between 0 to 5 months is still low (61%) and only 8% of children aged 6 to 23 months meet the minimum dietary requirements. The report also estimates that 37% of children in Malawi are stunted. Malawi government is working with its partners to develop policies and guidelines to overcome nutrition challenges among children in normal programming as well as during emergencies.

While 80% of the population in Malawi has access to an improved source of drinking water, about 4 million people continue to lack access to safe drinking water. Access to safe water and sanitation has decreased in 19 of Malawi's 29 health districts, resulting in an increase in outbreaks of communicable diseases. In drought-prone districts, less than 67 per cent of water points now function during the dry season. It is estimated that more than 495,000 people have insufficient or unreliable access to water, sanitation and hygiene during the dry season. This leads to the risk of water and sanitation insecurity and compounds the risk of malnutrition and other problems.

Malawi grapples with [frequent cholera outbreaks](#). Initially documented in [1973](#), Malawi has encountered a cholera outbreak almost every year since. The southern region has borne the brunt of the highest number of cases and most recurrent outbreaks. Typically, outbreaks coincide with the rainy season (November to March), in most districts, while areas surrounding Lake Chilwa may also witness outbreaks during the dry season. The current outbreak has recorded [59,088](#) cases. In an ongoing effort to prevent and control the disease, the Government of Malawi and its partners developed a [National Cholera Prevention and Control Plan in April 2017](#), subject to annual revisions and updates tailored to address any outbreaks throughout the year. The Malawi Government is committed to the elimination of cholera in the medium to long term and to that end plans to develop a [Cholera Elimination Plan](#). The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Water and Sanitation have aligned and adapted the objectives, strategies and activities in this plan to the guidelines provided by the [global task force for cholera \(GTFCC\)](#) and also by the [Health Sector Strategic Plan III](#). The cholera epidemic preparedness and response plan is intended to contribute to the implementation of an effective, comprehensive, integrated system of cholera prevention and control in Malawi through:

- Effective leadership and coordination
- Improved surveillance system and reporting including improved laboratory and diagnosis capacity
- Health System strengthening to provide quality and equitable services for both prevention and response
- Improved [water, sanitation and hygiene](#) conditions
- Use of oral cholera vaccine
- Intensified communication and social mobilization

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Malawi Red Cross works to ensure that all people have safe and equitable access to health, WASH and adequate living conditions by expanding integrated [community-based health and First Aid](#) as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene programmes to address the unmet needs of vulnerable or marginalized groups.

The National Society invests in [epidemic and pandemic preparedness](#) to enable local actors, networks, volunteers and community-based responders to detect and respond to disease outbreaks and other health risks. The National Society will also continue to collaborate with the government in contributing towards the cholera preparedness and response plan through its network of volunteers and community actions.

The Malawi Red Cross will also continue to support the Government of Malawi in community mobilization and awareness raising on non-communicable diseases. It will stay engaged with the UNICEF on nutrition interventions such as 'Scaling Up' to improve infant and child-feeding practices, particularly during emergencies.

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### Planned activities in 2024

- Provide people with contextually appropriate health services
- Provide people with contextually appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene services
- Provide people with mental health and psychosocial support services
- Train people in first aid and provide first aid coverage
- Revamp community health structures in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and improve community health information dissemination
- Facilitate menstrual hygiene management efforts and designed and implement distributions in ways that respond appropriately to the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence
- Facilitate establishment of reporting and referral systems including mobile courts and psychosocial support services
- Drill boreholes, install gravity fed water systems or solar pumped boreholes with taps in water scarce communities and schools

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

IFRC mechanisms such as the Disaster Response Emergency Fund (IFRC-DREF) and Emergency Appeals will be drawn on as needed for the National Society to respond to disease outbreaks and health emergencies. In January 2023, the IFRC launched an Emergency Appeal to support the Malawi Red Cross response to the cholera outbreak declared a public health emergency by the authorities the month before. The emergency [operation](#) was completed by end of September 2023.

The IFRC will provide the following support:

- Enable the Malawi Red Cross to identify and support community-led solutions as being key to controlling epidemics and pandemics
- Support National Society's participation in cholera response activities through training and cholera hotspot mapping exercises
- Help the National Society effectively network and link with other actors such as Global Health Security Agenda, Africa CDC, WHO and African Union on health, nutrition, immunization, and public health
- Link the Malawi Red Cross with other sexual, reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health platforms
- Support the Malawi Red Cross in promoting good hygiene practices through health education and mitigation of environmental health risks

The **Swiss Red Cross** will continue supporting the National Society's work on health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and blood donor recruitment.



