

From Peaceful Lives To The Destruction Of Hopes- A story in Dwangwa, Malawi

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A story on Lived Impact of The
Climate Crisis in Malawi



A total of 5,608 homes were completely washed away, forcing people to run away for their lives. Tragically, 28 people lost their lives, and 118 others were injured, leaving behind grieving families and shattered communities. The water rushed through villages with such force that homes, farms, and belongings were swept away in an instant.

People were left terrified, with no resources, and clinging to whatever they could to survive. The destruction is heartbreaking, and the scars left by the disaster will take years to heal. The floods have shown just how dangerous and destructive nature can be, leaving a powerful reminder of how weak life is in the face of climate change.



Malawi, known for its beautiful landscape and warm-hearted people, has recently experienced one of the worst natural disasters in its history around the villages in the Dwangwa region. Heavy rains caused the river Luangwa to overflow and it was unable to withstand the volume of the water. This caused large floods that destroyed human settlements, washed away crops and livestock and forced thousands of families to move from their homes.

The entire community was left in a moment of depression where crops, businesses, and infrastructure were washed away, leaving many with nothing. Beyond the immediate damage, the flood underscores the growing threat of climate change and the challenges it poses to vulnerable nations like Malawi. On February 27, 2024, traumatic floods faced the Dwangwa Region in Malawi, causing destruction on a massive scale. The floods affected 21,500 houses, leaving thousands of families with no place to go.



Image Description: This house shows the impact of floods on many families' homes, which caused major daily life challenges.

The Night That Turned Dwanga into a Nightmare

“It was 05 A.M. on February 27th, 2024, when I was resting with my family. Suddenly, I heard a strange sound, like water overflowing. I was shocked and quickly looked out the window. To my surprise, I saw chairs, tables, and even trees being swept away by the fast-moving water. I immediately woke up my wife and children and called out to our neighbors, urging them to wake up and run away from the rising floodwaters. We had to act fast to stay safe.” **Chakwera Banda, Father of three children.**

The trauma of losing their homes is increasing due to the struggles that families face daily. Many families have provided shelter to their close relatives and neighbors who survived.

“The water overflowed so quickly. Within minutes, our house was under water. We ran for our lives, carrying the children on our shoulders. Everything we owned is gone, there is no clean water, and every day feels like a fight for survival. We are staying with my sister, now her house is already small and there are too many people living here.

My children are crying everyday because they are depressed. I don't know when things will get better.” Said

Chakwera Banda

Children's education is one of the challenges, especially for girls. Schools have been destroyed, leaving children without a place to study. In some villages, neighbors' schools are located far away, making it difficult for girls to attend classes. Girls are often at risk because of safety concerns during long journeys to school, while staying home is also a risk to early marriage.





"My daughter used to love going to school, but now, she can't go because the schools are too far, and the roads are dangerous. Only my son can manage the long walk. I feel like my daughter's future is slipping away from her because of these floods" Said Zikomo Yawh

All the livestock has been swept away, which also provides food and additional income. Many animals have died, and some became weak due to the lack of pasture areas in their village. This crisis has left families struggling to survive and worried about their future.

"Those animals were my main source of income. Through livestock farming, I was able to pay school fees for my children as well as provide for their basic needs. I used to sell the animals to the villagers, and that business was the foundation that supported my family. Without those animals, I can no longer rebuild my family. We are completely broken and don't know where to start again."

Said Kauya Komba, a pastoralist.

Agriculture is also the main activity of many families in Dwangwa. Crops like maize, sugarcane, and rice are necessary for their daily lives. Sadly, many farms have been completely destroyed, leaving families without food and no income to generate. The loss of crops has shaken their livelihoods sustainability.

"The flood destroyed my maize and cassava fields. This was going to be my harvest to feed my family and sell the crops at the market. Now, we have nothing left. As the day goes, we are struggling to survive and not sure about the coming next days" Said Patrick Banda, a farmer from Nsanje village.

The health crisis is another threat in their village. They are facing unavailability of health services since the ones they used to rely on have been affected by floods. The outbreak of diseases due to environmental factors and lack of clean and safe water is severely affecting their families.

"The only option we have is to go to a neighboring village to fetch clean water. This is very painful because it leaves us tired, and sometimes, we have to wait for our sons to come back from school to help us meet the family's water needs. As parents, we also have the option to buy clean water brought by young men from nearby villages, who see this as a business opportunity. However, it is hard for us because we have no steady income, yet we need clean water to protect our health." Said Peter Ocheghi, the village leader.



Image description: This area was used for maize farming, is now infertile and unable to support crops due to soil degradation.



Image Description: The house was affected by floods, forcing the residents to move. Currently, the house is in an unsafe condition for living.

