

# MALAWI

High food prices, macroeconomic instability, and below-average agricultural production are driving high levels of acute food insecurity

## IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY ANALYSIS

MAY 2025 - MARCH 2026

Published on 17 October 2025

### CURRENT ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAY - SEPTEMBER 2025



**2.9 M**

16% of the population analysed

People facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above)

IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION

Phase 5 0 People in Catastrophe

Phase 4 0 People in Emergency

Phase 3 2,970,000 People in Crisis

Phase 2 5,832,000 People Stressed

Phase 1 9,725,000 People in food security

### PROJECTED ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY OCTOBER 2025- MARCH 2026



**4.0 M**

22% of the population analysed

People facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above)

IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION

Phase 5 0 People in Catastrophe

Phase 4 8,000 People in Emergency

Phase 3 4,002,000 People in Crisis

Phase 2 6,036,000 People Stressed

Phase 1 8,482,000 People in food security

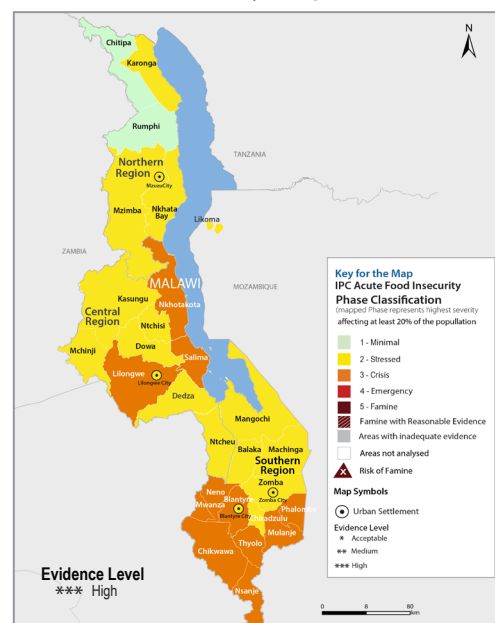
## Overview

Approximately 4 million people (22 percent of the analysed population) are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, classified as IPC Phase 3 or above (Crisis or worse) between October 2025 and March 2026 – the lean season in Malawi. Of that total, 8,000 people are facing critical levels of acute food insecurity, IPC Phase 4 (Emergency), driven by high food prices, economic decline and below average agricultural production. Phase 4 is characterised by large food gaps and high levels of acute malnutrition. These people urgently require Immediate, life-saving assistance to prevent a catastrophe.

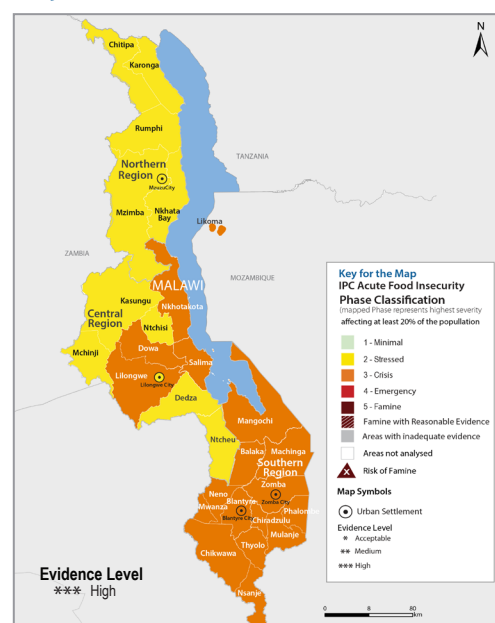
Most of the populations in Phase 3 or above are urban poor and low-income households in rural areas who are not able to produce enough of their own food and are dependent on crisis coping strategies to meet their food needs through market purchases. These strategies include harvesting immature crops, reducing expenses on essential health, and exchanging labour for food due to lack of resources or money to buy food. The situation is exacerbated by the persisting depreciate of the Malawian kwacha against major currencies, including the US dollar, Euro and the South African Rand, the high transportation cost and high food prices.

The food insecurity situation is a significant deterioration from the current period (May to September 2025), where 2.9 million people (16 percent of the analysed population) experienced high levels of acute food insecurity (Phase 3 or above) and no people were classified in Phase 4. The deteriorating situation is driven by high temperatures that reduced irrigated crop production, further worsening food insecurity and triggered an earlier onset of the lean season.

## Current Situation May - September 2025



## Projected Situation Oct 2025 - March 2026



## Key Drivers



### Economic decline:

Malawi's inflation rate stands at 27.7 percent, exceeding the forecasted level. The Malawian Kwacha continues to depreciate against major currencies, including the US dollar and the South African Rand. A shortage of import cover has led to persistent fuel shortages.