## Migration and displacement

Political instability and social unrest in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions have resulted in a [continual flow of refugees into Malawi](#) for over two decades. Malawi is host to refugees and asylum seekers from countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mozambique who flee their respective countries due to [wars and political unrest](#). The country is also a route for asylum seekers moving between countries across Southern Africa, with current trends showing increased flows of such migrants. Malawi hosts about 90,000 individuals who are seeking [asylum or are refugees](#). Of these 52,678 were registered as persons of concern (PoCs) by UNHCR in December 2021.

Most of the refugees and asylum seekers live in the [Dzaleka refugee camp](#) in Dowa district, approximately 41 kilometres away from the capital city of Malawi. The camp was initially established to host up to 12,000 people but now hosts over 52,000 individuals. Dzaleka is a [protracted camp setting](#), receiving around 300 new arrivals every month (62% from the DRC, 19% from Burundi, 7% from Rwanda and 2% from elsewhere). Of the identified persons of concern, 45% are women and 48% are children. Approximately 40% of the overall population holds refugee status, while 60% are classified as asylum seekers. This composition extends the duration of the situation in the camp, heightening risks related to protection, disease, and food security/livelihoods for its residents. UNHCR and WFP continue to provide cash assistance and services to those in the camp, recognizing their dependence on humanitarian assistance.

The Tropical Storms and floods that affected Malawi in recent years have provoked significant internal displacement, often lasting several months. Families who had fled from neighbouring countries and found refuge in camps in Malawi were also affected.

Malawi serves as a transit route for migrants, primarily from Ethiopia, who use it to journey to South Africa. Additionally, there have been instances where traffickers were apprehended while attempting to transport children to South Africa. More recently, human trafficking has emerged as a significant concern along the borders of Malawi and Zambia, particularly in Chipata. This situation underscores the need for enhanced migration services, coordination, and advocacy between the two countries to effectively combat this practice.

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Malawi Red Cross focuses on ensuring that all people who migrate and are displaced are safe, are treated humanely and with dignity, and have the assistance and protection support they need to thrive in inclusive societies. To this effect, the National Society will implement the following:

- Conduct a migration and displacement needs assessment and integrate migration and displacement into their strategic planning
- Operate along main migratory routes and develop the capacity to access resources to establish [humanitarian service points](#), providing access to assistance, protection and integration support to migrants and displaced
- Respond to the needs of migrants and displaced populations using an integrated approach
- Support the government with provision of food and non-food items including tents and camp management

The Malawi Red Cross, in collaboration with the government, will provide restoring family links (RFL) services for the refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and internally displaced

persons, to restore and maintain family links for the families separated by conflict or natural hazards and subsequent disasters. This includes restoring contact between family members through tracing, free phone calls, free internet, Red Cross messages for relatives and support for unaccompanied children. The National Society will also engage the police and prison authorities to explore the possibility of extending RFL services to detention centres so that those refugees and asylum seekers that are detained should have access to communication to allow them to contact their families.

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### Planned activities in 2024

- Provide necessities to migrants, displaced people and their families, and provide restoring family links services
- Facilitate multiple channels of communication to share information with the targeted groups and to receive feedback from communities on health-related issues
- Act on feedback from targeted groups and use it to adapt activities and key messages

- Facilitate linkages and referral of migrants, displaced persons with other service providers
- Conduct awareness meetings with communities on negative impacts of human trafficking and support case reporting on human trafficking
- Conduct advocacy with authorities on the issue of people not being registered as refugees, thus ensuring that the rights of asylum seekers are respected as per the international law
- Support coordination meetings at different levels to track human trafficking in coordination with the relevant organizations

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### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC, in collaboration with the participating National Societies, will provide the following support:

- Assist in resource mobilization and monitor implementation of all operations
- Link the National Society with other migration-related actors and platforms



## Values, power and inclusion

In Malawi, women make up 52% of population and 80% of the workforce, with 59% of employed women working in the agricultural sector. The situation of women and girls in Malawi is less advanced than that of men and boys in terms of literacy, education, political participation, land ownership and other developmental indicators. While adequate legal frameworks exist, the support on the ground is under-resourced and inadequate. Women in Malawi have little control over land and lack access to economic resources. Female-headed households are particularly vulnerable with limited productivity, income and empowerment, making them more susceptible to poverty. Social cash transfers (SCTs) are among the social protection tools used in Malawi to assist the poorest people and have contributed to a decline in extreme poverty. Working to improve women's inclusion will improve poverty and food security levels. There is also a need for improved maternal and child healthcare, family planning and reproductive health services to support women and girls to develop and strengthen their economic empowerment.

