



Compact2025 Malawi Forum

October 31, 2017
Bingu International Conference Centre,
Umodzi Park, Lilongwe

Moving from Relief to Resilience: Achieving Sustainable Food Security for Malawi

Synopsis

[Compact2025](#), launched in November 2015, is an initiative led by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to accelerate progress in ending hunger and undernutrition by 2025. The initiative brings together stakeholders to set priorities, innovate and learn, fine-tune actions, build on successes, and synthesize sharable lessons to accelerate progress.

Compact2025 organized the Compact2025 Forum in Lilongwe, Malawi on October 31, 2017 as a follow-up to the [Roundtable Discussion](#) held in Lilongwe last year. The Forum followed up on the recommendations from the last Roundtable Discussion, with a focus on the recommendation to “break the cycle with holistic, transparent, and market driven approaches.” Under the theme, “moving from relief to resilience,” the Forum brought together more than 100 multisectoral stakeholders from government, academia, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector, and the development partner community. This brief summarizes the Forum’s presentations, panel discussion, and next steps.

Breaking the cycle: From relief to resilience

The Forum began with welcoming remarks by Dr. Bob Baulch, Malawi Country Program Leader, IFPRI, and an opening overview of Compact2025 by Dr. Shenggen Fan, Director General, IFPRI. To set the stage for the keynote address, Honourable Goodall Gondwe, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development and Honourable Atupele Muluzi, Minister of Health, provided brief perspectives on building resilience in Malawi. Minister Gondwe introduced the concept of resilience as the ability to withstand unexpected shocks and avoid crises. The Minister also recalled major crises in the recent years and expressed his hope that Malawi will take its own experiences and translate them into action. Minister Muluzi highlighted that “from a healthy people comes a healthy economy” as he stressed the importance of nutrition and health as a priority for Malawi’s growth and development. He shared the efforts of the Ministry of Health to mainstream nutrition across government policies and reiterated the commitment of the Government of Malawi to attain zero hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

Right Honourable Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima, Vice President of the Republic of Malawi, provided the Forum’s keynote address, focusing on Malawi’s approach to building resilience. He stressed that because Malawi is an agro-based economy, resilience is critical not only for disaster management but also economic development. He highlighted that the National Resilience Strategy has been developed to **harness synergies and enhance coordination in resilience building** through 4 complementary elements: resilient agricultural growth; risk reduction, flood control, early warning and response systems; human capacity, livelihoods, social protection; and catchment protection and management. He also pointed to vulnerabilities in the nation’s agriculture sector, noting that much of the

investments are social protection-oriented rather than growth-oriented, which has not been conducive to resilience. The Vice President highlighted that a three-lens approach to resilience building:

- **Food security.** To sustain food security and nutrition, policy makers have an important role to play, especially to boost productivity through better irrigation. Policy makers and stakeholders will need to consider if the expansion of irrigated land will be sufficient to meet increasing food requirements with a growing population, the optimal mix of land among smallholders and medium and large-scale farmers, and how to fast track the creation of an enabling environment.
- **Infrastructure development.** Infrastructure needs to consider features that contribute to resilience. The National Construction Industry Council (NCIC) is working through the Construction Sector Transparency (CoST) initiative, and the Ministry of Land, Housing, and Urban Development has developed safe housing standards.
- **Economic resilience.** Considering Malawi's agro-based economy, economic resilience will be key as any shock to agricultural performance has enormous effects on the household and national economy.

In closing, Vice President Chilima stressed that “building resilience is no longer a talk show, it is a matter of action.,” and that partners, research institutions, and non-governmental organizations should support Malawi's effort to move from relief to resilience.