### High food prices:

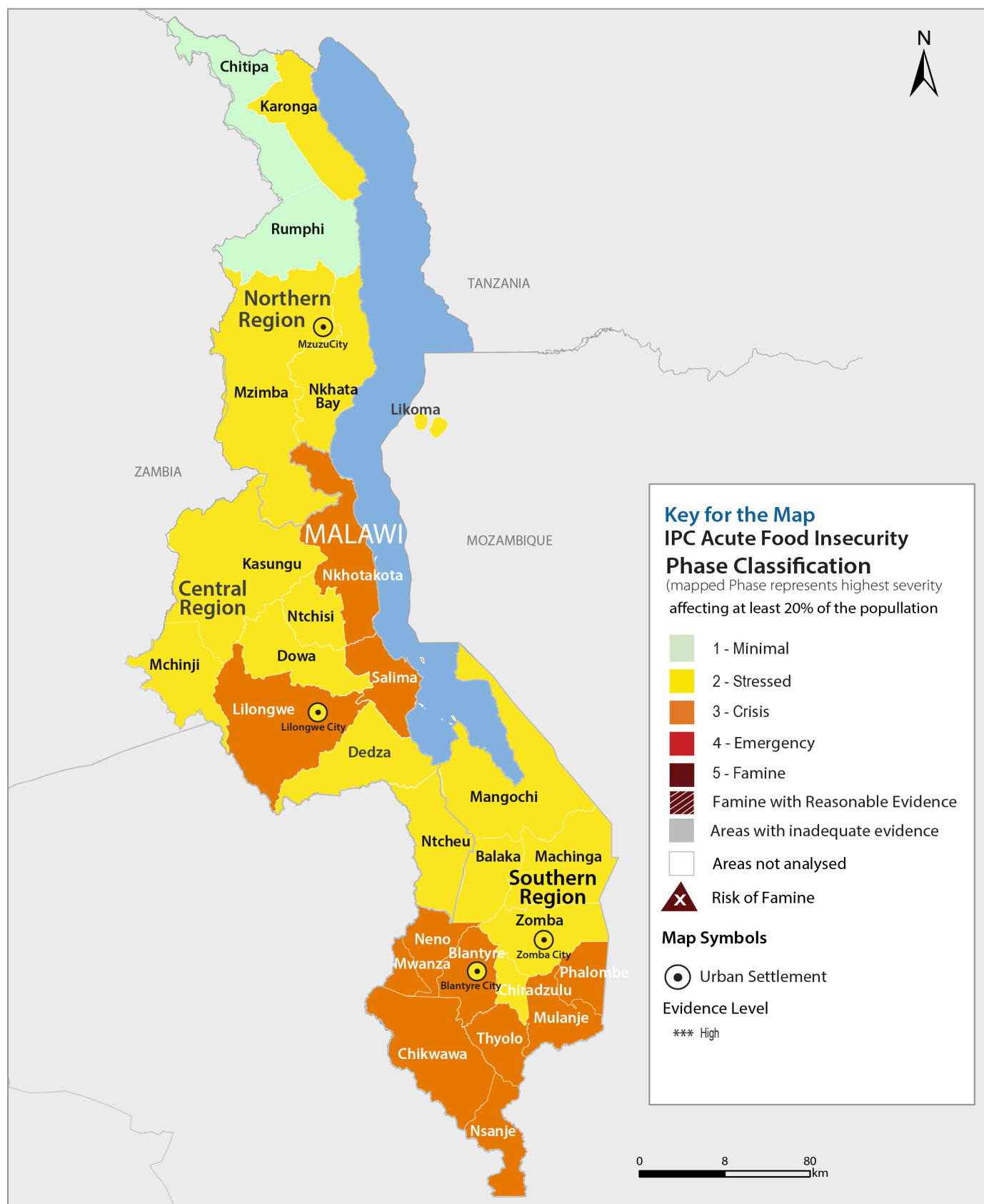
Maize grain, which is the main staple for the country sold in June 2025 at an average price of MK1,113, up from MK722 in the same month last year. The price of maize is critical, as it drives up the cost of other food commodities, including livestock.



### Below average production

Maize production in Malawi fell below the five-year average in the 2024/25 agricultural season, largely due to erratic rainfall and high input costs. However, the country managed to increase production by 5.4 percent in comparison to the previous season.

## CURRENT IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (MAY – SEPTEMBER 2025)





## Population table for the current period: May – September 2025

| District      | Total population analysed* | Phase 1   |    | Phase 2   |    | Phase 3   |    | Phase 4 |   | Phase 5 |   | Area Phase | Phase 3+  |    |
|---------------|----------------------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|---------|---|---------|---|------------|-----------|----|
|               |                            | #people   | %  | #people   | %  | #people   | %  | #people | % | #people | % |            | #people   | %  |
| Balaka        | 531,748                    | 265,874   | 50 | 186,112   | 35 | 79,762    | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 79,762    | 15 |
| Blantyre      | 532,697                    | 213,079   | 40 | 186,444   | 35 | 133,174   | 25 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 133,174   | 25 |
| Blantyre City | 133,866                    | 73,626    | 55 | 40,160    | 30 | 20,080    | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 20,080    | 15 |
| Chikhwawa     | 653,240                    | 261,296   | 40 | 228,634   | 35 | 163,310   | 25 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 163,310   | 25 |
| Chiradzulu    | 402,359                    | 221,297   | 55 | 120,708   | 30 | 60,354    | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 60,354    | 15 |
| Chitipa       | 264,965                    | 225,220   | 85 | 39,745    | 15 | 0         | 0  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 1          | 0         | 0  |
| Dedza         | 967,614                    | 580,568   | 60 | 290,284   | 30 | 96,761    | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 96,761    | 10 |
| Dowa          | 923,901                    | 415,755   | 45 | 369,560   | 40 | 138,585   | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 138,585   | 15 |
| Karonga       | 422,697                    | 274,753   | 65 | 105,674   | 25 | 42,270    | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 42,270    | 10 |
| Kasungu       | 994,304                    | 696,013   | 70 | 248,576   | 25 | 49,715    | 5  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 49,715    | 5  |
| Likoma        | 16,609                     | 7,474     | 45 | 6,644     | 40 | 2,491     | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 2,491     | 15 |
| Lilongwe      | 1,908,826                  | 954,413   | 50 | 572,648   | 30 | 381,765   | 20 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 381,765   | 20 |
| Lilongwe City | 193,072                    | 115,843   | 60 | 57,922    | 30 | 19,307    | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 19,307    | 10 |
| Machinga      | 934,448                    | 513,946   | 55 | 280,334   | 30 | 140,167   | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 140,167   | 15 |
| Mangochi      | 1,431,046                  | 715,523   | 50 | 500,866   | 35 | 214,657   | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 214,657   | 15 |
| Mchinji       | 686,764                    | 343,382   | 50 | 274,706   | 40 | 68,676    | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 68,676    | 10 |
| Mulanje       | 781,841                    | 273,644   | 35 | 273,644   | 35 | 234,552   | 30 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 234,552   | 30 |
| Mwanza        | 161,500                    | 64,600    | 40 | 48,450    | 30 | 48,450    | 30 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 48,450    | 30 |
| Mzimba        | 1,049,193                  | 839,354   | 80 | 157,379   | 15 | 52,460    | 5  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 52,460    | 5  |
| Mzuzu City    | 34,172                     | 23,920    | 70 | 6,834     | 20 | 3,417     | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 3,417     | 10 |
| Neno          | 158,898                    | 47,669    | 30 | 55,614    | 35 | 55,614    | 35 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 55,614    | 35 |
| Nkhata bay    | 319,934                    | 223,954   | 70 | 63,987    | 20 | 31,993    | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 31,993    | 10 |
| Nkhotakota    | 454,870                    | 159,205   | 35 | 204,692   | 45 | 90,974    | 20 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 90,974    | 20 |
| Nsanje        | 337,295                    | 84,324    | 25 | 151,783   | 45 | 101,189   | 30 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 101,189   | 30 |
| Ntcheu        | 796,177                    | 398,089   | 50 | 318,471   | 40 | 79,618    | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 79,618    | 10 |
| Ntchisi       | 387,513                    | 193,757   | 50 | 155,005   | 40 | 38,751    | 10 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 38,751    | 10 |
| Phalombe      | 515,353                    | 231,909   | 45 | 180,374   | 35 | 103,071   | 20 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 103,071   | 20 |
| Rumphi        | 264,674                    | 224,973   | 85 | 39,701    | 15 | 0         | 0  | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 1          | 0         | 0  |
| Salima        | 581,801                    | 232,720   | 40 | 203,630   | 35 | 145,450   | 25 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 145,450   | 25 |
| Thyolo        | 804,868                    | 321,947   | 40 | 241,460   | 30 | 241,460   | 30 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 3          | 241,460   | 30 |
| Zomba         | 864,110                    | 518,466   | 60 | 216,028   | 25 | 129,617   | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 129,617   | 15 |
| Zomba City    | 16,391                     | 8,196     | 50 | 5,737     | 35 | 2,459     | 15 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 | 2          | 2,459     | 15 |
| Grand Total   | 18,526,746                 | 9,724,789 | 52 | 5,831,806 | 31 | 2,970,149 | 16 | 0       | 0 | 0       | 0 |            | 2,970,149 | 16 |

