

## **Malawi launches National Platform for Disasters Risk Management**

**by**

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Malawi has launched a National Platform for Disaster Risk Management as the country witnesses an increase in disasters related to climate change, such as floods and drought.

The establishment of the National Platform for Disaster Risk Management is in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action as well as the draft National Disaster Risk Management Policy for Malawi.

The platform will serve as a coordination mechanism to enhance multi-stakeholder collaboration and coordination for sustainability of disaster risk management activities through a consultative and participatory process in line with the implementation of the National Disaster Risk Management Policy.

Vice President Khumbo Kachali launched the platform on February 20 in Lilongwe saying the platform will create a way of harmonising national responses to disasters in the country. He described the occurrence of disasters as a setback to development projects.

“Government recognizes that a lot of resources are spent fighting disasters in the country. This money could have been used for other development projects. Disasters erode development gains that were achieved over time,” he said.

Acting UN Resident Coordinator, Felistus Zawaira, while welcoming the establishment of the platform asked government to create a budget line which will help in the effective national disaster response.

Her sentiments were echoed by the representative of the Civil Society Network on Climate Change, Melton Luhanga, who also asked government to review the 1991 Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act to ensure it is relevant to changes that have happened with years especially that now there are emerging issues of climate change.

Principal Secretary and Commissioner for Disaster Management Affairs, Jeffrey Kanyinji, said so far disasters such as floods had affected 18 districts of the country's 28 districts such as Nsanje, Chikhwawa, Phalombe, Zomba, Salima and Mangochi.

“The human suffering in all these districts has been too much,” said Kanyinji.

The country is also reeling from drought and dry spell that affected about 2 million people who are currently receiving food aid in 16 districts. “They will need assistance up to March while others may need the food assistance up to May”, said Kanyinji.

Malawi is particularly exposed and vulnerable to drought and floods, and the associated hazards of epidemics and landslides. From 1979 to 2008, natural disasters affected nearly 21.7 million people and killed about 2 596 people.

Malawi's vulnerability is linked to specific geo-climatic factors. Malawi has of let experienced an increase in number of such disasters. The floods and drought have been accelerated due to climate change impact while some of the disease epidemics are secondary and tertiary impact of the floods and drought.

These hazards are common in low lying lake shore and lower shire districts of Karonga, Salima, Machinga, Phalombe, Mangochi, Zomba, Chikhwawa and Nsanje. These districts have also been identified as the vulnerable in the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA).

In response to these hazards, the Government developed a Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act in 1991, which is currently being reviewed to be in line with a new policy yet to be approved.