



CRWRC
DISASTER RESPONSE

Malawi Food For The Hungry

www.crwrc.org

February 2011

Drought in Malawi

Greetings from Malawi— a small land locked country in Southern Africa. Malawi is located south of Tanzania, east of Zambia, and is partially surrounded by Mozambique.

We arrived in Malawi at the end of January to serve as International Relief Managers (IRMS) with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) in response to drought.

This time of year is known in Malawi as the “hungry season” because food stocks have run out and the new harvest is not yet ready. This year, because of drought, the situation is even more dire than usual.

CRWRC is responding by providing food in five Malawian communities. Three thousand households (18,000 people) are receiving maize on a monthly basis. They have also received seed and fertilizer for new crops.

Of those receiving aid, 70% are participating in a conservation farming program in exchange for food.



A maize distribution

Conservation Farming is also called Farming God’s Way. It involves minimizing the soil disturbance by establishing a grid of planting locations, hand digging (with a hoe) for each plant, fertilizing (the soil in the future will be nutrient rich by reusing the same planting locations), and mulching to hold moisture and minimize weeds. These techniques make crops more drought resistant.

The participants in CRWRC’s program have been trained in these techniques and are now caring for community

demonstration gardens in exchange for their food. The people in the communities both within and outside of the program are seeing the positive difference conservation farming makes. Our hope is that they will also start using the techniques on their own plots of land.

The remaining 30% of the households that are receiving food aid are unable to do such work for numerous reasons (ill health, child headed households, the elderly). As an alternative, they have been given a variety of seed for smaller kitchen gardens.

Our Team

When we arrived in Malawi at the of January, the third of six food distributions was taking place under the watch of fellow International Relief Managers, Mike and Colleen Hoyer. They have a wonderful blog which well documents their time in Malawi and beyond (www.hoyers.blogspot.com). We recommend it!

In addition to International Relief Managers, CRWRC has a full time development presence here in Malawi under the leadership of Larry McAuley, Country Consultant. We are also working with Nancy Hinga, Program Consultant. We are eager to learn more about the work they do. We appreciate their wonderful welcome to Malawi, ‘the warm heart of Africa’.

We report to Jackie Koster, CRWRC Disaster Response Manager for East and Southern Africa. She has been in Malawi for two weeks. Her wisdom and insights have been most appreciated.



A conservation farming demonstration garden.

PRAYER REQUESTS

We ask for prayers for:

- Rains to reach the communities, especially those in the rain shadows.
- A plentiful harvest
- Resilience and wisdom for the local leaders and ourselves in order to achieve the objectives of CRWRC's Food for Work Program.
- A lasting resolution to the fuel shortages which are severely impacting transportation in Malawi.
- That CRWRC will positively impact the long term well being of the people of Malawi through the conservation farming teaching and implementation methodologies.



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Lake Malawi

Malawi shares Lake Malawi with Mozambique. Lake Malawi is about the same size as Vancouver Island and contains more species of fish than any other lake in the world. It also supports a large fleet of small commercial fishing vessels.

We had the pleasure of watching the fleet of boats head out for night fishing using lanterns, small open boats with a five or six man crews, a net and a dugout canoe.

Visiting them when they come ashore in the morning was fascinating... lots of trade and commerce on the beach. The main catch was sardines that are sold fresh, used as bait for larger species, dried on acres of drying racks and marketed to distributors.

We enjoyed watching the fishermen mend nets, dry fish and prepare their boats. During in the day the small dugout boats also head out to catch larger fish using hand lines.



Snapshots



Left: These women are carrying mulch that they gathered to use on the conservation farming demonstration plots. The mulch will help retain moisture in the soil and enable crops to better withstand drought.

Right: Stacks of maize at the distribution centre in Kamanze. Maize is a staple food in Malawi. CRWRC is providing six months worth of maize to 3,000 families. The maize is distributed once a month. So far three distributions have taken place.