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, therefore they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.



## CURRENT SITUATION OVERVIEW (MAY – SEPTEMBER 2025)

From April to September 2025, only Chitipa and Rumphi districts are classified in IPC Phase 1 (Minimal). This indicates that most households in these districts can meet their essential food and non-food needs without resorting to atypical or unsustainable strategies to secure food and income.

The Malawi IPC AFI analysed 32 administrative units, comprising of 28 rural districts and four urban cities. In the current period, 19 out of the 32 units analysed are in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed), but 11 are in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis). These include Blantyre, Chikwawa, Lilongwe, Mulanje, Mwanza, Neno, Nkhoskhota, Nsanje, Phalombe, Salima and Thyolo. This classification means that an estimated 2.9 million people in these areas can marginally meet their minimum food needs but only by depleting essential livelihood assets or using crisis-coping strategies.

In the urban areas, all four cities - Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu, and Zomba - are in Phase 2, indicating that the vulnerable population in these cities have minimally adequate diets but face challenges covering non-food expenditures.

Additionally, all cities have a population classified in Phase 3. The primary factor contributing to the current state of stress is high food prices in all city markets. According to WFP price data, the average national price of maize staples in May 2025 was approximately MWK 948.33 across nearly all monitored markets. In contrast, maize prices during the same period last year were lower, at MK 622.00.

Malawi's national maize production for the 2024/25 agricultural season is below the country's five-year average. Although national maize production saw a slight increase of 5.4%, from 2,712,578 metric tonnes (MT) last season to 2,859,949 MT this season, erratic rainfall and limited access to agricultural inputs across all districts influenced this modest rise. Despite functional markets across the country, high inflation and below average maize production are driving up food prices.

Prolonged dry spells in the Southern Region and erratic rainfall in the central and northern regions led to crop production deficits. Additionally, farmers across all regions struggled to access seeds and fertiliser, which were more expensive than in the previous agricultural season. Consequently, these rural households have low food stock levels, forcing them to rely on markets for their food supply earlier and for longer than usual.

In urban areas, an estimated 45,263 people in Malawi's major cities (Mzuzu, Lilongwe, Zomba, and Blantyre) are experiencing IPC Phase 3 or above. This represents nearly 12 percent of the vulnerable 377,501 urban residents in these areas. Blantyre City faces the most significant challenge, with 15 percent of its 20,080 analysed residents in Phase 3. Lilongwe City, similarly, has 15 percent of its 19,307 analysed population in Phase 3. Zomba City has 15 percent which is an estimated 2,459 people in Phase 3, while Mzuzu City has 10 percent of its slightly larger population which is at an estimated 3,417 people in the same phase. The city populations are lower this year because of the exclusion of high-income areas from the urban samples, ensuring the sample more accurately reflects the vulnerable city population. The primary reasons for this food situation in these cities are high food inflation rates, which stood at around 35.8 percent in April 2025 (a decrease from 39.9 percent in April 2024), and the continued depreciation of the Malawian Kwacha against major currencies like the US dollar, Euro, and South African Rand. This currency weakness leads to a shortage of foreign exchange and drives up the price of imported goods. Additionally, mobility in the cities is more expensive because of the persistent fuel shortages that make transportation of people and goods more expensive.