“Currently, we have no hospitals to provide healthcare services to our community. As a result, we are forced to travel to neighboring villages to access these services, which is particularly dangerous for pregnant women. We are forced to relocate them and find relatives in nearby villages to prevent further trauma in case they require urgent service. This threatens our life and the future of our generations unless immediate action is taken.” Said

Zikomo Yahwe

The stories from survivors paint a heartbreaking picture of loss and suffering. The floods have left scars that will take years to heal, but for now, the people of Dwangwa face each day with uncertainty, fear, and the urgent request for help.

The Humanitarian Efforts and Challenges after Devastating Flood

During this disastrous time, the Malawian government, along with international aid agencies, has worked hand in hand to provide relief to the affected communities. Efforts have included mobilizing resources such as food, clean drinking water, and temporary shelter for displaced families. Humanitarian workers were using boats, ropes, and even walking long distances to deliver life-saving supplies to the most interior areas. While these efforts were excellent, the scale of the disaster made it challenging to reach everyone in need, with some villages going weeks without receiving the necessary aid.

"In the beginning, we received food and water, and we were hopeful. But now, it feels like the government has forgotten about us. We are left to manage by ourselves, and there's no help coming. My family and I have no choice but to start looking for ways to survive on our own, even though we have nothing left." Said Zikomo Yahwe





The Urgent Call for Action

In taking into consideration the flood disaster that has affected Malawi, there is an urgent need for immediate and long-term action to support communities in rebuilding their lives and preparing for future disasters. Aid must go beyond short-term relief and focus on sustainable solutions as well as offering more support to local families. Improved early warning systems and basic human services must be addressed to help prevent future catastrophes.

"We've lost everything, and we need urgent help. Homes are gone, and we don't have enough food to survive. Floods destroyed our crops, and now we can't even find clean water. Our children are sick, and the clinic is too far. We need food, clean water, and help to rebuild our lives. Due to climate change, we also need to know how to take care of and prevent future disasters. Without help, we don't know how we will survive this if it happens again." Said Peter Ocheghi, a Village Leader

In the picture, The Village Chairman Peter Ocheghi and Mr Lee Ngrazie, Climate Justice Coordinator at ACTION AID Malawi, discussing the current situation in Dwanga and the efforts that may protect its residents and neighboring villages from the impacts of climate change. Image Description: The house was affected by floods, forcing the residents to move. Currently, the house is in an unsafe condition for living.

Parents where their children strive for access to education, where schools have become a depressing issue to them. They are asking for access to education for their children where girls must be a priority

"Our children are not going to school since there is no school nearby, we fear for their future. Without education, young girls may be forced into an early marriage just to survive. We don't want them to miss out on the chance to build a better life, but without a school, we don't know how they will escape the cycle of poverty. We need schools rebuilt, especially for girls, so they can continue their education and have hope for a brighter future." Said

Zikomo Yahwe



Image Description: This image depicts the current condition of 15,892 houses, which forced residents to leave their homes and seek refuge with relatives and neighbors. The situation poses a threat to their livelihoods and the future of their children. These homes are no longer habitable, and the community remains in urgent need of new and safe shelters.



Image Description: This image depicts the current condition of 15,892 houses, which forced residents to leave their homes and seek refuge with relatives and neighbors. The situation poses a threat to their livelihoods and the future of their children. These homes are no longer habitable, and the community remains in urgent need of new and safe shelters.

The Climate Justice Coordinator from Action-Aid in Malawi, **Mr. Lee Aristotle Ngirazie**, emphasizes the need for global action:

“The situation in Malawi is awful, and we need the world to act now. This crisis shows how vulnerable communities are to climate disasters, and urgent global support is needed both in terms of finance and expertise. We need investments in climate resilience, early warning systems, and infrastructure to protect people from future disasters. The international community must step in to help build sustainable solutions that will protect vulnerable families from the growing impacts of climate change”

Climate Change Knows No Borders. It's time for Action

The floods in Dwangwa underlined the continuing impact of climate change, showing that the devastation is not limited to one country but affects the entire world. From floods to droughts and other extreme weather events, vulnerable communities everywhere are facing similar challenges. The people of Malawi have shown super strength in their fight for survival, but without proper financial support, their efforts may not be enough. The world should acknowledge the reality of climate change and the urgent need for global solidarity.

In assisting communities, for example those in Dwangwa, through rebuilding and preparing for future disasters, financial aid is vital. Loss and damage caused by climate change are real, and it is time for countries to stand up and offer the necessary support. We must listen to those who are suffering the most. Now is the time for the global community to act and guarantee that no one is left behind in the fight against climate change.