Following the keynote address, Dr. Suresh Babu, Head of Capacity Building and Senior Research Fellow at IFPRI, set the context of discussions and introduced Malawi's **framework of resilience**. He summarized key elements of the resilience analysis framework and reviewed Malawi's experience under the Food Insecurity Response Program (FIRP) between 2016 and 2017. Dr. Babu outlined the key elements to mainstreaming resilience – including tracking results through an effective monitoring and evaluation system and building productive assets to withstand shock effects – as well as taking a **multisectoral approach** from local to national levels. He highlighted the need to take lessons from past development paradigms, including reasons for past failures, challenges in scaling up, working with development partners, and connecting innovations to funding opportunities. He also outlined specific lessons learned, such as the need to ensure that no groups of the population are left behind under relief and resilience pathways, the importance of information exchange on lessons learned between districts, the need to use existing structures while strengthening them to be flexible, and the importance of strengthened accountability at all levels.

[Panel discussion: Multi-sectoral approach for resilient food systems](#)

The panel discussion featured representatives across various sectors: Readwell Musopole, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development; James Chiusiwa, Department of Disaster Management Affairs; Felix Pensulo Phiri, DNHA, Ministry of Health; Clement Chilima, Department of Forestry; and Victoria Keelan, Agricultural Resources Limited. The discussion was moderated by Tamani Nkhono-Mvula, Agriculture Policy Consultant, and focused on elements necessary for building resilient food systems.

Panelists indicated that the agriculture system of Malawi needs to be more resilient at all levels through, for example, greater access to training, asset creation, and diet diversity. Further, irrigation is central to agricultural resilience, and key related challenges – namely in land tenure, management and utilization of irrigation infrastructure, expansion of targeted resources, and reprioritization on irrigation – need to be addressed. The importance of catchments and landscape restoration in the context of population and climate change was also emphasized. With regards to coordinated implementation of national strategies and policies on investment, food security, and resilience, the plans call for coordination between key players and have proposed coordination

structures at the ministerial level. To mainstream nutrition into resilience, district level ownership, multisectoral strategic plans, community-centered programming, and a strong monitoring and evaluation system are needed. For the private sector to engage and contribute to developing a resilient food system in Malawi, early stakeholder entry points, provision of knowledge and information, community empowerment, and an enabling environment were highlighted as necessary elements.

Participants also contributed to the rich discussion. Many highlighted the importance of gender, especially in reaching vulnerable populations in relief and resilience efforts. Others stressed that data and evidence, including the coordination and use of evidence, is vital. Few other issues were also raised, including the need to prioritize soil health and to learn from communities. Many emphasized the importance of partnership with the private sector and the need for enhanced dialogue with the Government and a stronger platform for participation.

Accelerating progress and translating recommendations into action

Dr. Shenggen Fan commended Malawi's commitment to ending hunger and undernutrition as well as to building resilience. He also noted the tremendous progress in stunting reduction, but also called attention to remaining challenges as hunger persists. Dr. Fan stressed that it is indeed possible to accelerate progress, as the global community is placing higher priority in ending hunger and undernutrition, including through the SDGs. Successful country experiences have emerged and are helping to shorten the learning curve, and there is greater awareness of the need to engage different actors. He also highlighted the importance of South-South learning, and reiterated Compact2025's commitment to support the acceleration of progress by **stimulating knowledge and innovation based on research and data**, and by **supporting initiatives and partnerships at all levels**. To close the Forum, Honourable Dr. Jean Kalilani, Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, provided a comprehensive review of central takeaways from the meeting, including the need for a multisectoral approach, private sector engagement, mainstreaming resilience, scaling up successful programs, sharing knowledge and experiences to harness synergies, efficient funding of programs and building on existing resources, as well as the importance of data and evidence. She also expressed hope that key actors in Malawi will take action to build resilience based on the discussions.

Next steps

Following the discussions, Compact2025 proposes to:

1. Develop the capacity of the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DODMA) of the Government of Malawi for planning and implementing resilience building programs;
2. Identify opportunities to scale up the social safety net and nutrition interventions by understanding how to use existing structures to move from emergency to development programs; and
3. Assist the implementation of the National Resilience Strategy.

A follow-up forum will be held next year to reconvene stakeholders, assess progress, identify action gaps, and fine-tune next steps toward ending hunger and undernutrition in Malawi by 2025.