### Current situation trends

Malawi has seen a consistent increase in the number of people experiencing Phase 3. This upward trend highlights worsening food security challenges driven by successive rainfall seasons plagued by various climatic shocks. In June 2019, 720,000 people were in Phase 3. This figure more than doubled by June 2020, reaching 1.7 million. While there was a slight dip to 1.6 million in July 2021, the numbers surged again to over 2.6 million in 2022, and peaked at 3 million in 2023. The crisis further escalated in 2024, with 4.2 million people classified in Phase 3. The current period in 2025 shows a minor improvement, with 2.9 million people in crisis. These alarming figures are largely attributable to consecutive rainfall seasons marked by severe climatic shocks, including cyclones, high temperatures, and reduced rainfall amounts. It is also important to consider these rising numbers in the context of increased units of analysis and population growth, as demographic expansion naturally impacts the scale of food security issues.

### Main Outcomes

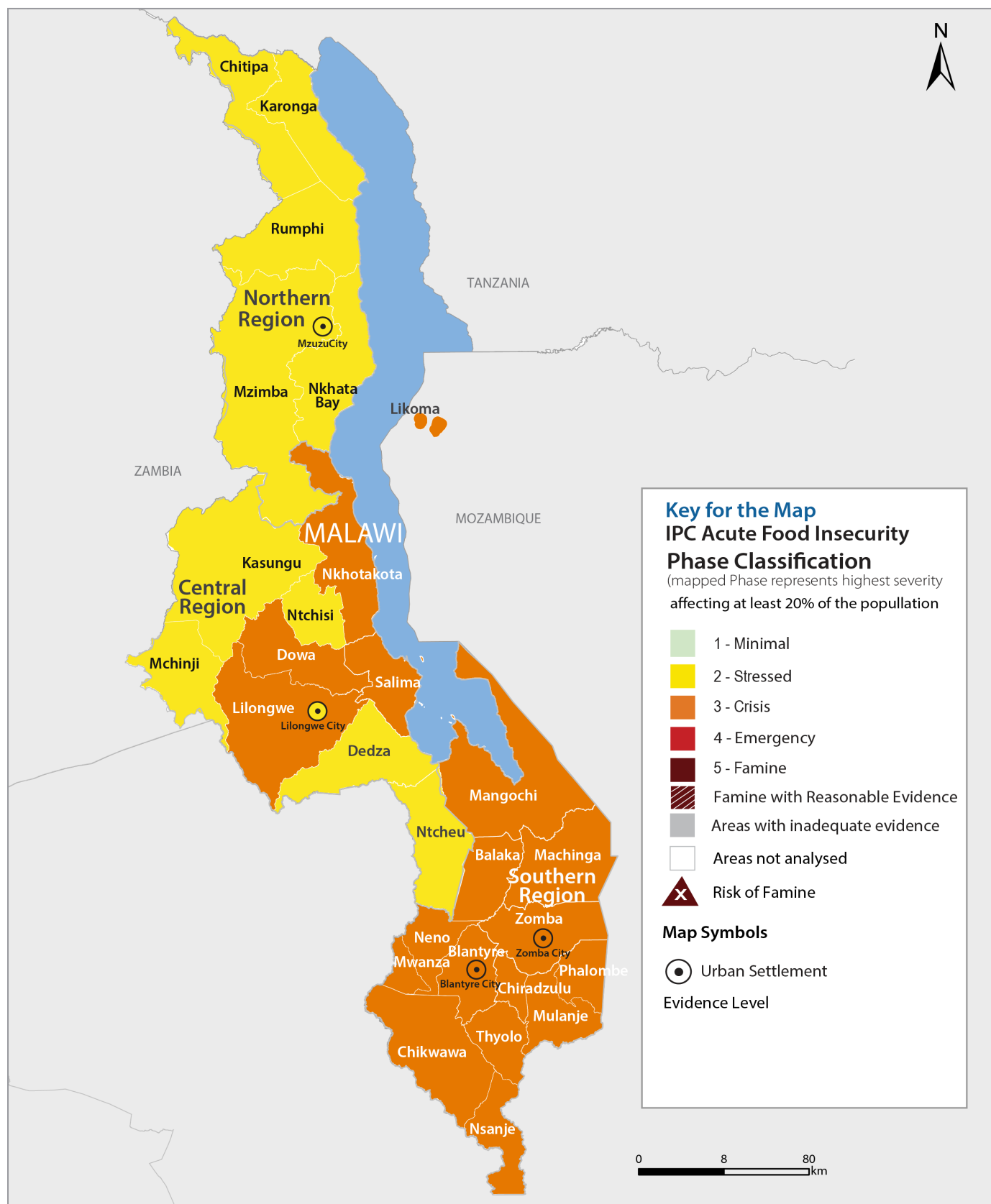
Information collected from households by MVAC survey between May and June 2025 reveals concerning trends in the IPC's direct evidence. At national level, Food Consumption Score (FCS) indicates that 34 percent of the population is in IPC Phase 3, reflecting a crisis situation. Similarly, the Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) classifies 27 percent of the population in IPC Phase 3, showing that many Malawian households are consuming fewer food groups, with nsima and vegetables being the primary foods.

The Household Hunger Scale (HHS) places most households in IPC Phase 2, although 15 percent are already experiencing crisis levels. The Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) also reflects a crisis, with 23 percent of households in IPC Phase 3. The reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) shows 21 percent of households in IPC Phase 3. Finally, the Livelihood Coping Strategy (LCS) indicator reveals that 14 percent of households are employing crisis coping strategies, while another 14 percent have resorted to emergency coping strategies.

The national level direct indicators show elevated values because this year's agricultural production is below average, with most households in the southern region failing to harvest significant amounts to sustain household consumption and selling. As a result, household consumption patterns are expected to deteriorate further in the current period.