Gender-based violence (GBV) also remains a serious challenge in Malawi. Malawi Demographic Health Survey reported that an estimated 14% of women have been physically abused and 25% sexually abused in 2016. Food insecurity is often linked to increases in GBV, with protection risks spiking during the lean

season, as food insecurity pushes women and girls to travel longer distances to seek food and water. Early marriages are also a challenge, as Malawi has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world (approximately 42% of girls are married before 18 and 9% before 15). Early marriages also increase the risk of pregnancy complications, low birth weight (LBW), and infant mortality. Other complications include urinary tract infections, pre-eclampsia and fistula. Early marriage is one of the more regressive practices which limits girls' education and sexual and reproductive health, especially in rural areas. This has links to poverty, with cases of young women being lured or sold into early marriages in exchange of food in food insecure districts. However, communities are being engaged in programmes to get girls back into education. Additionally, organizations such as UNICEF and UNDP are working with local community leaders to eliminate child marriage.

The majority of the population of Malawi are youths (80% are under 35 years of age and the median age is 17). This youthful population is one of Malawi's strongest assets. The youth in Malawi face a number of challenges in accessing health care, education, employment and participation. Only 51% of children complete primary level education. The Malawi 2063 vision identifies youth development and empowerment as a key priority.

## Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

The Malawi Red Cross will pivot on protecting and promoting a positive change for humanity, based on humanitarian values and principles. The National Society priorities include the following:

- Reach out to the youth with skills- and values-based humanitarian education, through flagship programmes
- Ensure all operations, programmes and services provide dignity, access, participation, and safety for all affected marginalized and excluded people
- Adopt innovative approaches to better understanding and engaging communities, so that it can enable them to address unhealthy and unsafe practices
- Continue to mainstream and institutionalize community engagement and accountability (CEA)

The Malawi Red Cross will also encourage inclusion and equality among its volunteers.

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## Planned activities in 2024

- Conduct training on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and response mechanisms
- Establish reporting and referral systems, including mobile courts and psychosocial support services

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## Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC, in collaboration with the participating National Societies, will provide the following support:

- Assist the National Society with the development of community-based information, education and communication initiatives to ensure that all operations consider dignity, access, participation, and safety
- Provide the necessary technical support to the Malawi Red Cross for institutionalization of community engagement and accountability (CEA)
- Support the engagement of the National Society with the education community

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## ENABLING LOCAL ACTORS

The Malawi Red Cross is committed to pursuing its institutional strengthening and carried out the self-assessment part of the Organizational Capacity Assessment and Certification (OCAC) process in 2013. The self-assessment part of the OCAC process is intended to capture the strengths and weaknesses of National Societies as a whole in relation to a wide range of organizational capacities.

The Malawi Red Cross seeks to address areas of its National Society development plan that are still lagging behind. Its Strategic Plan 2020-2024 gives priority to strengthening branches, volunteer management and youth engagement, and to increasing the resource base, effective service delivery and accountability.



## Strategic and operational coordination

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### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Define its auxiliary role with public authorities and position itself as the partner of choice in the humanitarian field
- Significantly expand participation and leadership in national and inter-agency coordination
- Implement investment plans to sustain the image of the organization as well as resource mobilization
- Diversify local resource mobilization strategies to sustain core business
- Explore prospects within the corporate sector, focusing on areas such as livelihood improvement, education, and financial literacy, among others

- Implement strategies that will strengthen more visibility to the corporate partners and beyond

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC**, in collaboration with participating National Societies, will provide the following support:

- Support the Malawi Red Cross with all the relevant documentation, tools and information to strengthen its auxiliary role
- Support operationalization of the resource mobilization framework, in accordance with the National Society's implementation plan



