

Salutation

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to stand before you today at this, first of its kind DRM symposium. This event is both timely and essential, as we gather to discuss an issue that is of the utmost importance to the future of our country. The theme of this conference “**Charting a Path to a Resilient Malawi**” is particularly relevant to us all – both as an institution and as residents of this beautiful nation.

The World Bank’s goal is to help countries end poverty and boost shared prosperity while ensuring a livable planet for future generations. We strive to achieve this through our focus on five key development areas: People, Prosperity, Planet, Infrastructure, and Digital. In undertaking work across these areas, we prioritize Cities and Urban Systems within our Climate Action Plan, providing support to national and local governments in designing, financing and implementing solutions that enhance urban resilience to climate change and support decarbonization efforts. The Bank’s Climate Action Plan (2020-2025) aims to increase climate finance, reduce emissions, strengthen climate change adaptation, and align financial flows with the goals of the Paris Agreement. Through these efforts, we hope to contribute to creating a livable planet free of poverty for all.

Malawi’s vulnerability to climatic shocks is an area that has been extensively studied in recent years. Current projections suggest that by 2050, average temperatures in Malawi will rise by 1–3°C, leading to a delayed start and earlier end to the rainy season. These changes will continue to pose significant economic and livelihood challenges. Currently, Malawi loses an average 1.7 percent of its GDP annually due to climate-related disasters, mainly floods and droughts. With an increase in extreme events, this losses are expected to rise. In the past decade, Malawi has faced a series of natural disasters, affecting an average of 100,000 people annually due to floods and 1.5 million people due to droughts – that have put a strain on the economy.

The World Bank and Malawi have a long-established partnership which includes support to strengthen the country’s capacity to build resilient communities, and withstand, manage, and respond to these climate-related shocks. Among the several projects and initiatives related to Disaster Risk Management, one that stands out is the Malawi Resilience and Disaster Risk Management Project (MRDRMP). This event showcases a number of the achievements of this project. This project came in as an additional financing to Malawi Disaster Recovery and Resilience Project (MDRRP), which was launched in response to the devastating floods and drought that affected the Country between 2014 and 2016. The MDRRP ran from 2017 to 2020 and was successfully implemented. Unfortunately, just as it was about to conclude, Cyclone Idai struck the country in 2019, affecting 997,000 people in 15 districts, causing 60 deaths, and resulting in an estimated total loss of US\$220.2 million. A post-disaster needs assessment, revealed the critical need to enhance Malawi’s disaster preparedness capabilities. Consequently, an additional financing agreement of US\$80 million was signed in 2020, which led to the creation of the MRDRMP. This project is being successfully implemented through to end-January 2025, with many significant achievements of note.

The MRDRMP’s objective has supported the recovery of livelihoods and infrastructure in disaster affected zones while strengthening the country’s capacity for flood and drought risk management; through four key components:

- **Climate smart irrigation** – Rehabilitating and reconstructing irrigation schemes to enhance resilience of rural agricultural systems. Notable schemes rehabilitated are Kamwaza (110 ha), Nkawinda (250 ha), Utale 210 ha)
- **Enhancing flood and drought risk management** – Financing the rehabilitation and augmentation of critical water supply infrastructure, including the Champhira-Msaka, Mpira-Balaka water supply schemes (benefiting over 800,000 people), and strengthening flood and drought risk management in Shire Basin. Additionally, DRM capacities at the national, district, and city levels are being enhanced.
- **Contingency Emergency Risk Component**- This component ensured quick and effective response to emergencies which assisted during disasters including the malaria epidemic
- **Project management** oversees the efficient execution of the project.

Beyond the physical infrastructure rehabilitation, a significant outcome of the MRDRMP has been supporting the Government of Malawi in establishing a framework for proactive rather than reactive disaster risk management with a shift towards data oriented DRM decisionmaking. The project supported the establishment of the new DRM Act and Policy which guides the country's DRM strategies. Alongside the legal framework, substantial capacity building initiatives have been undertaken for the institutions involved in DRM. Several tools have been developed to assist infrastructure planners and developers in designing projects that address the country's resilience demands in line with the forecast climatic conditions. It is essential that these are now embedded into the country's planning and implementation among sectoral agencies.

The symposium provides a valuable opportunity for practitioners (including implementors, policy makers, academia) to learn about the outcomes of these efforts, critically examine the tools developed, and brainstorm ways to best utilize them to inform future investments, government planning, and improving operational effectiveness in DRM and resilience building. We believe this event will foster networks that promote coordinated DRM implementation, enabling stakeholders to gain a clear understanding of their respective roles. The risk profiling instruments developed through the DRM team, as well the road asset- level vulnerability assessment conducted by the transport team, are just a few examples of the scientific and decision support tools that will significantly enhance infrastructure resilience in Malawi.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of other development partners who are helping to build a more resilient Malawi and recognize our close partnership with many of the development partners present here. One challenge that has often been raised is the lack of coordination among donors in implementation of various initiatives within Malawi. However, in the DRM space, we are encouraged to see more coordination among partners and look forward to continued collaboration.

I would like to end with congratulations due to the Government of Malawi, particularly the MRDRMP PMU, for organizing this important event. We look forward to a productive three days of learning, engagement, and interaction as we all chart a path towards a more resilient Malawi.

Thank you ... Zikomo kwambiri