## PROJECTED IPC ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY MAP AND POPULATION TABLE (OCTOBER 2025 – MARCH 2026)



## Population table for the projected period: October 2025 – March 2026

| District           | Total population analysed* | Phase 1          |           | Phase 2          |           | Phase 3          |           | Phase 4      |          | Phase 5  |          | Area Phase | Phase 3+         |           |
|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|------------|------------------|-----------|
|                    |                            | #people          | %         | #people          | %         | #people          | %         | #people      | %        | #people  | %        |            | #people          | %         |
| Balaka             | 531,748                    | 212,699          | 40        | 212,699          | 40        | 106,350          | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 106,350          | 20        |
| Blantyre           | 532,697                    | 186,444          | 35        | 186,444          | 35        | 159,809          | 30        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 159,809          | 30        |
| Blantyre City      | 133,866                    | 73,626           | 55        | 33,467           | 25        | 26,773           | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 26,773           | 20        |
| Chikhwawa          | 653,240                    | 228,634          | 35        | 228,634          | 35        | 195,972          | 30        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 195,972          | 30        |
| Chiradzulu         | 402,359                    | 201,180          | 50        | 120,708          | 30        | 80,472           | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 80,472           | 20        |
| Chitipa            | 264,965                    | 198,724          | 75        | 52,993           | 20        | 13,248           | 5         | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 13,248           | 5         |
| Dedza              | 967,614                    | 532,188          | 55        | 290,284          | 30        | 145,142          | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 145,142          | 15        |
| Dowa               | 923,901                    | 415,755          | 45        | 323,365          | 35        | 184,780          | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 184,780          | 20        |
| Karonga            | 422,697                    | 232,483          | 55        | 126,809          | 30        | 63,405           | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 63,405           | 15        |
| Kasungu            | 994,304                    | 596,582          | 60        | 298,291          | 30        | 99,430           | 10        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 99,430           | 10        |
| Likoma             | 16,609                     | 5,813            | 35        | 7,474            | 45        | 3,322            | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 3,322            | 20        |
| Lilongwe           | 1,908,826                  | 763,530          | 40        | 668,089          | 35        | 477,207          | 25        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 477,207          | 25        |
| Lilongwe City      | 193,072                    | 106,190          | 55        | 57,922           | 30        | 28,961           | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 28,961           | 15        |
| Machinga           | 934,448                    | 420,502          | 45        | 327,057          | 35        | 186,890          | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 186,890          | 20        |
| Mangochi           | 1,431,046                  | 715,523          | 50        | 429,314          | 30        | 286,209          | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 286,209          | 20        |
| Mchinji            | 686,764                    | 274,706          | 40        | 309,044          | 45        | 103,015          | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 103,015          | 15        |
| Mulanje            | 781,841                    | 234,552          | 30        | 234,552          | 30        | 312,736          | 40        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 312,736          | 40        |
| Mwanza             | 161,500                    | 56,525           | 35        | 48,450           | 30        | 56,525           | 35        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 56,525           | 35        |
| Mzimba             | 1,049,193                  | 786,895          | 75        | 157,379          | 15        | 104,919          | 10        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 104,919          | 10        |
| Mzuzu City         | 34,172                     | 20,503           | 60        | 8,543            | 25        | 5,126            | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 5,126            | 15        |
| Neno               | 158,898                    | 39,725           | 25        | 47,669           | 30        | 63,559           | 40        | 7,945        | 5        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 71,504           | 45        |
| Nkhata Bay         | 319,934                    | 191,960          | 60        | 79,984           | 25        | 47,990           | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 47,990           | 15        |
| Nkhotakota         | 454,870                    | 113,718          | 25        | 227,435          | 50        | 113,718          | 25        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 113,718          | 25        |
| Nsanje             | 337,295                    | 67,459           | 20        | 151,783          | 45        | 118,053          | 35        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 118,053          | 35        |
| Ntcheu             | 796,177                    | 318,471          | 40        | 358,280          | 45        | 119,427          | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 119,427          | 15        |
| Ntchisi            | 387,513                    | 155,005          | 40        | 174,381          | 45        | 58,127           | 15        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 58,127           | 15        |
| Phalombe           | 515,353                    | 206,141          | 40        | 154,606          | 30        | 154,606          | 30        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 154,606          | 30        |
| Rumphi             | 264,674                    | 198,506          | 75        | 52,935           | 20        | 13,234           | 5         | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2          | 13,234           | 5         |
| Salima             | 581,801                    | 203,630          | 35        | 203,630          | 35        | 174,540          | 30        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 174,540          | 30        |
| Thyolo             | 804,868                    | 241,460          | 30        | 241,460          | 30        | 321,947          | 40        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 321,947          | 40        |
| Zomba              | 864,110                    | 475,261          | 55        | 216,028          | 25        | 172,822          | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 172,822          | 20        |
| Zomba City         | 16,391                     | 7,376            | 45        | 5,737            | 35        | 3,278            | 20        | 0            | 0        | 0        | 0        | 3          | 3,278            | 20        |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>18,526,746</b>          | <b>8,481,766</b> | <b>46</b> | <b>6,035,446</b> | <b>33</b> | <b>4,001,592</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>7,945</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> |            | <b>4,009,537</b> | <b>22</b> |

Note: A population in Phase 3+ does not necessarily reflect the full population in need of urgent action. This is because some households may be in Phase 2 or even 1 but only because of receipt of assistance, therefore they may be in need of continued action. Marginal inconsistencies that may arise in the overall percentages of totals and grand totals are attributable to rounding.

## PROJECTED SITUATION OVERVIEW (OCTOBER 2025 – MARCH 2026)

For the projected period, two of the four urban zones analysed (Blantyre and Zomba) are projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) with 30,051 people from the urban population projected to be in Phase 3. This is a decrease of 95 percent from last year's urban food insecure population of 553,964.

This decrease is a result of the reduction of the analysed urban population from 2,488,951 to 377,501 to reflect only the vulnerable population, rather than the entire urban population, as was done in previous years. The urban population classified in Phase 3 or above is primarily affected by their dependence on market purchases for food, making them highly vulnerable to elevated food and staple prices. These prices are projected to remain above both the five-year average and last year's levels due to challenging macroeconomic conditions and relatively low production this year. The key drivers of the deteriorating food security situation in urban areas include high staple food prices, persistent inflation, and increased transportation costs.