## National Society development

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### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Ensure that youth, volunteers and emerging community leaders actively participate in decision-making processes, fostering innovation and enhancing the local network
- Create and implement youth engagement strategies
- Extend insurance coverage to all volunteers
- Develop branch expansion strategies that leverage social media platforms to amplify outreach efforts, employ online data management systems for efficient operations, enhance branding initiatives, and facilitate crowdfunding campaigns

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

**The IFRC**, in collaboration with participating National Societies, will provide the following support:

- Ensure support to the National Society development plan is aligned with the National Society priorities and in line with the Movement standards
- Support the National Society in implementing youth designed programmes and initiatives
- Assist in aligning branch development with the priorities of the National Society



## Humanitarian diplomacy

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Develop communication and public advocacy resources along with guidance to enhance impact, build public trust, and improve understanding of its role and activities
- Unpack the Humanitarian Diplomacy guidance notes

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC, in collaboration with participating National Societies, will provide the following support:

- Assist the Malawi Red Cross in accessing training opportunities and peer support networks focused on skills and strategy development in the realm of influencing
- Provide communications and public advocacy resources to the National Society



## Accountability and agility (cross-cutting)

### Multi-year high level objectives of the National Society

- Integrate a functional risk and accountability framework, based on the recently conducted high-level risk assessment and developed organizational-wide risk register
- Develop a security risk register and mitigation measures aimed to reduce prevailing risk to an acceptable level
- Extend awareness and training of staff and volunteers on the Code of Conduct, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, safeguarding-child protection
- Conduct data protection training for staff
- Ensure the existence of a functioning intranet, a full-time IT officer and an information and communications technology system

### Longer-term support from the IFRC network

The IFRC, in collaboration with participating National Societies, will provide the following support:

Provide the National Society with financial training and internal controls

Provide security assessment training, knowledge sharing and better direct support, through coaching on a case-by-case basis

Assist the Malawi Red Cross in the development of a security risk register and mitigation measures, aimed at reducing risks to an acceptable level

## THE IFRC NETWORK

### The IFRC

The IFRC provides support to the National Society through its country cluster delegation in Harare, and an office in Malawi since obtaining a status agreement from the government in 2022. The IFRC supports the Malawi Red Cross with strategic and operational coordination, National Society development and humanitarian diplomacy, including strengthening its auxiliary role. It also supports accountability as a cross-cutting theme.

The IFRC also provides support to varied long-term programmes of the National Society, and in recent years, has supported the Malawi Red Cross through various IFRC-DREF and Emergency Appeal operations in response to floods, disease outbreaks and tropical storms. Recently completed Emergency Appeals operations include the response to Tropical Cyclone Ana and to the cholera outbreak which started in 2022.

## IFRC Membership coordination

IFRC coordination involves working with member National Societies to assess the humanitarian context, humanitarian situations and needs, and agree on common priorities. It also involves co-development of common strategies to address issues such as obtaining greater humanitarian access, acceptance and space; mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. This also means ensuring that strategies and programmes in support of people in need incorporate clarity of humanitarian action and development assistance, while reinforcing the auxiliary role of the Malawi Red Cross.

The Malawi Red Cross is part of the four [IFRC Pan-African initiatives](#) focusing on [Tree Planting and Care](#); [Zero Hunger](#); [Red Ready](#) and [National Society Development](#).

The Malawi Red Cross is being supported by a consortium of in-country participating National Societies. It is led by the **Danish Red Cross**, which works alongside **Icelandic Red Cross**. The consortium supports the National Society with shelter initiatives, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) projects and flood recovery support. Other National Societies supporting the Malawi Red Cross include the **Belgian Red Cross**, the **Kuwait Red Crescent**, The **Netherlands Red Cross**, the **Qatar Red Crescent**, and the **Swiss Red Cross**. Specific areas of support include:

The **Icelandic Red Cross** has focused on community resilience projects.

The **Swiss Red Cross** has supported work on health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and blood donor recruitment.

