

## MARCH 2015

### Floods in Malawi



The rain just kept falling! For 7 days in January this year, the rain continued relentlessly, a product of a cyclone off the coast of Mozambique. Mud brown rivers flooded, picking up soil from hills that, over the last few years, have lost many trees. Mud mortared houses formed of sun-dried mud bricks collapsed under the deluge. Grass roofs were useless against the steady rains. Water rose in open fields, covering the fledgling crops that had been planted just 2 weeks before the rain set in.



Fifteen districts of Southern Malawi were the most seriously affected. The final count of those affected by the January floods is said to be 627,000 people. Many were forced to flee to churches and schools for shelter when their homes were lost. Some of these displaced people are still living in temporary shelters. Some are living with neighbours. As with any disaster, diseases such as cholera became a hazard, increasing the difficulties.

International agencies and non-governmental organisations provided assistance, initially for the displaced persons, bringing food, plates, buckets, blankets and mosquito nets to the most seriously affected areas. As the areas of standing water receded, more people were helped with these items. Big black sheets of plastic were given to people to assist in repairing their grass roofs (as the grass for roofing won't be available

Through Germany-based Humedica, EI Malawi was able to help 6000 families in TA Mwambo, an area severely affected by the rising waters of Lake Chilwa.

Supplies given were black plastic sheeting, plates/cups/buckets, mosquito nets, blankets and sweet potato vines.

for several more months, the plastic sheet will serve as roofing material). Latrines were built and wells dug. Drinking water became more accessible with the distribution of chlorine. Children were provided with notebooks and pencils in the hope of encouraging them to go back to school. Counseling services in some of the displacement camps were offered to school children to help them cope with the trauma they had experienced. As the initial emergency receded, attention was given to providing sweet potato vines for people to plant in the place of the maize that by now was yellow due to inadequate oxygen to the waterlogged roots.

Assistance has not been given solely by the international aid agencies. Our partner churches, the Evangelical Baptist Church of Malawi and the Word of Grace church stepped in to help.

Word of Grace (WOG) is a church of 10 congregations in and around Balaka District. WOG Pastor Moses Nkhata, with some of his leaders, began walking through the church areas to see how people were faring. Among those of his congregations, 11 people had houses that had collapsed and 3 churches were flattened. Within these communities, Moses found 300 people that he felt seriously needed help. He requested assistance to raise money for food, blankets and sweet potato vines for them. A church in Canada responded

with money for food for these 300. A church in the USA sent money for blankets. Together with his church leaders, Moses walked from community to community, seeking the elderly and calling them to the WOG church where blankets were to be distributed. 150 elderly people received a blanket that day; not one of whom was a church member. The church wanted to reach out in love to their communities. Moses says the dancing and singing that day was indescribable.

Late into March, Moses received a summons to the home of the head chief (known in Malawi as the TA, the Traditional Authority). He arrived to see the Chief surrounded by his advisors and Moses' first thought was that he was in trouble. Instead, the Chief had summoned Moses to thank him and the WOG members for the food and blankets distributed in the area. He thanked him for working closely with the government to find the people who were in need but who were not on government lists for assistance. And then the Chief, who is not a believer, said to Moses, "You may go wherever you want in my TA and talk about your faith. You can preach wherever you want." Can we even begin to imagine what this means to a small, struggling church who want nothing more than to be Jesus' light and love in their communities?

A gift from EIUK was just the right amount of money to purchase sweet potato vines for the 300 people targeted by WOG for assistance. However, many areas are looking for these vines so it has been difficult to find a reliable source. In the time it took from receiving the money to finding vines, the fields had become too dry in that area. Ironically, an untimely 3 week period of sunshine in March has dried the maize that

had started to grow! EI Malawi is still discussing with WOG where these vines will be best used.

The Evangelical Baptist Church of Malawi (EBCM) has also worked closely within the government structures to identify people needing assistance but who were not included on the relief lists of the government. The EBCM circulated a proposal in February seeking assistance to help 3000 people in flood affected areas of Machinga with food, blankets and mosquito nets.

Eleven churches have been damaged as well. As this is going to print, they are distributing food to 500 people through the generous support of EI Australia. Other overseas churches have written to say that they are raising funds to help.

EI Malawi missionaries and staff are pitching in to help. The school which Samuel Naudé attends (son of John and Belinda Naudé from EIUK) did a swim fund-raiser and raised over half a million kwacha (USD\$1000.00 or £673.00)! The school has donated this money to EI Malawi to use for the flood response. Together with funds given by EI Malawi staff, 5 families from a local EBCM church will be helped with home rebuilding and repairs. In one case, water took out one wall and the house collapsed. Several others were not strong to begin with. One house collapsed when the water came flooding down the hill. John Raby (EIUK) has visited these homes and together, they have prepared budgets for the needed repairs. Funds raised by the staff and the school will rebuild these 5 houses.

The emergency is past and now the long haul of recovery starts... homes need to be rebuilt, food needs to be found. Many people have lost their crops or expect only a minimal harvest.



### **Distribution of relief items**

EI Malawi has, for many years, been part of the yearly World Food Program Relief (WFP) Initiatives to help people in need. This year the numbers are huge. At the new year, EI Malawi was assisting 6000 families with a short term food relief program in Machinga District funded by WFP. The number needing assistance has been increased to 10,000. This time it will not be a straight distribution but will be done through "Food for Work". The way this will work is that the communities will meet together and decide what they need to do in order to rebuild their lives. Food is then given, based on the amount of work to be done. WFP requested proposals from agencies wishing to be a part of this program. We are waiting to hear if our proposal is successful. But we will need your prayers: WFP provides food, but EI Malawi will be responsible for funding the purchase of any tools needed for rebuilding.

Our desire is to rebuild, whether on a small scale with our partner churches or wide scale throughout Machinga District.

*For Emmanuel International, our mission is to encourage, equip and assist churches worldwide to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the poor according to God's Word.*

## Rebuilding Houses

In one EBCM church, five members, including one couple, suffered total or partial collapse of their houses. The rain may have undermined one wall of the house and this, together with the effect of such a quantity of water on the wall, in a house which was probably not built well in the first place, has led to the wall's collapse. In two of the cases, temporary repairs have been carried out with very poor quality bricks and sand from the road to ensure privacy but the repair will not last. In one case water has poured off the hillside and the house has completely collapsed.



A WOG church building and some houses have also collapsed.



Mwaye WOG Church completely fell down.



Bertha and her husband in front of their new house. The other fell down.

Please pray for the process of rebuilding communities.  
And through it all, may God be glorified.

El Malawi would like to help rebuild some of the houses and churches. If you can help, please donate to “Malawi Flood Appeal”. Cheques should be made out to Emmanuel International, please.

### Dates for your diary

**Board of Trustees Meeting:**  
22 May 2015

**EIUK summer meeting:**  
11 July 2015 at Trinity Church