## TRENDS

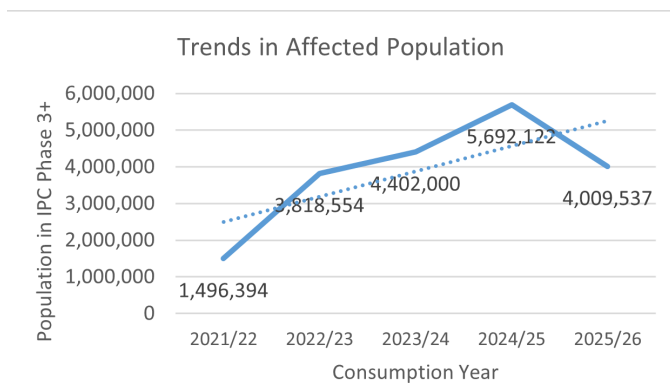
When looking at the trend of the food insecure population during the lean season (October- March), in comparison with the past five years, this year has a lower number of people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (4,009,537 people) compared to the last two years. There were 5,692,122 who faced Phase 3 or above in 2024/25 (6,188,379 people in the updated assessment) and 4,402,000 people in the 2023/24 consumption year. It is higher than the 2022/23 consumption year (3,818,554) as well as the 2021/22 consumption year (1,496,394).

This is primarily attributed to good production seasons in the 2022/23 and 2021/22 seasons. In terms of percentages, this year has a population of 22 percent of the population in Phase 3 or above which is better than the 2024/25 consumption year (28 percent) and similar to that of the 2023/24 consumption year (22 percent). This is followed by the 2022/23 consumption year with 20 percent of the population in Phase 3 or above and lastly the 2021/22 consumption year that had only 8 percent of the population in Phase 3 or above. The figure below shows the trend in projected populations in Phase 3 or above from the 2021/22 to 2025/26 consumption years coinciding with the lean season (October-March period). Generally, there is an upward trend throughout the years with a peak in the El Nino year (2024/25). This trend is mostly on account of lower agricultural production from various shocks such as weather-related shocks and macroeconomic volatility.

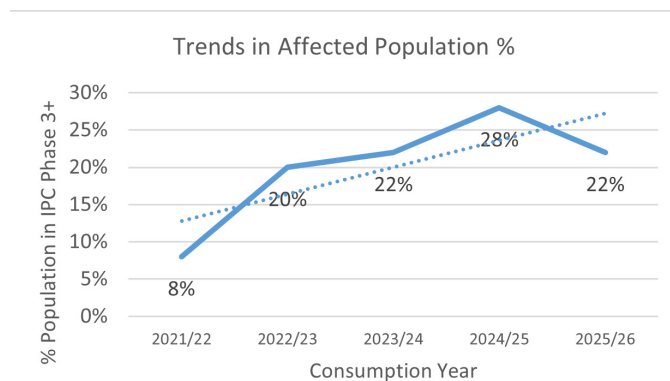
During the past five years, the trend shows that among the three regions, the southern region has had the highest acute food insecure populations, followed by the central region while the northern region has been the least food insecure region. Similarly, this year all of the 13 districts in the southern region are projected to be in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) as was the case last year.

The trend also shows that in all years apart from this year, the three southern region districts of Chikwawa, Nsanje and Balaka have been the most food insecure districts in the country mostly because they are rain shadow areas. However, this year, the three districts received better rainfall than the previous years, which resulted in an improvement in production. Despite this improvement, the three districts (Chikwawa, Nsanje and Balaka) along with the worst three districts this year (Neno, Mulanje and Thyolo) have been projected in IPC Phase 3 in the past four years except for the 2021/22 consumption year where only Chikwawa and Nsanje were projected in Phase 3. The situation has improved in all the central region districts with the exception of Dowa, Lilongwe, Nkhosakota and Salima, which are projected to be in Phase 3 while the rest are projected to be Phase 2. During the past five years, most of the districts have mostly been food secure apart from the 2024/25 consumption year. This is due to weather-related shocks such as late onset of rains, and dry spells.

**Populations in IPC Phase 3 or above:  
2021/22 - 2025**



**Populations (in percentage) in IPC Phase 3 or above:  
2021/22 - 2025/**



## COMPARISON WITH CHRONIC FOOD INSECURITY CLASSIFICATION

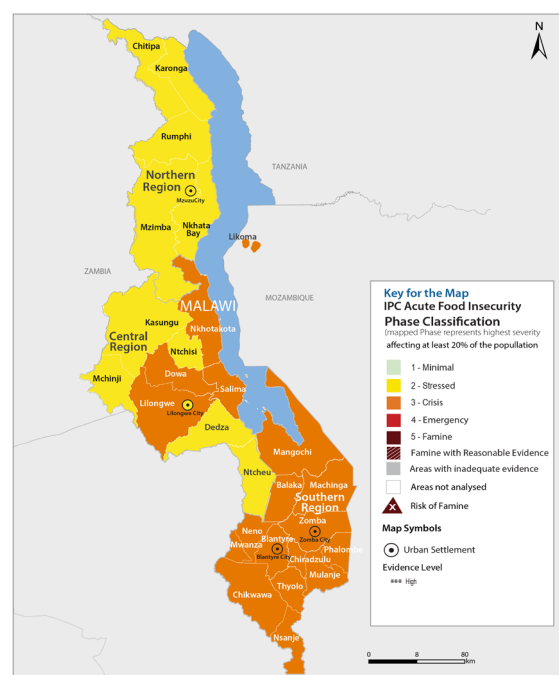
Strong linkages and complementarities exist between this year's acute food insecurity classification and the chronic food insecurity findings from 2022 as has been the case in previous years. The level of acute food insecurity reflected in the current IPC analysis between the productive and lean seasons underscores deep-rooted structural fragilities and the widespread reliance on agriculture as the primary source of food and income for much of the population. This vulnerability is particularly acute in southern Malawi, where the economy remains heavily dependent on the primary sector and subsistence farming. The direct impacts of climatic shocks, such as delayed rainfall onset and dry spells, on current food insecurity and their indirect effects on the projection period reveal limited economic diversification, insufficient formal safety nets, and low resilience among rural communities in Malawi.