### Participating National Society Support

National Society name	Funding Requirement	Climate	Disasters and crises	Health and wellbeing	Migration	Values, power and inclusion	Enabling local actors
Belgian Red Cross	284,000	●					
Danish Red Cross	1.6M		●				
Swiss Red Cross	600,000			●			●

Total Funding requirement

**2.4M**



23 February 2023, A Malawi Red Cross volunteer engages with a resident in Mangochi, discussing the risks of cholera and methods of mitigation (Source: IFRC)

## Movement coordination

The Malawi Red Cross ensures regular exchanges with the IFRC, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and participating National Societies, for the alignment of support and action between Movement partners. In times of emergencies, closer coordination is organized. This is carried out in line with the Strengthening Movement Coordination and

Cooperation ([SMCC](#)) principles, and the newly adopted [Seville Agreement 2.0](#).

The ICRC has no permanent presence in Malawi but makes regular visits to support restoring family links services in emergencies.

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## Coordination with other actors

The Malawi Red Cross works closely with the Government, which leads the overall coordination of any humanitarian emergency or disaster response through its Department of Disaster Management Affairs, which sits under the Office of the President. The disaster management structure stems from the disaster technical working group at the national level; civil protection committees at the district level; area civil protection committees at the traditional authority level; and civil protection committees at the group village level. The National Society is a member of the civil protection committee and the national disaster preparedness and relief committee that comprises the principal secretaries of all key ministries and departments, and three non-governmental organizations. It is also a member of the national disaster technical working group.

The Malawi Red Cross collaborates closely with the Ministry of Health, which provides overall technical coordination. As part of the COVID-19 response, the National Society was responsible for distributing medical equipment, raising community awareness on prevention measures and providing water, sanitation and hygiene services, and it supported the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign. For the response to the cholera outbreak in 2022, the Malawi Red Cross also worked with the Ministry of Water and Sanitation.

There is a humanitarian country team in Malawi chaired by UNDP, which is the coordination platform for all humanitarian bodies to ensure coordinated strategies and approaches. The National Society participates in all coordination meetings at the national and district levels, including clusters for shelter and camp management, search and rescue, food security and water, sanitation and hygiene. In addition to being a member of all clusters, it is also a sub-lead for the early warning cluster.

The Malawi Red Cross and IFRC co-lead the Shelter Cluster in Malawi, with the National Society also participating in its working groups. The Global Shelter Cluster (GSC) is an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) coordination mechanism and IFRC has been leading the shelter cluster in disaster contexts since the establishment of the cluster approach in 2005. This critical mandate places IFRC as one of the lead agencies in the international humanitarian coordination system. IFRC leverages its leadership position in the shelter cluster for improved coordination, stronger policies and standards across the sector, and better support for affected people in their recovery.

The Global Shelter Cluster and country Shelter Clusters work collectively with national response actors, including local and national governments, to support people with timely, effective and predictable shelter and settlement responses. As such, the Malawi Red Cross' shelter cluster leadership role significantly contributes towards the localization efforts of the international humanitarian system. Its local knowledge and understanding of the context, along with its network and established community relationships, enhance the effectiveness, relevance, and connectedness of the overall humanitarian shelter response.

In Malawi, notable partners of the National Society are UNICEF, Médecins Sans Frontières, World Food Programme, GOAL Malawi, Eagle Relief, Care Malawi, World Vision, Habitat for Humanity International and ShelterBox. The National Society has developed multiple partnerships with companies from the private sector and philanthropic foundations that have supported it with financial contributions and donations. Some of the civil society organizations it works with include Civil Society Network for Climate Change (CISONEC), Civil Society Agriculture Network (SISANET), Health Network and National Civic Education (NICE), among others.



**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest humanitarian network, with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and around 15 million volunteers. Our volunteers are present in communities before, during and after a crisis or disaster. We work in the most hard to reach and complex settings in the world, saving lives and promoting human dignity. We support communities to become stronger and more resilient places where people can live safe and healthy lives, and have opportunities to thrive.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- [IFRC Global Plan and Country Plans](#)
- [Subscribe for updates](#)
- [Donor response](#) on IFRC website
- [Live Disaster Response Emergency Fund \(DREF\) data](#)
- Operational information: [IFRC GO platform](#)
- National Society data: [IFRC Federation-wide Databank and Reporting System](#)
- [Evaluations database](#)

This plan reflects the priorities of the Malawi Red Cross Society, the IFRC and National Societies providing international support, for 2024 and subsequent years. It is aligned with IFRC [Strategy 2030](#), representing the collective ambitions of IFRC membership, and is the result of a joint planning process and will serve for joint monitoring and reporting. It will be revised on an annual basis to adjust priorities and funding requirements to the needs in-country.

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