This year, all the three severely chronically food insecure (IPC CFI Level 4) districts in the country, Balaka, Chikwawa and Nsanje, have been classified in IPC acute food insecurity Phase 3 with 20, 30 and 35 percent, respectively, of their populations in Phase 3 or above. During the projected period, Balaka is projected to have 20 percent of its population in Phase 3; Chikwawa is projected to have 30 percent in Phase 3 while Nsanje is projected to have 35 percent in Phase 3. None of the three districts is projected to have any population in Phase 4, an improvement in comparison to the previous year. This improvement is driven by increased production following improved rainfall. Nevertheless, it remains evident that these districts continue to face both acute and chronic food insecurity. This is because these districts lie in rain shadow areas and are highly prone to climatic shocks, frequently experiencing both prolonged dry spells and floods. This year, they were affected by dry spells while still recovering from last year's El Niño-related weather.

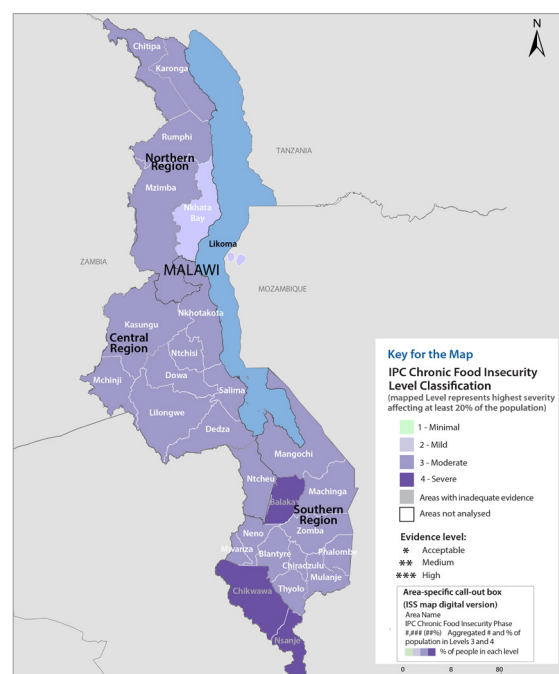
The two northern region districts, Likoma and Nkhatabay, with the lowest chronic food insecurity (IPC CFI level 2 – Mild) have been classified in IPC AFI Phase 3 and Phase 2, respectively. This depicts a situation of both low acute and low chronic food insecurity for Nkhatabay. The situation in Likoma mainly is driven by high food prices on the island. The remaining districts projected to be moderately chronically food insecure (IPC CFI Level 3) are also projected to be acutely food insecure (IPC AFI Phase 3, Crisis) except for Chitipa, Rumphi, Mzimba, Karonga, Ntchisi, Kasungu, Mchinji, Dedza and Ntcheu which have been classified in IPC AFI Phase 2. The primary drivers of both acute and chronic food insecurity are recurrent weather-related hazards and stresses that undermine food production, combined with widespread reliance on low-value livelihood strategies such as casual labour and petty trade. Food production in the country and dependence on low value livelihood strategies such as casual labour and petty trade.

The southern region of Malawi experiences high levels of poverty, largely due to persistent exposure to shocks such as floods and droughts. These events have severely undermined household livelihoods, further deepening poverty in the area. The majority of households rely heavily on staple crop production and have limited diversification in both income sources and food, leaving them highly vulnerable to repeated shocks recurrently.

### October 2025 - March 2026 period



### 2022 - 2026



## NUTRITION STATUS

The IPC Analytical framework has Nutritional Status and Mortality as second level food security outcomes. In the foregoing analysis, the indicators used to assess the second level outcomes include Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) based on Weight-for Height Z-score (WHZ), Global Acute Malnutrition based on Mid-Upper Arm Circumference, Body Mass Index (BMI) <18.5. The indicators for Mortality include Crude Death Rate and Under-Five Death rate.

Nutrition status and mortality were analysed using the results from the SMART Survey undertaken in December 2024 and January 2025 by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in collaboration with the Department of Nutrition with support from UNICEF. According to the results of the SMART Survey, the prevalence of acute malnutrition among children aged 6-59 months based on GAM was estimated to be within IPC acceptable range of less than 5%, at 3.6% at the national level, a rise in comparison to the previous 3.1%. The prevalence rates based on combined GAM (derived from WHZ and MUAC) was estimated to be at 7.1%, a rise from 4.4% for the country. Nsanje district has the highest combined GAM rate at 10.4%, indicative of a serious situation in the district (IPC AMN Phase 3). The BMI Body Mass Index for adolescent boys and girls aged 10-19 year [(BMI) <18.5], was estimated to be at 9.2% and according to IPC, this implies an alert situation (IPC AMN Phase 2) where 9.2% of the adolescent boys and girls aged 10-19 year is underweight.

The mortality indicator, based on Crude Death Rate was estimated to be within IPC acceptable ranges (IPC AMN Phase 1), at 0.11 (0.03-0.28) at the country level.

## HUMANITARIAN FOOD ASSISTANCE

There is a critical gap in humanitarian aid for people facing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) conditions in targeted areas. Efforts were made by WFP with funding from the World Bank under the Crisis Emergency Response Component to distribute maize as a response to the food deficit caused by the El Niño drought from May to June 2025. However, this food assistance has not met the criteria of at least 25% of households assisted nor at least the 25% coverage of the caloric needs through humanitarian food assistance in none of the areas. Besides, neither the government nor key aid partners have plans for assistance during the period from June-September 2025.

Humanitarian food assistance is crucial from October 2025 to March 2026. Though not confirmed and funded, aid organizations plan to deliver critical food aid to affected populations during this period. This intervention aims to directly address the food security crisis and ensure people have enough to eat.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

## Response Priorities

- Ensure humanitarian assistance for populations in IPC Phase 3 or above, focusing on timely food distributions to prevent further deterioration of food security and nutrition, especially among vulnerable groups.
- Promote winter and irrigated cropping in areas with residual moisture and reliable water sources. Facilitating and guaranteeing the timely supply and distribution of inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides during the winter season can help boost agricultural productivity and household food stocks.
- Maintain adequate maize stocks through ADMARC to stabilise staple food prices. Sufficient grain reserves will help ensure food availability and affordability during periods of scarcity.
- Promote food and dietary diversification to enhance nutrition outcomes. Disseminating key messages on the importance of varied and balanced diets and encouraging the production and consumption of nutrient-rich crops can support healthier communities.
- Improve feeding practices and post-harvest management to reduce food loss and waste. Training farmers and communities in better storage, handling, and processing techniques is critical to preserving food quality and availability.
- Support livelihood diversification to reduce dependence on rain-fed agriculture. Promoting small businesses, vocational training, and value-added agricultural activities can help households build resilience and improve income stability.
- Strengthen disaster risk reduction and early warning systems to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climatic shocks such as droughts, floods, and pest infestations.

## Situation Monitoring and update

- **Maize prices:** Maize prices are projected by WFP to be significantly above the five-year average due to low production and high inflation. Currently, maize prices are trending higher than the five-year average.

## Risk factors to monitor

**Price shock:** Fluctuations in staple food prices driven by local production variability are likely to pose significant risks to household food access.

**Above-average temperatures:** easonal forecasts by FEWSNET indicate above-normal temperatures across much of Malawi during the 2025/26 season. Elevated temperatures may cause moisture stress, reduce crop yields, increase evapotranspiration, and place additional pressure on water resources.

**Political instability in an election year:** As Malawi heads into national elections, there is a risk of political tensions, protests, or disruptions. Such instability could affect market operations, humanitarian access, and the movement of goods and services, potentially compounding existing food security challenges.

**Fuel shortages and supply chain disruptions:** Fuel shortages, worsened by macroeconomic instability, may disrupt food and input transport, raise prices, limit farmer market access, and hinder humanitarian aid.

## PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The IPC AFI Analysis workshop took place from 29 June to 6 July 2025 at Protea Ryalls Hotel in Blantyre, Malawi, with a total of 43 participants. These included representatives from the ministries of agriculture, livestock and water development, DODMA, DCCMS, economic planning and development, World Vision International, UN OCHA, WFP, FEWS NET, FAO, Care Malawi, Save the Children, and University of Malawi. There were no CCLEs that took part in The IPC Global Support Unit provided data support remotely. A half day refresher session was conducted before the analysis. Analysts were split into four regions (north, central, east and south) with each district being independently analysed and compared with the neighboring districts in the same region. Upon completion of entries into the platform, the technical consensus process involved each region presenting their results which were reviewed and vetted by facilitators. A plenary discussion before the team incorporated the comments and closed the analysis. In terms of analysis requirements, the level of evidence was assessed as High Evidence Level (Evidence Level 3). The draft report was developed by the MVAC secretariat and forwarded to the government for endorsement. However, to have buy-in, a discussion was conducted at the district level with main stakeholders (NGOs, government departments) to discuss the results of the analysis before the Humanitarian Response Committee begins to deliberate on the development of the Lean Season Integrated Response Programme.

### Sources

The MVAC TWG conducted an Annual Assessment and Analysis from May to July 2025. The main surveys undertaken were HEA data collection, rural household food security survey and urban food security survey.

The main data sources used for this analysis include Household Food Security Survey, Agricultural Crop Production Estimates (APES), Price Projections (WFP), Price data Ministry of Agriculture (Agricultural Market Information System- AMIS), mVAM data from WFP, National Statistics Office (population and Smart Survey) and District Food Security reports.

### Limitations of the analysis

The market assessment was not conducted due to resource constraints, resulting in the absence of comprehensive information on market functionality that could have guided appropriate humanitarian response modalities for the lean season.

### What is the IPC and IPC Acute Food Insecurity?

The IPC is a set of tools and procedures to classify the severity and characteristics of acute food and nutrition crises as well as chronic food insecurity based on international standards. The IPC consists of four mutually reinforcing functions, each with a set of specific protocols (tools and procedures). The core IPC parameters include consensus building, convergence of evidence, accountability, transparency and comparability. The IPC analysis aims at informing emergency response as well as medium and long-term food security policy and programming.

For the IPC, Acute Food Insecurity is defined as any manifestation of food insecurity found in a specified area at a specific point in time of a severity that threatens lives or livelihoods, or both, regardless of the causes, context or duration. It is highly susceptible to change and can occur and manifest in a population within a short amount of time, as a result of sudden changes or shocks that negatively impact on the determinants of food insecurity.

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This analysis has been conducted under the patronage of the MVAC. It has benefited from the technical and financial support of FAO/GSU for the analysis and USAID for data collection.

Classification of food insecurity was conducted using the IPC protocols, which are developed and implemented worldwide by the IPC Global Partnership - Action Against Hunger, CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CILSS, EC-JRC, FAO, FEWSNET, Global Food Security Cluster, Global Nutrition Cluster, IFPRI, IGAD, IMPACT, Oxfam, SICA, SADC, Save the Children, UNDP, UNICEF, the World Bank, WFP and WHO.

### IPC Analysis Partners:



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

